

Victorian Tatton

The Domestic Scene in Victorian England

The Servant Hierarchy

Servants in all great country houses were strictly ranked, each with their own special skills and tasks. Even amongst the servants themselves there was a strict code of protocol, which meant that those at the top of the tree were treated almost as respectfully as members of the master's family. In the late nineteenth century, Tatton had 40 indoor servants, 24 gardeners and over 100 farming and estate workers. The family living here at that time was not large by Victorian standards, but Tatton was well known in aristocratic circles for its great parties and social events culminating in a visit by the Prince and Princess of Wales in 1887. All in all, there was plenty of work to keep the following servants occupied:

Lower Servants:

It was these servants who did most of the hard work! This meant keeping the house clean without the benefit of modern technology and looking after the family and their guests. They included: Footmen; Under-Butlers; Housemaids; Nursery-Maids; Still-room Maids; Kitchen Maids; Scullery Maids; Laundry-Maids; Dairymaids; Kitchen Men; Baker and Helpers. Some of their jobs will be undertaken by your class!!

Lower servants ate plain food in the Servant's Hall, sharing small dark rooms in the attic. Promotion prospects were good however, and conditions were often far better than at home....

A Typical Housemaid's Day from a Victorian Diary

Average Yearly Wage £12 - £25

6.00am	<i>Woke up, swept state rooms, cleaned grates and fireplaces, took hot water upstairs for family and guests.</i>
8.00am	<i>Breakfast in Servants Hall.</i>
8.30am	<i>Cleaned bedrooms, made beds, emptied slops and refilled the coal buckets. Swept staircases.</i>
1.00pm	<i>Took hot water upstairs for family to wash before lunch</i>
1.30pm	<i>Servants lunch</i>
2.00pm	<i>Returned to bedrooms to empty water. Dusted and tidied.</i>
4.00pm	<i>Put clean towels etc. out, answered calls from mistress.</i>
5.00pm	<i>Re-lit bedroom fires. Cleaned glass and china in the drawing and dining room.</i>
7.00pm	<i>Took up more hot water. Lit lamps.</i>
8.00pm	<i>Tidied bedrooms whilst guests were at dinner.</i>
10.00pm	<i>Made up bedroom fires for the night.</i>
11.00pm	<i>Answered requests from guests for drinks of water!</i>
11.30pm	<i>Retired at last.</i>



Upper Servants

The lower servants were supervised by the Upper Servants who had their own quite modest apartments and took their meals in the stewards room - a diet based on that of their employers.

They included the House Steward who engaged all servants and kept accounts; the Housekeeper who hired and fired all women servants and supervised work both above and below stairs; the Butler who had complete responsibility for the wine cellar, the Cook or Chef and the Valet and Ladies Maid who were personal servants of Lord and Lady Egerton.

Costume Information Sheet

Victorian Servants

Date: 1896/7, Victoria is Queen of England

Where are we going?

You are going to the Mansion at Tatton Park to work as a servant for the day. Some of the work you will be doing is very hard! This might include scrubbing cold, hard stone floors on your hands and knees, and carrying heavy buckets of coal up to the bedrooms, so be prepared!

Etiquette

This means 'how to behave'! In Victorian times everybody knew 'their station' (position) in society and there were lots of rules. During your day at Tatton you must remember not to speak to members of the family unless you are spoken to first. You should call the butler "Sir" and the Housekeeper "Ma'am". If you happen to meet a member of the family or a visitor in the house, stop to let them pass. Boys should then bow, and girls must curtsy.

What to bring

If possible, bring one item of silver or copper for cleaning, but make sure you ask permission first from your parents.

What to Wear

We find that some sort of costume, however simple, helps everyone to enter into the Victorian servant's world. However, you should remember that big country houses like Tatton are often cold and draughty, it's important that you are warmly dressed!

Boys

Servants wore turned up collars with a plain necktie or cravat and a crisp, white shirt.

Plain, dark coloured waistcoats were worn by all the menservants and were usually a cast-off from the master. Trousers can be either long or short, tucked into socks or cut off and elasticated at the knee.

Socks should be long and dark coloured. Wear black shoes or pumps or lace-up boots, but not trainers!

Victorian Servants



Girls

A mob cap can be made from a circle of white cotton, gathered with a drawstring or elastic. Hair should be tied back tightly or tucked under the cap.

Wear a long dark or printed dress buttoned up to your neck, or a light blouse and long, dark skirt with a wide belt.

Flat shoes are essential, preferably in a dark colour. To be really authentic, you could wear lace up boots...

We can provide a long white apron for girls and a short one for the boys, when you get here.

Teachers and accompanying adults - please come in costume too! You will need to bring your own apron.