



British Chimney Sweeps: Five Centuries of Chimney Sweeping

Benita Cullingford

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Our picture of a chimney sweep is often Dick Van Dyke in *Mary Poppins*. This meticulously researched examination shows a different side to this hazardous trade. The art and science of chimney sweeping are examined in detail for the first time in this lively and fascinating book. From the development of chimneys in the twelfth century, replacing the open cooking fire in a smoke-filled room with a plain hole in the roof, to the patenting of mechanical devices in the late nineteenth century that came to the rescue of many a poor climbing boy, all is revealed. The personalities who dominated the profession, which surprisingly included several women sweeps, are portrayed, along with many illustrations of the tools of the trade. Sweeping techniques, the impact of social reform and the place of the sweep in literature are explored in this absorbing work. With 75 black-and-white illustrations.

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