In large Country Houses communication between the family “upstairs” and the servants “downstairs” was quite a problem. The first solution was a system of servants call bells operated by a wire and pulley system. Later, battery-operated systems were employed and eventually internal telephone systems were introduced.
Bell wire call system at Tatton Park in Cheshire
“Home Comfort,” Christina Hardyment, National Trust, 1992
(CIBSE Heritage Group Collection)

Servant call system at Erdigg Hall, Wrexham
WHITNEY
FOR
Electric Bells,
Batteries,
Wires,
Pushes,
Switches,
Indicators,
AND ALL ACCESSORIES AND SUNDRIES.
Reliable Material at Lowest Cash Prices.
ILLUSTRATED LIST FREE.

WHITNEY,
The Scientific Exchange, Established 1875.
117 City Road, London, E.C.

Advertisement from above handbook
Bellboard system of around 1893 at Wightwick Manor, West Midlands
(CIBSE Heritage Group Collection)

Main bell annuciator board with 29 call positions, Dunster castle, Somerset
Servant Call system at Montacute House, Somerset
Telephone in Lady Stamford’s parlour at Dunham Massey, Cheshire
Direct lines to 5 other rooms accessed by moving the lever (Hardyment)

An early telephone from a display at Kingston Lacy House in Dorset
Telephone Switchboard beside the owner’s bed, Sennowe Park, Norfolk
(CIBSE Heritage Group Collection)