

'Our day out'

Poyntzpass Primary School visit the Argory

ON WEDNESDAY 3rd June, 1992 we went to the Argory outside Moy in Co. Armagh. A lady with a Victorian dress met us. We were put into two groups. One lady took a group upstairs. Another lady took a group downstairs. We were told that the family's name was Bond. We entered the house by an impressive entrance hall. Our group went upstairs to the organ gallery where the family held their prayers each day at 8.30 a.m. in the morning and 6.30 p.m. in the evening. The piped organ could also play by itself. There was a great big picture of Jesus.

From here we went to Lady Bond's bedroom. It had a large four poster bed, a wardrobe and a dressing table. There was a chamber pot at the side of the bed. When the lady wanted hot water for washing she pulled a red painted rope. This rang a bell and the maid came up with two copper kettles of hot water. Alison got into the hip bath which the lady would have relaxed in after horse riding. When the other group came up Robert was allowed to sit in the hip bath. The maid would have spent hours brushing her lady's hair. We also saw the lady's hats and gloves. The Victorian ladies changed into different clothes throughout the day.

We then went to see the lady's maid's bedroom. It was very plain. Instead of a four poster bed the maid had a single bed. There was also a simple plain fireplace and dressing table. The lady's maid went everywhere with the mistress.

Next to this room was the linen room where the linen, irons and old vacuum cleaners were kept. There were two irons, No.6 and No.4. No. 6 was for ordinary ironing. No. 4 was for the collars - it was rounded.

Downstairs in the drawing room we looked at the card games, reading books and handwriting books. There was no television and no wireless. In Victorian times they painted pictures, sewed and played the piano. They entertained a lot and when callers were leaving they would put the calling cards in a bowl in the hall.

In the dining room there was a great big table with twelve chairs around it. At one side was a brass-banded bucket which had a slot to make it easier to lift out the plates and another bucket for left-overs from the plates. We also saw a teapot and something which was like an oven. A hot brick was put into it to keep the food and plates warm. When dinner was ready a gong rang three times to say it was dinner time. Heather Anderson rang the gong.

In the study, Christine, Adam, Ryan and Heather were allowed to write their names with a quill and we saw the paper edged in black which was used when there was a death in the family.

We then went to the billiards room. This was the men's room. Billiards is a little like snooker. There were all sizes of billiard cues. There were only three balls on the table, one red and two white.

After looking around the house we were allowed to dress up in Victorian clothes and play with Victorian toys. Kate thought this was the best part. She says, the dresses were long and wide - they were very pretty but even better when you had them on. I was in a hooped dress and I was shown how to walk properly in Victorian Times. You were taught to walk properly with books on your head. I liked the way the lady's hair was worn. Sometimes it was worn up in a bun and sometimes up in plaits. The boys played games and dressed in caps and waistcoats.

The games were all different from the games we play now. They were made from wood and string. They were great fun.

Heather Anderson and Alison also think it would be fun to play with the toys and games in the Victorian Times, but what Heather likes most is the Victorian furniture. Robert however, thinks he would get bored with their games quickly and would not like to have lived in the Victorian Age as they had no television or wireless and no colour in their books.

Craig and Rory agree with Robert but Alice has mixed views. She likes some of the toys and enjoyed dressing up in Victorian clothes. However, she says, "I wouldn't like to be a Victorian girl. They had to work hard at getting their posture right and they had to do a lot of sewing, knitting and crochet which I hate. The books would have been boring without any colour and you wouldn't be allowed short hair."

Heather Watson would not like to live in the Victorian times either. She says: "If you were poor you would have to go out to work. I did not like the dresses because they were too long and you might trip over the dress if you were running."

Laura however, loved the Victorian dresses. She says, "The hoops under the dress make it stick out. When you sit down you have to sit on the edge of the chair and wriggle to the back of it."



Victoria Cairns wearing one of the dresses.



Gareth McDowell, James Kellet, Rory Best, Nevin Cully, Adam Ferris, William McCartney, Robert Liggett, Ryan Cairns and Craig Bryson with some Victorian games.



Rory Best, Ryan Cairns and Jonathan Anderson playing with wooden spinning tops.



Laura Carty curtsying in one of the elegant dresses.