

Top 5 Children's Worst Jobs – Stirling Castle (Scotland)

Get set for a run-down of some of the terrible tasks that children in Stirling, and around Scotland, were forced to do!

Warning: not for the faint-hearted...

5. Whipping Boy

Members of the royal family were much too special to be punished for anything they did wrong, so as Royal Whipping Boy it was your job to take their punishment when the prince or princess misbehaved.

Can you imagine that happening in school today?



4. Peat cutter



As a Peat Cutter you'd be working in a bog. No, not a toilet, a peat bog!

Peat is a mixture of rotten grass, plants and small animals. It looks a lot like mud and is really soggy and very squelchy.

Your job as a peat cutter would be to help cut the peat into squares, which you'd then pile up to dry. Once it had dried out, you would carry it into the house to be used on the fire.

3. Shepherd Boy

This might sound like quite a good job at first: shepherds spent their time lying on the hills in the sunshine watching sheep graze all around them, right? Wrong! You were more likely to spend your time sheltering from the rain, soaking wet and freezing cold!

But that's not the worst of it. As a Shepherd Boy, it would also have been your job to 'pop' the sheep. As you might know, sheep like eating clover but it makes them very... well... gassy! Your job was to spot the swollen ones and 'pop' them in a certain place to let the gas out.



Smelly or what?!

2. Climbing boy



Sadly, this job didn't mean you'd spend all day climbing trees! In fact, Climbing Boy or Girl was just another name for a chimney sweep.

From the age of 5 or 6 you'd climb up inside chimneys with a big brush and sweep all the soot out. It was dark, dirty and very dangerous - lots of climbing boys and girls got lost or fell and hurt themselves.

1. Gong-scourer's Boy

This is officially the worst job in the world!

A Gong-scourer was paid to clean out cess-pits. A cess-pit is a big hole in the ground where all the poo, pee and other disgusting stuff ended up. There weren't any pipes to take it away back then!

As the Gong-scourer's boy you'd be left with the jobs even your boss couldn't stomach – like crawling into the smallest, dirtiest spaces of the cess-pit to clean them out!

The yucky mess had two layers: squidgy solid goo at the bottom, and a yellow-brown liquid on the top. You would get covered in both. Eugh! As nobody wanted to see (or smell!) you during the day, you would have to work during the night.

As if this wasn't bad enough, rotting sewage gives off a gas called hydrogen sulphide (which smells like rotten eggs). If you didn't get very ill or die from touching all the germs in the goo, chances were breathing in that gas might kill you.

'Silent but deadly' has a whole new meaning now!

