

# THE TOLL HOUSE

The Toll House was probably built in 1845 when the Sedgley to Tividale Turnpike Road was built. Turnpikes were gated roads which levied a charge/toll on those travelling along them. The small side windows in the porch were for the toll house keeper to see when someone who needed to pay was coming up the road.



The building was used as a toll house until the 1870's, thereafter, it became a rented house. Local people referred to it as the 'cott'. The Hodgkiss family who lived there between 1904 and 1927 paid a weekly rent of 2 shillings and 6 pence. That's about 12 pence in today's money, but equivalent to about £2.50 in terms of what you could buy. The landlord was the Earl of Dudley, who was good to his tenants in charging low rents.

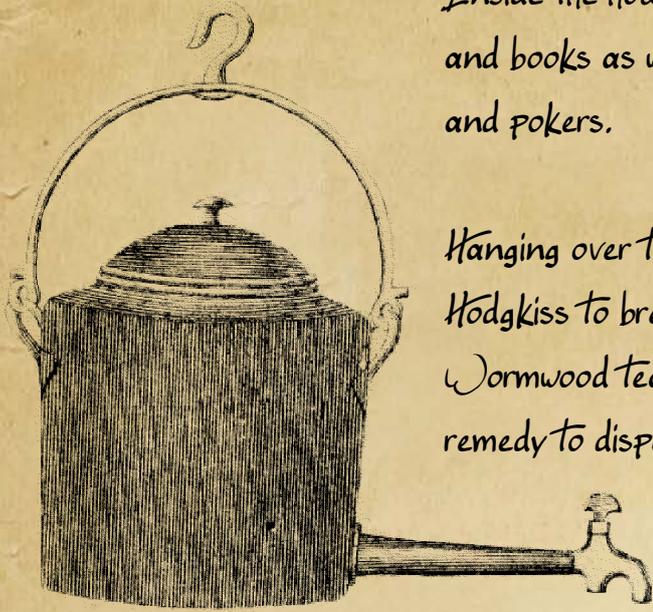
There was no gas or water supply so an oil lamp was used in the main room and candles in the bedrooms. They had to get water from the brook in the garden - if it was frozen solid they had to beg water from neighbours with a pump or a well in the back yard.



The toilet was originally an earth closet which the night soil men came and emptied. Children were bathed in the brew house sink.

The built up sections either side of the front door (shown left) were put there to prevent passers-by using the corners as a public lavatory. At least the humps prevented urine from soaking into the main brickwork of the house!

Inside the house the Hodgkiss family have donated the photographs and books as well as other items such as the black lead brushes and pokers.



Hanging over the grate is an iron pot with a tap used by Mrs Hodgkiss to brew herbal remedies. One of her favourites was Wormwood tea. According to a Victorian herbalist, this was "a liver remedy to dispel the symptoms of jaundice and to remove depression and melancholy. A light brew of the flowers and fresh leaves promotes digestion, increases the appetite, and strengthens the stomach".

The range was also used for cooking. If the pet dog caught a rabbit it would be skinned and put in the pot for a nourishing meal or two! They grew lots of vegetables in the garden and kept chickens both for eggs and meat.

To make ends meet Mrs. Hodgkiss made all their clothes herself on the sewing machine and baked her own bread. She also earned a little extra money by chopping and selling bundles of wood for about 6d (2-3p today) per day.

The bedrooms were small and the beds covered by patchwork quilts made from old clothes and heated by stone hot water bottles. You can also see a rag rug on the floor beside the bed.



Photograph by Mike Hessey