The UK Cost of Living 1750-2012

(based on 2012 = 1.00)

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175-	133	133	126	129	128	132	126	114	120	130
176-	128	130	126	124	120	116	118	109	112	117
177-	117	111	108	108	107	108	114	109	108	114
178-	112	106	104	102	104	107	110	108	107	104
179-	101	102	103	99.3	97.3	87.5	83.3	87.7	89.1	83.2
180-	68.4	64.5	75.6	77.3	74.5	68.7	68.7	67.4	66.0	61.4
181-	60.1	61.4	56.4	55.2	59.2	62.7	64.8	62.0	61.8	64.2
182-	67.7	72.2	77.2	76.7	74.5	69.5	71.1	73.3	72.5	74.5
183-	75.8	76.9	78.7	80.4	81.4	83.4	79.7	76.9	76.2	74.5
184-	76.5	77.0	79.7	83.1	84.7	83.8	82.0	77.4	85.0	87.8
185-	90.5	92.7	92.0	85.7	79.5	79.1	79.1	80.8	85.2	84.8
186-	79.5	79.0	79.0	81.0	83.3	81.0	78.4	75.0	76.2	78.2
187-	81.0	78.8	75.6	75.0	78.6	79.8	79.6	79.7	82.2	86.1
188-	84.3	85.4	85.3	85.3	88.3	91.5	92.2	94.2	94.3	93.6
189-	93.2	92.5	92.1	93.9	96.4	97.8	98.0	96.1	94.3	95.3
190-	91.6	91.9	91.9	90.9	91.2	90.9	91.1	89.6	88.4	88.3
191-	86.4	86.2	83.8	83.3	81.3	67.9	57.4	47.4	41.2	38.9
192-	34.0	37.6	46.2	48.3	48.3	48.3	49.1	50.5	51.0	51.5
193-	53.5	57.5	58.8	60.1	60.1	58.8	57.5	54.6	54.1	52.5
194-	46.2	41.9	39.5	38.1	37.3	36.5	35.1	33.1	30.8	29.9
195-	29.0	26.6	24.4	23.6	23.2	22.2	21.1	20.4	19.8	19.7
196-	19.5	18.8	18.1	17.7	17.2	16.4	15.8	15.4	14.7	13.9
197-	13.1	12.0	11.2	10.2	8.82	7.10	6.09	5.26	4.86	4.28
198-	3.63	3.25	2.99	2.86	2.72	2.57	2.48	2.38	2.27	2.11
199-	1.92	1.82	1.75	1.72	1.68	1.63	1.59	1.54	1.49	1.47
200-	1.43	1.40	1.38	1.34	1.30	1.26	1.23	1.17	1.13	1.14
201-	1.09	1.03	1.00							

This chart allows you to work out what amounts of money in any year from 1750 onwards would be equivalent to in modern terms, taking inflation into account.

For example, in *The New Man* (set in 1908), Thomas' salary is stated as being £50 per year. Hence today, this would be approximately equivalent to 88.4 x £50 = £4420 per year. This sounds ludicrous, but remember that servants lived in and didn't have any rent/mortgage, food bills or travel expenses to pay. Any medical bills were also usually paid for by the employer. Apart from clothes and the like, this was practically all money that could be saved away or spent as desired.

Another example. A lilac maid's dress like Rose wore was listed as costing 4/1 (4 shillings and one old penny – about 20 new pence) in the Army and Navy stores catalogue of 1910. Today's price would be: 86.4 x £0.20 = £17.28

Note that Britain did not use decimal money (where £1 is made up of 100 new pence) until 1971. Prior to this, the pound was instead divided in 20 shillings, with each shilling divided into 12 old pence (written as 12d). The monetary unit of a guinea (sometimes mentioned in the programme) was £1.1.0 (one pound and one shilling) and was how professional people like doctors and solicitors used to present their bills.

All sorts of non-self-explanatory terms were used for the different denominations and can occasionally be heard within the programme. A shilling was often called a "bob". A florin was a coin worth two shillings. A half-crown was a coin worth 2/6 (two shillings and sixpence). A "tanner" was a sixpence. A farthing was a small coin worth ¼d. A "quid" was (and is) very common slang for a pound. Sovereigns (and half-sovereigns) were actual gold coins worth a pound (and half thereof) used up till WWI.