



**'In service'
in the 1930s**

Dorothy Dawes

neé Gough

(1916-1998)



a cooking range in use in the 1930s
similar to the one Dorothy used to light.

(source: Muckross Research Library, Killarney, Co. Kerry)

Herefordshire

I went into service when I was 14 years old. The house was 14 miles away from my home in Herefordshire. This was 1930. I was a 'Between Maid'. This meant both the Head-housekeeper and the Cook told me what to do. There was a staff of seven at that house and I was the youngest.

I was up at 6.30am. The bedroom was cold, no heating, and no hot water to wash with. Many's the time I had to break the ice before I could wash. I had to clean the range with black-lead and light it. The sticks had been put in the oven overnight to dry out. I used to light the sticks with the coal placed on top. Then I had to sweep and wash down the front steps. There were 5 steps, and I had to clean the brasses on the front door. Every day, I had to do this. Then I laid the table for breakfast.

At 8am I took the Housekeeper up her cup of morning tea on a tray. Then I helped with the toast for breakfast, which was cooked by Cook. I ate my own breakfast on the go, when I could - I had a job to keep up with all I was told to do. If I didn't keep up, at the end of the month they might say I had to go, and get rid of me. Because both Cook and Housekeeper gave me jobs to do, it was always difficult to keep up. Then

I used to clear and wash up breakfast, and go upstairs to help with the bedrooms.



After lunch was washed up I had to ride one and a half miles (on my own bicycle) to fetch 2 cans of milk. Then we started on the evening meal - always 5 or 6 courses. I didn't finish work until the washing up from the dining room and servants' meal had been done; sometimes it was 10pm before I finished.

I used to have one afternoon off a week, off at 2pm, back by 9pm. I used to cycle 14 miles to spend a couple of hours with my family, then one of my brothers would ride with me halfway back, then I went on alone. But we never used to worry being out in the dark at night, we were used to it. I had a week's holiday once in the one and a half years I was there.

When I started there I had to provide my own uniform. I had to have 3 dark blue morning dresses, 6 white aprons with a bib, 3 caps, a black dress for afternoons and small afternoon aprons. My mother had put aside 6d a week for us girls right from when we were little. This paid for the material to make my uniforms.

The worst job I had to do was cleaning the saucepans. There were brass saucepans hung on the wall, all sizes. I had to clean those every week with sand and vinegar - no hot water. It was really hard on your hands. My hands and arms were chapped to the elbows.



If you were ill that was your hard luck. The kitchen had three steps down to the scullery where the sinks were, and once I was carrying a saucepan of boiling greens to strain off the water and I slipped and scalded my leg. I remember I was wearing thick black stockings and as I pulled them off the skin came off too. All Cook could say was, 'What shall we do - we've got no greens!' The Lady of the House said, 'We'll have to send you home' but the Doctor said I should rest. One of the other maids brought me meals, and I got back to work just as soon as I could. If you were really ill they just sacked you, you had no comeback. No insurance was paid for under-16s, so servants were often sacked when they reached 16. It was up to you to look for something better.

At that job I earned £1 a month (Sugar was 2d for a 2lb (1kg) bag, 6d for a 15-mile train ticket.) Shop girls were worse off than girls in service - at least we got board and lodging.

When I left this job in Herefordshire, I moved up to London to work in service there.



Tower of London



Steamship Incomati from a website about Andrew Weir Shipping (Lord Inverforth was Vincent Weir)
www.red-duster.co.uk/AWEIR2.htm

The Tower of London

In London, I worked in service in different houses. After 2 or 3 years, I saw an advertisement for the NAAFI (Navy, Army and Air Force Institute). I felt like something new, so I got a temporary job in the Tower of London canteen, making tea for the soldiers. I actually lived in the Tower. We had to give a password to get in. Then the NAAFI sent me to Kingston-upon Thames, and that was a bit far out of Central London, I couldn't get to the dances, so I threw it in and took temporary jobs.

Lord Inverforth's, The Hill, Hampstead Heath

One night at a dance, in 1936, I was introduced to a Head Cook and she offered me an interview. I went to work at Lord and Lady Inverforth's at The Hill, North End Road, Hampstead Heath (NW11). Lord Inverforth was in steamers - his steamboats used to go from London out to Southend and Margate. We used to get a free ticket every year.

