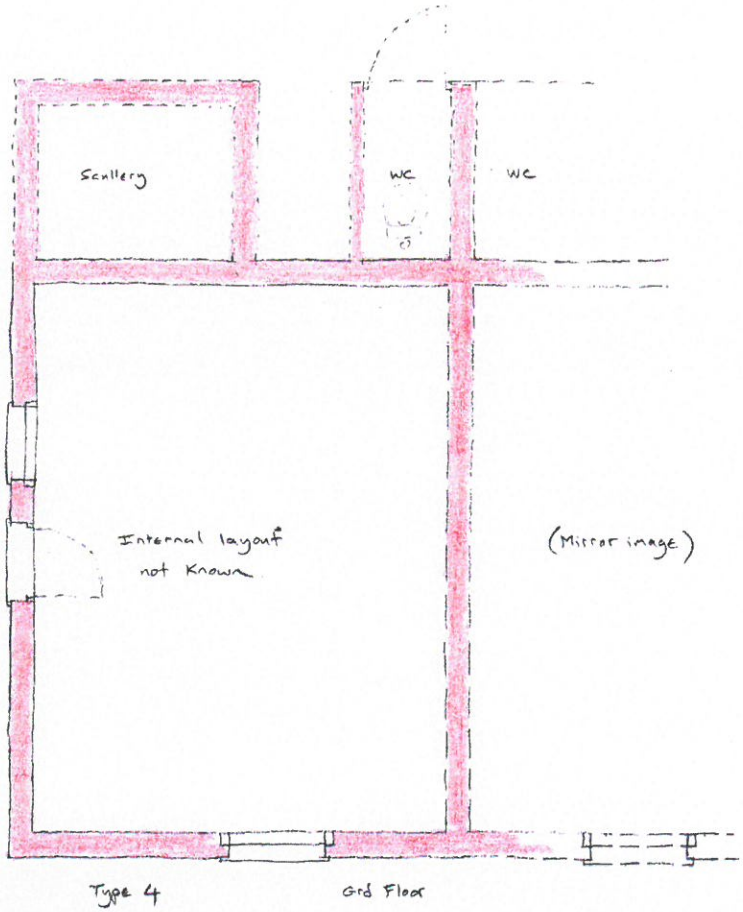
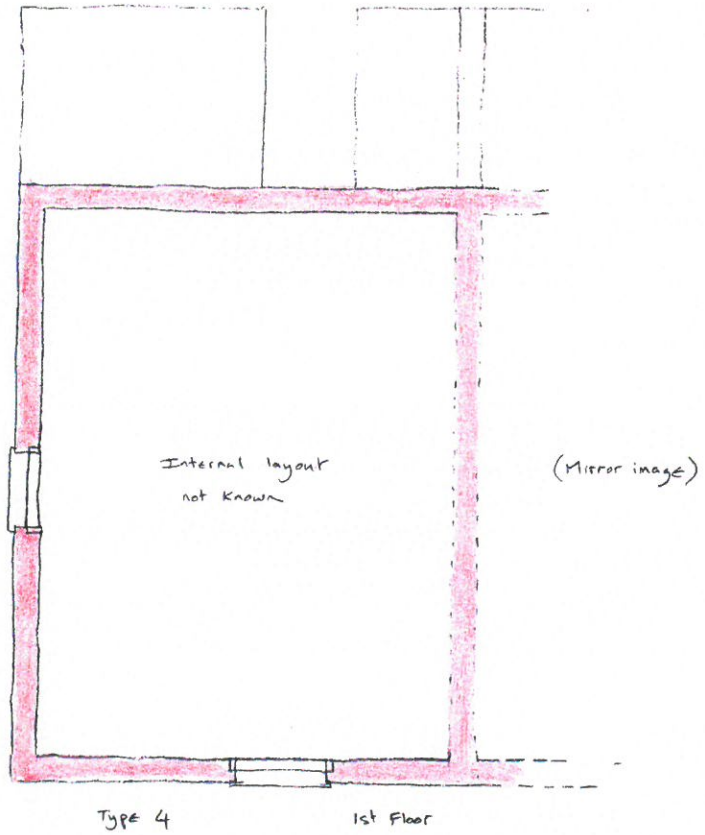
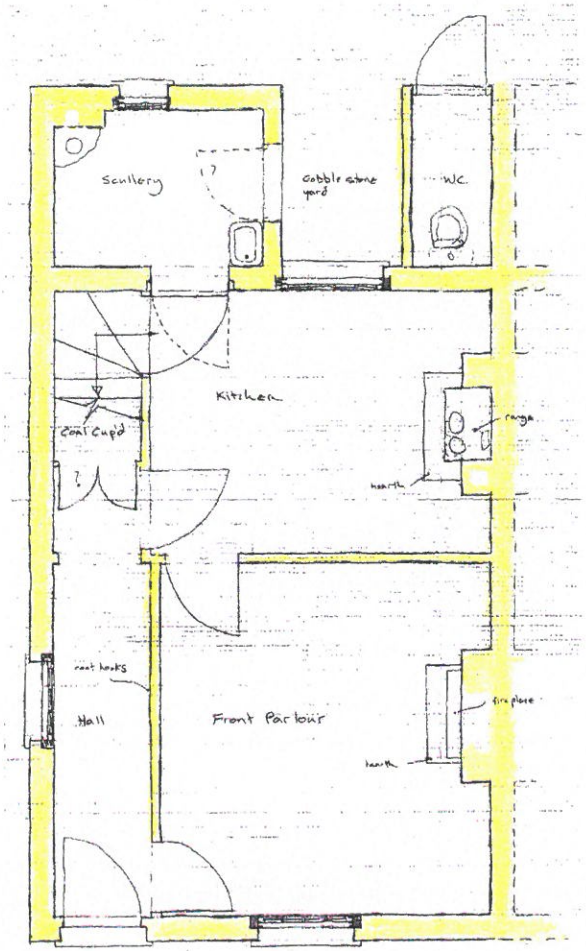
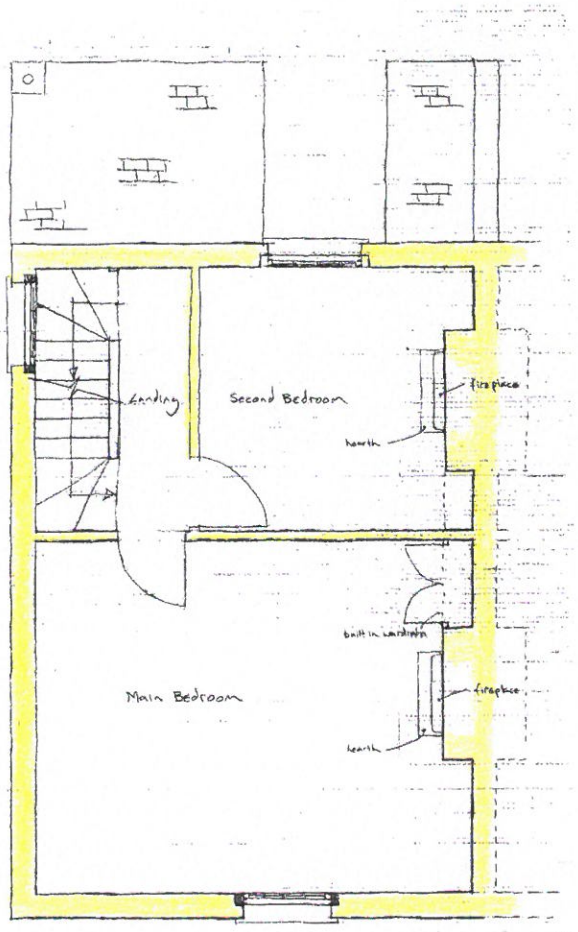
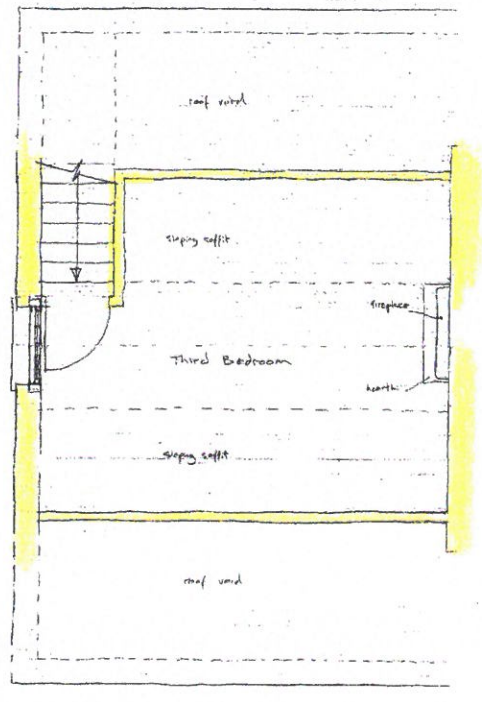

Scullery
WC
WC
Internal layout
not Known
(Mirror image)
Type 4
Grd Floor


Internal layout
not Known
(Mirror image)
Type 4
1st Floor


Scullery
cobble stone yard
W.C.
Kitchen
coal cupd
range
hearth
coat hooks
Hall
Front Parlour
fireplace
hearth
Type 5
Gnd Floor


Landing
Second Bedroom
fireplace
hearth
built in wardrobe
Main Bedroom
fireplace
hearth
Type 5
1st Floor


roof void
sloping soffit
fireplace
Third Bedroom
hearth
sloping soffit
roof void
Type 5
2nd Floor

Cottage Type 2B (lhs) *Cottage Type 5 (rhs)*

Old School House

Estate House & Workshop

Old School House/Parish Lane

(Insufficient details known)

(Insufficient details known)

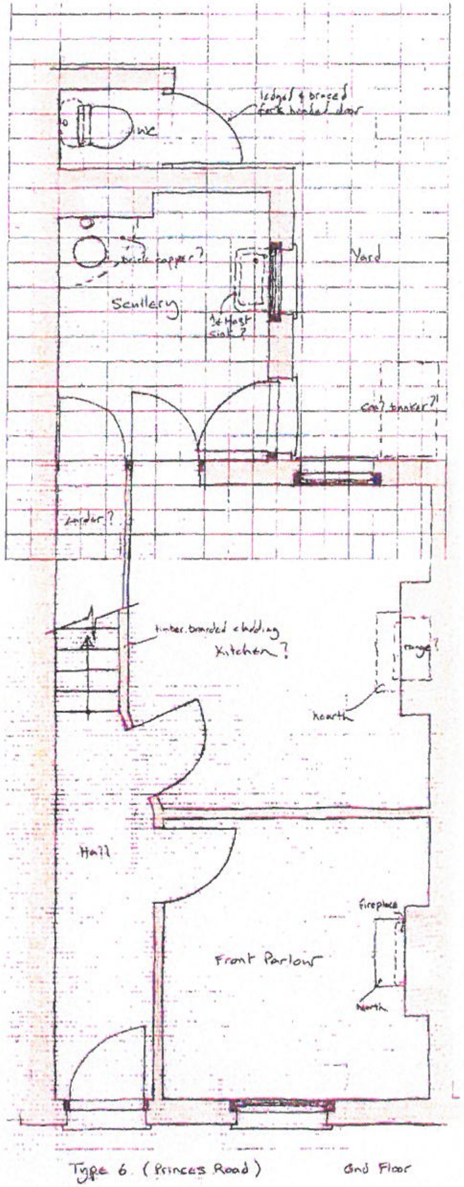
Old School House – Ground Floor

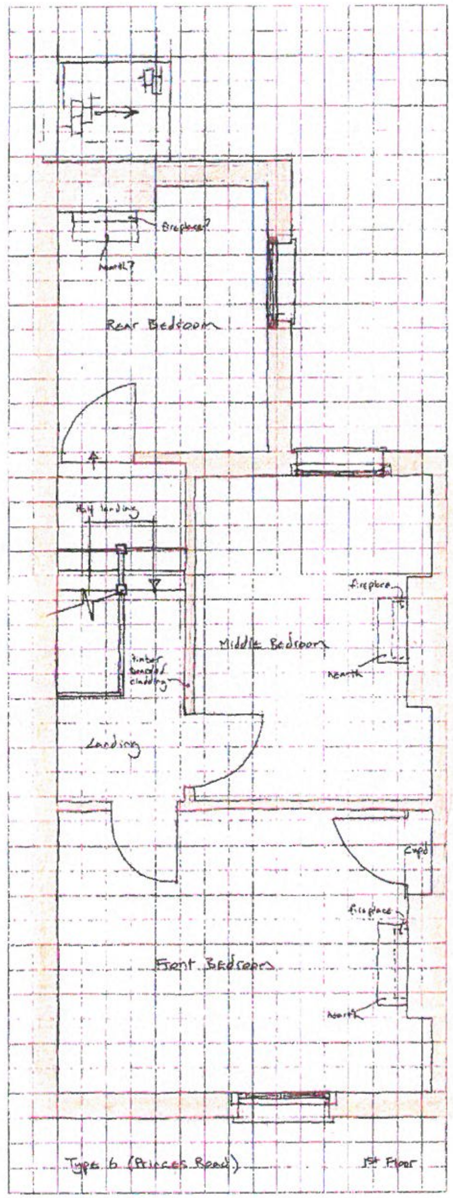
Old School House – 1st Floor

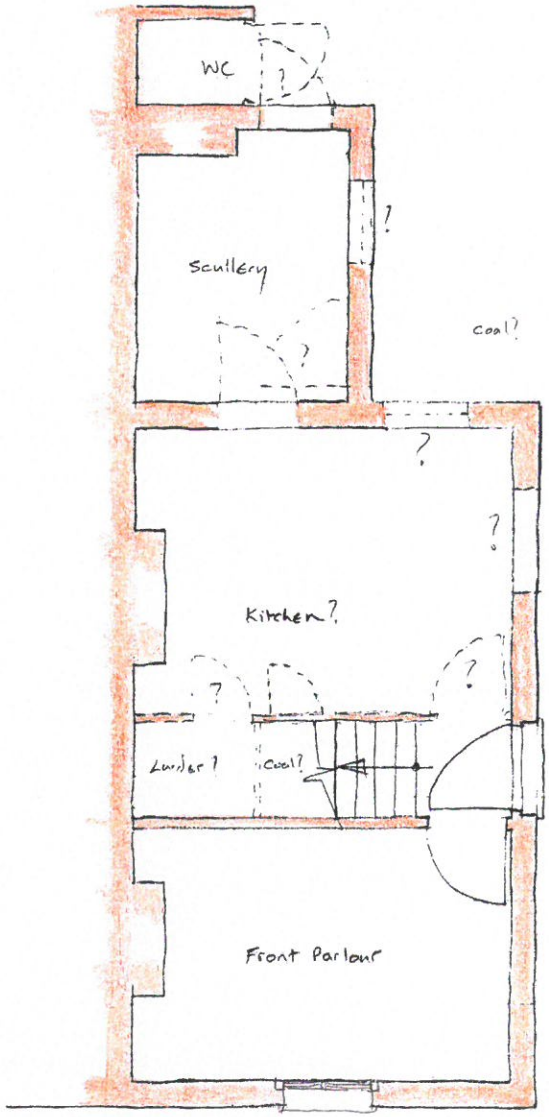
Princess Road 1-12

Princes Road 13-22 and former shops 23 & 24

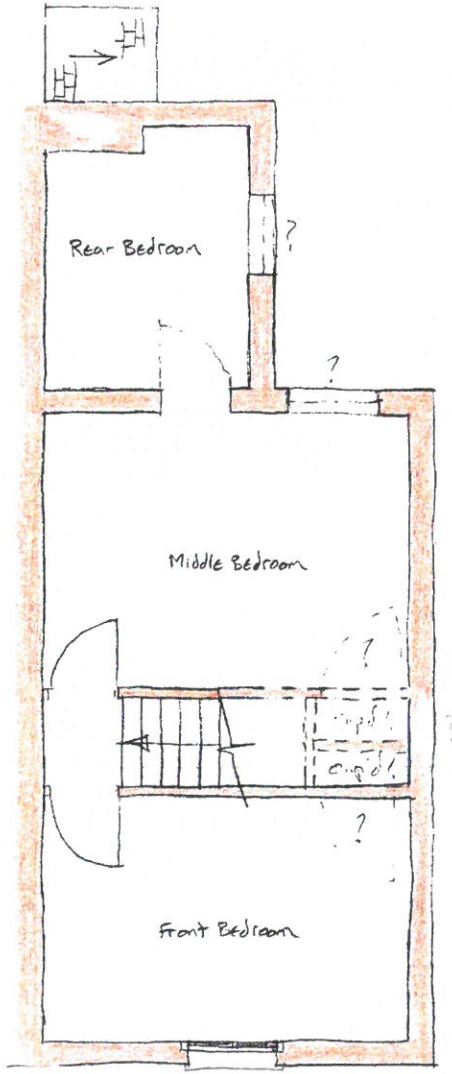
Princes Road


WC
Yard
Scullery
Kitchen?
hearth
Hall
fireplace
Front Parlour
hearth
Type 6 (Princes Road)
Gnd Floor


Rear Bedroom
Middle Bedroom
hearth
Landing
fireplace
Front Bedroom
hearth
Type 6 (Princes Road)
1st Floor



Type 7 (Princes Road) Grd Floor



Type 7 (Princes Road) 1st Floor

Chapter V

Exterior Features

Roof

The cottages have simple pitched roofs that would have originally been covered in Welsh slate. There are still a few roofs with the original dark grey Welsh slates remaining but many of the coverings have been replaced with imitation mineral fibre slates or profiled interlocking concrete tiles.

The imitation slates can be a relatively good match for those original to the cottages but frequently are too uniform and lifeless, or overtly shiny when new, especially adjacent to the original material. The use of interlocking concrete tiles was particularly popular in the 1970's-80's and their cumbersome profiles, rough finish and limited range of colours do little to enhance the character of the cottages. The concrete tiles also tend to be heavier per m2 than traditional slates and therefore can contribute towards deflection of the rafters and consequent roof sag in the longer term.

The cost of renewing the roof coverings to the cottages is relatively modest due to the simple nature of the construction, with no troublesome valley gutters or parapets etc. It might therefore be economic to reinstate the original materials since the majority of the cost is likely to be in respect of the labour and scaffolding access.

The unusual 'chalet' roof style of the cottages with large overhanging eaves gives a lively roofscape when viewing from the street, especially when combined with the shared chimney stacks to the ridges.

Chimney stacks

The type 1 & 2 cottages have shared brick chimney stacks front and back, whereas the type 3, 4 & 5 cottages have a central brick chimney stack, all of which have simple straight clay chimney pots with a small roll-top edge. The chimneystacks have corbled brickwork near to the top and flaunching around the pots, with a corbled band to the base.

The vast majority of the chimneystacks are square or rectangular, with the exception being a number with splayed brick slope to the back face of the rear stacks. This additional slope is believed to house the flue for the brick copper used for washing clothes in the scullery and it is unclear why this arrangement was not adopted for all of the cottages.

The chimneystacks have remained largely as original, except for partial replacement of the pots and/or the addition of cowls for gas appliances or to minimise rainwater ingress. The flues would have originally been open and any water would be left to evaporate naturally or from the heat of the coal fires used internally.

The environment would have been frequently smoky from the coal burnt in the ranges in the kitchen, brick copper in the scullery and fireplaces in the front parlour and upstairs bedrooms. However, these days we are fortunate enough to have smokeless fuel available should residents wish to burn real fires and have the correct type of open terminal to their chimneystacks.

Rainwater Goods

The cottages originally had cast iron 'Half Round' profile gutters to the roof eaves and cast iron downpipes, many of which are still in use.

The rainwater downpipes appear to terminate straight into the underground drainage, with no gulley or inspection eye.

The ironwork was believed to have been painted in a dark green to match the remainder of the windows and doors, although it was typical in Victorian times for ironwork to be decorated in colours like "Drainpipe" (dark bluish grey) or "Purple Brown" (dark reddish brown).

It is therefore unlikely that the ironwork would have ever been painted black, as is commonly used today.

Walls

The external walls of the cottages are built in 9" thick brickwork in a predominantly stretcher bond, which consists of two full length bricks followed by a header brick which binds the two skins together.

The main elevations are finished with yellow stock bricks with decorative horizontal bands of red facing bricks at lintel and cill levels and to the gable ends. Matching red brick gauged arches are also provided over the window and door openings, which have straight heads and gently curved arches to the underside.

The external brickwork would have originally been pointed in a lime mortar mix that is deliberately weaker than the bricks and finished flush with the brickwork.

It is important in the care of old buildings that the pointing should be subservient to the bricks which are the main aesthetic and structural consideration.

