

ULSTER FOLK and TRANSPORT MUSEUM

**LIFE
IN
VICTORIAN TIMES**



URBAN HOUSING

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The activities in this booklet will help to illustrate the central theme of 'the nature of urban life in Victorian Times'. It is one of a series of Activities which can be used as part of the KS2 W.A.U. Unit 'Life in Victorian Times'.

A Preparation for your visit to the Museum

Divide your class into groups of approximately six.

Photocopy a set of the following sources and grid for each group.
(You may wish to enlarge the grid to A3 size.)

Separate the sources and put each set into an envelope. Give one envelope to each group of children.

Each group should:

- a) Appoint one person to record the information.
- b) Divide the sources amongst the other members of the group.
- c) Study the sources carefully and then complete the grid according to the sources.

(Some boxes may need to be left empty and one word answers will suffice.)

NB Please feel free to adapt the information in this pack whatever way you feel necessary.

URBAN LIFE SOURCES

Source 1

The great majority of the poorer houses in this town consist of four rooms varying in size from 7 to 10 feet square in two stories. They are generally occupied by two families... we have known as many as eighteen or twenty persons sleeping within such limited apartments... poor lodging-house keepers have been known to cram three beds into one apartment and three persons into each bed!

Dr A Malcolm c. 1850



Source 2

With few exceptions, the houses are constructed in a wretched manner, a large number of them consist of rows clapt together (ie back to back), the consequences of which is that the occupiers, having no proper drains or sewers.... are obliged to throw their slops, refuse, etc., before the door... The whole surface of this neighbourhood is constantly kept in a filthy and most abominable state, covered thickly over with heaps of manure and every kind of nuisance... which when rain falls, penetrates the earth, finding its way into the very springs and fountains.

Dr A Malcolm c. 1850



Source 3

Ours was a home indeed and not just a house to dwell in. It was a roomy, airy, sunny house, not large enough to have spare rooms, but with a place for everything and everybody, plenty of closets and presses and pantries so there could be no disorder... We had no 'undergrounds' where servants could be stowed out of sight. Our kitchens were cheerful and airy and had large wooden presses to hold stores of all kinds and our dairy was always well filled with cream crocks and great pans of sweet milk.

Our parents, our sisters and the boys all slept in rooms off the lobby. The older girls also had a nice little sitting room of their own here, filled with favourite books and drawings and there was a piano where Cecilia played and sang while Caroline played old Irish airs on the harp.

Up another flight of stairs was our nursery where we could romp and play to our heart's content.

Letitia Charley, born 1841

Source 4

In the houses of the lower classes... small rooms with earthen floors... without sufficient windows and sashes rendered immovable, are all too common to be even remarked.

Some 50,000 people obtained their water from 24 public fountains and from pumps and water carts. The poor could not afford a piped supply even if one passes the door. As for sanitary conveniences – I estimate that some 25,000 persons spend their lives without even ‘necessary accommodation’ (dry lavatories).

Dr A Malcolm c.1850

**Source 5**

The houses are in a state of great dilapidation and there is a total absence of all sewerage in the place. A sea of stagnant water, mingled with refuse of every description, stretches all along the front of the dwelling forming a horrible cesspool.

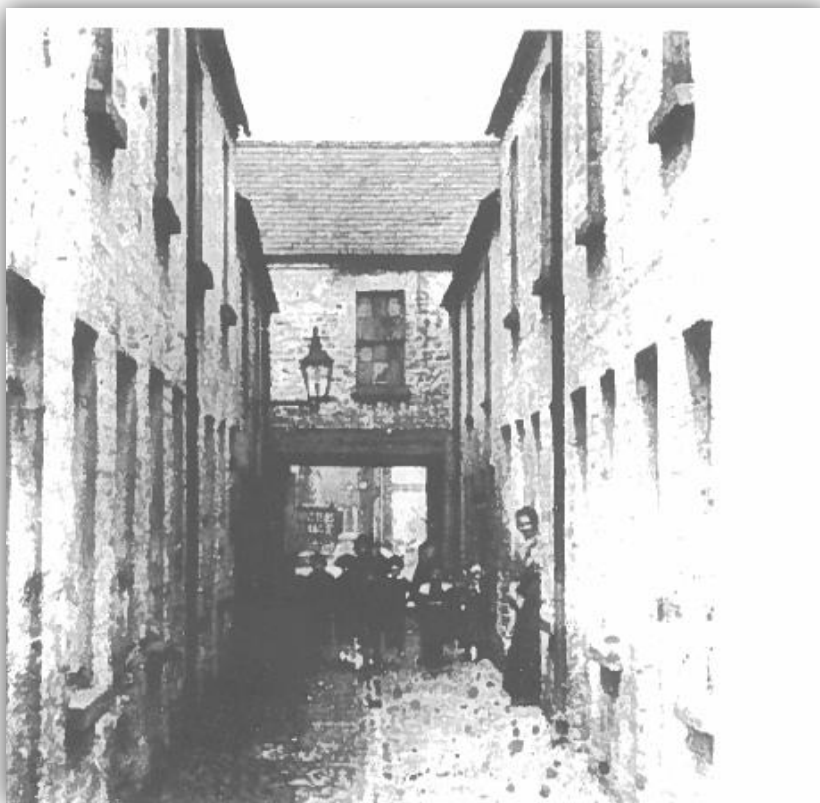
Rev. W O’Hanlon c.1850

**Source 6**

[Green Collection, UFTM]