Lady Inverforth was an invalid, and they had three daughters and a son, all grown up. One of the daughters used to give us flowers when we were going to dances, and clothes too, sometimes.



Inverforth House (The Hill), Hampstead Heath
www.shellguides.freeserve.co.uk/Thm/THM.htm

The second kitchen maid brought me tea in bed at 8am - I didn't have to get up so early now I was head kitchen-maid. I used to help the two younger maids out when they got behind with their jobs - I could remember what it was like - but Cook used to tell me off for that.

There were four of us in the kitchen, and in the pantry there were the butler and 3 maids. They looked after the silver and the dining-room. They used to wash up the dining-room washing-up (from the Family's meals) in special sinks. We kitchen-maids used to do all the servants' washing-up.

There were meals going on all over the house. The kitchen people, like me, ate in the kitchen, except for Cook. Cook (or Cook-Housekeeper as she was really), the butler and the lady's maid all ate in Cook's sitting-room. Her sitting-room was where the Lady (one of the daughters) came down each day to give her the menus and any instructions.



The upstairs servants ate in the servants' hall. The pantry girls ate with the house-maids there. The nurses ate with old Lady Inverforth - their meals were sent up on a tray. I only saw the old Lady twice in all the years I was there. Meals had to be dead on time - and there were always five or six courses. We didn't eat with the gardeners or the men who looked after the cars. They lived in a separate block over the old stables where the cars were kept. The chauffeur and the head gardener both had cottages in the grounds. The girls were segregated from the men - going out with each other was frowned upon.

My uniform at Lord Inverforth's was provided for me. We even had a choice of 3 or 4 styles, all in mauve, with tall chef's hats worn in the kitchen. All our laundry was done for us - it came back all pressed ready to wear. The servants used to get passed on the clothes that were no longer wanted by the Family. Mostly the maids upstairs got those.



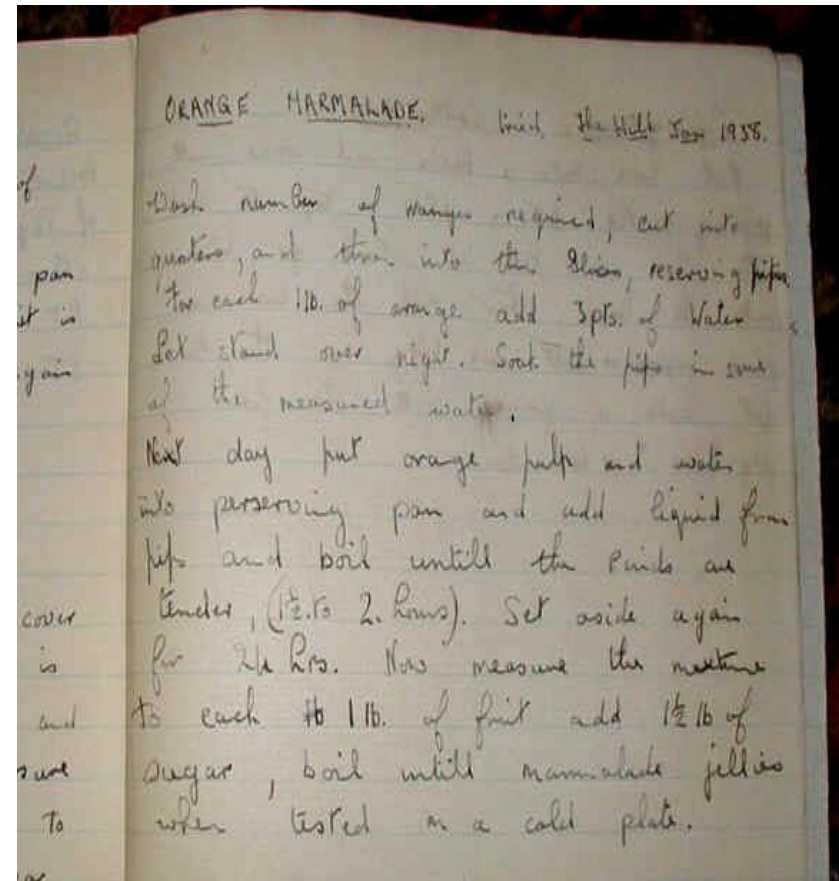
We used to go down the Caledonian Market and look for evening dresses. You could get really good ones, didn't look as though they had been worn, for only half a crown. By then I was earning £3 a week (there were 8 half crowns in £1). I always sent some money home to my mother in Herefordshire. Cook used to give me tea to send home, too - it was all a racket. When I got married she gave me cutlery and saucepans through ordering more than she needed for the House.