The use of an inappropriate mortar mix can therefore cause damage to the brickwork where natural expansion and contraction is hindered by a strong cement base. The water can also be trapped within the bricks rather than drying out through a lime mortar which allows the walls to breathe.

It has, unfortunately, been popular over the last few decades to use rich cement mortars, often as strong as 1:3 (cement: sand) and these tend to retain moisture. This can easily lead to the spalling of softer types of brick and to fracturing of the pointing or the mortar subsequently falling out of the joints. The colour of these cement rich mortars also often has a rather unflattering grey colour when set against the mellow yellow and red bricks used on the cottages.

It is frequently advisable to carry out limited re-pointing to missing or loose areas, rather than the complete re-pointing of every joint, as removing sound pointing can cause extensive damage to the bricks, especially when using mechanical means to cut/rake out the joints.

The simple test of "if it will not come out easily by hand tools, it probably does not need re-pointing" will save considerable expense and unnecessary damage. In the event that a cottage has been pointed in a cement rich mortar it is probably best to wait until the mortar falls out of its own accord, which it will do given time.

There are numerous styles of pointing which have been used over the centuries, including "ribbon", "tuck", "struck" etc. but the most appropriate for the cottages is "flush", which all builders should be familiar with and carry out at a standard rate, and can be found on countless other Victorian buildings.

The suggested mortar mix for re-pointing the walls of the cottages would be something closely equivalent to 1:1:6 (cement: lime: sand) or slightly weaker to achieve flexibility, porosity and an acceptable colour mix, but operatives may need to experiment to find the optimum mix.

The other important aspect of re-pointing is that the depth of the raked out joints should be no shallower than the typical width of the joints or at least 10mm deep.

The brickwork below ground floor window cill height is finished with render which may have been original or added throughout the Estate at a slightly later date, and could be an early form of damp proofing. I have been unable to confirm whether the walls of the cottages were built with slate damp proof courses, as was common in Victorian times, and the render may have been a secondary line of defence against rising damp.

However, the use of lime within the pointing to the external walls would have helped the external walls dry out naturally and damage to internal plaster would have been less of a problem since lime plasters are able to breath.

The use of modern materials, such as internal gypsum or carlite plaster, have therefore created problems of their own when used in old buildings.

The application of a rendered finish which bridges any original damp proof course or subsequently installed modern dpc can cause rising damp to penetrate further up the wall. It is therefore important to keep the external ground level at least 150mm below internal floor level and any paving, hardstanding, lawns or flower beds clear of the cottage or house.

The walls have masonry sub-cills to the window openings that are believed to be stone or a reconstituted stone mix and were presumably always painted. The projecting sub-cills are weathered and throated to throw rainwater clear of the brickwork. The threshold to the front doors are similarly weathered but believed to be of concrete construction and are understood to have been originally white-stoned.

The external walls to the scullery and w.c. are believed to have been the same construction as the main house but the dividing internal wall may have been only ½ brick thick.

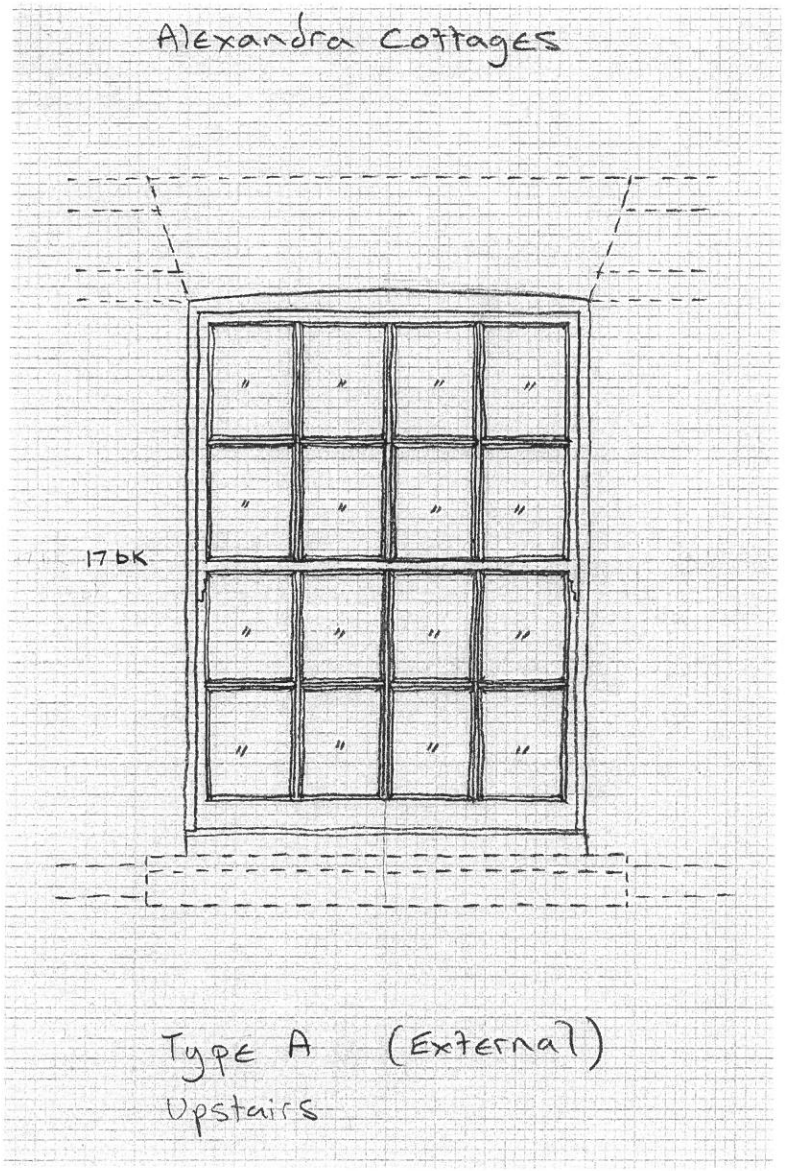
The means of ventilation to the loft spaces, under floor voids, and outside w.c. were by decorative cast iron grilles, many of which can still be seen to the gable ends of the cottages and at ground level to the front and side elevations. However, very few of the rear lean-to scullery/w.c's remain to be able to confirm whether the same attractive decorative design was used.

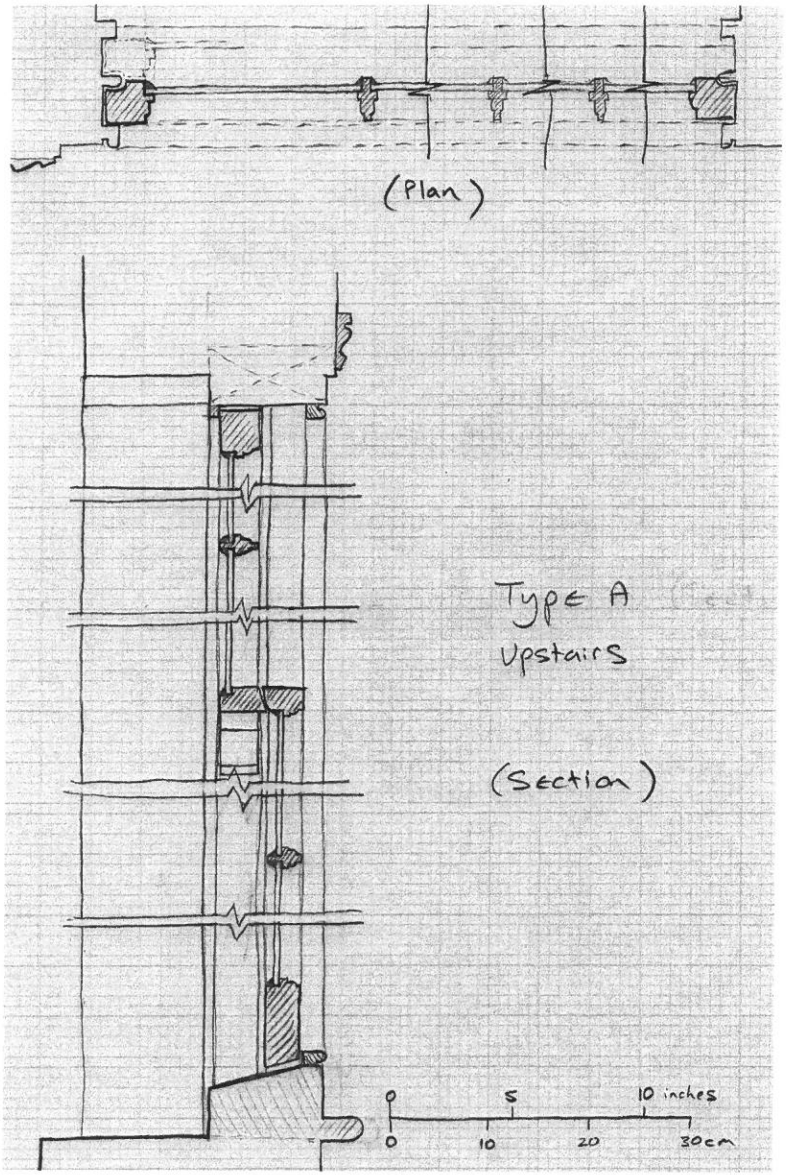
The vast majority of the cottages still have the original exposed yellow stock brickwork and decorative red brick banding and gauged lintels. However, unfortunately, approximately ¼ (41 out of 158) of the cottages on Hardings Lane and Albert, Edward and Victor Roads have been either clad in pebbledash, painted or partially rendered thereby obscuring the decorative original brick detailing.

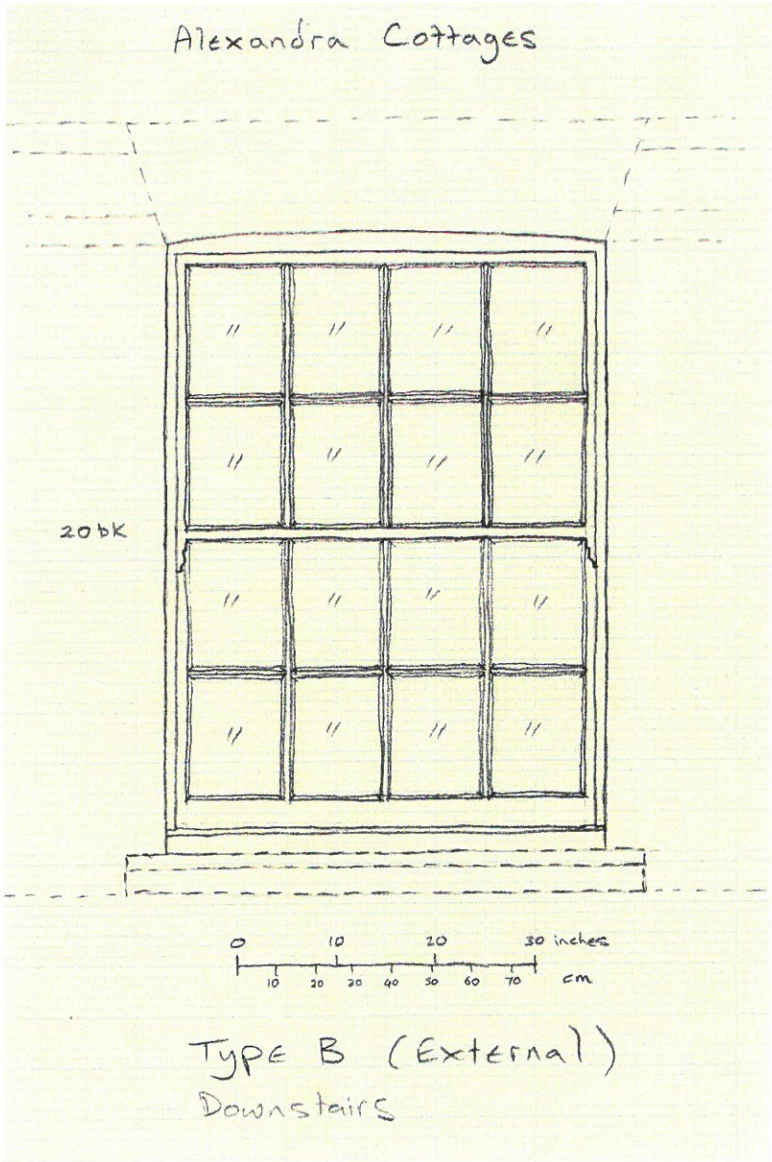
The number increases to almost half for the houses in Princes Road where their simple brickwork is obscured by pebbledash, masonry paint or render to the front elevations.

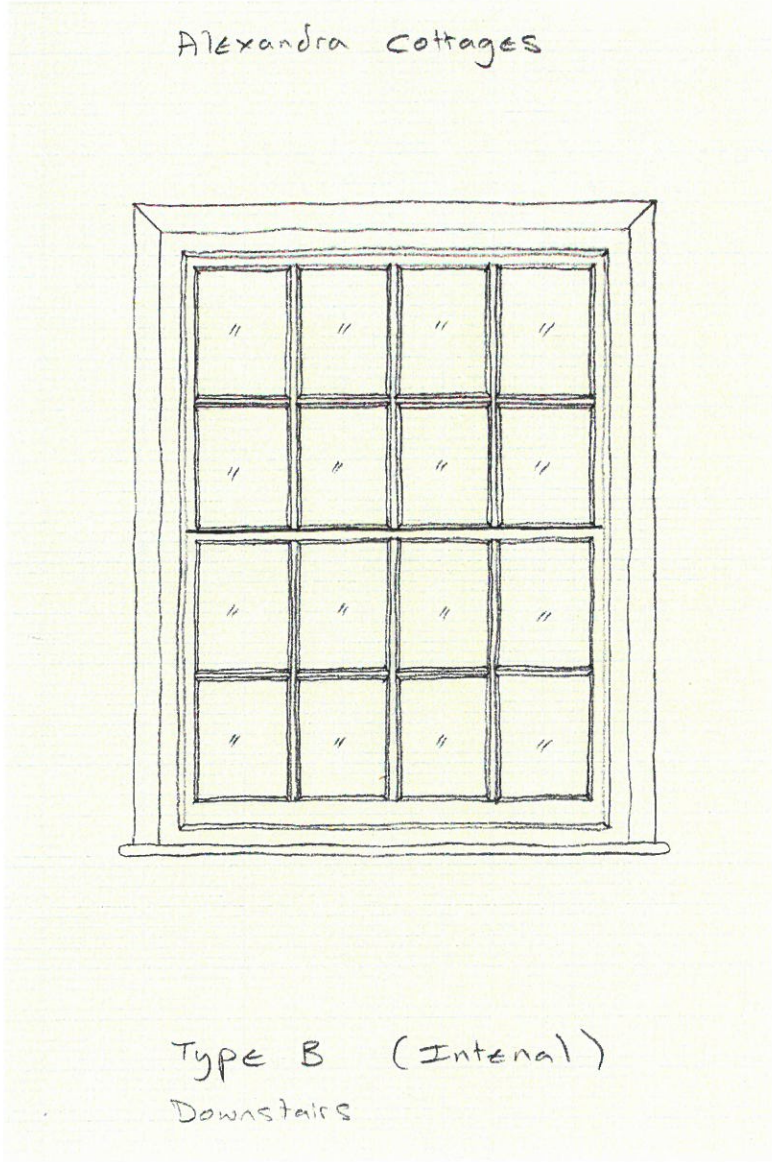
The application of pebbledash or render is practically irreversible without tremendous damage to the original brickwork and therefore covering over the original brickwork should be strongly discouraged to preserve the intrinsic long-term character of the conservation area.

It is possible to have paintwork carefully removed from brickwork by specialist means, should owners wish to re-expose the original brickwork, but advice should be sought on the method to be used and degree of protection to avoid damage to adjacent areas. However, the use of sand blasting is not recommended as the outer face of the bricks will be damaged, exposing the softer and more porous material, that could be vulnerable to spalling in the longer term.

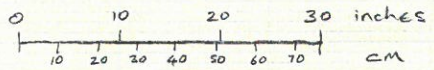

Alexandra Cottages
17 bK
Type A (External)
Upstairs

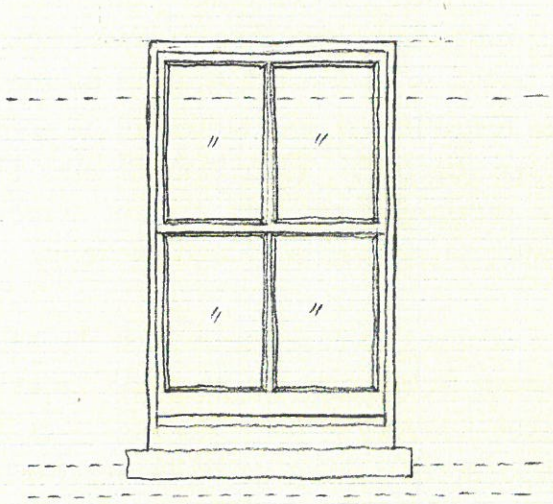

(Plan)
Type A
Upstairs
(Section)
0
5
10 inches
0
10
20
30cm


Alexandra Cottages
20bk
0 10 20 30 inches
10 20 30 40 50 60 70 cm
Type B (External)
Downstairs


Alexandra Cottages
Type B (Intenal)
Downstairs

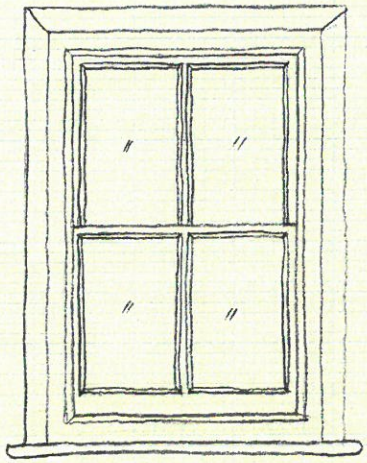
Alexandra Cottages





Type C (External)
Middle bedroom / Landing

Alexandra Cottages



Type C (Internal)
Middle bedroom / Landing

Windows

The original small paned, sliding sash windows to the cottages are perhaps one of the most endearing features of the properties in Hardings Lane, Albert, Edward and Victor Roads. The typical arrangement being sashes of 8 over 8, to give 16 panes per window, except for the small side windows which are 2 over 2, to give 4 panes per window.

The size of the glazing is reminiscent of earlier Georgian windows, when the cost of manufacturing large panes of glass was prohibitively expensive. However, the corresponding large numbers of glazing beads are delicately slender to minimise any loss of daylight.

The original windows consist of sliding sashes in a box frame with cords and weights and at least ¼ of the houses still have these traditional style windows. The original 130-year-old plus timber is typically of better quality than the quick dried seasoned timber available over the last 30-50 years, as modern timber is prone to warping and shrinkage. It is therefore advisable to try and retain as much of the original sashes and frames by piecing-in repairs rather than wholesale renewal of aging components. The use of modern two pack resin repairs, such as are available from Window Care Systems, can be extremely cost-effective and permit minimal intervention and loss of the original fabric.

It is also possible to overhaul the original sashes and frames to incorporate modern rubber gaskets to opening edges and extrusions in lieu of the parting beads to cure rattles and draughts. This can be achieved at a relatively modest cost of approximately £900* for five windows from companies such as "Draught Sealing", for possibly one third of the cost of installing replacement windows. **NB: estimated in 2002*

The original windows will require periodic maintenance, typically at the time of external redecoration, which is normally recommended every five to seven years. However, I am told the secret is in the preparation as modern lead-free paints are less forgiving of poor substrata *(in spite of what they might claim on the tin!)*. Care should also be taken when removing or sanding down old timber windows to avoid potential contact or inhalation of lead particles.

It might be necessary to ease and adjust the sashes to ensure that they operate freely and are properly balanced, including removal of excess layers of paint built up over the years. The cords may also need waxing or replacing from time to time and ideally should be left unpainted to prolong their life and improve operation. These were originally made of plaited Jute or Hemp and braided Cotton, although the modern equivalent of plaited Nylon is now available. Access to the lead weights is via a removable slot at the bottom of the box frame on each side but these can be difficult to locate due to over enthusiastic past redecoration.

The operation of the windows by sliding the top sash down and the bottom sash up has proved popular and practical for hundreds of years, and to my mind still provides the most effective means of ventilation of practically any window design. It is therefore a pity that the sliding sash has fallen out of favour in preference to the cheap and unsophisticated outward opening casement.

The original windows to the houses in Princes Road would have been also timber sliding sash but the typical arrangement is thought to have been sashes of 2 over 2 to give 4 panes per window. There are very few of the original windows remaining, especially to the front elevations, and it is feasible that the glazing bars between the glass panes may have been removed over the years from the larger sashes to give larger pane sizes.

