

## A Day in the Life of ... A 1930s Kitchen Maid

Jean Stowe was born and bred in Ascott and has spent most of her life in the village. She started school there and, when she was 11 years old moved to St. Mary's School, Shipton.

Back in the 1930s the council provided bicycles for the Ascott children to cycle to school, as long as they lived far enough up the High Street to qualify; luckily for Jean she lived in the right end of the road.

At school Jean learnt to cook and keep her kitchen spotless. Leaving school at 14, Jean 'went into service' at Pudlicote House. She started as kitchen maid, on the bottom rung of the domestic ladder; there was a staff of six then. She took on the work of housemaid and waiting on table when some of the others left to work in the munitions factories, where the pay was much better.

### Not quite Downton Abbey

Rising at 6am Jean's first job of the day was to light the range to make tea for the lady of the house; if it was not served in her bedroom by 6:45am there was trouble. After the family had breakfasted, at about 8am, it was the turn of the staff to eat. At 9am 'Madam' would go through the menus with the Cook and give orders for the day's food. Jean remembers the lady being very strict but Cook was good to work for.



Jean did not have a photograph of herself, so here is Christine's handsome Grandmother in 1903 when she was 18 and in service.

Jean had to prepare the vegetables for the family meals. Pudlicote House had its own farm so there was always an abundant supply of vegetables, bacon, ham, eggs and milk. Jean soon learnt how to skin a rabbit or pluck a bird, although it was never a job that she enjoyed. Another of her duties was to boil up all the bones to feed the dogs. Because the farm had its own generator there was electricity in the house, which meant a plentiful supply of hot water, a blessing for Jean when it was time to start the washing up. There were flush toilets too, no trudging to the earth closet at the bottom of the garden.

### Pudlicote by 10pm or else

Jean had half a day off each week, when she was allowed to go home to Ascott. Her mother had died some years before, so Jean spent her time off caring for her father's cottage. She had to be back at Pudlicote for lights out at 10pm or the door would be locked. She was late once but luckily managed to wake the cook, who let her in.

At 18 Jean married a lad she had met on the farm. After living at Kingstanding for a while they moved to a new council house in Ascott. Jean remembers good times during her years in service but, as she says, "the pay was rubbish".

### Christine Halliday