

## Life in Victorian Times

The Egertons were a rich aristocratic family, and during Queen Victoria's reign three generations of the family lived at Tatton Park. First, Wilbraham and Elizabeth lived here with their eight children. They redesigned much of the house so it was very like what you will see today. They were followed by their son William and his wife Charlotte, and their children. Last came their son Wilbraham and his wife Mary and their daughter Gertrude. Like similar wealthy families, they also had a house in London, in fashionable St James's Square. During the grouse-shooting season they would rent a large house in Lancashire called Bleasdale Tower. They were also keen travellers and spent months away, exploring Europe.

Entertaining was an important part of the Egertons' time at their country house and they had a host of servants to help them. Imagine all the balls, country sporting weekends, Christmas parties, evening soirees, lavish breakfasts, picnics and afternoon teas. The servants would have a constant stream of food to prepare and serve, shoes to clean, and masses of housework to do.

**Here are a few fun activities for you to try in the classroom or at home**

### Activity 1: Entertaining family and friends

The Egertons had several ways of showing hospitality to their guests. At an evening 'soiree' they might play cards, play a musical instrument or sing a song. Writing short plays, and performing them in front of everyone, was a popular activity. **How would you spend an evening if you had no television or internet to entertain you?**

**Think of ways you could entertain your family one evening without electricity. Make a list and ask which ones they would enjoy. Try writing a short play and perform it using props and dressing up-clothes. You could make it topical, and funny or serious.**

### Activity 2: What's for tea?

The Egertons often took afternoon tea in their beautiful drawing room. Afternoon tea was rather like a snack you might have when you get in from school to keep you going until dinner is ready. A pot of tea would be served along with dainty cucumber sandwiches, scones and small cakes. The 'stillroom' maid would prepare everything.

**Ask an adult to help you make some scones or some dainty sandwiches with the crusts cut off. Serve them to your family as an afternoon treat. Here is a recipe for scones. (In Victorian times they measured in ounces instead of grams)**

#### Ingredients:

- 8oz (225g) self-raising flour
- Pinch of salt
- ½ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda (optional)
- 1 1/2oz (50g) butter (or margarine)
- 1 heaped tablespoon of sugar
- 5 fl oz (150ml) milk to bind together

#### Method:

Rub the butter and flour together to make 'breadcrumbs'. Add the other dry ingredients and then mix to a soft dough with the milk. Cut out 12 scones and bake in the oven at 220°C/200°C fan or Gas 7 for 8 - 10 minutes. Leave to cool, then serve with butter and jam, or jam and thick cream.

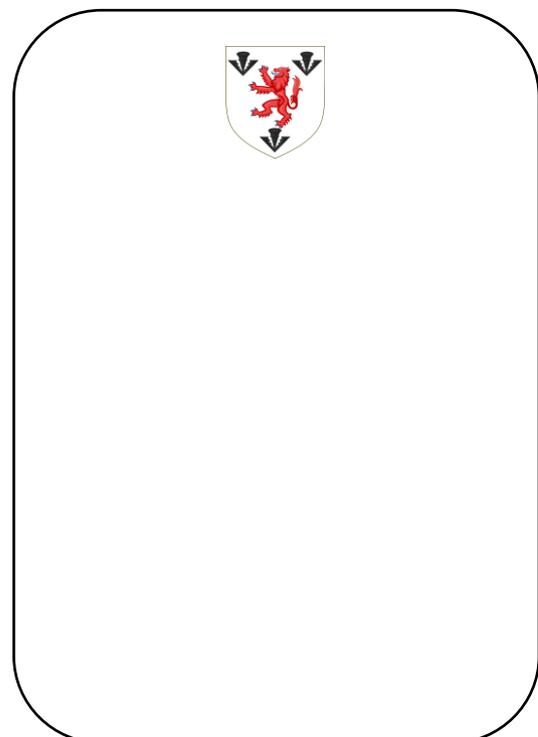


### Activity 3: Dinner is served

Dinner in the evening would be served in the dining room to the Egertons and their guests. Sometimes they had important guests – even royalty at times. The butler and footmen would lay the table with the best china, crystal glasses and silver cutlery. Napkins would be folded in elaborate designs.

[Click here for a pattern for folding a napkin.](#) The napkins would be lightly starched first so they would hold their shape. Try with both paper and fabric and see what works better for you.

Here is a supper menu served at Tatton Park. Design your own menu card and list the delicious food you would serve to your guests. Think of some fancy names for the dishes.



### Activity 4: How far is a day's work?

In a large country house like Tatton, when all 24 bedrooms were full of family and guests, servants would be busy all day long. They might get up at 5.30am and not go to bed until after midnight, carrying trays, scuttles of coal, cans of water, and anything else the guests requested. They had to answer incessant bells, and always in a courteous manner. In the course of the day they would climb many stairs and walk lots of corridors. There are many stairs at Tatton, including the grand staircase which has 40 steps, the family stairs, and the servants' stairs from the cellars to the bedrooms.

- Count how many stairs there are in your house and how many times you go up and down in one day. How many seconds or minutes does it take to go up and down your stairs?
- Or count how many steps you take every time you move around your house. How many steps do you take in a minute?
- Write down how many steps you have taken in a whole day and work out how many minutes that took in total

