

Washday Blues Loans Box



Dolly tub and dolly peg

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 The tub was originally made from **wood** but galvanised **steel** became popular because it was **lighter** and therefore **easier** to **empty**.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!

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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.

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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.

Once 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."

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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.

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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**.

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Darning mushroom

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**.

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Drawers and Christening gown

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**.