

# LIVING IN THE PAST

## VICTORIAN CHILDREN AT WORK

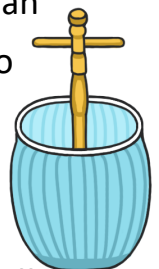
### Portland Basin Museum. Objects from the Collection



In 1871, 4% of the population were employed in domestic service, including many children. Children's main roles would be the house maid, under house maid, laundry maid, kitchen maid, scullery maid, house boy and stable boy. This dolly tub was used to wash laundry. Perhaps you could help out at home and see how hard the work is!



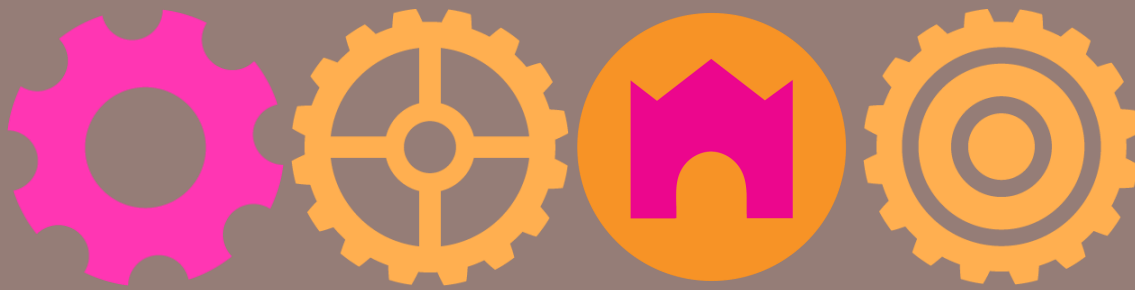
Children employed as house maids would have to clean the house, make beds, empty chamber pots, clean the fireplace grates, polish furniture, clean windows. Carpet beaters like this were used to keep rugs dust free.



As well as having to iron the clothes (and do all the other jobs around the house) house maids even had to iron their master's newspaper, to ensure it was free from crumples and ready to read while eating breakfast.

Do you think it would have been hard working as a Victorian child?

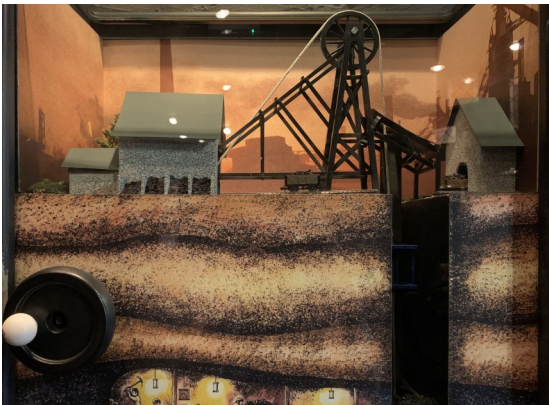




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The local coal industry was at its height in the mid-19th century, with the main centres being in Ashton, Denton, Dukinfield & Hyde. There were very few safety rules. Cutting & moving coal which was later done by machine was done by men, women & children.

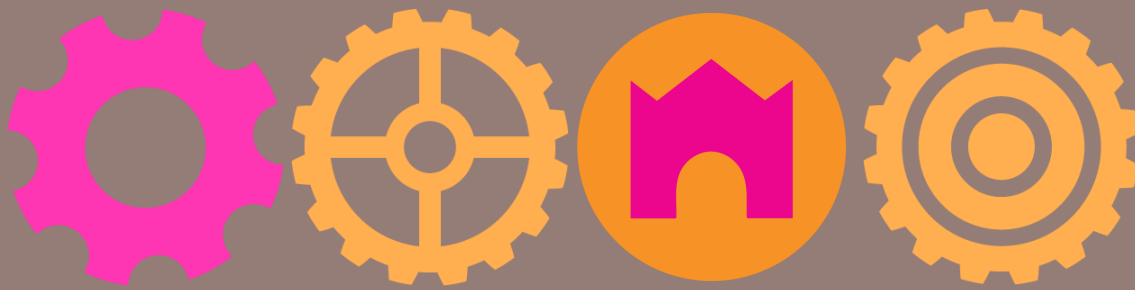


Some of the worst jobs for children were down coal mines. Being small, children were ideal to work into tight spaces. 'Hurriers' worked on their hands & knees dragging cartloads of coal behind them, while 'trappers' crouched ready to open trap doors whenever a cart came past. **Can you curl yourself into a small ball and stay there as long as possible—just like a trapper!**



Coal mines were dangerous for children out playing too. Jack Bowker & Sarah Leech fell into a disused mine shaft at Glasshouse Fold near Haughton Green. They were trapped for 16 hours, clinging to a small ledge before being rescued a basket!

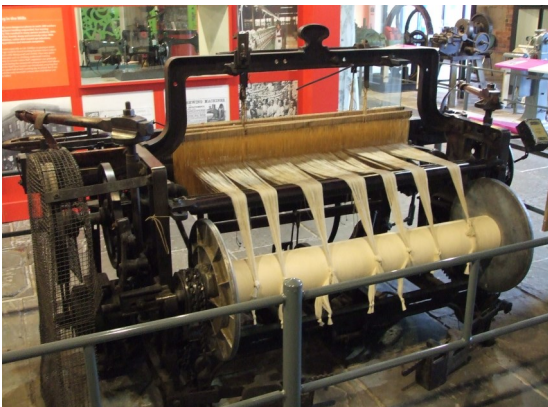




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Children as young as 7 could be found working long day in the region's cotton mills. Being small & nimble, they did dangerous jobs like climbing underneath moving machinery to remove cotton pieces that had fallen below - this role was called being a 'scavenger'.



Children working in mills had little time for fresh air or exercise. Even part of Sunday was spent cleaning machines. There were serious accidents where children caught their hair or hands in the machinery. Some were killed when they fell asleep at the machines.



Young girls could be apprenticed to dressmakers who made clothes for rich households. Expected to sit indoors sewing for 15 hours a day, the girls developed eye sight problems and chest pains from being hunched over their work.

Could you do some sewing at home?

