

Activity: Victorian Cellars

**History
Years (5/6)**

ABOUT THE ACTIVITY

As with all of our activities, this is designed to complement the work done in school – it is not meant to be a complete history unit.

The group visits the Beaumanor cellars and Hall staircase, and learns about the servants' lives and work, including:

- The linen room.
- The laundry room.
- The bread kitchen.
- The salting room.
- The Hall staircase and main concourse.

WHERE THE ACTIVITY FITS IN

to a visit to Beaumanor

the cellar and staircase visit is one of the three major strands of a Victorian visit to Beaumanor (along with the schoolroom and the photo-trail), chosen because of its relevance to the experiences of a Victorian child. The visit might also include playground games and songs, a mystery, a visit to the local village and church to look at local social history and, if appropriate, research of primary historical sources (newspapers, oral testimony, etc.).

to the QCA scheme

History unit 11 What was it like for children living in Victorian Britain?

ADAPTING THE ACTIVITY FOR A DIFFERENT AGE GROUP

Younger children could:

- Do the same activities, at a level appropriate to their age and abilities.

PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if the children have learned:

- About pounds and ounces and their abbreviations.
- About the various jobs, such as: ironing, doing the washing, weighing ingredients, sweeping chimneys, etc.
- Basic science of heating.

VOCABULARY

In this activity, children will have opportunities to use:

- words associated with servants, e.g. *servant, master, mistress*.
- words associated with houses, e.g. *upstairs, downstairs, staircase, cellars, chimney*.
- words associated with jobs, e.g. *iron, salting, brine, carcass, scales, balance, mangle*

RESOURCES

- Cellar rooms
- Cellar artefacts
- Hall staircase

EXPECTATIONS

At the end of this activity, due to age or ability

most children will:

have a good idea of the jobs they have seen and an idea of the working conditions of servants in the cellars.

some children will not have made so much progress and will:

have had a go at the different jobs and decided whether they would like to work in a similar environment.

some children will have progressed further and will:

Be able to compare the life and environment of the owners and that of the servants and reach conclusions about the unfairness and injustices of Victorian life.

ICT POSSIBILITIES

In our computer suite at Beaumanor during a residential visit, or back at school after the visit

- We have an 'Internet Treasure Hunt'. Children search the web to find answers to various questions about Victorian servants.
- We have the Beaumanor census from 1851 to 1901 available. We use it to learn about the servants and also to learn about using databases (*Information Manager*). We can extend this work into more general work on using and creating databases.
- As with all visits to Beaumanor, we have several digital cameras available for use by groups. These could be used by staff and children during a residential visit and the pictures produced could be incorporated into multi media presentation packages such as 'Illuminatus', 'MS Publisher' and 'MS Powerpoint', initially at Beaumanor, then back at school after the visit.

WORK BACK IN SCHOOL

The database of Beaumanor servants is available on floppy disc for use back in school. The disc contains files in "MS Works", "MS Excel" and "RM Information Manager" format.

A similar database of census material local to the school could be collected.

The Victorian mystery can be solved back in school after the visit. This gives lots of reading, thinking and discussion work for use in Literacy. The children can use our model to design and write a mystery of their own, based around the school or their locality.

Children can visit churchyards to find out about local people.

RISK ASSESSMENT

In addition to the 'Group Visits - General Risk Assessment', the following specific risks have been identified

Hazard	Risk control
Moving between the base room and the cellars.	Children are warned about being safe around the courtyard and especially when crossing the road archways. An adult visitor is asked to guard the upper courtyard archway.
Fire precautions	Visiting leaders are made aware of the fire precautions and exits in the cellars and each group is signed in and out of the cellars.
Fire doors	Children are warned about the springs on the doors and are asked to look after the person behind them when going through doorways.
Trip hazards	Children are warned about the unevenness of the floors and the need to walk and to be careful.
Irons	Children are warned to be very careful with the irons, as they are very heavy.
Mangle	The mangle is inoperative. The reason is explained to groups.
Glassware	Children are asked not to touch the glass and pottery in the bread kitchen. The reason is explained.
Servants' staircase	Children are told to walk on the outside of the staircase when ascending the servants' stairs.
Main staircase	Children are warned about the danger of falling down the main staircase and strictly controlled while doing so.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES CHILDREN LEARN	ACTIVITY	LEARNING OUTCOMES CHILDREN	POINTS TO NOTE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to behave as a Victorian schoolchild. 	<p>The group is seated in the base room and the session is explained to that they know what is expected of them. An agreement is sought to for everyone to act in role and not try to spoil the session.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are able to conduct themselves properly in the context of the classroom. 	<p>We do treat the activity seriously and stay in role, but we don't overact and pretend that Victorian teachers were more beastly than they really were.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About cleanliness and proper conduct. 	<p>The group lines up outside the schoolroom to have their hands and handkerchiefs inspected.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get into role before they enter the classroom. 	<p>If it is raining, we don't do this activity.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to use slate and chalk. 	<p>Children do sums on the slates and hold them up for inspection by the teacher.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get used to acting as a group, not as individuals. 	<p>Younger children write letters and numbers rather than sums.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How children learned most of their lessons. 	<p>Children chant their tables, backwards alphabet and religious texts hung on the walls</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Their tables and start to learn "The Kings & Queens Of England". 	<p>Our aim is to get children to understand how rigid and repetitive lessons normally are.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to do Drill. 	<p>Children practice drill in rows, out in the courtyard</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to do drill and that even a fun activity is done in an uninteresting way. 	<p>We often miss this activity out if time or weather do not permit it.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to write properly with pen and ink. 	<p>Children learn how to write properly with pen and ink. They practice forming copperplate letters.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How hard it must have been for children to write neatly and how much technology has improved writing. 	<p>There is other material on the worksheet, which can be done back in school.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About the religious nature of Victorian schools 	<p>Children sing a hymn and repeat two prayers, at various stages while in the classroom.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About the importance of religion in English schools. 	<p>Our religious material is very general, and mentions only "Lord". We can leave it out if necessary, but prefer not to, as the session is history rather than religion.</p>