The proliferation of upvc replacement windows has seriously undermined the character of the conservation area and in my opinion ruined the appearance of many of the cottages and houses. However, their impact on neighbouring properties and the streetscape can be dramatically minimised by adopting the following simple guidelines: -

a) retention of original opening sizes and stone cills, rather than enlarging or changing of the brickwork and lintels to suit standard windows
b) copy the original reveals rather than setting new windows flush with the brickwork elevations
c) selection of sliding sash windows, rather than casement or pivot type windows which project out from the building when opened
d) choice of manufacturers who offer 'heritage'-type designs to mirror correct number of small panes and slender frames/glazing beads to complement the delicate detailing of the original timber windows
e) consider repair and/or overhaul upgrading or draftproofing of existing timber sliding sash windows rather than renewal
f) question whether the complimentary 'free' front door, frequently offered by upvc companies, is actually required, as they are almost universally of an ugly design and inappropriate for the cottages
g) avoid painting the brick window reveals as this gives the impression that the frames are more cumbersome in appearance

The installation of replacement upvc windows and doors is often justified on the grounds of improved heat and sound insulation and security. However, the hanging of net curtains and heavy lined curtains can help substantially to create a pocket of air to minimise heat loss. Similarly, secondary glazing fixed internally to the window frames can be extremely effective.

It is also possible to purchase a variety of window locks to secure sliding sashes from illegal forced entry.

The fairly recent changes to Part L of the Building Regulations, which require that all replacement windows and fully glazed doors be double-glazed with special insulating glass, could still have a devastating impact on all buildings of historic and/or architectural interest. However, statutory Listed Buildings are generally being treated as exempt and individual local authorities can elect to adhere to long established conservation policies (such as the Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes on Conservation Areas) rather than permit/assume the Building Regulations take precedence.

The situation in respect of the locally listed Alexandra Cottages and houses in Princes Road is less clear as the elevations facing the road or alleyway are controlled under the recently adopted Article 4 Direction, but the other elevations have less restrictions. We may therefore have to await a number of test cases in the courts to establish the true position, although the guidance from English Heritage is that properties in Conservation Areas should also be exempt.

It is also unclear as to the precise interpretation of the term "replacement" and at which point the repair of an existing window could be construed as replacement, ie. fabrication of a bottom sash to match the top sash, or reglazing of all sixteen panes to a standard double sliding sash window.

"Warning" *The Building Regulations cannot be applied retrospectively and therefore if an unscrupulous UPVC sales person claims "you are legally obliged to change your original windows to comply with Part L of the regulations" they will be lying!*

The whole issue of applying modern Building Regulation standards to works in old buildings is fraught with conflicting aims and results, especially where in relation to windows. The apparent good intention of saving energy through installing air-tight upvc double glazed windows can lead to problems of condensation and mould or loss of heat through other elements, such as walls, floors and roofs instead. The lack of trickle ventilation to provide moisture in the air to combat the drying effect of modern central-heating can also give some people sleepless nights and could perhaps explain the rather peculiar phenomenon of open upvc windows often seen on a cold winter's night.

The environmental credentials of upvc have also been called into question and the material has already been banned in some countries.

The debate over upvc replacement windows will undoubtedly run and run but at the end of the day many householders and Estates Agents agree that poorly constructed or designed upvc windows do not enhance the value of the cottages and the original features can demand a premium.

The introduction of casement windows over recent years has also resulted in a rather cluttered and haphazard appearance to the cottages where on a summer's day the projecting windows can look more akin to an advent calendar.

Front Door Step and Boot Scraper

The cottages originally each had a large sandstone step outside the front doors and a few still remain. The slabs are approximately 18" wide x 49" long and are believed to be at least 2" thick. The slab was complemented by a cast iron boot scraper for removing mud from shoes and boots before entering the cottages. There are still a few examples of the cast iron boot scraper in situ but most have been salvaged and placed at a later date elsewhere in the gardens. The need for boot scrapers would have perhaps been greater in the 1880's as much of Penge was still rural and pig farms existed nearby.

The stone entrance slab would have abutted the T-shaped front garden path leading to the cottage opposite and to the road. Residents may therefore wish to consider replicating these features or setting out modern materials and planting to echo the original design.

The terraced houses in Princes Road are also believed to have had the same cast iron boot scrapers adjacent the front door to the short front gardens.

Front Door

The cottages originally had solid bead and butt four panel, timber front doors and are unusually tall and impressive for the scale of the cottages. The timber is thought to be pine and to have been painted in dark green, both externally and internally, although the olive and cream colour scheme may have been extended to the interior of this door to match others of the internal rooms.

It is understood that at least ten of the original doors exist to the cottages and are typically 31 ½" wide x 81" tall and 1 ¼" thick to the rails. The discreet bead and butt mouldings around the tall upper and shorter lower panels are rather handsome and add considerably to the charm of the cottages. The original doors can provide a striking first impression when visiting one of the cottages, especially when painted in deep colours, and provide a useful focal point to add a little individuality to each cottage, if desired by the occupier.

The size of the original front doors is slightly unusual and non-standard. It may therefore pose a problem finding suitable modern 'period style' doors off the shelf, although it may be easier to find original Victorian or Georgian doors of the correct size in salvage yards. However, the chances of finding a beautifully plumb example that also fits the peculiarities of your cottage would be luck indeed.

It may therefore be simpler (and quicker) to have a door made to order, based on the original design, which should not be prohibitively expensive, when compared with the overly fancy designs often on display which rarely suit the character or period of the cottages.

The conservation area is sadly gradually seeing the installation of white upvc front doors which the manufacturers appear to go out of their way to make as cumbersome, kitsch and hideous as humanly possible and my plea would be to try and avoid them like the plague. *They are often offered theoretically for free, when purchasing upvc windows for the rest of the house, but the sales pitch rarely mentions that you have two sizes to select from, neither of which fit the cottages and the least popular shambolic design (I wonder why?) is the only one included in the special price!*

It is now possible to obtain upvc doors in pseudo wood grained dark finishes which are moderately less intrusive and may be a compromise if residents must have upvc doors rather than a traditional painted timber front door. There are now even upvc primer paints to enable gloss colours to be applied to potentially hide the rapid fading and yellowing of some upvc doors and windows.

The number of upvc doors to be presently found on the cottages is just over 10% with the vast majority of replacement doors being painted or varnished hardwood.

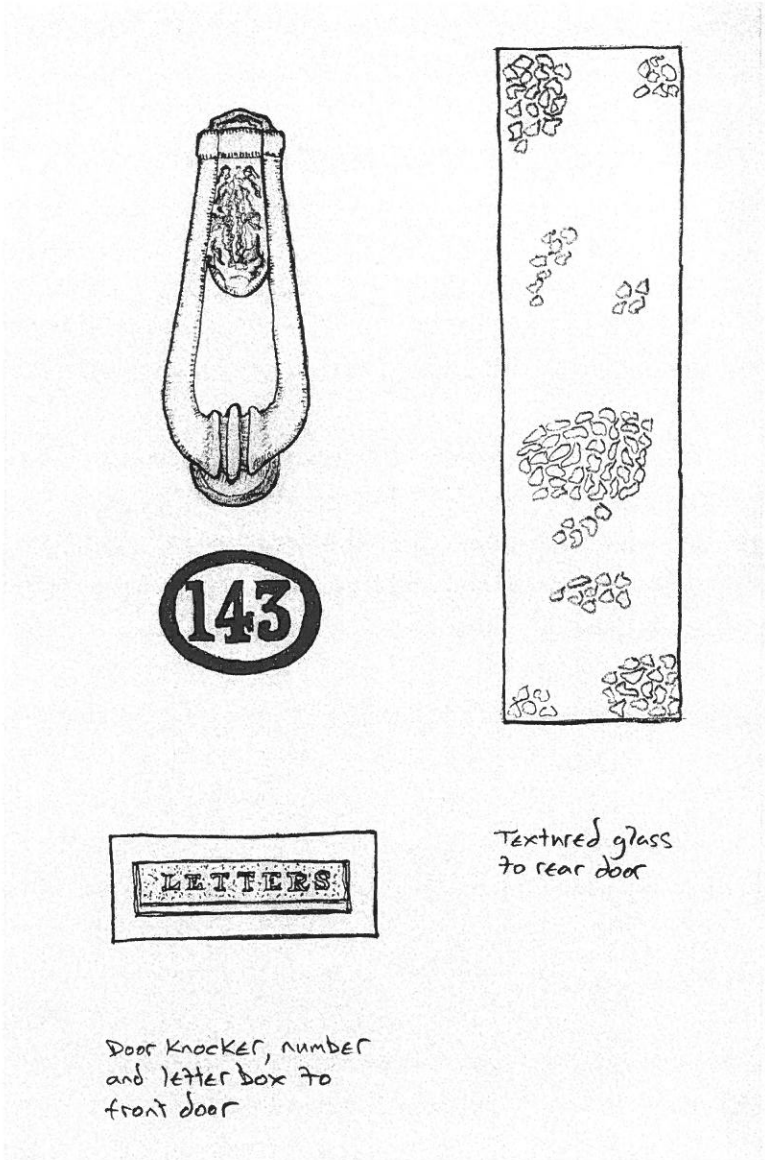
The latter can complement the character of cottages better than upvc but obviously will depend largely on the design, as the all too common mock Georgian style half round fan light is plainly the wrong era for the cottages, where a more simple Victorian design would be far better in keeping. However, residents may have to search a little longer and wider for copies of Victorian designs, as the more artistic (and expensive) Edwardian, Georgian, Art Deco and Farmhouse styles are typically the styles that are mass produced.

There are also a very small number of cottages that have period doors which are not the original and these can be attractive and in keeping with the era, especially the half glazed four panel doors which have the advantage of letting light into the hallways.

It would appear that all of the original doors have been lost to the houses in Princes Road but they may have had very similar four panel doors to the cottages or quite possibly were half glazed to match the back doors.

Back Door

The cottages originally had the same bead and butt four panel timber doors as to the front and these served the rear exit from the scullery. However, the houses in Princes Road had similar four panel doors but with the top two panels being glazed.



Ironmongery

Door Knocker

The cottages originally had large heavy cast iron door knockers, of which very few remain. They are quite ornate with a decorative handle and circular knocker, although the detailing has been partially obscured by many years of decoration.

It is even possible that beneath all those layers of paint the doorknocker may in fact be brass to match the material of the letterbox.

Numbering

The cottages are believed to have had small oval enamel house numberplates with a black border, cream background and black lettering.

The cottages are numbered sequentially, rather than odd and even on either side of the roads, and the numbering continues from road to road, as previously mentioned.

It is therefore possible to refer, for example, to 90 Alexandra Cottages, rather than 90 Edward Road, without any confusion, if more of the residents wished to revert to the original system.

Letter Boxes

The cottages originally had small brass letterboxes with the words "LETTERS" embossed on the tiny flap. It would appear that extremely few of the original letterboxes remain, since they are rather too small for the large envelopes and newspapers delivered these days. I think we can be pretty certain that the Sunday Times and all the associated supplements would never have squeezed through the original letter boxes, but the odd rent demand, coal order, milk bill and extracts from the monthly *"The Beckenham Journal"* would have happily dropped through the flap.

Decorations

The cottages are believed to have been decorated externally to the windows, doors, bargeboards, downpipes and garden gate, in the same dark green. The colour has been described in some accounts as "Pea Green" which was a fairly loose term applied to a variety of greens over many years. This being a colour inherited from the Georgian period and intended to resemble ripe peas in a pod, but could range from "Olive" to fairly vivid and deep greens.

The first half of the nineteenth century saw widespread use of "Invisible" greens, which were so named because they would blend into a background of garden foliage.

The use of "Invisible Green" was particularly popular for gates, fences and railings. Colours such as "Brunswick Green" could fall into this category which was available in different shades of light, medium and deep. It was also possible that the standard colours available at the time were blended with off whites to obtain lighter shades of popular colours.

It is now quite easy to obtain reproduction "Heritage" colours from companies such as Dulux ICI, Farrow & Ball and Fired Earth and it is therefore possible for householders to replicate and/or experiment with Victorian (and late Georgian) colour schemes.

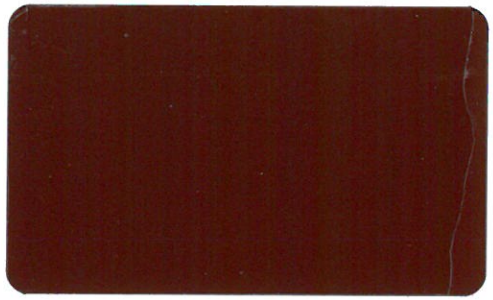
The atmospheric pollution in Victorian times was particularly prevalent in major cities, such as London, and therefore the use of bright whites was not deemed very suitable. It was therefore common to use colours like "Olive" and "Purple Brown" on external joinery and/or ironwork that would not show the dirt.

The use of very dark colours, which appear almost black on colour charts, normally have a wonderful deep shade of green, brown, grey or blue when used in larger areas, and can be far subtler than using black, which was not widely in use.

The choice of blues is also often very limited in Victorian inspired colour charts.

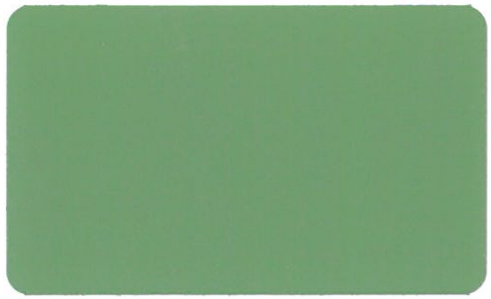
The rendered plinths to the cottages may have been painted with a lime-water and copperas solution, which was common on stucco facades in the Victorian era. This finish would provide a permeable coating and the appearance of Bath Stone. It may, therefore, be more appropriate to select rather more mellow colours, generally closer to the colour of stone or brick than decorating in today's brilliant whites.

The use of lime washes was becoming less popular on stuccoed houses by 1860 and was largely replaced by more pollution-resistant oil paints. However, the rough surface of the plinths to the cottages would not have been particularly conducive to the application of shiny oil paints. It is therefore possible that with the introduction of Portland cement around the 1850's that grey coloured paint may have been used on the plinths of the cottages.



Light Purple Brown

Brunswick Green



Pea Green

Chapter VI

Gardens

Plot Size

The cottages were built with a generous plot size and are considerably more spacious than the standard provided for the industrious classes in Victorian times. The cottages are set well back from the streets giving a front garden approximately 9' 3" deep and larger back gardens between approximately 36' and 38' long. However, the front gardens are longer in Hardings Lane, where the first cottages were thought to have been built.

The type 1 and type 2 cottages are of differing widths and are generally set out alternatively along each street. The size of the garden adjacent the side of the type 1 cottages is therefore approximately 1ft narrower as the centre line of the semi detached cottages is equally distant along the streets.

Boundary Walls

The original front boundary walls are predominantly 9" thick yellow stock brickwork with matching brick-on-edge copings. There are also attractive ridged blue-black coping bricks to the perimeter boundary walls onto the alley way and Parish Lane, where short spiked rails are interspersed at interval joints.

The rear boundary walls to the back gardens are similarly 9" thick yellow stock brickwork with brick-on-edge copings and are thought to be in joint ownership.

The side boundary between the adjacent cottages is thought to have been open and equivalent to the centre line of the shared T - shaped path to the front gardens.

The front boundary walls originally had single gate openings leading to a shared garden path that served facing cottages. The loss of the sense of enclosure provided by the walls unfortunately became common when the cottages transferred to private ownership and sadly much of the cohesive character has been lost as a result.

The desire for owners to achieve off street parking is obviously very compelling but in reality many residents find the narrow driveways inconvenient to use and often still park on the road. The combination of dropped kerbs that are left clear and cars being parked in the road, rather than in drives, can in effect result in less parking space for vehicles, than had there been no drives formed at all.

Let me set you one of those tasks similar to the National IQ questions:

"You may now turn over"

Q: If 10 cottages have 5 shared drives and the space between each drive can take two cars, how many cars can fit on the drives and road at any one time?

A: 20 cars

Q: However, if half do not use their own drives and park on the road instead, how many cars can park?

A: 14 cars

The result being less than the 15 plus cars which could be parked if there were no drives at all, as the standard car is shorter than an average double drive.

The use of hedging to provide enclosure was also popular and would provide a little privacy. The typical species of hedges popular in Victorian times would have been "box" or "privet" which are slow to medium growing and tightly packed with foliage. The inter mixing with the golden yellow variety can be extremely attractive.

Shared Gates

The cottages originally had timber wicket style single gates with spiked tops and were hung off square section concrete posts attached to the boundary walls. There are still a fair number of the original round top posts in existence or in use and a few of the timber gates remaining.

The simple style of the gates would be easy to recreate should residents wish to replace metal gates with a style that is more in keeping. The gates were probably painted the same green as the joinery and ironwork on the cottages, although the concrete posts were probably left bare.

Shared Paths

I mentioned previously that the cottages originally had a T-shaped concrete path leading between the shared gate and the front door step of the facing cottages, and many are just recognizable or are indeed still in use.

This neighbourly arrangement has sadly faded away but the design could be incorporated into any resurfacing of existing hardstanding to recreate the spirit of the original design.

Drainage

The drainage for the cottages is understood to run through the back gardens adjacent to the former sculleries to the rear and connect onto sewers at right angles in Princes Road and Parish Lane. The drainage to most cottages is therefore shared with neighbouring properties and the responsibility of the local service provider to adequately maintain, except for the properties at the end of each road. Access to clear blockages has therefore in the past been problematical, especially as in some cases rear extensions have been built over the original line of the below ground drainage.

The matter of drainage was also highly contentious around the time that the cottages were built, as the Estate was located on part of an area known as the "Beckenham Tongue of Land", which separated the Hamlet of Penge from the Parish of Lewisham. This slither of land and the adjacent Hamlet of Penge were not properly served by sewers and resulted in a source of serious nuisance from as early as 1857 as the number of inhabitants increased in the locality. The original outfall was directly into the Pool River which ran from the Kent House Pleasure Ground (renamed Cator Park) and towards Sydenham and Lewisham. The Lewisham Board of Works, who had sought to construct a sewer through the Cator Estate to serve the Hamlet of Penge, was consequently engaged for several years in defending an action brought against them by Mr Cator, for contaminating the Pool River with sewage.

The Board eventually managed to reach a compromise with Mr Cator by slightly diverting the sewer from the line originally intended and the Hamlet of Penge was connected in April 1866 to the Metropolitan sewage system. However, this did not alleviate the problem for long as the annual minutes of the Lewisham Board of Works dated 1872-73 recorded that: -

> *"the evils resulting from a part of Beckenham, out of the Metropolis, intervening between Penge and Lewisham within it, were by no means removed, for the sewer was required by the Metropolitan Board to be maintained for the exclusive use of the Lewisham District, and the rapid increase of building on the Tongue of Land, all of which drained into the Pool river, soon revived the nuisance, which year by year became more intolerable"*
>
> *"In the year of 1869 the nuisance had grown so intolerable that this Board, in self defense, were constrained, as a temporary measure, to permit the drainage of a large number of houses on the Beckenham Tongue to be connected with their sewer, and entered into agreements with two public companies, owners of estates, for such purpose"*

The situation was finally resolved by the "Beckenham Sewerage Act 1873" and the relief of the Lewisham Board of Works can be easily concluded from the annual minutes of the same year, where they stated: -

> *"Perhaps the greatest achievement of the Board during the year has been the introduction and passing of a Bill in Parliament for effecting the drainage of the Beckenham Tongue of Land through the sewers of this District, and securing an adequate contribution from the Parish of Beckenham towards the cost of the sewers".*

Trees

The front gardens of the cottages were originally planted with trees on either side of the shared gates and the following species were believed to have been in each road: -

Lime	-	Hardings Lane and Edward Road
Almond	-	Albert Road
Laburnum	-	Victor Road

The original trees must have been extremely handsome and archive memories recall that the branches were often intertwined to form an arch.

It would be lovely to be able to reintroduce these original species back onto the Estate but the mildly poisonous nature of the laburnum seeds and sticky pollen from lime trees could make them less suitable to front onto the public highway. However, residents may wish to consider planting them in the rear gardens since there is also limited space in the front gardens due to the recent installation of drives to many of the cottages.

It would also be advisable to keep any trees well clear of the buildings or boundary walls and away from the underground drainage and water supplies that typically run to the rear of the properties.

