

an act of Parliament that an apprenticeship in this profession should not start before the age of 8 years. Prior to that time, boys as young as four years had been accepted as climbing boys. It was prohibited that any one master-sweep employed more than six apprentices. To curb further the existing excesses of industrial exploitation and to insure a more adequate care and supervision of these youngsters, it was required that they should be kept clean and should be given a bath at least once a week (Oliver). The age limit for apprenticeship was raised to 10 years in 1834 and the number of apprentices for any one master-sweep was restricted to four. The age limit was again extended in 1842 to 16 years. It was decreed at the same time that climbing-sweeps should be at least 21 years old. Twenty years later it was made illegal for master-sweeps to employ boys less than 10 years of age in any other work and only within the place of business and in the yard.

It is obvious that all these laws were neither obeyed nor enforced. This fact is clearly demonstrated by the way in which the census of sweeps in England was conducted until rather recent years. The official sweep census figures of occupied males included originally all sweeps of 10 years and over. This procedure was not changed until 1912, when the age limit was raised to 12 years and over, while it is 14 years and over since 1931. The census taken in 1811 showed that there were still 99 sweeps between the age of 10 and 14, and 611 sweeps between the age of 15 to 19. There were 1,852 sweeps under 20 years of age in 1841; in 1851, 183 sweeps between 5 to 9 years, 924 sweeps between the age 10 to 14 years, and 2,045 sweeps below 20 years of age. A minor improvement to this distressing situation had taken place when the census was taken in 1861. At that time there were 67 sweeps 5 to 9 years old; 569 sweeps 10 to 14 years old; and 1,503 sweeps below the age of 20. In 1871 five boys from 5 to 9 years of age were still listed as sweeps; 243 were from 10 to 14 years old; and 1,054 were below the age of 20. In 1921 there were only 203 below the age of 20; while in 1931 the number of sweeps below 21 years of age had dropped to 198 (Henry).

SOOT

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