Source 7

[Green Collection, UFTM]

**Source 8**

[Courtesy, Ulster Museum]

Source 9

Communal privy (dry toilet) for these houses

[Courtesy, Ulster Museum]

**Source 10**

[Courtesy, Ulster Museum]

URBAN HOUSING – Evidence from Sources

	Source numbers									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Victorian houses were often overcrowded and living conditions were unhealthy										
Some Victorian houses had no toilets or water supply INSIDE the house										
Some Victorian houses had no back yards or gardens										
Some Victorian houses had plenty of space and were bright and airy										

KEY

- There is evidence in the source to support this statement ✓
- There is evidence in the source to contradict this statement ✗
- There is no evidence in the source on this matter 0

B The visit to the Museum

Before your visit, telephone the Learning Department at the Museum (028 90 428428) in advance to let them know which houses you will be visiting.

Reproduce the following grid and give each group a copy attached to a clipboard.

Each group should visit these three houses:

Tea Lane (No. 3-4 on map)

Meeting Street (No. 6-9 on map)

Portglenone Bank House (No. 13 on map)

and complete the grid extracting the evidence from the actual house and contents.

N.B. If possible, the groups should start off at different houses as the dwellings mentioned are quite small.

EVIDENCE FROM BUILDINGS – URBAN HOUSES

Examine the evidence. One word answers will be enough in most cases. If you cannot find the evidence to answer a question then leave the box blank. Some questions may have more than one answer.

	Meeting St.	Tea Lane	Portglenone Bank House
1. How many rooms are there in this house?			
2. What is the kitchen floor made of?			
3. Is there a water supply to the house?			
4. What kinds of lighting are there?			
5. On what was the cooking done?			
6. Where did the people in this house take a bath?			
7. Does this house have a toilet?			
8. If you answered 'yes' to question 7, where is the toilet?			
9. In these houses families of 6 or 7 were quite common. Did everyone have their own bed?			
10. Did the family in this house have money to spend on things that were not essential?			
11. If you answered 'yes' to Question 10 list at least five pieces of evidence to support your answer.			
(a)			
(b)			
(c)			
(d)			
(e)			

C After your visit

Separate the rural life statements and give one set along with the Venn diagram to each group. Groups should follow these instructions.

- (a) Appoint a different person to record the information.
- (b) Divide the statements out amongst the rest of the group.
- (c) Each person reads out their statement and the group decides which house or houses the statement applies to. The letter should be recorded in the correct area of the Diagram.

STATEMENTS – URBAN LIFE

- ✂-----
- A** The people who lived in this house would have worked as labourers or, perhaps, as spinners in the mills.
- ✂-----
- B** The wives and children would have worked, probably in the mills. Some might have worked as servants.
- ✂-----
- C** The man who lived in this house would have been regarded as belonging to the professional class. His wife would not have worked.
- ✂-----
- D** The people in this house would have had a maid.
- ✂-----
- E** The people who lived in this house had very little money because their wages were low and they were often thrown out of work when business was bad. [There was no unemployment benefit.]
- ✂-----
- F** The people who lived in this house had plenty to eat.
- ✂-----
- G** The rooms in this house were kept warm by coal fires which were tended by the maid.
- ✂-----
- H** The people in this house bathed in a tin bath in front of the fire.
- ✂-----
- I** The wife in this house did her washing in a tin tub and tried to get it dried around the kitchen fire.
- ✂-----
- J** In this house the laundry was done by a maid or by a washerwoman who came in once a week to do it.
- ✂-----
- K** These people had to cook over an open fire.
- ✂-----
- L** These people had little room to move in their house.
- ✂-----
- M** These people had to get their water from a pump in the street.
- ✂-----
- N** The children of this house did not have to work.
- ✂-----
- O** These people could afford to buy fine clothes and entertain friends often.
- ✂-----
- P** These people often fell ill and could not afford to visit the doctor.
- ✂-----

✂-----

Q As the sanitary conditions were so poor many of these people died young.

✂-----

R The children of this house went to the National School.

✂-----

S These people used a tumble dryer to dry their clothes.

✂-----

VENN DIAGRAM