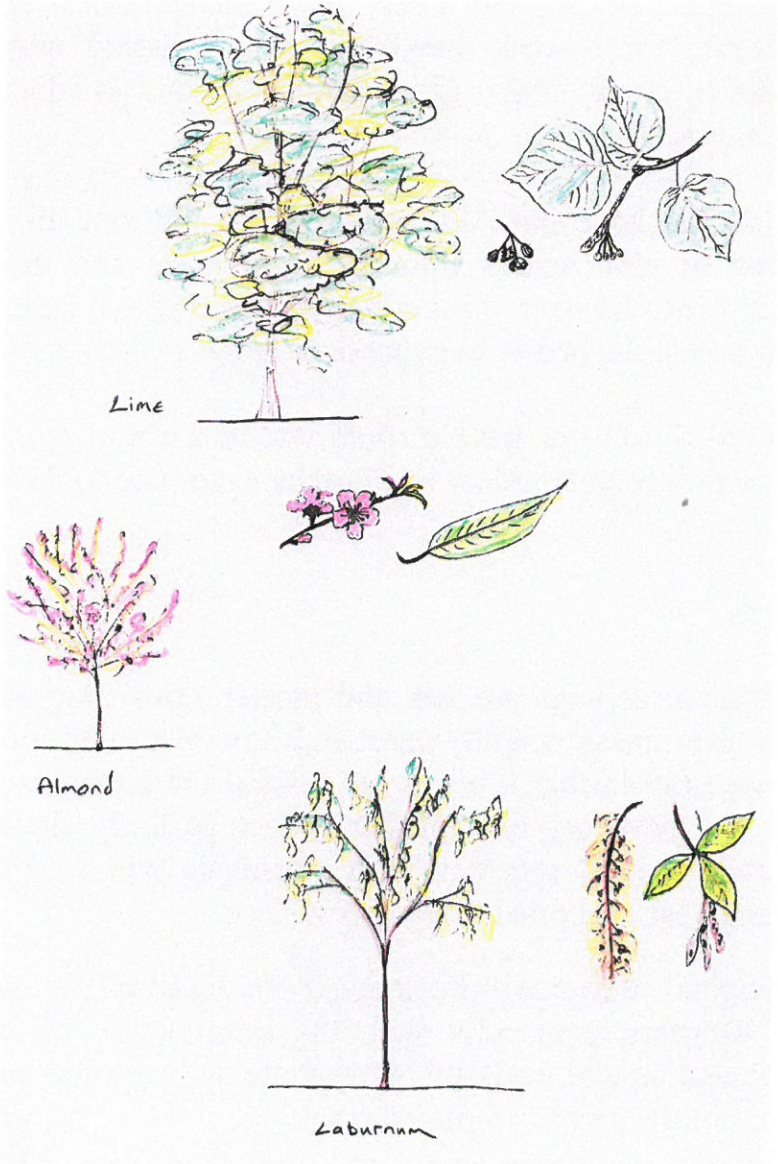
The blossom from the Almond trees in Albert Road and yellow fruits from the Laburnum trees in Victor Road must have been spectacular in the Spring/early Summer.

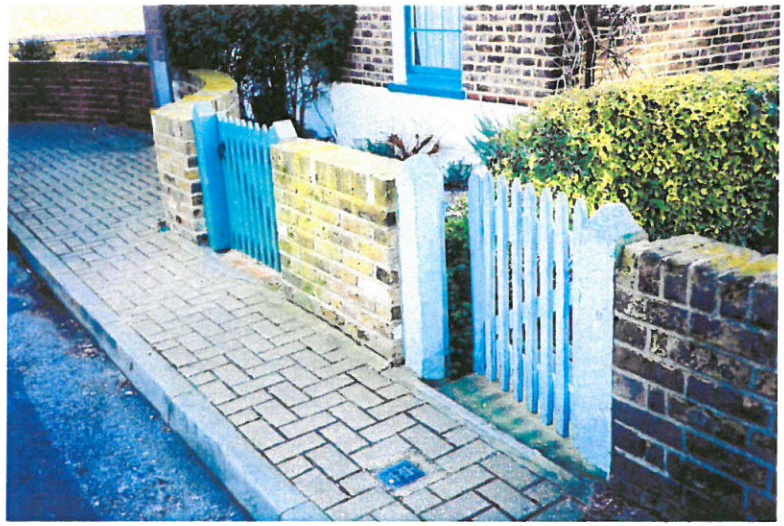
The other two roads may not have had the beautiful colour display each year but would have had the sweet aroma of the Lime trees, especially before the desire to pollard the trees that had grown larger.

The last remaining original Lime tree was sadly cut down in Edward Road a few years ago and none of the Almond or Laburnum trees still exist in Albert and Victor Roads. However, there is an old Lime tree in Hardings Lane, which is thought to be one of the original trees.

Garden Design

The image of a quaint country cottage garden would appear a natural design for the cottages but the original gardens were probably considerably more formal. Popular species would have included flowers such as busy lizzies and shrubs such as roses, together with an area for growing vegetables and maybe a few herbs. It is also likely that much of the garden would have had lawns and possibly hedging.


Lime
Almond
Laburnum



Chapter VII

Interior Features

Lofts

The loft space was probably inaccessible when the cottages were first built and simply formed part of the roof structure.

It would appear that many of the cottages were built without any separating wall at this level between each half of the cottage, except for the three-bedroom (Type 1), which may have marginally taller loft spaces. The maximum height of loft space being about 45" high and barely tall enough for a small child to stand up in. The area was therefore not well suited for use as storage space and access was not required to modern services, such as central-heating header tanks which are often located in the lofts today.

The original lofts are reasonably well ventilated with two decorative cast iron metal airbricks to both the front and rear, giving suitable through ventilation. I have also been told that the internal room vents to the side of the chimney breasts connect via a tiny flue and open into the loft space. They therefore provided useful underfloor, natural ventilation for the main habitable rooms and probably helped with the circular air draw needed for successful real coal fires.

This degree of sophistication in chimney flues is quite remarkable for modest dwellings of this period and is an example of the generally good standard of design adopted for the cottages.

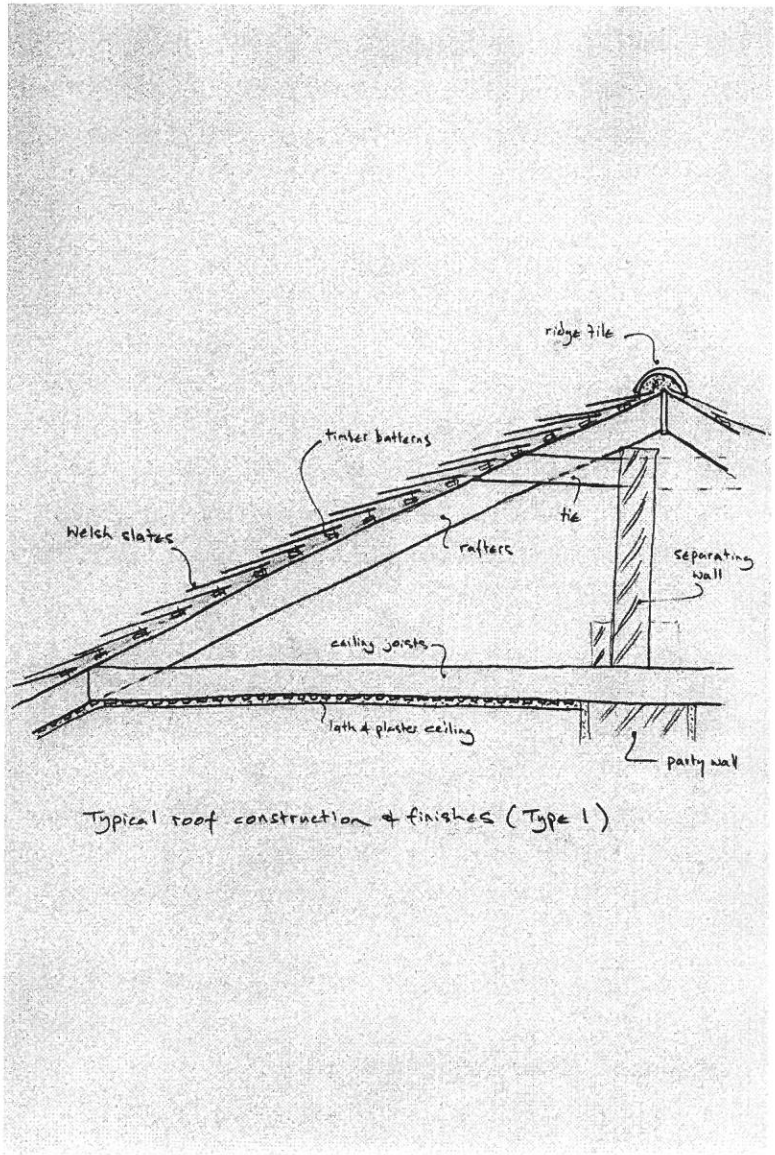
Loft hatches have been formed in many, but not all, of the cottages to give access into the roof space and these are typically located over the landing in the Type 1 cottages or within one of the bedroom cupboards in the Type 2 cottages.

The Type 5 cottages have a room within the roof space with only small loft areas at low level to the eaves and to the apex.

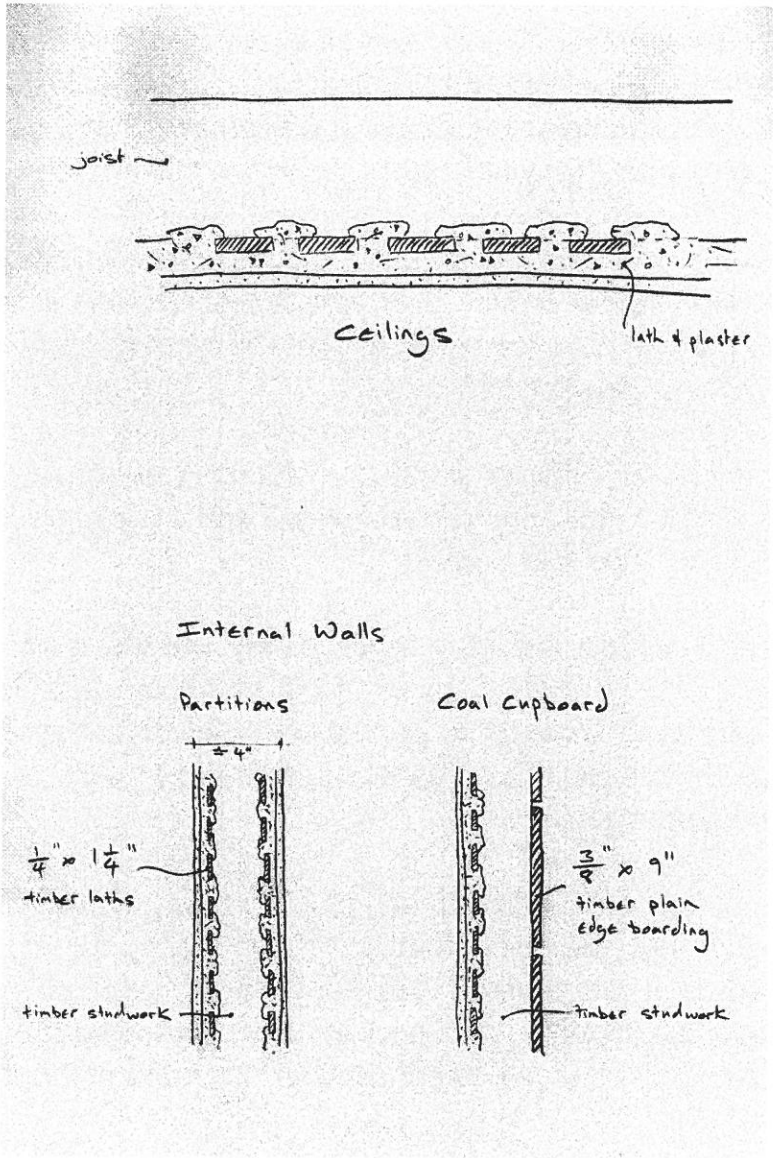
Ceilings

The original ceilings are lath and plaster, consisting of small timber slats spaced slightly apart and lime plaster applied onto the underside so that it oozes out behind the lathes to form a key. The two-coat lime plaster, which is fairly flexible, is frequently bound together with horsehair and a smoother finishing coat is applied to the top surface.

The original plaster will have dried out significantly over the last 130 years, especially with the introduction of modern central heating and the bond between the laths can de-laminate to give hollow areas or isolated cracking.



Typical roof construction & finishes (Type 1)



It is possible to repair lath and plaster ceilings by applying plaster of paris fixing dots or hessian backing bathed in plaster to extend the life of the original ceilings, almost indefinitely, as some of our historic buildings in this country have ceilings that are well over 400 years old.

The stability of a lath and plaster ceiling is also dependent on the condition of the timber laths, which can become detached from the ceiling/floor joists, particularly if the nail heads have perished due to previous dampness.

Lath and plaster ceilings should be checked, every now and then, to confirm that they are still sound and the plaster keyed to the laths or laths to the joists.

Extensive cracking and give when gently pushed up are tell tale signs that a ceiling is in need of repair and if left unattended may lead to a spectacular partial collapse and resultant dirty mess. The plaster, often in three coats, is fairly thick and quite heavy!

The visual appearance of lath and plaster ceilings is often quite subtle and less uniform looking than plasterboard ceilings. The formation of graceful curved ceilings, such as in the bedrooms and scullery, was perhaps easier to achieve in lath and plaster than it would be with modern boarded materials.

The use of matt paint finishes or even specialist traditional paints, such as distemper, can give an authentic looking appearance that is well suited to the character of the cottages. The use of textured artex or glossy type finishes are probably best avoided.

Internal Walls

The internal partition walls are mainly non-structural as the floors and roofs are largely self-supporting off the external and party walls. However, the internal partitions do enhance the lateral stability of the structure and the original layout of the rooms was well thought out to give reasonable size rooms and minimise any wasted circulation spaces.

The internal partitions are constructed of timber studs at approximately 18" – 24" centres between timber sole plates with the occasional use of horizontal noggins around door and window openings. The faces of the stud partitions are lath and plaster, similar to that used on the ceilings, and are thought to have had no cornicing at the junction with the ceilings.

The floor to ceiling heights are just high enough to merit the use of picture rails, but these were only evident in one of the Type 5 cottages in Hardings Lane.

It may be that picture rails were added later or the "Association" deemed the picture rails to be an extravagance that was discontinued after the first few cottages had been built.

The use of half height timber plank "bead and butt" cladding, up to a narrow rail, was also evident in the Type 5 cottages in the ground floor rooms and may hark back to earlier Georgian times when timber panelling was very much the order of the day. The terraced houses in Princes Road also used timber plank wall cladding to impressive effect to the full vertical height of the staircase internal walls.

The interior faces of the coal cupboard hole under the stairs were typically clad with wide plain edged timber boarding, which where still existent is suitably time worn and blackened.

The modern trend to "knock through" rooms had taken place in a number of the cottages but many retain the original room layout or it is easy to interpret how the rooms would have looked back in the late 1800's. The scale and charm of the cottages is very much dependent on the proportions of the individual rooms and the privacy that is afforded. It is therefore desirable to try and keep the original layout, if possible, or at least provide evidence, such as projecting wall nibs and a downstand beam, to the position of the old partitions.

Skirtings

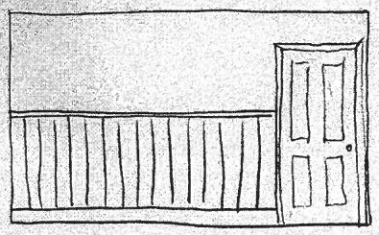
The internal and external walls were provided with modest rendered skirtings, approximately 5 ½" tall, with a simple chamfer to the top edge. Several of the cottages still have them almost throughout or in differing rooms.

The use of a dense render, rather than a more typical moulded timber skirting, suggests that cost and durability were perhaps on the architect's or Association's minds during the construction of the cottages.

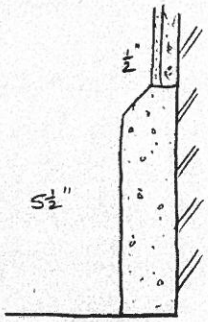
It could be said that the selection of utilitarian elements would still find their way into social housing of today and the fact that the original skirtings are still largely intact in some of the cottages demonstrates that the dense render was a good choice. It is also unclear whether the cottages were built with slate damp proof courses, and it could be that the external rendered plinths and internal rendered skirting were applied to minimise rising damp from the ground penetrating into the interior.

Chimney Breasts

The majority of the cottages were built with, predominantly, rectangular chimney breasts to all rooms, with the exception of the downstairs rear room, where an arched alcove was formed to serve the flue from the brick copper in the adjacent scullery.

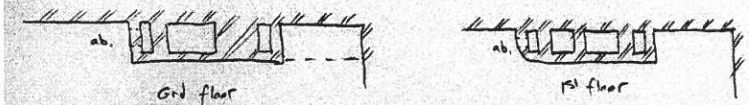


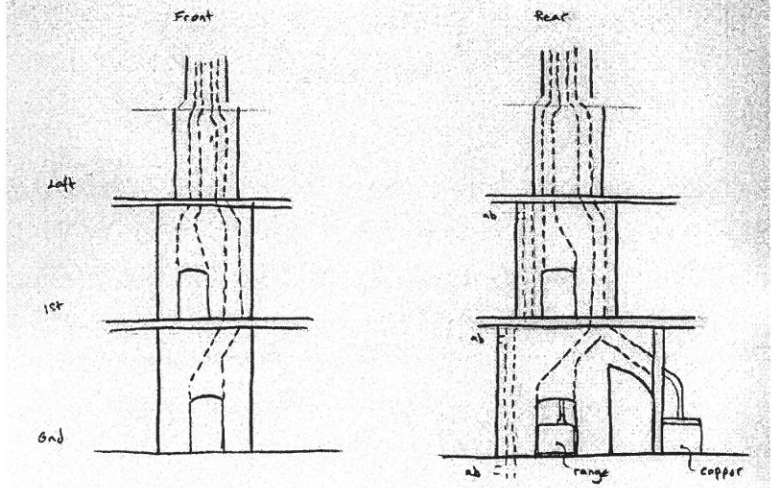
Dado panelling (Type 5)



Rendered skirtings

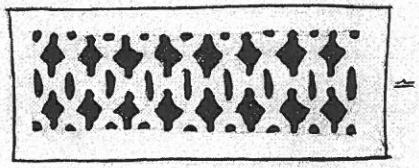
Chimney breasts (Type 1)





Assumed typical flue arrangment (Type 1 & 2)

≏ 9"



≏ 3"

Air brick to flues

The Type 1 cottages also have rectangular chimney breasts with one corner rounded off to the rear upstairs bedroom. This was presumably to improve access and remove a potentially sharp corner, as the fireplace is located fairly close to the entrance of this bedroom. The corresponding corner of the partitions are also splayed at 45° to maximise the opening width into the room, which has no doubt pleased many a tenant's furniture remover or owner for almost 140 years.

The arched alcove flues in the downstairs back room are particularly unusual and attractive, and quite fascinating when the brickwork is carefully exposed, as it is beautifully executed. I shudder to think how much a builder would charge today to recreate the same design and working flue.

The chimney breasts are cleverly designed with integral flues serving the open fires and range/copper and incorporate angled flues to bypass other flues and to draw the smoke up rather than into the rooms. The flues are also normally angled at the top, adjacent the base of the chimney stacks to minimise ingress of rainwater down the open chimney pots.

The diagram on page 67 is my best guess at how the flues probably work. However, unless I get the dubious pleasure of sticking my head up a few more grubby old open fire places or squashing into someone's ridiculously tight roof space, I cannot be 100% sure of the design!

The removal of chimney breasts was popular between the 1960's – 1980's and sadly many rooms lost their natural focal point as a result. The method of removal often left a lot to be desired, including my own cottage, where the front chimney stack was left unsupported (hence my hasty reinstatement of the bedroom chimney breast for both structural and aesthetic reasons).

The value of original features, such as chimney breasts and fireplaces, is now, fortunately, appreciated more by residents and prospective purchasers and therefore the trend to make structural alterations would appear to be in decline.

Metal Grilles

The provision of decorative cast iron grilles can be found to the side of the chimney breasts, which connect to the narrow horizontal flues and are a delightfully quirky remnant of the original features.

It is highly likely that most of the cottages retain the single brick-sized opening for the metal grilles behind modern plaster and/or decorative finishes. It would therefore be beneficial to reinstate this feature and improve natural ventilation, should the opportunity arise during re-plastering or redecoration of the kitchen and back bedroom.

Brick Copper

The scullery and outside w.c. on the back of the cottage would have been the only rooms with running water.

The copper would have been located in the internal corner of the scullery and were believed to be of brick construction with a wooden lid. The interior of the brick copper would have included a coal fire stove, possibly with a fixed iron base, but it is extremely unlikely that any of the originals have survived.

The washing chambers would be used for washing clothes, turned by a wooden dolly, and was probably a lot harder work than the delights of a modern washing machine. The clothes would then be threaded through a mangle to remove the excess water and hung out to dry, either outside or in front of the kitchen stove.

