

# Baker Street *Elementary*

PRESENTS  
"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"



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THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON  
# A046 -- THE NEW WOMAN CYCLIST -- FEBRUARY, 2022





WELCOME TO TOPIC # 046... TODAY, WATSON AND  
I WILL BE LOOKING AT CYCLING IN THE  
SHERLOCKIAN STORIES...





**VIOLET SMITH, THE SOLITARY CYCLIST WHO SOUGHT MY ASSISTANCE, REPRESENTED THE NEW TYPE OF SINGLE WORKING WOMAN WHO EMERGED AT THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.**





*SARAH GRAND COINED THE TERM 'THE NEW WOMAN' IN 1894 TO DESCRIBE THE INCREASING NUMBER OF WELL-EDUCATED AND SELF-SUPPORTING WOMAN WHO EMERGED AS THE SOCIAL CLIMATE AND DEMOGRAPHICS SHIFTED.*





**AT THE END OF THE 1800s, APPROXIMATELY HALF  
OF THE WOMEN AGED 20-40 WERE UNMARRIED AND  
OUTNUMBERED ELIGIBLE MEN.**



WITH LITTLE PROSPECT OF EVER BECOMING A WIFE, WILLIAM RATHBONE GREG ESTIMATED THAT ABOUT 300,000 OF THEM WERE DOOMED TO LIFE DEVOID OF MARRIAGE AND CONSISTING INSTEAD OF 'CELIBACY, STRUGGLE, AND PRIVATION.'



**DESPITE GREG'S INSISTENCE THAT WITHOUT FULFILLING THEIR ROLE AS WIFE AND MOTHER, MANY OF THOSE IN THIS AGE GROUP FOUND NEW PROSPECTS OPENING TO THEM...**



*...AND THE BICYCLE WAS BOTH A SYMBOL AND A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO THEIR NEW-FOUND FREEDOM.*



**TOWARD THE END OF THE CENTURY, TWO MAJOR  
IMPROVEMENTS TO THE BICYCLE MADE THEM BOTH  
SAFER, MORE COMFORTABLE, AND OVER TIME,  
MORE AFFORDABLE...**



**...THE 'SAFETY BICYCLE' WITH TWO EQUAL-SIZED WHEELS AND A CHAIN-DRIVEN REAR WHEEL, AND THE PNEUMATIC TIRE, TRANSPORTATION.**



WHILE BOTH WOMEN AND MEN FOUND THESE INNOVATIONS TO THEIR LIKING, THIS NEW FORM OF MOBILITY HAD A MUCH GREATER IMPACT ON WOMEN.



**VICTORIAN ETIQUETTE PROSCRIBED WOMEN, PARTICULARLY THOSE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS, TO A VERY LIMITED SET OF 'RESPECTABLE' ACTIVITIES VISITING, ATTENDING CERTAIN CULTURAL EVENTS, SUPPORTING CERTAIN CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES, AND SOME RECREATIONAL OUTINGS.**



**BICYCLING EXTENDED WOMEN'S GEOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL BOUNDARIES. THEY WERE ABLE TO TRAVEL FARTHER AND INTO AREAS NOT PREVIOUSLY VISITED, AND POSSIBLY UNACCOMPANIED.**



THIS DESIGN, HOWEVER, REQUIRED DIFFERENT CLOTHING, AND LED TO ADDITIONAL FREEDOM IN THAT ARENA AS WELL.



*AT A TIME WHEN SHOWING HER ANKLE WAS ENOUGH TO MARK A WOMAN AS A PROSTITUTE AND LADIES ONLY RODE SIDESADDLE MANY DONNED PANTALOONS OR BLOOMERS, PERMITTING THE WHOLE LOWER LEG TO BE VISIBLE (ALTHOUGH COVERED BY WOOLEN STOCKINGS OR BOOTS).*



# BIKES AND BLOOMERS

Kat  
Jungnickel

Victorian Women Inventors and  
Their *Extraordinary* Cycle Wear

THE VOLUME OF FABRIC USED IN THIS FASHION,  
HOWEVER, PROVED AS GREAT, OR GREATER,  
HINDRANCE THAN SOME SKIRTS.





