

LIFE in the WORKHOUSE!

My name is Elizabeth and I am so happy that I finally escaped that wretched, horrible workhouse! How long I have waited for this! I was put in there because I was poor. My mum thought it was our last option as we needed a roof over our heads, however I now realise it was better to be on the streets.

I remember the first day we arrived. From the outside it looked dark and gloomy with spiked, rusty bars on the windows. Inside didn't look much better. The dull wallpaper was peeling off and it was a damp and dark place. As you entered it felt like your happiness may be removed.

Devastatingly my mum, who was my only family, got separated from me. Sadly I haven't heard much from her since. How I miss her! With blunt scissors, they cut off my hair and gave me new clothes. Frustratingly these clothes were rough and itchy and every girl wore exactly the same. A while later, they marched me to the

room I'd be sleeping in.

As I walked into a large, depressing room, which was at the end of a long, scary corridor, I could see dusty shelves that had small boxes on them. We were expected to sit into them, although I don't know how! Nervously I tried to sleep, with one itchy cover over me, but it was just too hard. The other girls were crying and I too was so frightened by the dark, chill and cold. The footsteps of the wardens made my heart thump so loud I was sure they could hear me.

My first day was pretty much how every day was. Days never changed and all blurred into one.

We'd be woken up at 5. am sharp to go and get washed with freezing, iced water. This I dreaded every day. Immediately after, we'd be sent to work in the courtyard to sweep all the leaves away with heavy, broken brooms. Then we'd be sent back inside to pull apart old rope to make good again. Blisters and

Scars never had a chance to heal. It was agony and I felt I might not survive, although somehow I did.

Now it was time for school. If you put one foot wrong you would be punished and beaten. This wasn't untidy as the headmaster seemed to enjoy it.

Dinner was definitely the worst part of the day as I was always so hungry but it never managed to fill me up. One corner of bread and a measure of gruel would be gone in seconds and I'm surprised we didn't starve to death. Anxiously, all the girls had their heads down, not daring to speak in fear of being punished.

Back to work we'd go for the evening and then off to bed for more of the same the next day. I couldn't tell you how long I was in there for but I finally saw a chance to escape and here I am! With a roof over my head and a little bit of hope.

