

Domestic Service

Domestic Service was the second largest area of occupation after Agriculture and so it is hardly surprising that some of our ancestors took up posts with families as their servants. They may have lived in, leaving their own families behind them from quite a young age or they might have lived out, travelling to their workplace on a daily basis. Some of the servants shared a room with others in the large houses of the day, a door segregating the men from the women – or their sleeping arrangements might have just meant a small bed in the kitchen.

Domestic servants could be recruited by word of mouth, advertisements in newspapers and magazines of the day as well as recommendation of a 'girl/boy from the same village' as that of an existing servant. So do not be surprised if you find your ancestor living somewhere that you had not expected.

What did they do?

Here is some clarification of the different roles that you might find that was the employment of your domestic ancestors:

Boots – A young lad who was responsible for cleaning the boots and shoes of all of the household. Also known as a Boots Boy.

Footman – Although originally for accompanying carriages of the very wealthy, and therefore a status symbol, Footmen also helped with household chores such as moving furniture, opening and closing doors for the aristocracy and even serving meals.

Governess – Teaching the daughters of the household was the main responsibility, but young sons might also be taught – until they were sent away to Prep School, of course!

Maid of All Work – Also known as a General Servant, the job title gives it away. Not only did she cook and clean for the whole family every day *on her own*, she also undertook the laundry work, although sometimes there was help for this chore.

Scullery Maid – If ever there was a job that the rest of the maids did not do, then the scullery maid did it. Usually very menial tasks were undertaken.

Please be aware that this is just a small list of occupations that you might find in Domestic Service and you will probably discover a lot more.

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If you have a question about your Domestic Service ancestors, we have a forum where you can post those questions. Register for FREE at <http://www.genealogy-specialists.com/> and tell us about the ancestor that you are researching. The members will do their best to help you.

If you would like to discover more about your ancestors who were in Domestic Service, the types of work that they did or want to know more about their lives, listed below are some products that will certainly help you - and all of them are available from [www.parishchest.com](http://www.parishchest.com). Just pop the reference number in the website search box to see the details:

- Enquire Within upon Everything 1890 Ref: OHB-10
- My Ancestor was in Service Ref: SOG-1197x
- Something For Everybody 1861 Ref: ARB-0551b
- The Domestic Revolution Explained 1750-1950 Ref: CSB-1468
- Women of Victorian Sussex Ref: HPL-BK03

Many more products are also available from Parish Chest that would be specific to the area that you are researching. Use the website search box and pop in key words such as **Domestic** and **Servant**. You never know what you might find!