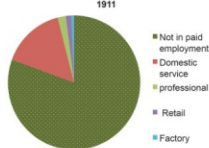




Alice As Scullery Maid

Female Employment Elvaston Parish 1911



Alice's wartime experience will be shown through the letters she wrote to her friend and neighbour, Charley Garratt

June 1915
Dear Charley
Thank you for your letter. It was interesting to hear all about your training in Norfolk and about your trip to Alexandria on the SS Saitan. You all must have been terrified at the thought of a U boat attack. I know I would have been.
I was sad to hear that Dan Combs is so ill. How strange that you should have met him in Egypt of all places. I hope that his health improves.
Life goes on much as it did here. They have to do something to keep us at the big house.

We are all doing twice the work as more boys join up as they get to 17. Miss Beaman is considering closing rooms that are little used so that we can use staff in the main rooms of the house.

We have just had the sad news that the Earl's nephew, Viscount Talbot Stanhope, was killed at Fromelles. He was only 18 and was a lieutenant in the Second Rifle Brigade.

We did have a frightening experience in February. Three Zeppelin airships were spotted close to Derby. One bombed the Stanton Ironworks. Another dropped a number of bombs to the South of

Derby landing in the Rolls Royce site on Nightingale road but only breaking a few windows. Others fell on the Metallite lamp works on Gresham road and on the lace factory on Osaston road. The worst damage was done to the loco works where 3 men were killed and another 2 were seriously injured. We could hear the noise of the engines. It was all very frightening! Please write and let me know your news.

Your friend
Alice



The war provided employment opportunities for women which would not have existed without it. These opportunities gave women decent wages and an escape from the drudgery of servitude. It gave them new skills and self-belief – that they were far more able than either themselves or their male counterparts had realised. But did it last? And what was the impact of their newly found freedoms on the country estates of Britain?

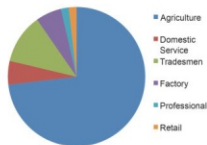
Before World War 1, in country areas like Elvaston the 'big house' acted as the main opportunity for employment for the villages of Elvaston, Ambaston and Thulston. For the young women of the villages it provided the only local work. It gave them lifelong security, a place to live away from their crowded homes - and food. 'Three meals a day was something you could only dream about in a damp cottage' was a personal memory of one employee.

Most women in the 3 villages were not in paid employment in 1914. They were housewives, often caring for very large families with no 'mod cons'. It was very hard work. For girls of 13 entering service at Elvaston Castle the hard work and long hours reflected the lives of their Mothers.

The 1911 Census for Elvaston Parish shows that of over 140 women of working age only 3 worked outside the home, one in industry and 2 in retail. All other women in paid employment (23 in total) were in domestic service. Most of these were employed by the Earl of Harrington.

When Alice left school at the age of 13 she was pleased to accept a position in the 'big house' as a scullery maid.

Male Employment Elvaston Parish 1911



ALICE'S DAY

6am: Get up. Washed and dressed and bed made, room tidied.

Stoke kitchen range.

Empty chamber pots of all female servants and clean with rag soaked in vinegar.

Help prepare cups of tea for upper servants.

Clean kitchen, passages, pantries and scullery and scrub the floor (by candle light in the winter)

Wash servants clothing using dolly tub, scrubbing board and carboloc soap.

Iron servants clothing with flat iron.

Lay table for servant's breakfasts, lunch and tea

Clear table and wash pots

Attend morning prayers in the main hall.

Assist cook with peeling vegetables/washing saucepans, cleaning the range

Repeat for all meals.

Keep the kitchen and passages clean at all times.

9.30pm: If all work is done Alice can go to her bedroom, a 15 and a half hour day!

Most of Alice's day was spent 'below stairs'. She was responsible for most of the unpleasant tasks. Alice suffered from sore, chapped hands and arms as most of the time she worked with her hands in water using harsh soap and vinegar for cleaning.

Alice worked 7 days a week but was allowed time off for special occasions. If her chores were completed she could visit her Mother during the working day for an hour.

Alice earned £12 a year as scullery maid. She did not have to pay for board and lodging. She was given a uniform. So her wages only paid for the extra things she needed. In fact most of her wages she gave to her Mother to help feed and clothe her siblings.



ALICE'S ROOM

Alice lived in Elvaston Castle. Alice shared a bedroom with 2 kitchen maids. The room was at the top of the house up 3 flights of stone stairs. Although there was a fire place it was rarely lit as fuel needed to be carried from ground level.

To Alice, sharing a room with 2 other people was a luxury. At home she would have slept in the same room as her 5 sisters and they would even have shared a bed.



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