

Mining Dress-up

Victorian Child



Health and Safety was low on the list of priorities in Victorian Times. Children generally wore hand me downs from the older siblings, as poverty was extensive during the Victorian Period. No safety wear, even on their heads they wore flat caps which would provide little or no protection from falling coal or rock. Historic pictures show Children working underground naked from the waist up and just wearing a pair of breeches. On their feet they would of worn clogs, these had no toe protection, but good solid rubber or wooden soles to prevent sparking and the consequent explosion.

Mining Dress-up

Pit Brow Lass



The Pit Brow lass generally wore a knee or calf-length skirt over breeches or a pair of heavy-duty stockings. They would then wear a blouse with a high neck and probably a handkerchief over the top to try and prevent coal dust from filtering through. They would also wear a small plaid shawl or similar for the same purpose. The hair would be protected in a scarf or kerchief. Over this would be an apron to protect the clothes from the worst of the coal dust and dirt. Clogs were the usual footwear with wooden or rubber soles to prevent sparks and a possible explosion.

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Victorian Ladies Outfit

In the Victorian period and pre-war periods the miner and his family would have to make do and mend. The child would wear hand me downs and the family would probably all be working at the mine. What about days off (most likely Sunday) when the wife would want to dress up! Her outfit would often be made of disused fabrics such as old curtains or similar. She would make it herself and it would be smart compared with the work clothes she would have worn during the week.

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Nationalisation Miner



By the 1940s most miners wore a hard hat underground. It was made of compressed cardboard and provided protection for the head from falling rock replacing the flat cap which was often stuffed with card. The 'Donkey Jacket' was common wear in the post nationalisation period. It usually had orange shoulder flashes and visibility strips so that a miner could be seen underground. Clogs were being replaced by steel toe capped boots in this period. Made of leather with rubber soles (to prevent sparking and causing explosions) they provided protection for the feet and toes from falling rocks and coal.

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Modern Day Miner



By the 1980s the miners dress had evolved with the emphasis on health and safety in the mines. A modern helmet made of plastic had been compulsory since 1963. These were able to protect the head from a weight of 40 pounds falling from a height of 40 feet. They carried fixings for safety lamps, ear defenders and face visors. Orange overalls were often worn which provided good visibility, with an alternative of shorts and a reflective waistcoat in hot conditions. The boots evolved and had ankle supports as well as steel toe caps and rubber soles. They provided overall support for the ankles, protection for the toes and the soles provided important protection from sparking that could cause an explosion.