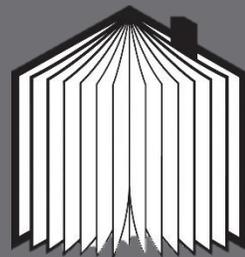


# Mrs Smith's Wash Day

An introduction to washing clothes  
without a washing machine.



Mrs Smith's  
Cottage



**HERITAGE  
FUND**



Mrs Smith lived a very simplistic life, without the technology we rely on to complete household tasks today.

Instead she would do her washing by hand, come frost, rain or shine. Her diaries are a primary source that tells us a lot about daily life.

Reading the diaries, do you think Mrs Smith's washing changed with the seasons or as she got older?

# Mrs Smith's Diary

MAY, 1957

3 FRIDAY

G.W. South wired up for  
Electrical gadgets.

Bad back. 8-10-0.

Frank Turner died in  
County hospital. 74

finished Mrs Rollins thick

4 SATURDAY  
s.r. 4.28, s.s. 7.27

Lidged up. went to  
Sleaford. L.P.M.A.

long service certificates

Mrs Cowham died 89

MAY, 1957

5 SUNDAY

2nd after Easter

Chapel in the morning.

g at Scopurick.

Resting afternoon.

Chapel at night

6 MONDAY

Bank Holiday in Scotland

In big garden.

set 3 rows tates.

Cleaned room +

spare bedroom.

14<sup>th</sup> January 1954 – *A very wet day & a big wash.*

26<sup>th</sup> February 1968 – *A dull morning but became brighter. Wash day. Rained about 12 all to dry indoors ironed during the afternoon.*

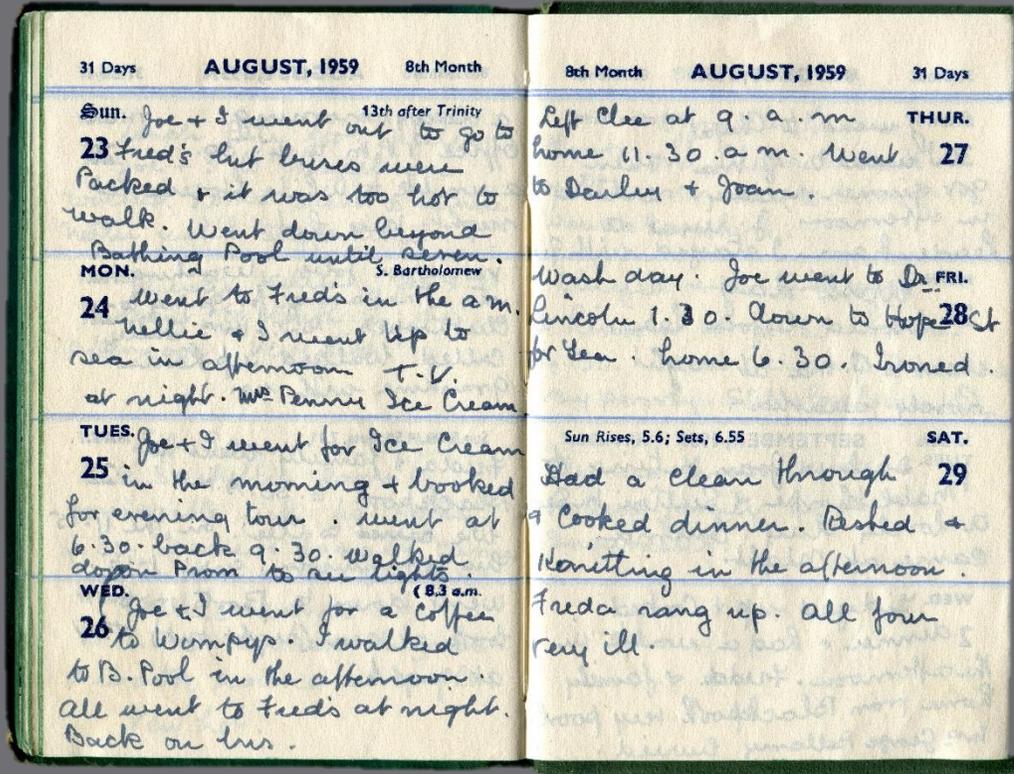
2<sup>nd</sup> March 1959 – *A lovely day. Washed & ironed.*

18<sup>th</sup> April 1972 – *Wash day, all outside ironed by 3pm.*

8<sup>th</sup> May 1961 – *Wash day. First time I watched since my accident. Ironed afternoon.*

4<sup>th</sup> June 1962 – *A most lovely day. Wash day. 1 blanket, settee cover extra. All folded by dinner time.*

# Mrs Smith's Diary



11<sup>th</sup> July 1955 – Wash day. 3 blankets. Washed pots out of pantry.

