Monday was 'Laundry Day', also known as 'Blue Monday'. Soaking had already begun well before, as early as Saturday night for those whose religious beliefs forbade them from any type of work or labour on Sunday.

On Monday the dolly tub was filled with boiling water for washing the clothes. The tub was originally made from wood but galvanised steel became popular because it was lighter and therefore easier to empty. The dolly tub needed to be filled and emptied many times on washday. The dolly peg was made from wood and had 4 or 5 legs. It was turned backwards and forwards in the dolly tub to move the clothes around and get them clean. Housekeepers said the dolly peg should be turned 100 times for each item of washing!
Washday Blues Loans Box

Posser and stirrer

The posser had a copper cone at one end and was used to agitate clothes in a dolly tub. It could be used instead of the dolly peg. As there were no detergents until the 20th century boiling water was needed to clean clothes with soap.

Once the clothes had been thoroughly agitated in the soapy water the water was thrown out and the items were rinsed. They were then boiled again in water with a teaspoon of soda to remove the soap thoroughly.

It was an expensive and time-consuming business to do the laundry with two people needed, the amount of coal needed for boiling water all day and soap was not particularly cheap. Well-off families might get a laundress in to do the clothes. It was so expensive that when people stayed with friends they expected to be presented with their washing bill on departure.
Carbolic soap, pegs

Carbolic soap was used in the days before detergents and white laundry went in first as it needed the hottest water. A bar of soap was shaved, cut into pieces and dissolved in boiling water to form a jelly.

One the washing was complete the clothes were ideally hung outside if the weather permitted or if the house was not located too near a factory with unpleasant smells and chimney ash. Pegs like these would have been used to hang clothes up outside. How are they different to today’s pegs?

Grace Foakes, the child of labourers remembered, “The ceiling of the kitchen was not very high and most of the time the washing was dangling over our heads. The place was damp and smelly, with steam running down the windows and walls. In bad weather the washing took two or three days to dry.”
Dolly blue box

The soaps of the time had a tendency to turn whites yellow, and blue was a lump of dye used to counteract this. This was just one part of the laundry process. The simplest load of laundry took one soaking, three washes, one boiling and four rinses! That is eight different processes.

More delicate materials than cotton, such as woollens and silks, were not washed at all but were brushed and dabbed with a cleansing fluid.

Without chemical detergents, stains were a serious problem. Ink came out with lemon juice and fruit stains were washed in hot milk. Special items with more than one type of fabric needed to be unsewn, washed separately and then sewed together again.
**Irons**

*Tuesday* was often *'Ironing day'*. Shapes of irons varied dependent on what was being ironed.

The *favourite* iron of the 19th century, the *sad* [i.e. solid] or flat iron, was used in *pairs*, one iron being in use while the other was heated on a *trivet* over the *stove* or *range*. It was lifted with a cloth when it was *hot*. You had to *spit* on it to test if it was *hot* enough. Because the fire made irons *sooty*, they had to be cleaned each time after they were heated.

The *cap* iron was used for ironing the *crowns* and *brims* of *bonnets* and *caps* and this was why it was *double-pointed*. 
Checking clothes was essential to make sure no mending was necessary after all the many rubbings and manglings (to remove water) they had received. Clothes would be mended at home by wives and daughters.

Darning mushrooms were made of wood and used to fix socks with holes. The darning mushroom was put under the hole and then darned across and down with wool to repair the hole.
Victorian children wore a vast amount of underwear and one girl remembered wearing a vest, a calico chemise reaching the knees, drawers, stocking suspenders and a flannel petticoat, long black wool or thick cotton stockings and over all a white petticoat with a bodice. Children from poorer families wore patched and mended clothes that had often been bought second hand, then passed down through the family.

Bloomers were baggy undergarments worn by women.

Christening gowns were special objects, often being passed down generations or made by hand with great skill and attention to detail.