

'The Great Horse Manure Crisis of 1894'

Dog poo in the park, or on the streets of St Neots, is not the problem it once was, but back in Victorian times horses were the problem...

London, 1894. There are over 11,000 Hansom cabs, with over 11,000 horses. There are 3,000 horse-drawn buses each needing 12 horses a day. Add on the police horses, cart-horses, delivery-wagon horses and there are a lot of horses. And horses produce manure, 20 lb per day or more. Work it out, that's thousands of tons of manure *every day!*

Horse-drawn carts enter the City daily to collect the stuff for spreading on farmers' fields outside London...fields that produce hay to feed the horses that produce the manure, but they are fighting a losing battle.

Imagine the smell. Plus, in a dry summer there is the 'dust' and when wet there is the 'mud'. It is *everywhere*. No wonder shoe-shine boys are so busy.

In 1894 The Times newspaper published an article predicting that it won't be long before the city would be '9-foot-deep in manure' if no-one came up with an answer to this now world-wide, horse-made, organic onslaught.

However, by 1912 the internal combustion engine had all but replaced horses and the problem just drifted away. Historians refer to *The Great Horse Manure Crisis of 1894* as the perfect example of an intractable problem being solved unexpectedly.

And now, 100 years later we have the problem of motor exhaust fumes - no mess, but life threatening. The 'simple' answer here is probably electric vehicles, but where will all the electricity come from? And where to park them all while they charge up?