The sight of clothes blowing in the wind on a washing line in the back garden would have therefore been a common practice.

The exception being on a Sunday, when hanging of washing was not allowed by the "Association" rules, which also stated that washing lines should be brought in when not in use.

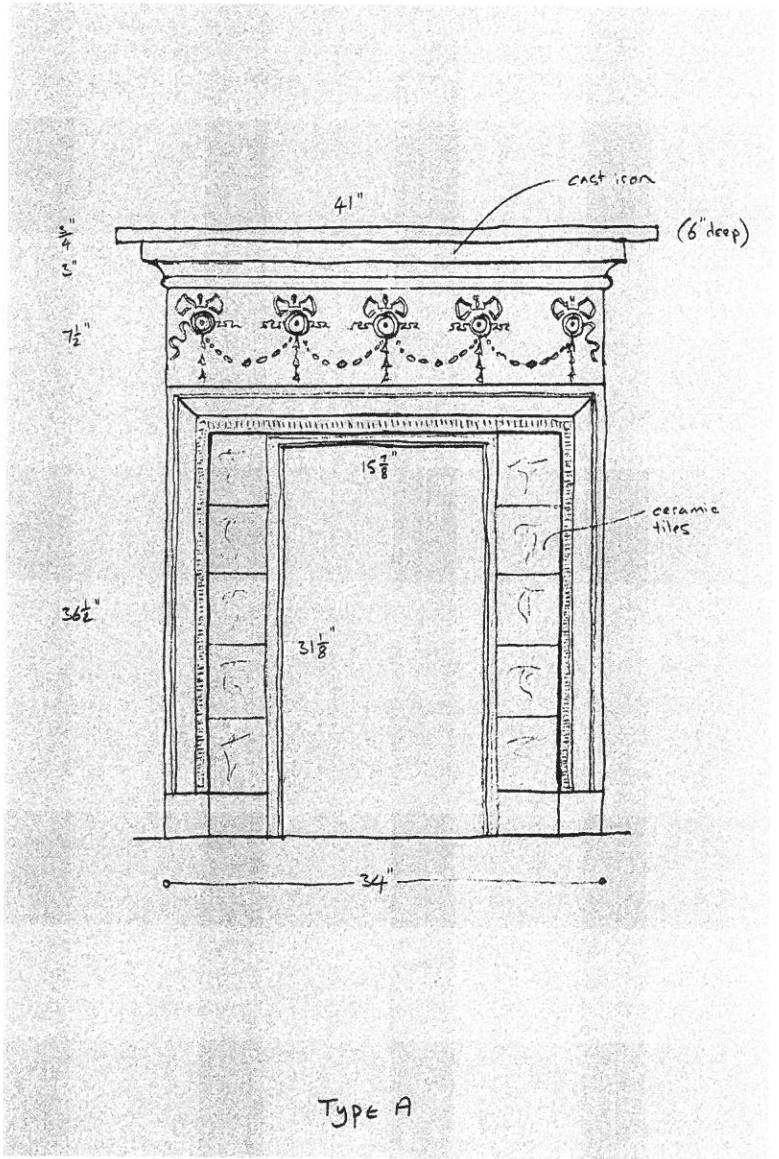
Fireplaces

The cottages appear to have been built with three different styles of fireplace for the front parlour and a single style of fireplace for the bedrooms.

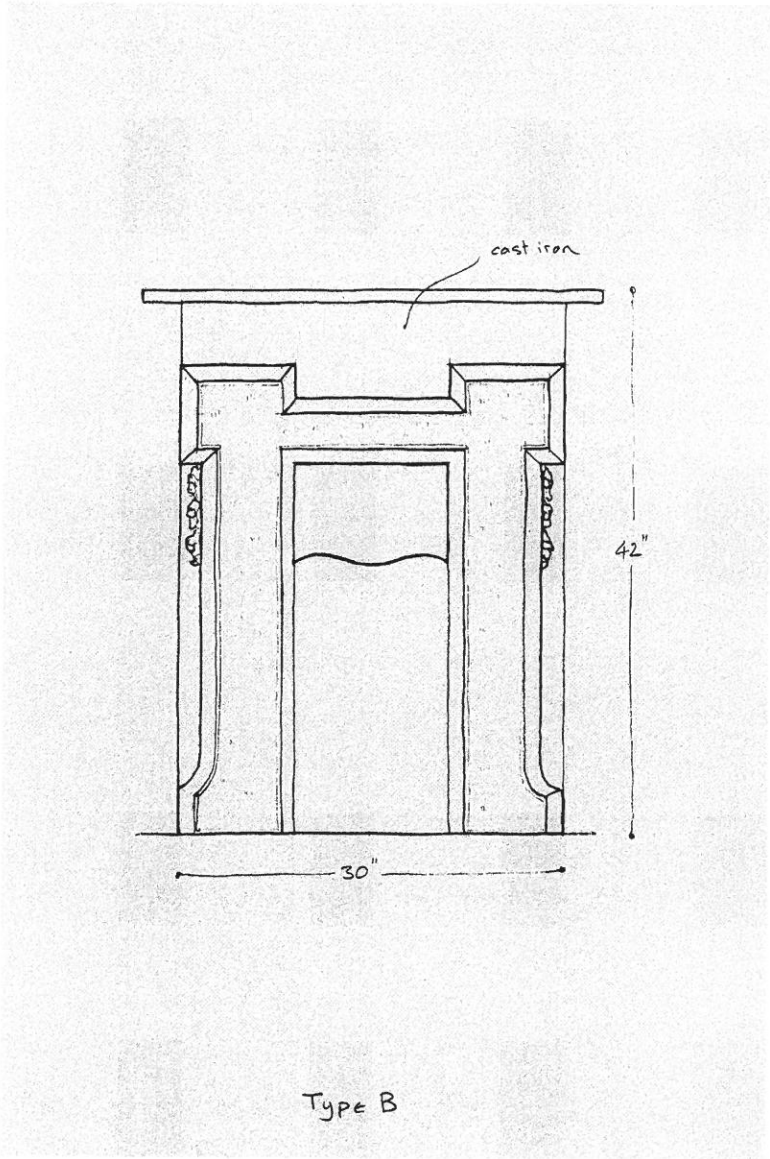
The largest fireplace, Type A, consists of a slender cast iron surround and mantelpiece with decorative ceramic tiles to the insert panels. The decoration on the surround is fairly modest with an attractive repeat motif and chain design. The overall impression is typically understated and traditionally Victorian in appearance.

The slightly shorter and narrower fireplace, Type B, consists of a distinctive cast iron surround and mantelpiece with gently curved detachable hood. The design is more 'Arts and Crafts' than 'Victorian' in appearance with beautiful curved lines and fascinating embossed finish. The design is therefore believed to be a very early example of a style that was to become popular and more common over fifty years later.

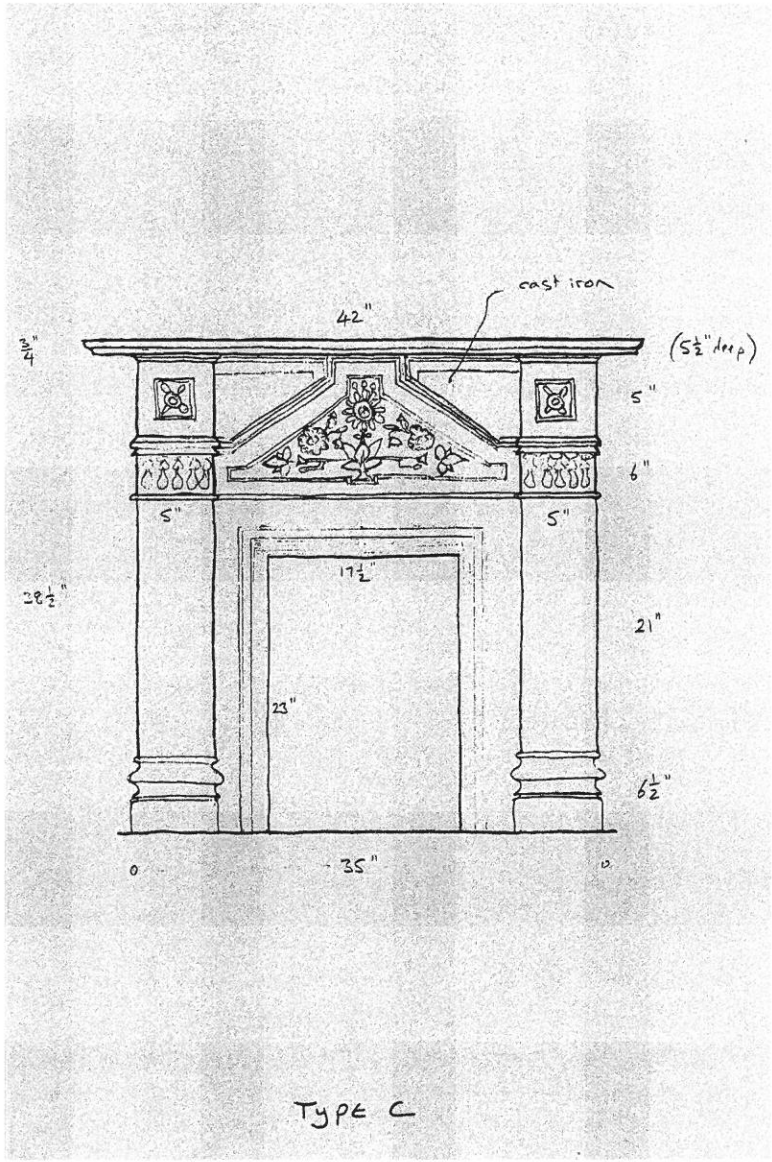
Drawings of the above fireplaces and the third alternative fireplace to the front room are shown overleaf, together with the standard fireplace believed to have been used to the front and rear bedrooms.


41"
cast iron
(6" deep)
¾"
3"
7½"
15 7/8"
ceramic tiles
36½"
31⅛"
34"

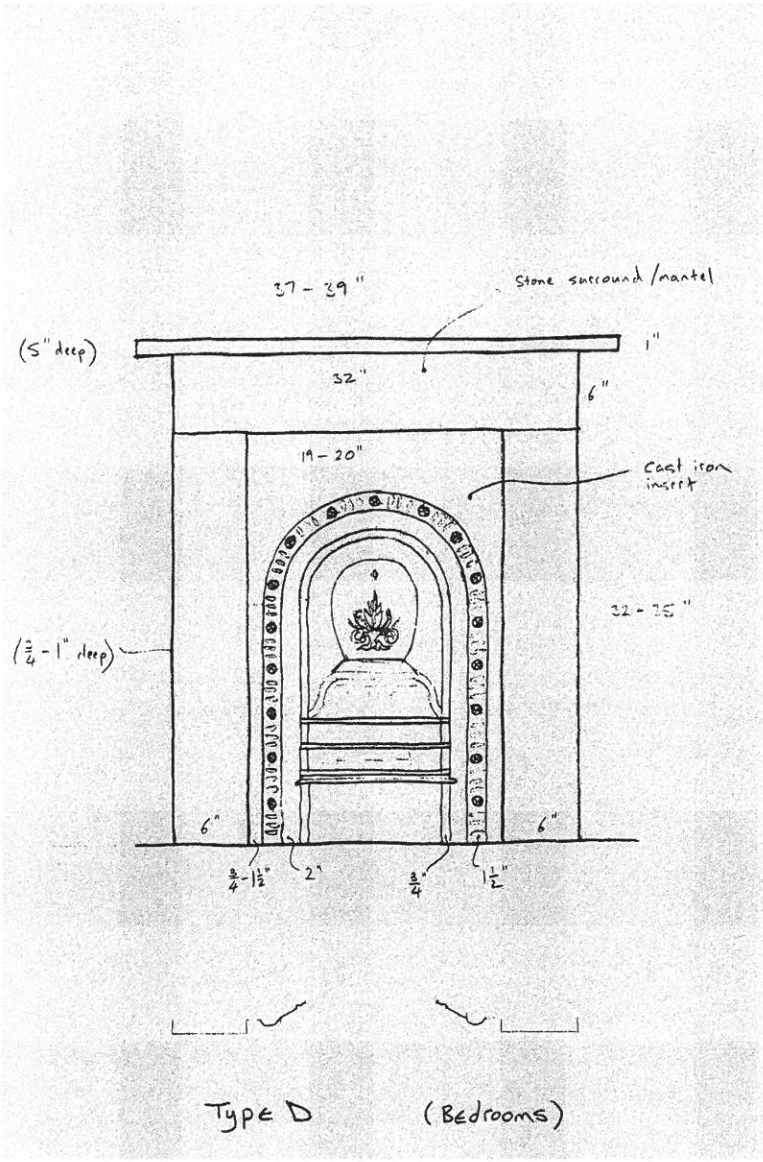
Type A


cast iron
42"
30"

Type B



Type C



Type D (Bedrooms)

The third fireplace, Type C, has the lowest mantelpiece height but is generally wider. The fireplace consists of a one-piece cast iron surround, mantelpiece and internal insert. The decoration is highly embossed and includes a prominent daisy and leaf design. This style of fireplace would appear to be more common than Type A and B and can be more easily tracked down in salvage yards, where smaller bedroom versions are also to be found.

The bedroom fireplaces, Type D, appear to be standard throughout all of the cottages, irrespective of the cottage type. The fireplaces consist of a very simple stone or rendered surround and mantelpiece with an arched cast iron insert. The cast iron inserts are very narrow and rarely available in salvage yards. However, larger versions of this popular design appear to be more common for use in rooms of less modest scale.

Fireplace Grates

The bedroom fireplaces had decorative cast iron trivet stands which would clip onto the bar of the coal grate. The stands would be used to warm up water in a kettle in front of the coal fire and poured into the wash bowls typically found in the bedrooms rather than downstairs.

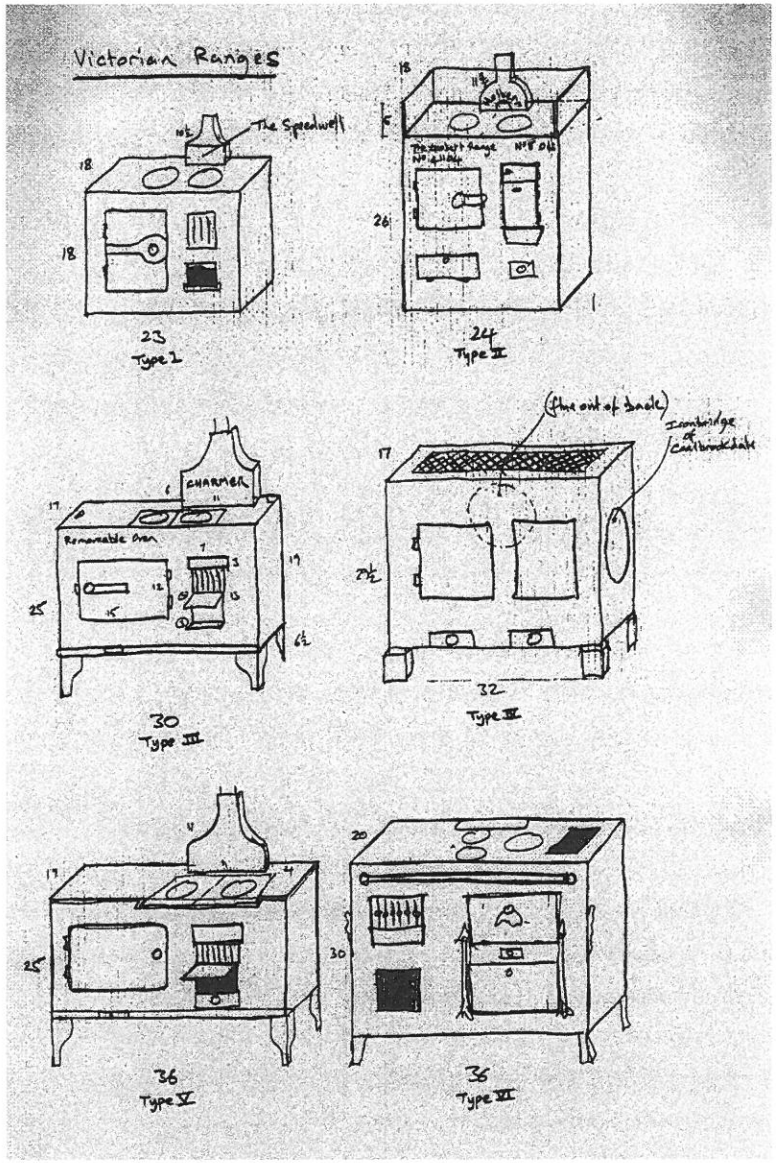
The coal grates of the fireplaces vary according to the fireplace design, with a removable coal grate to Type A and B, integral to Type C, and again removable to Type D. The size of the grates to both Type B and Type D are quite rare and may prove difficult to locate in salvage yards or from specialist fireplace restorers. The fireplace grates are generally not well suited for installation of modern gas fires and are best left alone for their aesthetic purpose.

Kitchen Stove/Range

The kitchen stove was located in the main rear room and recessed into the arched brick opening to the chimneybreast.

The design of the stove is believed to have been of heavy cast iron construction with two hot plates to the top, single door to the oven and open grate to the coal fire. The provision of a trivet stand was also often attached in front of the coal fire for the heating of water and no doubt for toasting bread.

I have shown a number of typical Victorian ranges in the sketches overleaf but it is thought that Type III would be the closest to the original ranges found in the cottages. However, if anyone has any photographic evidence showing the actual kitchen range it would be fantastic to hear from you.



The extract fumes from the coal-fired chamber would be ducted up the chimney flue via a cast iron funnel at the rear of the stove.

The kitchen range would have been the main source of constant heat being used for both warmth as well as for cooking and heating water. The kitchen would have therefore been the focal point for the family, rather than the front parlour, which was kept for "best". The older residents on the Estate recall that the front parlour was used mainly for special occasions, such as Christmas and birthday celebrations, and in some cases the door was kept firmly locked for much of the year. It also appears from the censuses that, family sizes were typically larger than those of today and it is possible that the front parlour often had to double up as an extra bedroom.

The sparks from the hot coals would have been contained behind a mesh fireguard to protect the family and the combustible timber floor.

Kitchen Mantelpiece

The kitchen range would have needed no fireplace surround but it was common to have a timber mantelpiece on brackets at high level over the range for the storage of pots and pans. Alternatively, the shelf and brackets may have been stone or render as used for the upstairs fireplaces.

Fireplace Hearths

The kitchen range probably stood on a concrete hearth, which extended around the range. This would have been "white-stoned" using a whitening brick with water and a cloth. The kitchen range would have been notoriously difficult to keep clean because of the coal ash and the white hearthening would be carried out every day with religious vigour and frequently with a great deal of personal pride.

The material used for the hearths to the other rooms is not known for certain, but one of the three storey cottages in Hardings Lane still has slate hearths in the upstairs rooms which could easily be the original material. It might be that the single slab of slate was dispensed with on cottages that were built later in Albert, Edward and Victor Roads in an effort to save on expenditure.

It is therefore most likely that the majority of the fireplace hearths would have been simple concrete and possibly white-stoned or coloured.

The positioning of the original hearths is normally off-centre to the chimneybreasts due to the need for the vertical flues to pass to one side of each opening. The non-symmetrical appearance is very typical of early Victorian houses where the chimney breast size is kept to a minimum.

It was often only in much grander houses that they could afford the width to make the fireplace and hearth symmetrical within the chimney breasts.

The offset nature of original fireplaces and hearths is one of the unique features of the cottages and desirable to maintain, if at all possible, even when fireplaces have been previously removed and a new one is being installed.

It is usually possible to correctly position the fireplace from the original hearth, which is often simply hidden under carpeting and underlay or hardboard.

