

## Reasons to be cheerful were in Victorian times



Rose-tinted view...women selling flowers in London's Covent Garden



Sail of the century...a boat lies in shallow waters at Dittisham, Devon



Cart blanche...ginger beer seller. Left, a London photographer

By **Tom Campbell**

**THESE** photographs were taken at a time when Britons seemed happiest, researchers have revealed.

Countless books and newspapers were used in a pioneering study which measured nearly 200 years of the nation's mood.

The "golden age" of 1880 was a year which saw the first Test match between England and Australia at the Oval, the second Anglo-Afghan war, Disraeli was prime minister and the first frozen lamb was imported from Australia.

But the academics who published the study cannot say for sure what raised the nation's mood.

Professor Thomas Hills, of **Warwick University**, said: "The UK seems happiest in the Victorian times, around 1880. It's difficult to say why.

"The people writing then would have probably been rich and educated and life might have been like a basket of cherries for those people.

"It's the age of Empire for Britain, it's very proud of itself and that might be reflected in the writing as well."

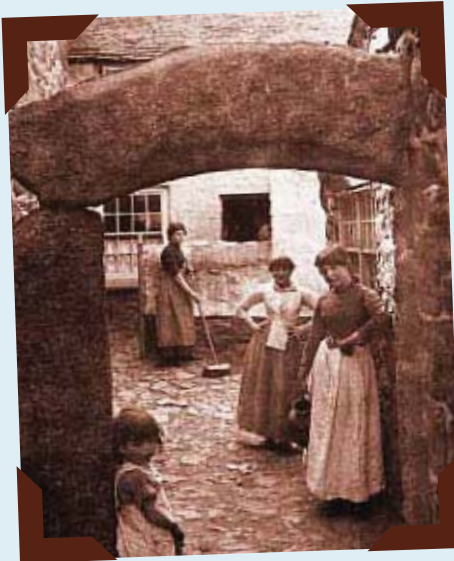
The study, in the journal *Nature Human Behaviour*, also found Britons were most gloomy in the Winter of Discontent in 1978.



Pictures: JOHN THOMSON/SWNS



Harping on...an Italian street musician performs for onlookers on a London street during a golden era



Street life....domestic workers in Cornwall



Taste of the times...people line up for a bite to eat