7<sup>th</sup> August 1979 – Wash day, very showery so all to dry indoors. Roy came in with ice cream.

2<sup>nd</sup> September 1952 – Washed. Put bed in clean tick. Mangled and ironed.

8<sup>th</sup> October 1963 – Wash day. 5 sheets & bedspread & 3 weeks wash. Finished 12:30.

16<sup>th</sup> November 1981 – A raw misty am. Washed undies, twin set & cardigan.

22<sup>nd</sup> December 1971 – Up early. Home help 9-11. I did some washing, finished drying indoors.



## The Wash House

Without a washing machine Mrs Smith would need a lot of equipment to clean her clothes, towels, and bed covers.

She kept everything in the Wash House until she needed it.

**Can you work out how each piece of equipment is used?**

**How different is this to how the washing is done at home?**

# Washing Equipment



Soap

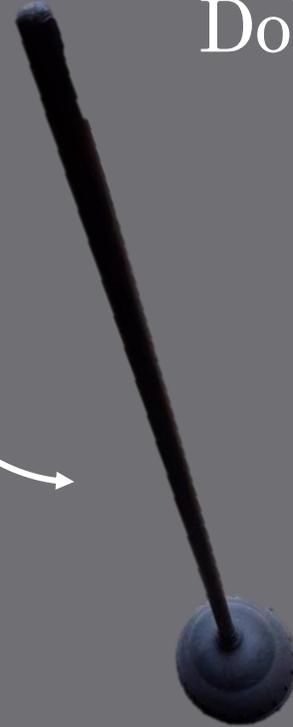


Water Boiler

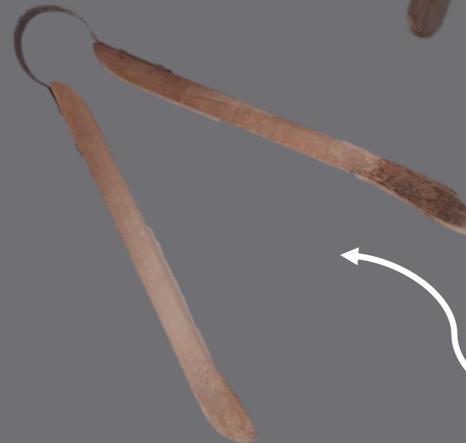


Barrel

Posset



Dolly



Tongs

# Washing Equipment



Wash Board



Tub



Peg



Drying Rack



Mangle



Iron



# The Wash Day

To begin Mrs Smith would fill and turn on her **wash boiler**, to heat the water.

The hot water would be transferred to a large **barrel**.

Her washing would be dunked into the barrel, pushed down with the **posset**.

Using the **dolly** she would twist and turn the washing to remove some of the dirt.

Once the washing is wet it need will be transferred to the **bath**, using the **tongs**.



# The Wash Day

Grated **soap** is added, and stains are removed by rubbing the fabric up and down the **washboard**.

The clean clothing will be rung out, using the **mangle** to remove excess water.

So everything can dry it will be hung up on the **drying rack**, or on the washing line with **pegs**.

Finally, once the washing is dry, it will need to be **ironed** before it can be put away.



There are lots of different steps involved in washing clothes the way Mrs Smith did.

Mrs Smith lived on her own, so she didn't have very much washing to do.

**How long do you think it would take Mrs Smith to do her washing?**

*(the diaries might help you)*

**Do you think it would take longer for a family to do their washing?**

# Have a go at home

Have a go at some hand washing at home, to learn more about what it would have felt like for Mrs Smith.

## You will need:

- 2 Buckets or Washing up Bowls
- Cooking Tongs
- Wooden Spoon
- Tea Towels

## Instructions:

1. Fill both Washing up Bowls/Buckets with warm water, and put one aside.
2. Place the towels into one of the bowls, and use the spoon to push them under the water and twist to make sure it is soaked through.
3. Using the tongs move the towel into the second washing up bowl/bucket.
4. Rub the fabric together between your hands, mimicking the action of the washboard.
5. Take the fabric out of the water and twist it to get as much of the water out as possible, before hanging it up to dry.

# Further Resources

To learn more about