Floors

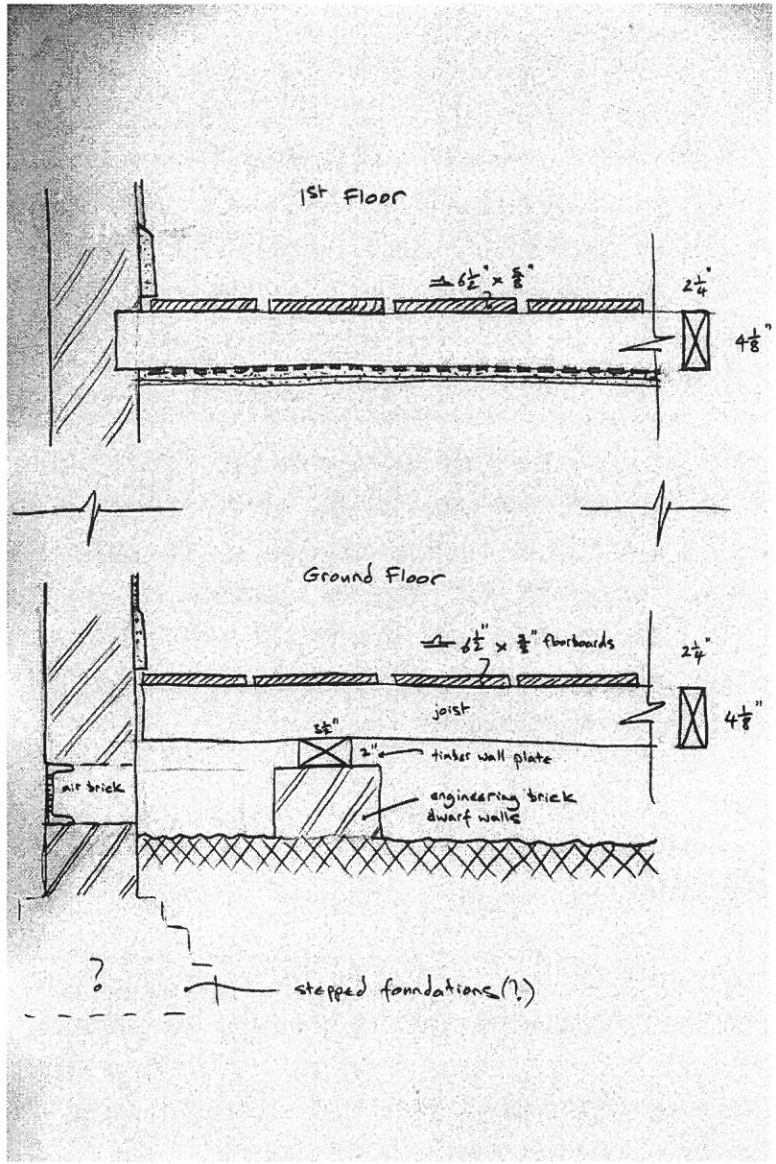
The upper floors of the cottages are of timber construction with 2 ¼ " x 4 $^{1}/_{8}$" joists at 13"-14" centres. The joists span between the outside walls and the party wall with the floorboards running front to back.

The length of timber used in the 19th Century was clearly longer than that typically available from the 20th Century onwards. The joists to the upper floors appear to run through the width of both semi-detached cottages and hence that sound of the mystery ghost upstairs is only my next door neighbours leading their normal lives. (*I hope!)*

The floorboards are also incredibly long and can run practically the whole length of the cottages from front to back. The boards are plain square-edged and of a good size, being approximately $^{5}/_{8}$" thick by 6 ½" wide. I also get the impression that the floors were completed before the internal partitions were constructed.

The original floorboards have plenty of character and can look extremely impressive when sanded down and protected with a clear matt or satin finish wax polish or varnish. The use of wood staining is not recommended as the original boards have plenty of warm colour and attractive natural graining, knots and old blemishes, which add much to the character. The use of wood stain to change the colour or darkening of the natural wood can also lead to long-term maintenance problems where accidental scratches and general wear and tear will be more prominent and difficult to disguise.

The trend for stripped pine floors has been popular for years, although it is highly unlikely that the Victorians would have gone to the trouble to display the natural timber. It is more likely that the centre of the rooms would have been left bare and covered with a rug and only the external border would have been coloured with a dark polish or an imitation painted finish to emulate something more expensive. It was therefore common to see painted floorboards in colours such as "mahogany" which is still available in historic paint colour ranges.



The recent trend of laying laminate flooring can revive the appearance of a patchwork repaired or damaged floor, but can also look rather artificial and "too perfect" for a one hundred and forty year old cottage. The laying of laminate sheeting also needs a good substratum, and covering over dodgy old rotten/loose/uneven boards, can lead to irritating creaking noises and reduced serviceable life for the new flooring. It is also a major exercise to find any leaking pipework or defective wiring run within the floor. It is therefore preferable to refurbish existing floorboards where feasible.

The ground floors of the cottages are mainly of timber construction with the same sized 2 ¼" x 4 $^{1}/_{8}$" joists at 13"-14" centres as the upper floors but the joists span between 2" x 3 ½" timber wall plates, which in turn sit on dwarf walls built of engineering bricks. It would appear that the joists are deliberately clear of the external and party walls to guard against wet rot due to possible rising or penetrating dampness. Blue grey engineering bricks rather than common bricks are used since they are less prone to absorb moisture from the ground. However, the wall plates are the most vulnerable part of the floor to decay and therefore it would be prudent to incorporate a bitumen damp-proof course, or similar, in the event that the wall plates need replacement.

The underfloor ventilation is reasonably good with a clear air flow in between the joists and over the dwarf walls and especially good if your house has no floor coverings.

The open joints in the boards giving plenty of circulation (call that a draught by any other name!) in the dead of Winter. The rather ingenious narrow flues to the side of the chimneybreasts also provide valuable ventilation to the area adjacent the party walls, which could otherwise have stagnant air.

The importance of adequate ventilation should not be underestimated as damp, unventilated voids can be ideal breeding conditions for the dreaded dry rot fungus which can cause untold damage and easily spread even to next door. The remedial costs of works to rectify the damage caused by dry rot are rarely covered under household insurance policies and therefore can be a major expense to owners of the properties.

The floor of the walk-in larder in the Type 1 cottages was probably red facing bricks laid flat in two layers over the earth, although few survive or these could be a later addition. However, it is highly likely that the floor was either bare earth or some type of masonry finish to keep the cupboard cool.

The floor of the coalhole in all cottage types was almost certainly bare earth and deeper than the adjacent timber floors to the rooms.

The floor of the scullery and outside water closet would most likely have been concrete construction with a linoleum finish to the scullery as the only wet area in the home.

Scullery and Outside WC

The cottages originally all had lean-to sculleries at the rear which housed the brick copper for clothes washing and a Belfast sink for food preparation and dish washing.

The scullery and adjacent outside w.c. extended across the whole of the rear elevation to cottage Types 1 & 2, whereas the scullery and w.c. were thought to be separated by the rear window in cottage types 3, 4 & 5.

There are very few remaining examples of the sculleries in evidence today as most have either been demolished completely for newer kitchen and bathroom extensions or partially incorporated into an extension. However, the original brickwork at the side of the w.c.'s is often still visible, together with the line of the former sloping roof.

The scullery is believed to have had a solid panelled door onto the garden and a similar door to the w.c, which matched the bead and butt panelling of the front door. However, the houses in Princes Road had half glazed panelled doors and rather attractive 'forked headed' matchboard ledged and braced doors to the outside w.c's.

It is also likely that the scullery had a small sliding sash window or casement adjacent the door into the rear garden.

The w.c. was probably windowless and is believed to have had two 9" square cast iron air bricks for ventilation.

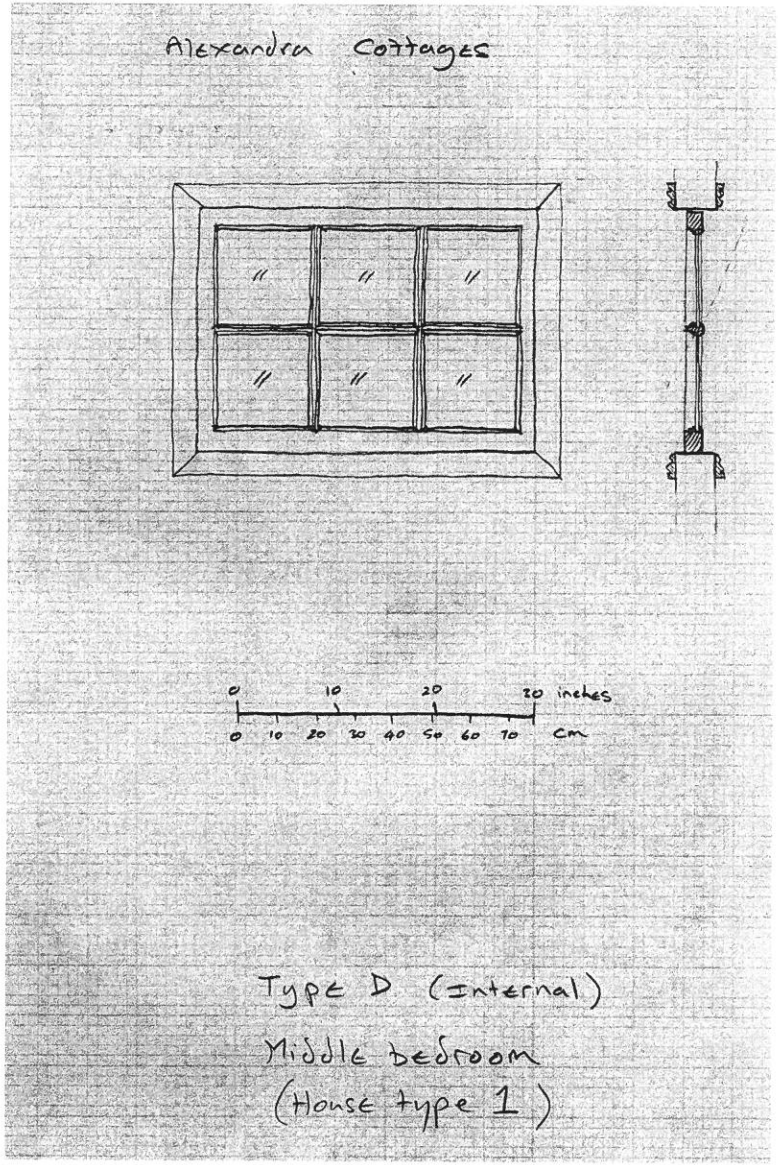
There was apparently little thought or embarrassment over having to use the outside w.c. and neighbours would happily chat to each other, especially when emptying the bedpans from the upstairs.

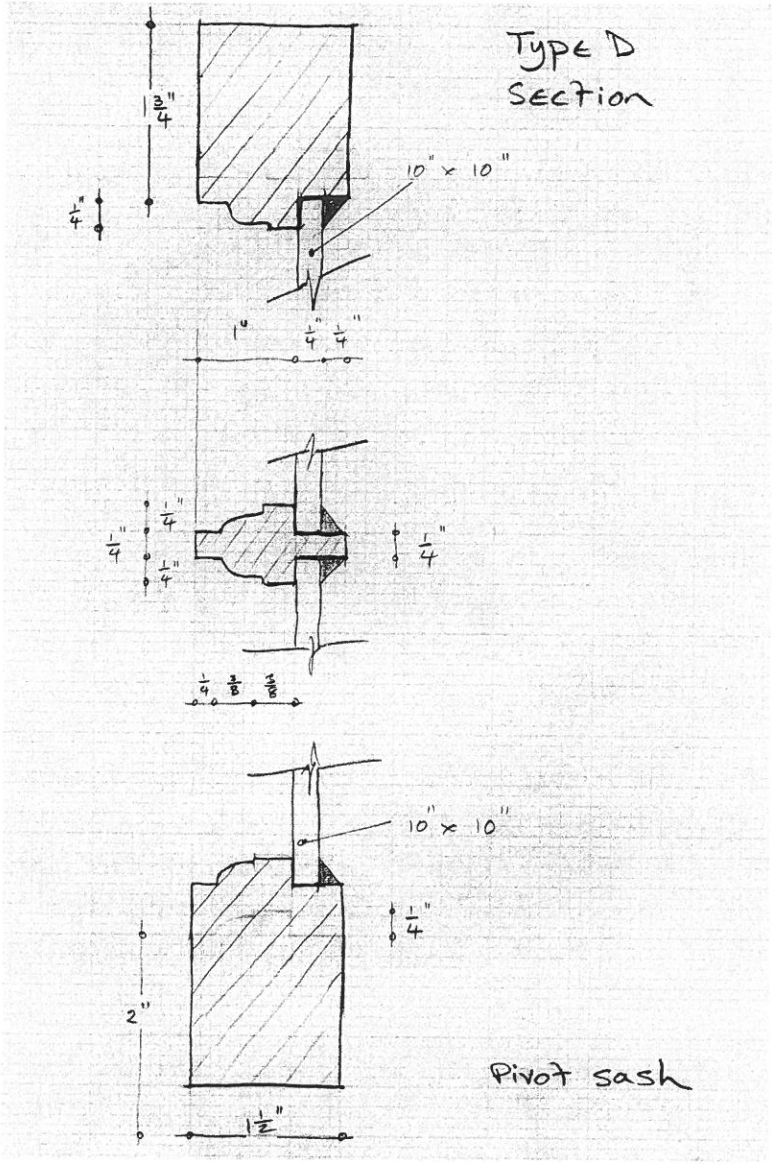
Water Supply

The neighbouring areas of Sydenham and Penge were originally supplied with water by the Lambeth Company and it is possible that the same company served the Alexandra Cottages. However, the minutes of Lewisham Board of Works Annual Report of 1867 makes reference to "The Sanitary Act" of 1866 which was partly compulsory and partly permissive. They also go on to state that: -

> *"the water supply of the (*Lewisham*) district, although usually of good quality, is only given every other day and not upon Sundays and is stored in receptacles which in some instances are inadequate as to size, and in many instances are of an improper character".*

The above could also explain another reason behind the Association rules that no washing was allowed to be hung outsides on a Sunday.


Alexandra Cottages
0 10 20 30 inches
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 cm
Type D (Internal)
Middle bedroom
(House type 1)


Type D
Section
1 3/4"
1/4"
10" x 10"
1"
1/4"
1/4"
1/4"
1/4"
1/4"
1/4"
1/4"
3/8
3/8
10" x 10"
1/4"
2"
1 1/2"
Pivot sash

Joinery

Window to staircase off bedroom

The three bedroomed cottage Type 1 have a six pane pivot casement to the middle bedroom at high level onto the staircase, with this arrangement giving both borrowed daylight onto the otherwise windowless staircase and privacy to the bedroom. The frame is a simple rectangle with no mouldings and finished with architraves to either face.

Doors

The original doors onto the internal rooms and cupboards are all four panel with no mouldings, with the exception of the two panel double set of doors to the cupboard under the stairs to the Type 2 cottages.

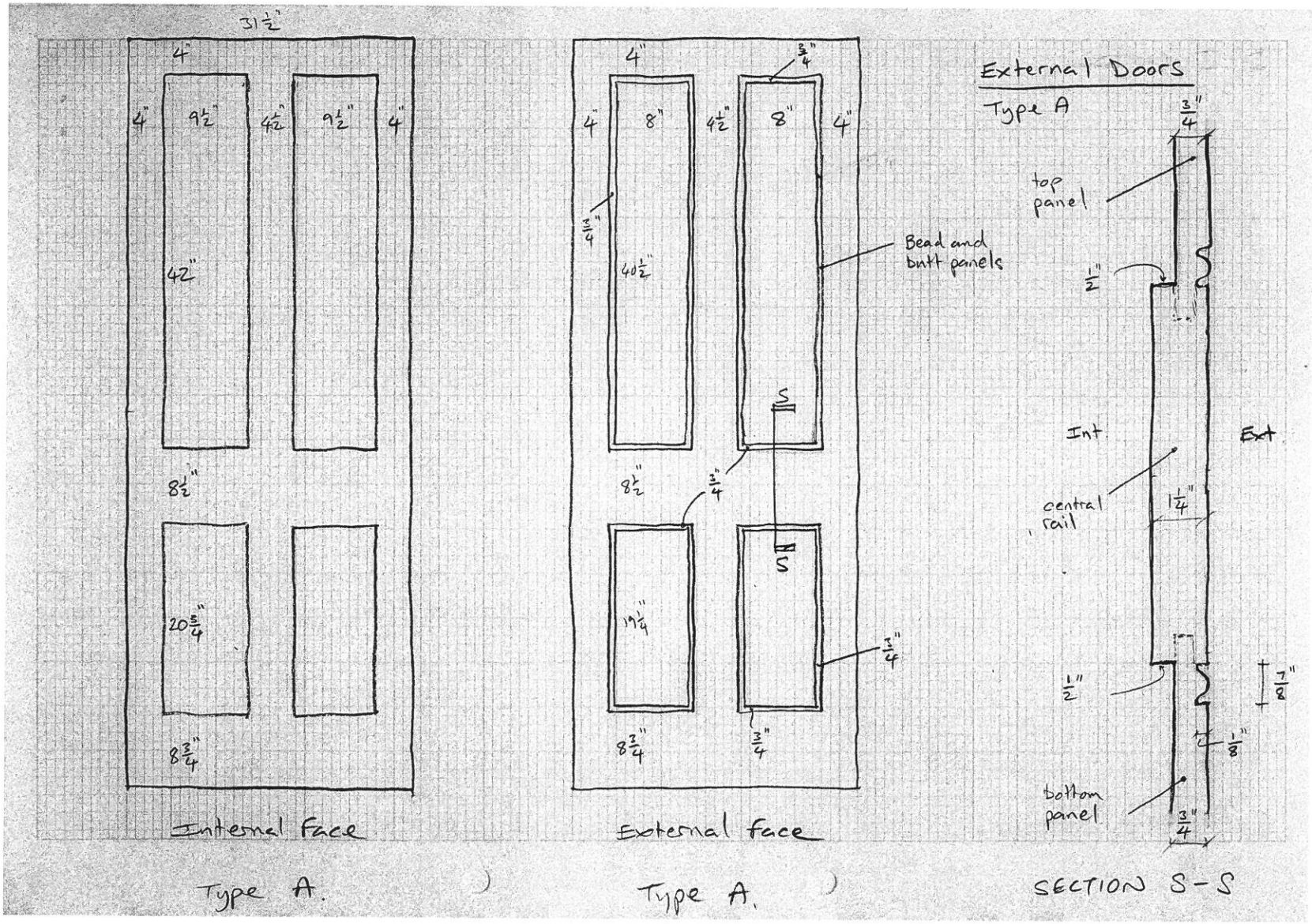
The door sizes throughout the different cottages vary according to function, with the largest doors onto the principle downstairs rooms and slightly smaller doors to the bedrooms and larder. The doors are fractionally smaller/narrower still to the bedroom cupboards and almost half the standard height to the coal cupboard.

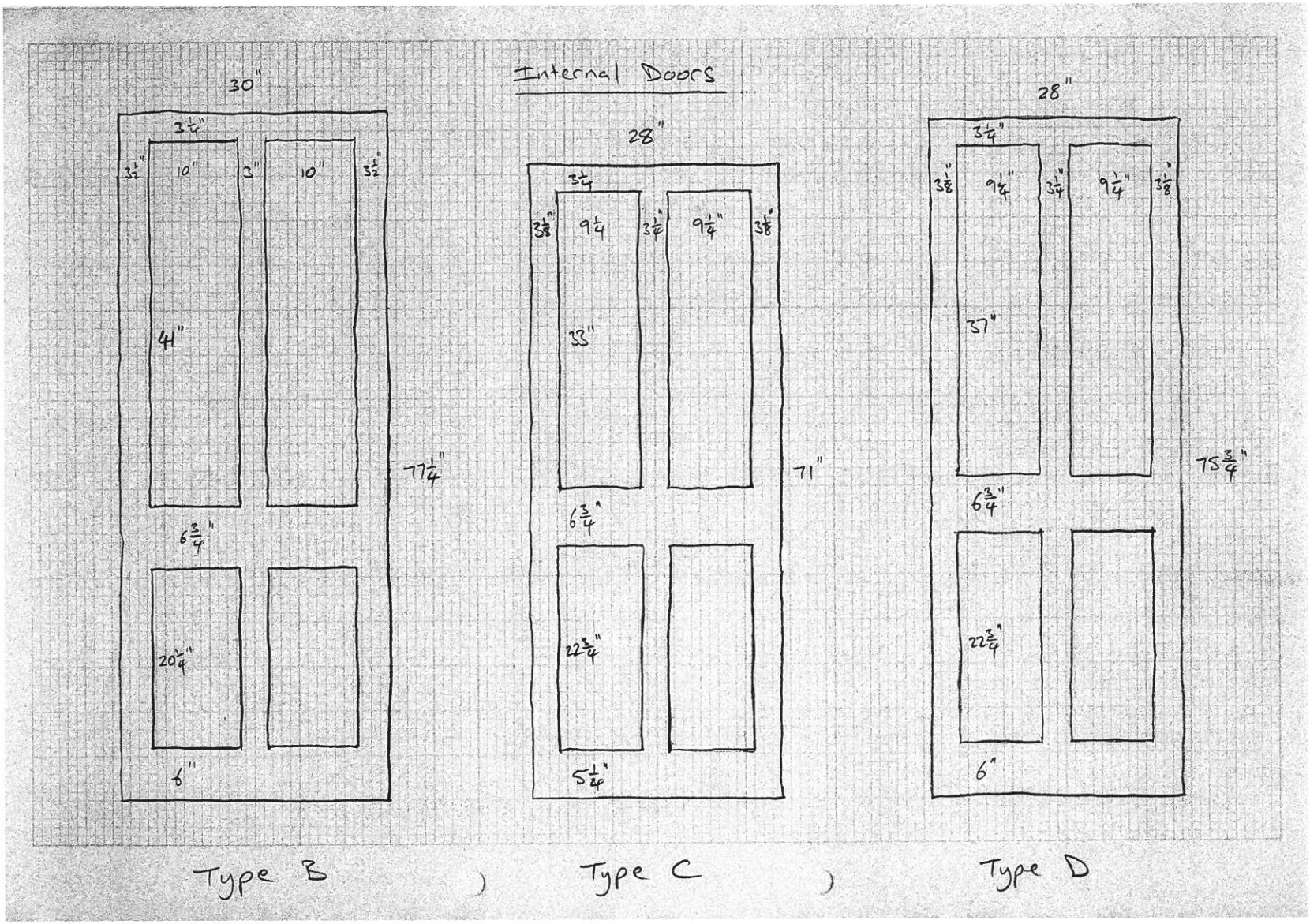
The doors are believed to be made of pine with 1 3/8" thick rails and 5/8" thick panels, with the exception of the coal cupboard door (type F) which is only 1" thick.

