



The Country House Servant

Pamela Sambrook

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One 19th century footman complained about the work involved in drawing more than 40 baths for his household, yet Lady Grenville felt no compunction in describing her footman as a "lazy flunkey". For centuries a large body of domestic servants was an often unappreciated foundation for the smooth running of a household. Today, the warrens of 'domestic offices' intrigue visitors. This book makes sense of these and the social structures behind them. It describes the skills, equipment, cleaning methods and work organisation of the housemaid, laundrymaid, footman, valet and hall-boy - the servants who spent their days polishing fine furniture, and washing brilliant chandeliers, but also sponging filthy riding habits, and washing babies' nappies. The author also looks at how servants spent their leisure time. One footman enjoyed rowing on the lake every morning before work, while others had to sit up late at night sewing their own work-dresses. Contemporary manuals, diaries, accounts and first hand recollections provide a vivid insight into what life was really like for those in domestic service. A wealth of photographs, engravings and panels illustrate the domestic workings of country houses, many now looked after by the National Trust. This is an absorbing book for social historians and visitors to country houses alike.

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