

### Colonial Washing

All don a hessian apron and step back in time to the Swan River Colony and the Pensioner Guard settlement at Freshwater Bay.

#### 1. Washboards and tubs

Discuss where water would be found and how carried up the hill. Show the buckets and the yoke.

Hand out tea towels.

Soap is “precious”, so use it sparingly. All supplies originally came by ship from England and that took many months by ship (of which many were shipwrecked). Put soap back in washboard recess after use.

Discuss the differences in how Mother/Father does the washing today.

(Electric Power versus ‘hand power’, piped mains water, instant hot water, soap powder/liquid, water softeners)

Wring out the articles and clean suds off washboard.

#### 2. Off to the rinsing table

‘Blue’ is used to stop the whites going yellow. (As a fabric brightener.)

Use the washing dolly to rinse the suds out of the cloth. (Human Power)

Use two hands to wring the water out of the tea towel.

Think about if you have a double sheet. Twist the tea towel in opposite directions to remove excess water. This is called “wringing”.



#### *Last group*

Collect soap in plate. Remove washboards and lean against wall. Throw water from the tubs on the garden. (The vegetable garden was an important household commodity and no water was wasted.)

#### 3. Move to the washing line

Show the large wringer or mangle. Stress the dangers when using it.

Allow children to have a turn. (MUST BE SUPERVISED)

Group moves to the line. Show the “dolly” pegs and discuss.

Show the clothes prop. See if children can guess how it is used.

Some people used to sell “props” door to door.

Discuss the different sorts of clotheslines people use today including driers.

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Different materials – Plastic buckets, pegs, clothesbaskets, nylon ropes.

#### 4. Move to Museum Wash House

Discuss why the wash house was situated at the side or the back of the house.  
Enter in the dark, then switch on the power.

**Items to discuss.** (Choose according to time you have left in the activity)

- Hurricane Lamp
- Mangle for squeezing out water or pressing large items like table cloths and sheets
- Different wash boards – made from wood, corrugated zinc and glass
- Wash troughs made of concrete
- Wringer – note lack of safety features on handle
- Tongs and copper stick for removing garments from boiling water
- Copper. Tasks before school would be collecting kindling and chopping fire wood. Wooden lid. Emptied with a dipper. (No plug hole). Important to fill with water before lighting fire.
- Soap grater to make soap jelly which would dissolve in the boiling water in the copper
- Starch. Used to keep material clean and crisp. Also used as an ironing aid.
- It also makes good paste for scrap book clippings
- Detachable starched collar, see example before starching. Imagine wearing such an item around your neck on hot summer days.
- Flat iron and electric irons. Try the weight.
- Pot holder necessary for flat iron, heated on kitchen stove. Families usually had two, one heating up while using the other.
- Electric iron – wooden handle, thumb rest (for right handers only).
- Look at the pegs. Some have advertisements stamped on them. Daisy butter and boot polish.  
(Where do you see products advertised today?)



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