

Life in a Workhouse

What is a workhouse?

During the Victorian times, a workhouse was a large building where very poor people had to live and work.

Families

If a father could not find a job, he would have to live in a workhouse. His wife and children had to go with him. Men lived in a separate area of the building to the women and children.

Work in the workhouse

Work in the workhouse was very hard.

Here are some of the jobs the men and women had to do:

Men	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• stone breaking• chopping wood• working in the fields• grinding corn
Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• washing clothes• sewing• kitchen jobs• weaving• scrubbing walls and floors

Children had lessons in reading, writing, maths and religion. Girls did not have as many lessons as it was not thought to be as important for girls to learn as it was for boys.



Clothes

Everyone had to wear a uniform. It was made of rough, dark fabric. Men wore caps and women wore aprons and bonnets.

Workhouses came to an end on 1st April, 1930.



Food: Breakfast was a water porridge called gruel. Dinner was usually broth, bread and cheese, with meat only twice a week.

In a workhouse you were not allowed to:

- be noisy
- be dirty
- play cards

Questions

1. Who had to live in a workhouse?

2. What happened if a father could not find a job?

3. What happened to the family in a workhouse?

4. Name 2 jobs women would have to do in a workhouse.

5. What did people in the workhouse have for breakfast?

6. Name 2 things children had lessons in.

7. What did men wear with their uniforms?

Answers

1. Who had to live in a workhouse?

Poor people had to live in a workhouse.

2. What happened if a father could not find a job?

If a father could not find a job, the whole family had to move into a workhouse with him.

3. What happened to the family in a workhouse?

In the workhouse, the family had to live in a different areas.

4. Name 2 jobs women would have to do in a workhouse.

Women had to wash clothes, sew, kitchen jobs, weaving, scrub floors and walls (accept any 2).

5. What did people in the workhouse have for breakfast?

Breakfast was a water porridge called gruel.

6. Name 2 things children had lessons in.

Children had lessons in reading, writing, maths and religion (accept any 2).

7. What did men wear with their uniforms?

Men wore caps with their uniforms.