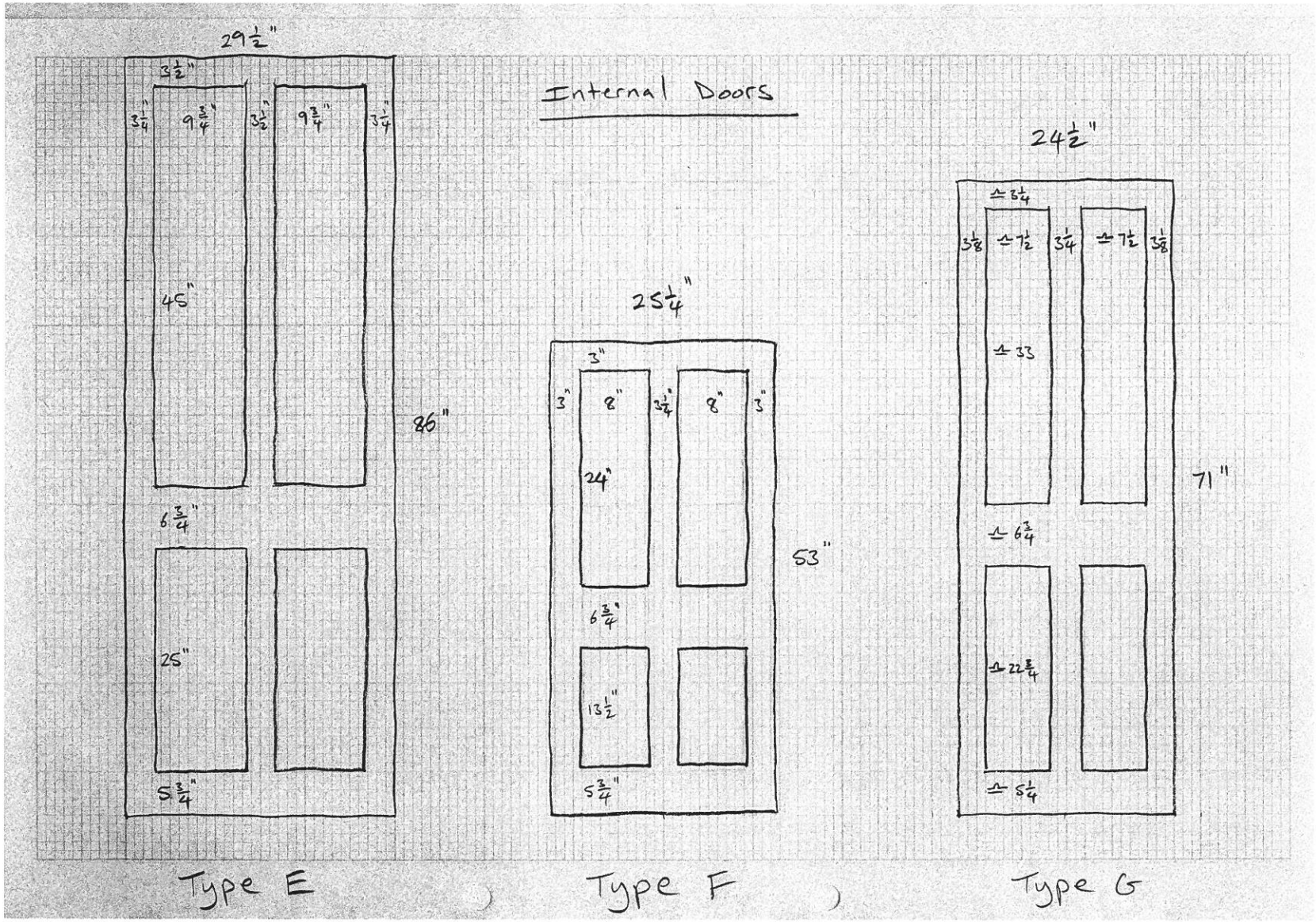
The top, central and side rails are unusually slim for Victorian doors, being typically 3 ¼" wide rather than the commonly seen 4" wide rails and, therefore, have a dainty appearance compared with the more sturdy but cumbersome norm. The doors therefore have more in common with the Georgian era and can be difficult to match precisely "off the peg" or locate in architectural salvage yards. The period furniture shops and second hand dealers also tend to stock the more elaborate designs with standard mouldings but the cost to have a replica door made can be relatively modest due to the plain and simple design used in the cottages.

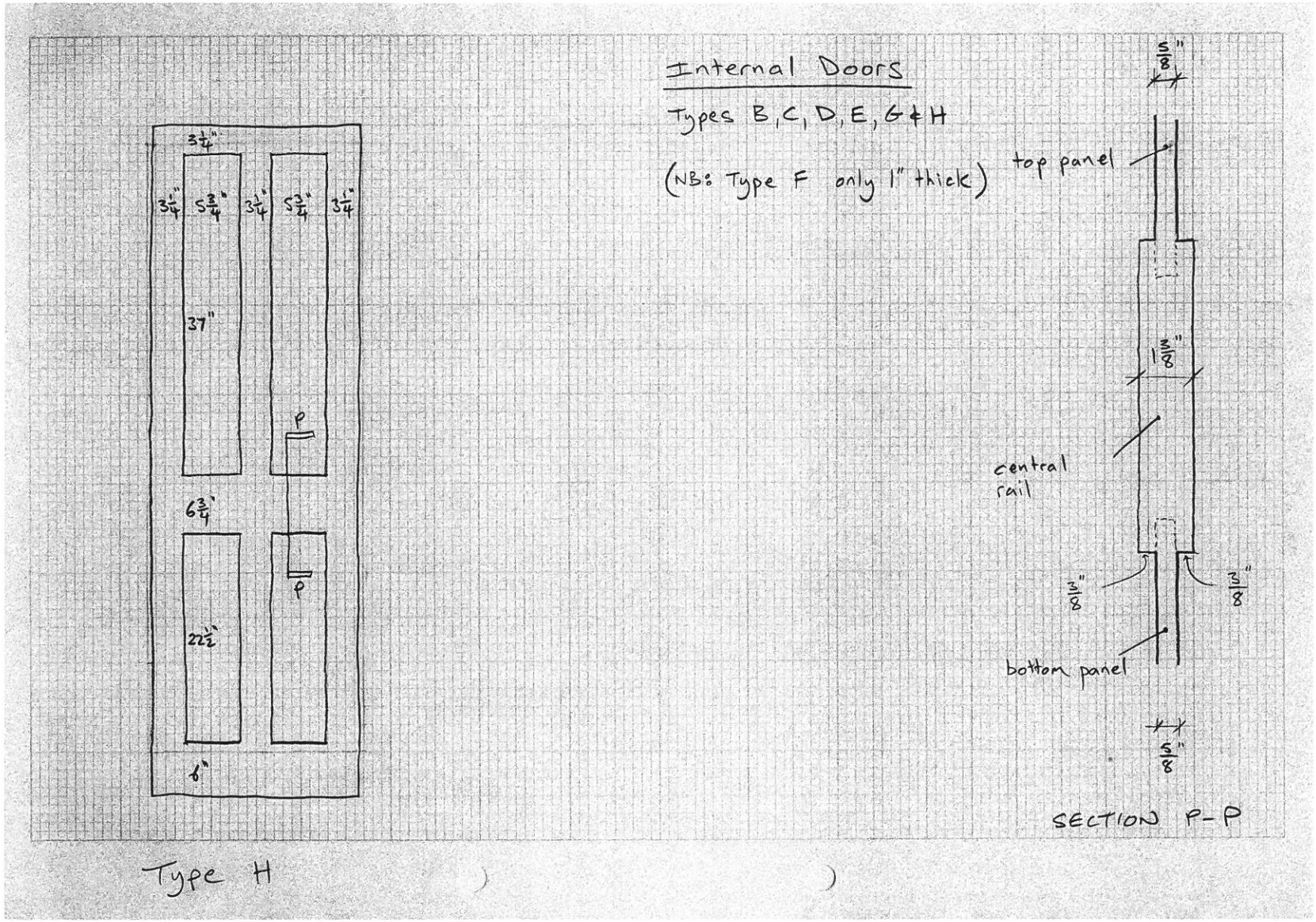
The doors are thought to have been hung on standard butt hinges but examples of rising butts were noted in a few of the cottages especially on the bedroom doors.

The traditional convention being for doors to open into the room rather than against the wall, as this gives the occupant of the room a greater degree of privacy and warning when someone wishes to enter the room. However, over the years the original doors in the cottages have been swapped over or new doors fitted according to personal taste and therefore it is difficult to say for certain whether all doors were hung in the traditional manner. It would appear that certain doors were hung in the opposite manner, for example, to the rear bedroom of the cottage Type 1 where the short corridor afforded the desired privacy.


31½"
4"
4"
9½"
4½"
9½"
4"
42"
8½"
20¾"
8¾"
Internal Face
Type A.
4"
4"
8"
4½"
8"
4"
¾"
¾"
40½"
Bead and butt panels
S
8½"
¾"
S
19¼"
¾"
8¾"
¾"
External face
Type A.
External Doors
Type A
¾"
top panel
½"
Int.
Ext.
central rail
1¼"
½"
7/8"
⅛"
bottom panel
¾"
SECTION S-S


Internal Doors
30"
3¼"
3½"
10"
3"
10"
3½"
41"
6¾"
20¾"
8"
77¼"
Type B
28"
3¼"
3⅜"
9¼"
3¼"
9¼"
3⅜"
33"
6¾"
22¾"
5¼"
71"
Type C
28"
3¼"
3⅛"
9¼"
3¼"
9¼"
3⅛"
37"
6¾"
22¾"
6"
75¾"
Type D


Internal Doors
29½"
3½"
3¼"
9¾"
3½"
9¾"
3¼"
45"
86"
6¾"
25"
5¾"
Type E
25¼"
3"
3"
8"
3¼"
8"
3"
24"
53"
6¾"
13½"
5¾"
Type F
24½"
3¼
3⅜
7½
3¼
7½
⅛
33
71"
6¾
22⅝
5¼
Type G


Internal Doors
Types B, C, D, E, G & H
(NB: Type F only 1" thick)
top panel
central rail
bottom panel
SECTION P-P
Type H

Architraves

It would appear that identical architraves were used throughout the cottages for all internal doors and window frame surrounds. The profile of the architraves being a popular "ogee" moulding, which is still in use today, although the proportions of the flat and curve profiles vary quite substantially depending on the supplier. The size of the architraves is approximately ½" maximum thickness by 2" wide.

Dresser and Pantry

The alcoves to either side of the downstairs chimney breast lend themselves to housing built-in dressers or pantry units which were typically found in Victorian houses. However, I have not yet found an original example that has survived, although old photographs of the cottage Type 5 appear to have a larder cupboard in the front parlour.

Meat Safe

The discovery of an old meat safe in one of the Type 2 cottages was a fascinating find and could well be original. The meat safe is of very simple timber construction with two metal gauze fronted doors and is located at high level above the base of the stairs.

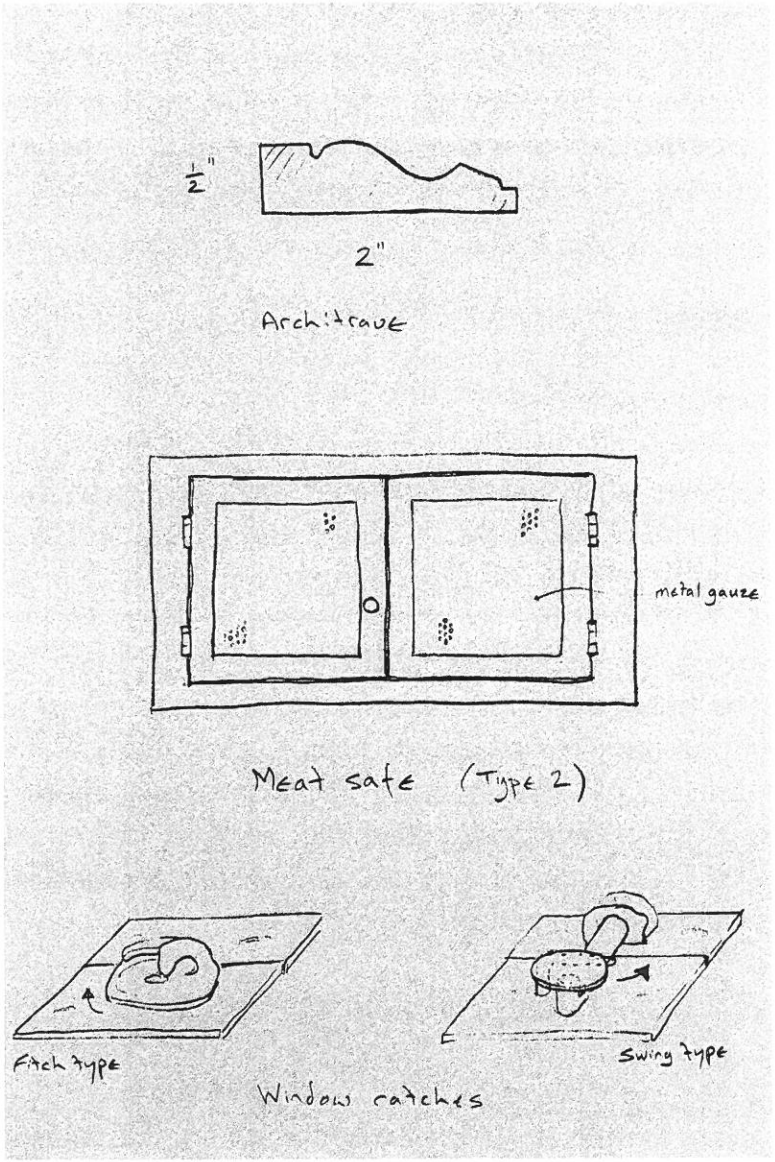
This position being remote from the exterior, away from daylight and probably the coolest part of the cottage. The Type 1 cottages may not have needed the meat safe as they had a separate larder under the stairs, which is believed to have had stone or slate shelves to keep food stuffs cool.

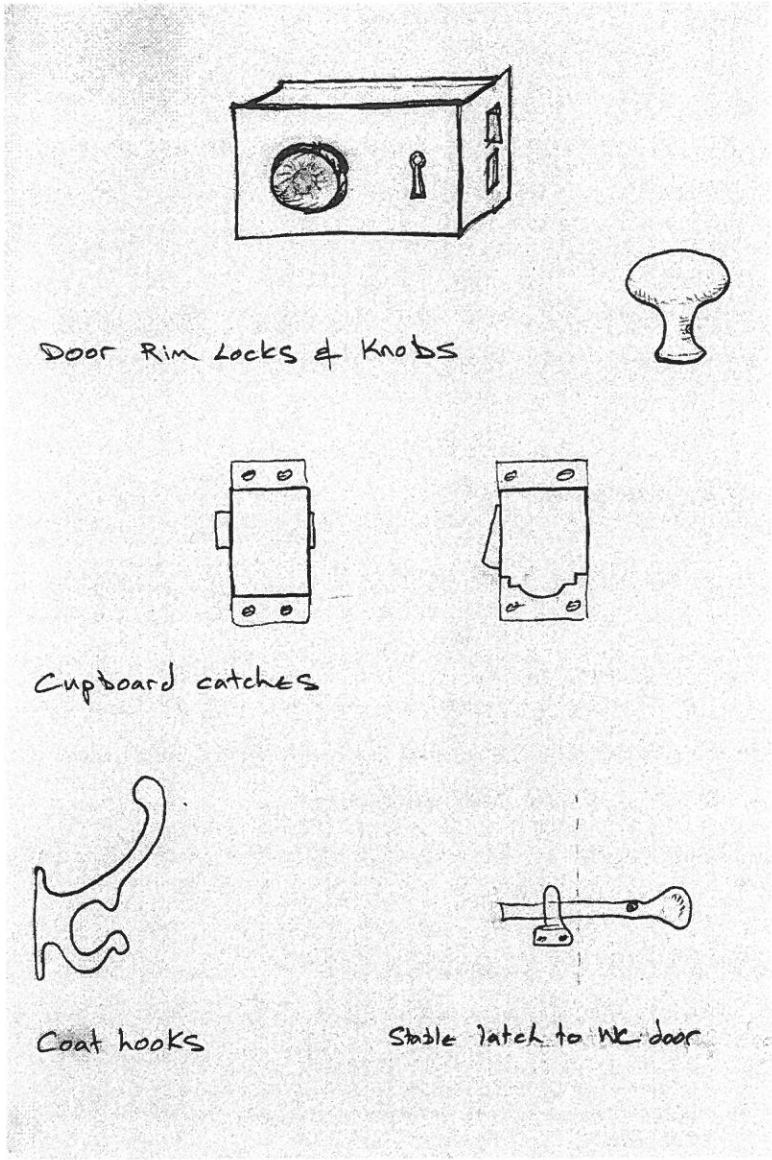
Ironmongery

Window Fasteners

The windows of the cottages would have originally had turn (Fitch) or swing fasteners to secure the sashes in the closed position and several of the cottages still have the original catches. It is possible to obtain replica catches from larger ironmongers of both types, although, sadly in these security conscious times the Fitch pattern turn fasteners are preferable to install as they are harder to open with a blade and obtain forced entry from the outside. There is also a more recent variant of the swing arm, called the Brighton pattern, with a tightening bolt at the end of the arm which are considerably more secure from forced illegal entry.

It is also easy to obtain modern window locks suitable for sliding sash windows, including concealed threaded bolts through the meeting rails but care should be taken with the positioning to minimise loss of strength to the mortice and tenon joints.


½"
2"
Architrave
metal gauze
Meat safe (Type 2)
Fitch type
Swing type
Window catches


Door Rim Locks & Knobs
Cupboard catches
Coat hooks
Stable latch to Mk door

The installation of sash stays which limit the height to which each of the sashes are opened can also discourage illegal entry whilst permitting useful ventilation.

Door Rim Locks

The main room doors would have originally had 4" high x 6" long metal rim locks and keeps to the door frames. These would have been mounted on the surface to the internal face of the doors with a keyhole to the outer face.

The design of the original locks is believed to have been fairly simple with shallow concave sides and small lip. The doorknobs are thought to have been a light brass extrusion rather than solid with a gentle non-circular side profile.

It is not certain whether the upstairs rooms all had lockable doors but it is highly likely that the front parlour would have been lockable and only unlocked for special occasions.

Cupboard Catches

The doors onto the bedroom cupboards would have originally had (1 ½" wide x 3" high?) metal rim locks to the internal face and small key to the outside. The design is quite fancy for a simple cupboard lock, although a plainer rectangular design has also been noted.

Coat Hooks

The layout of the Type 1 & 2 cottages provide little space for an entrance hallway and therefore the positioning of any coat hooks would have been in one of the main rooms. The size of the hallways in the Type 3, 4 & 5 cottages was more spacious and it can be seen from an old photograph that the coat hooks in one of the Type 5 cottages were originally quite substantial and ornate, with at least two hooks possibly on a timber batten.

Stable latch and bolt to w.c. door and lavatory roll holders

The outside w.c. is likely to have originally had a thumb stable door type flip up latch (Suffolk) which is still available today. However, there may have also been a traditional bolt to guard against unsuspected visitors.

The typical Victorian lavatory roll holder can be relatively ornate and frequently made in brass, although none of the original holders have been located to date for the cottages.

