



Campsea Ashe in Victorian Times

A few facts about Victorian England

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- Before Victoria came to the throne, the country had suffered a long period of depression. It started in 1814 and lasted until 1839. In the early 1830's farm labourers were dissatisfied with their lot, with work more difficult to find. Land owners were buying more and more farm machinery so less man power required. Farm workers earned about 7d per day.
- Poor Law Amendment Act 1834. A generation of people had grown up with no sources of income expect poor relief. The Act introduced Union Workhouses to cope with the problem.
- In 1840's many people left the rural areas and flocked to the towns for work. In 1850 the population in towns was 50% and by 1901 it had risen to 75%
- In 1846, the Corn Laws were repealed which meant that bread, the staple food of the poor, became cheaper.
- 1849, two thirds of men and half the women who married were able to write their names.
- Victorian values. These included that the population should be frugal and thrifty and that the secret of success was to be industrious, willing to work hard and persevere. Also piety and religious observance greatly encouraged. Temperance, punctuality and no time wasting were part of these Victorian values.
- Victorian sayings:

The devil finds work for idle hands

Take care of the pence and the pounds take care of themselves

Where there's a will, there's a way.

- The class divide. There was a great gulf between the classes. A man's social status was determined by the work he did, eg manual or non-manual work

*"God bless the Squire and his relations and keep
us in our proper stations"*

Many reforms were introduced by P.M. Disraeli and Gladstone. These improved social conditions but wealth remained unevenly distributed.

- Education In 1860's many children attended school but in many cases a fee was charged. Education was not compulsory until 1876. In general about 50% of pupils attended school less than 100 days a year. Most only went for 1 to 2 years
- From 1874 until 1894 there was a depression in rural areas. During this time there were poor harvests, low prices and the loss of live stock. Farmers went out

of business. Conditions for farm workers were very hard indeed. The harvest of 1879 was the worst for 100 years.

- Mid January 1881 – the worst snow storm of the 19th century. Immense snow drifts brought the country to a stand still. Many deaths of people and animals.
- Weather In March 1891, severe blizzards ruined orchards and woods. The winter of 1894/5 brought prolonged freezing weather making farm work impossible Farming families found it extremely hard with little money.
- Voting In 1830 only a small number of people had the right to vote, less than 1 in 50. You had to own freehold property worth at least £2 a year in rent. In 1832, the Reform Act made new rules which stated that all voters had to be male, over 21 and in towns, be the owners of property or tenant of a house with rent at least £10 a year. As a result of these reforms only the educated middle class males gained the vote. The working classes could not and therefore could not improve their living standards. An extra 300,000 gained the vote, 1 in every 30 people. It was not until 1884, that working men in the countryside got the vote.
- Diseases. Main causes of death were T.B. or consumption. Typhoid was another killer along with Typhus. Smallpox was common among children and many childhood diseases were also dangerous along with influenza. Cholera was another deadly infection and there was a 50% death rate. Around the world, there were 4 epidemics in the mid 19th century. In Britain, there was a severe one in 1848.
- Population in Suffolk. In 1801, the pop. was 210,000. In 1871 it was 350,000 . Despite the emigration, the population had grown by 66%.