



CHILTERN
OPEN AIR
MUSEUM

*Where buildings come
alive through history*

Traditional toys and games



Location:

- Thame Vicarage Room.

Practical Notes:

- Adult helpers will need to help young children at some points. The amount of help will be dependent on the age and ability of your group members.
- The toys that are made during the session may involve the use of tools.
- The toys that are made during this session will belong to your group members; the Museum will provide small bags for each member to put their toy in but recommends that labels are arranged by the group leader.

Purpose and content of the activity session:

- Children will participate in dressing up in replica Victorian pinafores and waistcoats and investigate and play with replica Victorian toys.
- A Museum teacher will help your group to understand the social importance of different toys and the economic differences between families.
- Your group will be taught how to make a toy that children in the Victorian and 1940s periods would have made from 'scrap' materials.
- The type of toy made during this session will be suitable for the age and ability of your group. Toys that could be made include a thaumatrope, push-pull toy, an every weather bird or a cork animal.
- Children will also have the opportunity to take part in some traditional games, if time allows.

Toys and Games – Historical Background

During the Victorian period and the 1940s, lots of children would have lived in relative poverty; with rationing of most items in force in the 1940s it was normal to inherit hand-me-downs. Television sets did not enter most homes until the late 1950s (many people of that era can remember several families crowding around one neighbour's television set to watch Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II's coronation). With family income needed for rent, food and clothes there was little to spare for frivolities such as toys. Most children would have had perhaps a dozen toys by the time that they left school (before 1947 that would have been at 14 years old). However, many parents made toys at home for their children.

Children were expected to amuse themselves rather than be amused and would do model making, painting and crayoning, needlework and other hobbies such as stamp collecting. Unlike today, children were encouraged to learn how to use tools, for example a penknife to 'whittle' a wooden object. They would have learned crafts that would help them in their adult lives; girls would learn crochet and knitting while boys would learn carpentry and gardening. They would have made some toys themselves out of scrap materials, for example kites, sledges, trucks and cricket bats and stumps.

Games developed over time to increase a child's co-ordination, skill and aim, for example marbles was developed by the Ancient Greeks to instil technique when training as a warrior in later life. Various games were available in the 1940s that we are familiar with today such as Monopoly, Snakes and Ladders, Snap and Ludo; however there are very few toys and games in the prefab.

Many games could be also played in the house and outside in the garden, for example 'Oranges and Lemons', skipping, leap frog, hopscotch, marbles, paper and pencil games and card games. Nursery rhymes, songs and singing games have been played in fields and playgrounds for centuries, many being based on historical events. For example 'Ring-o-Roses' is said to represent the symptoms of the bubonic plague and 'The Grand Old Duke of York' recalls a famous battle in the late 1700s when a regiment of redcoats were

marched to their deaths. You may like to discover the different histories behind rhymes that today's children know. Variations can be found all over the country and through different generations.

Access Statement:

Thame Vicarage Room: Fully Accessible to all users.

Traditional Toys and Games: This activity provides a hands-on experience for all children and can be adapted to all needs.