

Tower Bridge Stories

Take a look at the pictures on the following pages of some of the many people who have worked on Tower Bridge over the past 125 years.

What you need to do

Look closely at the pictures on the following pages and read their information

To get started think about these headings:

- 1 When do they get up in the morning?
- 2 Where do they live?
- 3 What is their bed like?
- 4 What do they eat for breakfast?

What do you think a day in their life might be like?

Write a story of the day in their life... You could choose to think about Charles the stoker, or Olive the housemaid... or any of the other people here.

Travelling

- How do they get to work?
- Do they take a bus?
- Do they walk?

A day at work

- How long do you think their day at work is?
- Who else do they work with?
- What does it feel like to work on Tower Bridge?
- What conversations do they have during the day?
- What do they eat for lunch?

Going home

- How do they travel back home?
- What was their day like?
- Is it light or dark outside?
- What is the weather like?
- What time of year is it?
- What do they do in the evening?



Charlotte Olive Dora Burch

My names is Charlotte Olive Dora Burch, but people call me Olive.

I was the first woman to work on Tower Bridge. I worked as a housemaid for Mr and Mrs Cator. Mr Cator was the Bridge Master, the most important job on the whole Bridge! He even lived upstairs, in one of the towers – called the South Abutment. In order to get up to the flat, there were many, many stairs to climb! It was exhausting work. Mrs Cator was very kind, and I liked working for them.

I have long dark hair and of course, I always wear it pinned back, although I like to have it loose down my back. I wear a high collared dress, it's a bit frilly, and has buttons down the front. The dress is dark, and has long sleeves all the way down to my wrists. I usually wear an apron over the dress to protect me. I was only 19 years old when I started work at Tower Bridge, and worked there for just over two years.



Keshavji Shamji Budhbhatti

I am from Bhuj, in the province of Cutch, India, but I moved to Kentish Town in North London in 1888. I became an engineer on Tower Bridge the following year until it was completed in 1894.

As an engineer, I had a good job, which paid well. This meant I always wore a smart suit to work, and I was allowed to wear a bowler hat, although sometimes I might like to wear a different style of hat – what do you think would suit me?

I have a large brown moustache, which I am proud of. I have brown eyes, and brown hair. After I finished working on Tower Bridge, I went back home to India, where I became a famous engineer, and even have a bridge named after me in Pakistan.



Charles Bull

My name is Charles Bull, and I'm a stoker. I started working at Tower Bridge before it was even finished!

I worked for the engineer, Mr Armstrong, but when that job was done, I began work in the Engine Rooms. The engines that helped raise the Bridge are powered by steam. My job was to keep shovelling enough coal into the boilers to boil the water and make steam. It was very hot down in the Engine Rooms, so we usually rolled up our sleeves. I sometimes had to wipe my forehead or my neck with a big hanky, and at the end of the day I was usually covered in coal dust! My only uniform was a cap.

What you need to do

Here is a letter written to Olive Burch – the first female employee on Tower Bridge. The letter is written by her new boss – Mrs Violet Cator – the Bridge Master’s wife. She is going to give Olive a job as a housemaid.

She is very much looking forward to Olive arriving, and wants her to be happy in her new job.

Write a reply to Mrs Cator from Olive

- What sort of style would she use?
- What questions does she have?
- Mrs Cator asks Olive to arrive on the 21st, but how is Olive travelling?
- Where is she travelling from? Is it going to be a long journey?
- How is Olive feeling – excited, nervous?
- What luggage will she need?

The letter is dated March 11th 1895, Olive’s birthday is on March 14th. Will she tell Mrs Cator about it? How would she celebrate?

Southern Archway
Tower Bridge S.E

To Olive Burch,

I am very glad to hear from you that you have made up your mind to take my situation and I hope you will be happy here and make up your mind to stay with me.

I try to make my servants happy and I like to feel that they do their work not only because they must, but because they themselves take an interest in it and wish to please me.

The work is not hard, the stairs being the only reason that it makes it necessary for me really to keep four servants.

I shall expect you here on the 21st. If by any chance your mistress can spare you before then, please let me know and come to me at once.

Your aunt asked me if I would sooner you come straight here or went straight to her. I told her I would sooner you came straight to me. Then if there is any little thing you would (need) to get for yourself I would let you go out the first afternoon you could be spared to get it.

Please write before the 21st and tell me what time you can get here that day. I should like you to arrive about three o'clock if possible, no later than 4pm.

Yours etc
Violet Cator

March 11 95