Sherlock Holmes and Victorian England in 1886.

London in the era of Queen Victoria was a fascinating place to live. Flickering gas lamps lit the squalid streets, casting eerie shadows. Horse drawn carriages clattered along, carrying the wealthy and well to do. Crime was rife in the slums of London. Prostitution, drug abuse and murder were commonplace. There was much poverty and ill health; poor people lived in cramped, dirty and squalid conditions. Smog caused by the factories weighed heavily on the city, creating a dark, dreary place.

Public hangings were frequent and Victorian people feared crime greatly. At this time, an infamous murderer, Jack the Ripper, was loose on the streets of London, attacking women. He knifed and ruthlessly murdered many prostitutes, often sending body parts to the Police force to show off his crimes. However, the Police couldn’t catch him and their methods were seen as inefficient. A number of officers were also publicly exposed as corrupt. Many Victorians had a deep resentment against the Police in London, as they did not appear to be protecting the public.

When Arthur Conan Doyle’s character, Sherlock Holmes, surfaced in 1887 the Victorians immediately fell for the fictional character, as they liked the fact that he cracked every case and always defeated evil! He became the perfect detective, although in the stories Holmes was actually an amateur detective, not a member of the London Police force. When Doyle tried to kill off his famous character in 1893, there was a public outcry and Doyle received death threats warning him to keep Holmes alive!

Sherlock Holmes has become one of the most celebrated and famous fictional detectives the world has ever known. There are hundreds of web sites dedicated to him, scores of films and TV productions and he remains most people’s idea of a super sleuth!!!