

High Wycombe Toll House

What is it?

This tiny house was home to a Tollkeeper and his family. When you are out in the car with your family do you ever have to stop to pay money to someone at a toll booth before you go any further on a road e.g. on a motorway going to Wales? Nowadays we take it for granted that our roads are in a good condition with smooth hard surfaces and are without any ruts or potholes. Four hundred years ago, roads were little more than muddy cart tracks in winter, and very dusty in the summer. As more people began to travel by carriage and more goods were transported in heavy carts between large towns, the condition of the roads began to worsen. In Victorian times, the roads were filled with horse-drawn coaches carrying passengers and Royal Mail post. On market days, roads were also busy with farmers and craftsmen having produce and goods to sell. Landowners were responsible for keeping the roads in a safe condition, so they had toll houses built like this one and employed a Tollkeeper to collect money (or 'tolls') in return for using the road. The money collected was then spent on repairs.

How old is it and where did it come from?

This toll house was originally built in 1826 at a cost of £500 for collection of tolls on the London to Oxford road in High Wycombe, covering the Beaconsfield to Stokenchurch section of the London to Oxford Turnpike. Our Victorian Toll House is decorated and furnished as it might have been around 1860.

Why is it at the Museum?

In 1867, the spread of the new railways meant fewer travellers and businesses were using the roads, so the collection of tolls stopped. In the 1970s this Toll House was being used as a shed for a cricket club. On March 2nd 1974 a runaway car ran into the building, demolishing the front as far back as the chimney breast. The building was going to be demolished following the accident, at which point the Museum offered to take it.



Home Learning

Imagine

In the 1840s, we know that the Brickwell family lived here. Thomas and his wife Margaret along with their three children Mary Ann aged 11, James aged 9 and Martha aged 6. During Victorian times, families like the Brickwell family would have played cards and board games for entertainment. Can you make up your own family game?

Research

Can you research what life would have been like as a Victorian Tollkeeper? What would a typical day for a Tollkeeper and his family look like? Can you write a job description for a Tollkeeper using the information you have gathered- what type of person do you think they would need to be? <https://www.coam.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/What-was-it-like-to-live-in-a-toll-house.pdf>

Create

Our Toll House contains a traditional Victorian kitchen. It is more than likely that the kitchen would have been used for a spot of baking. Why not bake and follow a Victorian recipe yourself? www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/grannys-victoria-sponge