When you think about it, we all looked after each other. There were only 5 in the Family, and all of us working to look after them, but really looking after each other too. The under-housemaid used to make my bed, for example, and turn it down at night ready for me to get in. If I used a spoon in the kitchen, the second kitchen-maid would pick it up and take it to the scullery-maid to wash up. One lot of servants waited on another. The scullery-maid waited on the second kitchen-maid. The second kitchen-maid waited on the head kitchen-maid (me) and I waited on Cook. Every morning we laid out the big kitchen table with Cook's chopping board and knives, piping nozzles, bowl of eggs, containers of spices, etc. Every evening we cleared it all away and scrubbed the table.

There were lots of servants there: 7 gardeners, 5 men who looked after the cars, 7 housemaids, 4 in the pantry, 4 in the kitchen, 3 in the laundry, and a day nurse and a night nurse.

I was the Head Kitchen-maid. In the kitchen, there was Cook, myself, second kitchen-maid and scullery-maid.

<p>Garden 7 gardeners</p>	<p>Garage 5 men who looked after the cars</p>	<p>Pantry Butler and 3 maids</p>	<p>Nurses day nurse and night nurse</p>
<p>Kitchen Cook 2 kitchen-maids 1 scullery-maid</p>	<p>Laundry 3 laundry-maids</p>	<p>House 7 house-maids</p>	



Dorothy's recipe book. This recipe for orange marmalade says 'tried. The Hill Jan 1938.'



Dorothy in the gardens at The Hill



The Hill in the late 1930s



At first I shared a bedroom there, which I wasn't too keen on as I'd had my own before. Once when Cook was away it was my job to receive the menus from the Lady, and we got chatting and I mentioned I didn't like having to share a room. They found a bedroom for me and had it decorated! Cook was a bit put out when she got back. Also while she was away the King of Greece had been entertained, and we had managed all the cooking without her! But I used to get on well with Cook.

The Hill as it is 70 years later. (June 2004) It is now apartments, but the garden is open to the public because the Pergola is of such historic interest.

My hours were 8am to 2pm and 6pm to 9pm, but if we'd done the work Cook always used to say we could finish. We used to go to Golders Hill Park and listen to the band, or in the evening to hear the nightingales. There were lots of good places to go round there. In the afternoons in summer we would swim in the Hampstead Heath swimming pool (below). For 2d we could take a bus ride to Oxford Street.



I used to get 2 weeks holiday a year. I had one Sunday off every month, and a half-day off every week. I used to see one of my sisters a lot, she was in service, too, and we used to go out together.





Dorothy at a ball. Cook is on the right.

I used to go to lots of dances. There was a dance for servants run by the big houses every month.

Every year there was a big ball for servants in the Albert Hall - the big houses laid on transport and hired a 'box' for us to sit in. The Duke of Devonshire's lot used to have the box next to us. We knew them quite well; there were 7 in the kitchen there, but they did more entertaining than the Inverforths.

Then there was a chef's ball once or twice a year at the Grosvenor Hotel or the Savoy Hotel. Once I went to a ball for servants at Buckingham Palace, in Queen Mary's time, it would have been. We didn't see her - we went in a side entrance to a big ballroom.



I was there at Lord Inverforth's three and a half years. War broke out in 1939. Everyone had to register. I was engaged, and my fiancé was waiting to go in the Army at any time. We got married in April 1940, so I left in March. If you married, you left your job automatically. Lady Inverforth's daughter had the flowers made up for my bouquet and arranged for the wedding breakfast. She gave me a pale blue jacket, it hadn't even been worn, and I had a dress made to go away in.

I kept in touch with people for a while, but the war disrupted everything. After the war, people didn't have servants in the same way.