

The Victorian Job

or "*Oliver! meets The Italian Job...*"

A barge appears through the misty marshes, its dubious-looking crew set for a rendezvous with four mysteriously cloaked men. Bags of Welsh gold and a kidnapped child are exchanged. What is going on one foggy night in 1839 on the muddy banks of the Usk river?

One thing is for certain – Charlie Finch and his gang are hell-bent on thievery, so they lie in wait to steal the loot as it changes hands. They had reckoned without local police constable Portescue, however, who appears at just the wrong moment to scupper their plans.

But where is the gold coming from? Charlie is convinced there is a connection with the work that the orphans from the workhouse do each day at Samuel Fly's Formularium – a factory making a miraculous medicine (Fly's Formula) with a top-secret ingredient.

Locked overnight in the workhouse by mistake, Charlie's gang discover exactly what *is* going on. The secret ingredient in Fly's Formula is Welsh gold - but it is being taken from the factory unwittingly by the children and locked away by the unscrupulous workhouse staff, led by Mr Crump the beadle. Charlie begins to plan a heist.

There is someone else interested in the gold too. Freddie Fly, the son of the factory owner, has run up huge debts by gambling. He's on the run from his debtors and desperate to get out of his fix.

Meanwhile, real historical figure John Frost is plotting revolution. In the local pub he urges the working people of Newport to rise up in support of his "Charter" for workers' rights. A peaceful protest rally is planned by the Chartist marchers, but things get out of hand. A riot begins when some supporters are arrested and held in the Westgate Hotel.

The day of the riot is exactly the day where, nearby at the workhouse, Charlie Finch's gang are putting their plan for robbery into action. When the workhouse staff are distracted by the fracas outside, the children help Finch and his mates to break into the cupboard where the gold is being hidden, before making their escape with all the precious loot.

The riot is now in full flow, complete with shooting, explosions and a mad bicycle chase down the streets of Newport! But when the villainous workhouse staff try to rush their stolen gold to safety they find the hiding place is empty! Orphans spring from nowhere to lock the villains up in their own cupboard. Also caught red-handed is Freddie, arrested by constable Portescue whilst furtively creeping around the Formularium trying to find the gold for himself.

What is going to become of the gold now? The children decide to give their share to Samuel Fly to help set up a workhouse school.

But back at the banks of the Usk, the barge is making a return journey. This time Charlie's gang aren't going to make a mistake. What sort of a deal are they planning to do? Wait and see!