Pan Hooks

It is possible that metal pan hooks were positioned on the timber mantelpiece believed to have existed above the kitchen range but no record has as yet been found to provide confirmation.

Staircases

The Type 1 & 2 cottages are very different in layout, despite the apparent external similarities, and the Type 1 cottages effectively have a straight staircase off the hallway, whereas the Type 2 cottages have a tapered staircase off the rear room.

The staircases in the Type 5 cottages are similar to the Type 2 but extend an extra storey to the 2nd floor.

The staircase configuration and location is thought to have been similar in Type 3 & 4 cottages, although I have been unable to confirm this as access was not possible to the small number of cottages where alterations have not taken place.

The staircases are of timber construction with half-round nosed treads and simple risers, which may be tongued together.

The treads and risers being held in place by slots in the timber strings to each side and firmed up by triangular timber wedges hammered into place.

The addition of small diagonal blocks between the underside of the treads and back of the risers being possibly also original.

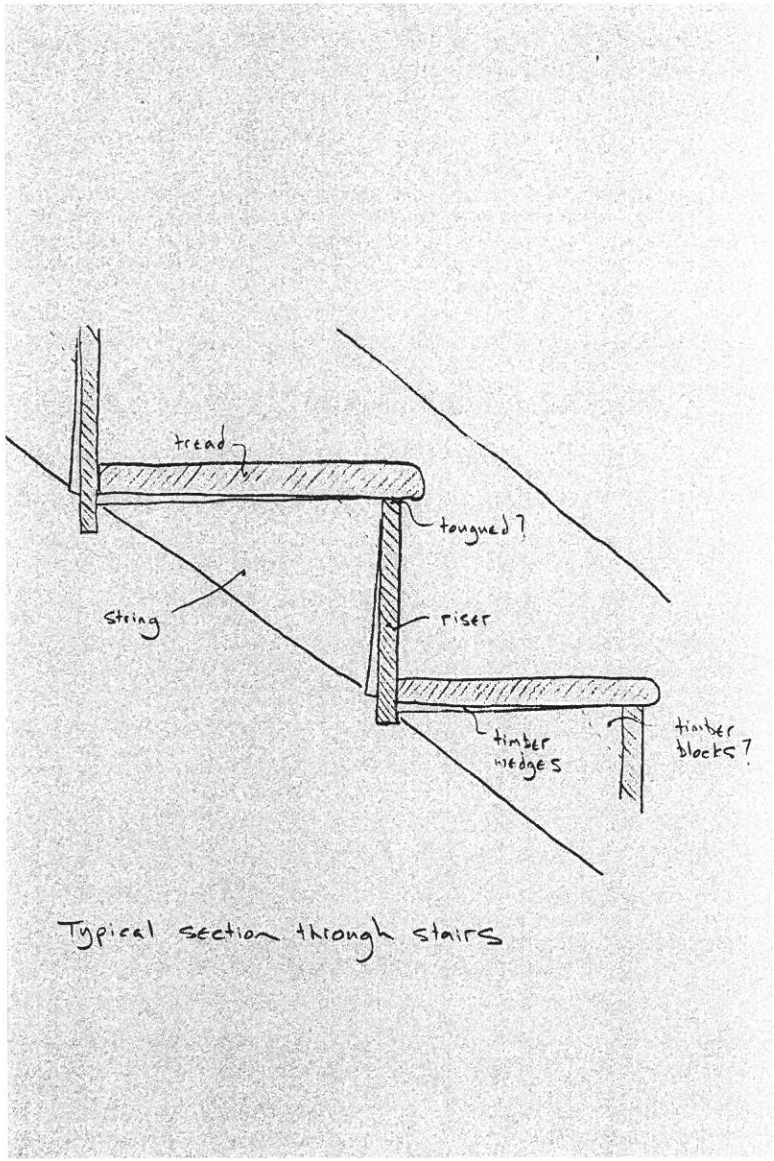
The blocks and timber wedges can work loose over the years and it is therefore advisable to overhaul the staircase occasionally to re-secure any dislodged wedges or unattached blocking pieces, which is a relatively simple operation where the underside is exposed.

However, the soffits to the larder in the Type 1 cottages were originally finished with lath and plaster to match the other ceilings and were gently curved on the underside of the top tapered landing and steps.

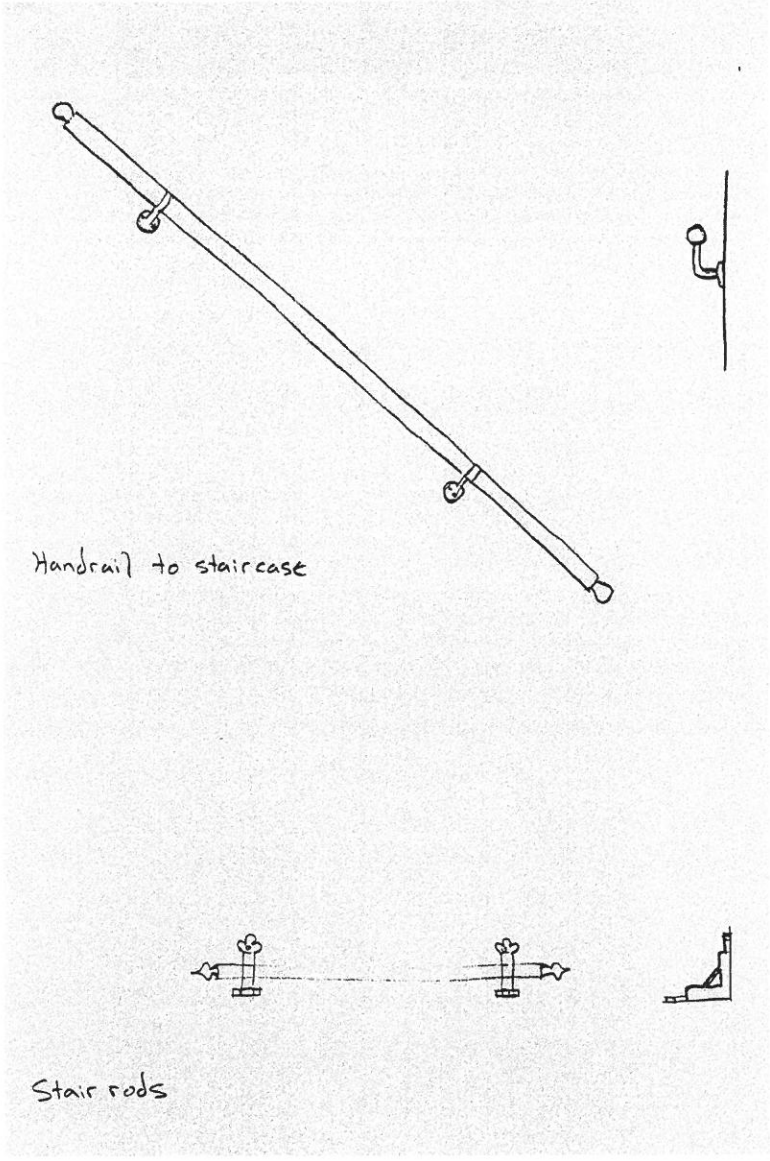
Handrail

The staircases are believed to have had a single handrail to the original staircases, which was made of cast iron barrel and wall brackets with circular knobs to each end of the rail. The design is rather utilitarian and ungraceful in appearance but the handrails are almost essential due to the steep gradient of staircases.

It is vaguely possible that the handrails were installed at a later date, say between 1920-50's, as the design is not particularly Victorian in character, but the cottages where they still exist tended to be the ones which had been altered the least and had kept many of the other original features.



Typical section through stairs



Handrail to staircase

Stair rods

Stair rods

The staircases are thought to have not been fully carpeted and originally had painted or grained varnished borders. It is therefore highly probable that approximately ¾ length stair rods were originally provided to secure linoleum in place.

The stair rods found in one of the cottages were lightweight brass triangular rods with spearheaded ends and solid brass decorative brackets of a matching design.

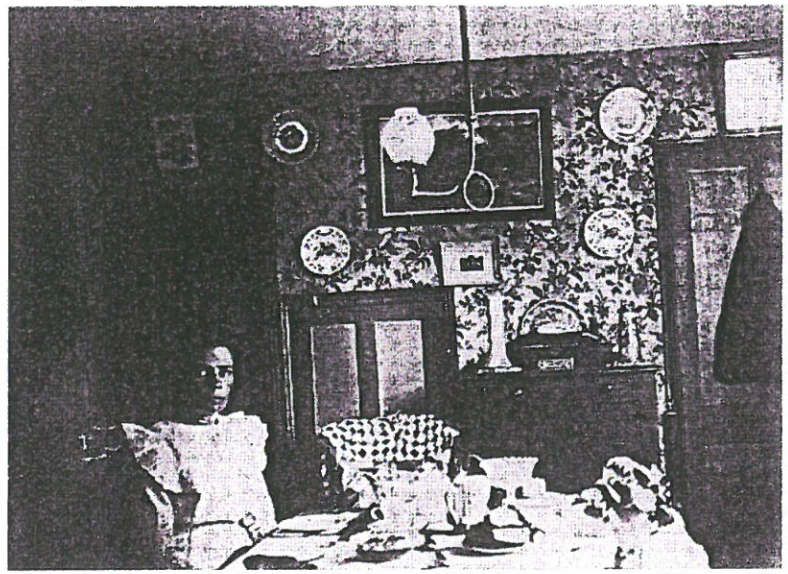
Larder

The Type 1 cottages are believed to have had a walk-in larder under the staircase, off the kitchen, and this had a series of half depth shelves.

The shelves were probably solid slate, or possibly stone, to help keep the foodstuffs cool and fresh, although the housekeeper of the family would have carried out daily shopping for most essentials. The standard food and household items being relatively limited in choice and the shopping list reminder boards of the day give a fascinating glimpse at what was generally available.

It is also likely that the tenants of the cottages grew their own vegetables in the gardens and possibly also raised chickens.

Design by William Morris



Winnie's mother in the kitchen of their cottage in Victor Road

Decoration and Floor finishes

Wallpapers

The tenants of the cottages were given a choice of wallpapers for decorating the rooms and redecoration was carried out on a regular basis, especially in the downstairs rooms, by the caretakers cum handymen of the Association.

The selection of wallpaper was probably rather garish with busy, flowery patterns to suggest wealth and it was not uncommon in Victorian times to place different patterned and coloured fabrics side by side with wallpapers and carpets. The overall appearance would have therefore been quite richly decorative and uncoordinated.

The beautiful designs produced by William Morris would have been popular at the time that the cottages were built but may have been used in grander houses and settings. However, more modest reproductions or variations on popular designs may have filtered through to the cottages.

The use of highly patterned wallpapers can be considered a little overpowering these days and therefore the use of William Morris or period-inspired wallpapers could be limited to one wall or chimneybreast to pleasing effect.

Limewash

The use of lime wash was popular in the Georgian and Victorian eras, especially in the service areas, such as the scullery. It is thought that blue limewash was used to the walls and ceiling of the scullery and this would have been applied on a frequent basis as and when the finish became chalky.

Limewash is difficult to clean, but lets moisture evaporate and was therefore favoured in rooms where water is used, and the frequent overcoating resulting in heavy brush stroke texture and varying depths of colour.

It is still possible through specialist suppliers to obtain genuine limewash in a limited selection of colours and can obviously provide an authentic appearance. However, traditional limewash will not adhere well to modern synthetic paints and should really be applied to bare plaster. Alternatively, composite paints are available that provide the benefits and distinctive appearance of limewash but include various binders to help it adhere to modern finishes.

The use of limewash can also in practice help towards alleviating problems with condensation and rising damp under certain conditions.

The tradition range of colours is shown on the colour card overleaf, although blending or thinning was commonly used.

Lime-Earth-Paints

Lime-earth paints, like limewash, have all the soft reflectivity and warm vibrancy that only lime and earth pigments when mixed together can give in both natural and artificial light.

This paint is not a flat paint, it absorbs, reflects and diffuses light in different ways, a three dimensional colour in every way. As early pigments are difficult to disperse evenly, quick mixing and uneven application in various directions creates a naturally occuring colourwash effect, with localised areas of stronger pigments appearing subtly across the surface of the wall.

Acrylic, accepted in conservation as an artificial ingredient has been added to replace traditional tallow or casein as a binder requiring no fungicides. It is non-toxic with a slightly sweet odour normally masked by other chemicals in emulsion paints.

Lime-earth paint can be used in place of emulsions and most internal paint, and as an external masonry paint. Its texture can bridge cracks to cover poor original plasterwork. It covers a range of substrates from previously painted surfaces, old lime plaster, modern gypsum plaster, lime or cement renders, brick, lining paper and untreated wood - tanins in wood may effect the colour.

This collection of colours give texture and depth of tone to suit both traditional and contemporary interiors. If used externally, rain will temporarily deepen the colour as will humidity when used internally. To visualise this transitional change of colour try damping the swatches.

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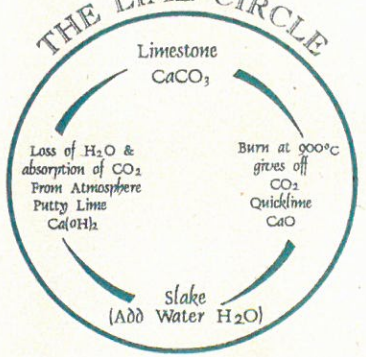
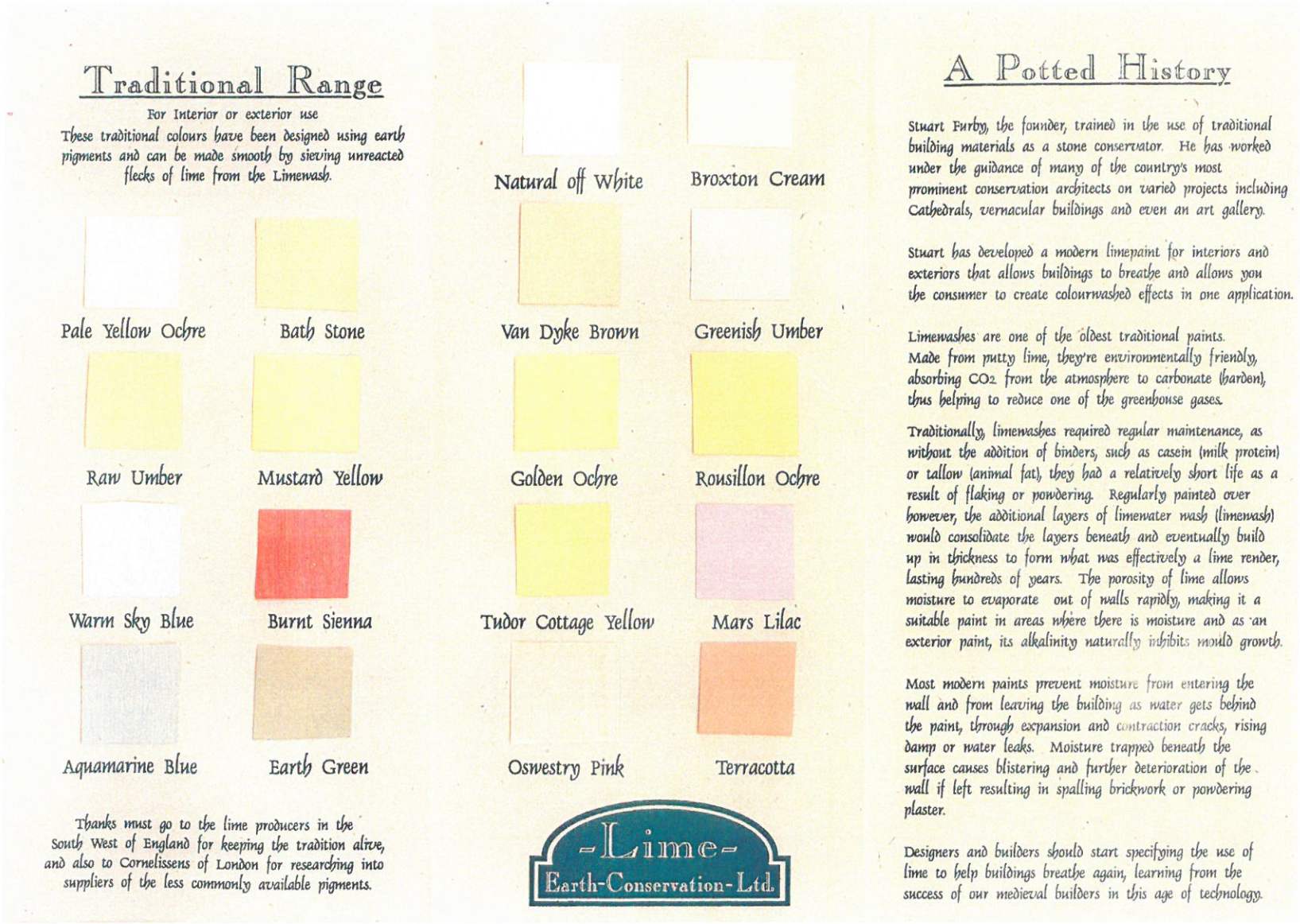
-Lime-
Earth-Paints

For Interior and Exterior decoration of modern and historic buildings



Manufacturers of Lime Paint, Lime Mortars & Plasters.
Traditional Plasterwork, Repairs to Old Buildings.

Lime Earth Paints



Colour Chart

Paintwork

The colour scheme adopted throughout the cottages is believed to have been "Olive" and "Cream" with the majority of the joinery painted a green olive colour and the door panels picked out in a yellow/brown off white. The rendered skirtings may have also have been painted the same olive colour.

It is unlikely that a high gloss finish would have been used originally on the woodwork and a "dead flat oil" is more likely, which gives similar durability but a matt finish.

The lath and plaster ceilings would have been painted in an off white as brilliant whites only really became available and popular during the "Queen Anne" period of the 1870's and 1880's. The cottages bear little resemblance to the typically finer and more expensive Queen Anne houses and the colour scheme of the cottages is likely to have been more old fashioned.

Olive and cream paintwork

The effect of gas lighting would also have been taken into consideration by selecting darker colours that would not show the dirt quite as readily and it was not until electric lighting was introduced that brilliant whites became more common.

Linoleum

The cottages were primarily for labourers, artisans and their families and it is likely that floor finishes were of linoleum sheeting or tiles, rather than fitted carpet or rugs. The exception being the kitchen where a 'rag rug' was often placed in front of the range.

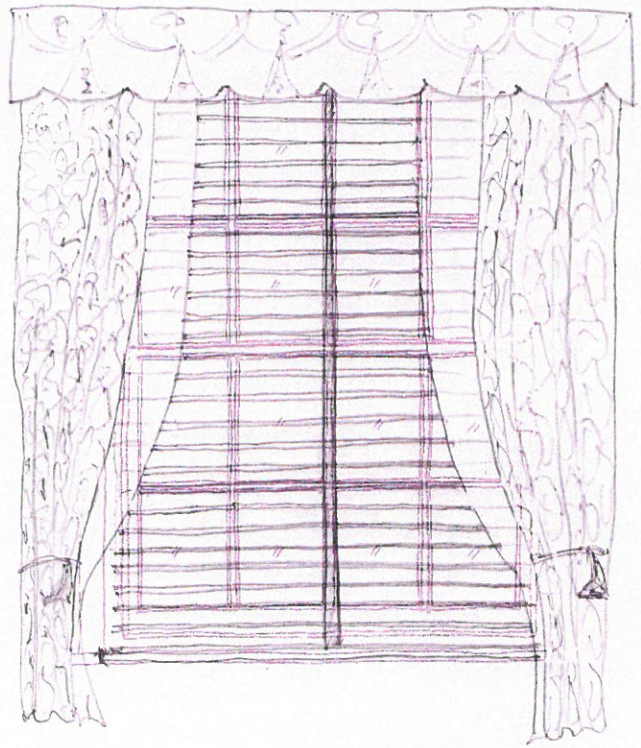
The colour schemes for linoleum were fairly austere by today's fashions and may have echoed the olive and cream paintwork in a chess board pattern or had a traditional marbled fleck on a plain background.

The Victorians were masters at the art of imitation and therefore linoleum with the appearance of marble would have been very much the order of the day. It is not known whether the Association provided furnishings to the cottages but the tenants may have acquired fitted carpets or additional rugs over the years, as the floorboards appear to have been left bare, even to the perimeter of the rooms.

Curtains and Blinds

The Victorians typically dressed their windows with wooden Venetian blinds, net curtains and curtains, often under a pelmet. I was therefore heartened to know that my contemporary wood blinds from those Scandinavian darlings "Ikea" are in fact appropriate and if you wait long enough, fashion will come back into vogue, even if it did take 140 years and was completely accidental.

Design by William Morris



Venetian blinds with net curtains, curtains and pelmit