**SOME FORWARD-THINKING CYCLING AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS ADVOCATES WENT SO FAR AS TO DISPARAGE THE CORSET AND DISCOURAGED ITS USE AS WELL.**





*IN THE END, THE MAJORITY OF WOMEN CONTINUED TO WEAR SKIRTS AND CORSETS WHEN CYCLING.*





Illustration by Rockwood, New York  
CLOOMER COSTUME

**BICYCLE MANUFACTURERS DEVELOPED A NUMBER OF DEVICES TO HELP MAINTAIN THE WOMEN'S MODESTY, BUT NONE WERE TRULY EFFECTIVE.**



*DESPITE GREG'S CONCERNS ABOUT WOMEN'S  
MARITAL PROSPECTS, THE SITUATION WAS NOT  
AS DIRE AS THE ONE HE PAINTED.*



**THE RISE IN EDUCATED WOMEN LED TO A RISE IN  
THEIR INVOLVEMENT WITHIN THE WORKFORCE.**



**MANY SINGLE WOMEN MOVED INTO PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS SUCH AS SECRETARIES, TEACHERS, GOVERNESSES, ETC. AND WERE ABLE TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY, WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF A FATHER OR HUSBAND.**



**IN ADDITION, WOMEN HAD A LARGER POOL OF PROSPECTS  
FROM WHICH TO CHOOSE... COUPLES NO LONGER HAD TO  
LIVE IN THE SAME VILLAGE OR NEIGHBORHOOD.**





THEY WERE ABLE TO TRAVEL OUTSIDE SUCH AREAS  
TO MEET, OFTEN UNCHAPERONED.



*SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT WAS COMMON ENOUGH TO  
BE IMMORTALIZED IN THE HARRY DARCE SONG  
'DAISY BELL' AND HER BICYCLE 'BUILT FOR TWO.'*



**MISS SMITH DISPLAYED THE ASPECTS PHYSICAL FITNESS, FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT, AND SELF-SUPPORTING INCOME THAT MIGHT HAVE LABELED HER AS 'A NEW WOMAN,' WITH THE EXCEPTION OF HER MARITAL PROSPECTS.**



**WHILE SOME NEW WOMEN MIGHT NEVER RECEIVE AN OFFER OF MARRIAGE, SHE HAD THE CHOICE OF THREE (ALBEIT WERE TWO UNDESIRED).**



*ALL THE SAME, SHE HAD THE FREEDOM TO REFUSE THE TWO UNWANTED ONES, AND THANKS TO YOU, RETAINED HER INDEPENDENCE TO MAKE THAT CHOICE.*



*SO, WE HAVE COMPLETED TOPIC # 046 IN OUR SERIES...*

*IN TOPIC # 047, WE WILL BE LOOKING AT THE CLERGY DURING THE VICTORIAN PERIOD.*



## ORIGINAL SOURCE MATERIAL FOR THIS TOPIC:

- SARAH GRAND, "THE NEW ASPECT OF THE WOMAN QUESTION," THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, 1894.
- WILLIAM RATHBONE GREG, WHY ARE WOMEN REDUNDANT? LONDON: N. TRUBNER AND CO., 1869
- [HTTPS://VICTORIANIST.WORDPRESS.COM/2015/04/13/CHAINS-OF-FREEDOM-THE-BICYCLES-IMPACT-ON-1890S-BRITAIN/](https://victorianist.wordpress.com/2015/04/13/chains-of-freedom-the-bicycles-impact-on-1890s-britain/)
- CLARE S. SIMPSON, "A SOCIAL HISTORY OF WOMEN AND CYCLING IN LATE-NINETEENTH CENTURY NEW ZEALAND."
- [HTTP://WWW.TELEGRAPH.CO.UK/LIFESTYLE/WELLBEING/DIET/8419028/BICYCLES-THE-CHAINS-THAT-SET-WOMEN-FREE.HTML](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/lifestyle/wellbeing/diet/8419028/bicycles-the-chains-that-set-women-free.html)



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"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"

IS CREATED THROUGH THE INGENUITY & HARD WORK OF:

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