



ONE HUNDRED YEARS

1922-2022

**The Origins of Wellington Gardens,
Battle's own "Cottage Garden Estate"**



Introduction

Battle residents are familiar with the housing development named Wellington Gardens, situated on the North Trade Road. Many locals have long connections to the estate, with family members living there for many years, some to the present day. But what were its origins? Why was it called Wellington Gardens? When was it built? Why was it originally surrounded by hedges giving a distinct "cottage garden" appearance? To answer these questions we first need to look at the housing situation nationwide in the aftermath of the First World War.

Post WW1 housing development – "homes fit for heroes"

Lloyd George made a promise to veterans returning from the horrors of WW1: that they should expect not only a better life than they had known pre-war, but that it would include "homes fit for heroes", built to a minimum standard to enable a better quality of life. 1917 had seen Christopher Addison placed in charge of a Ministry of Reconstruction, whose remit included reform not only of government administration, but also housing, women's roles,

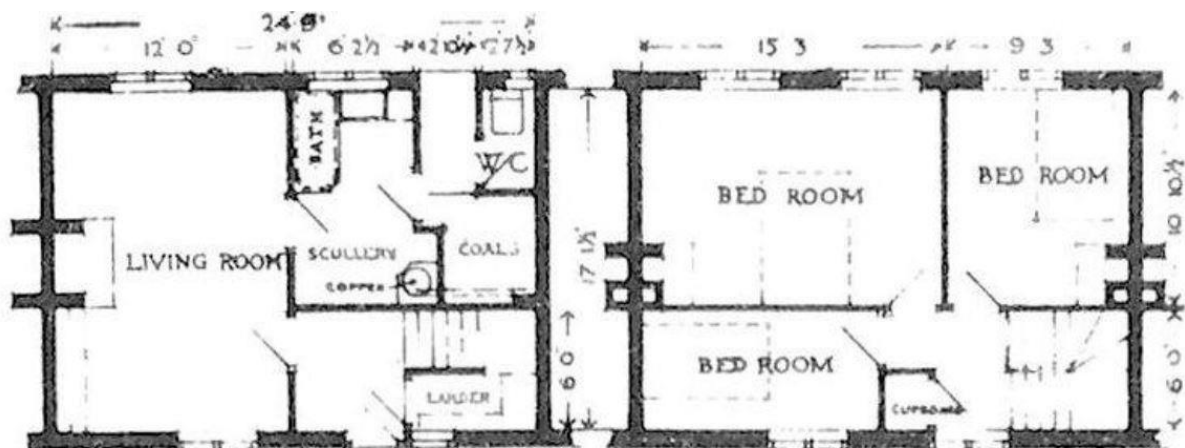


industrial relations and employment, the aim being to create a better society for the future. A scheme to subsidise new build housing was introduced in 1918, the forerunner of a wider reaching scheme enabling local authorities to provide housing as set out in the 1919 *Housing and Town Planning Act*, also known as the *Addison Act*.

The content of the act was heavily influenced by the 1918 Tudor Walters Report, or more properly the *“Report of the Committee Appointed to Consider Questions of Building Construction in Connection With the Provision of Dwellings for the Working Classes”*. Two members of the committee producing the report were Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker, who had designed private schemes such as New Earswick village in York for Rowtree chocolate workers and Letchworth Garden City, promoting healthy spacious homes in a novel “garden” setting. The report made recommendations for design of houses to be built by local authorities to a set size, a minimum building standard with facilities such as a bath in each home a requirement. Every house should have three bedrooms, a bath, a larder, hot water provided by a “copper”¹ plus WC and space for coal storage. Larger homes would have a “parlour” and a living room, others would just have a living room. Kitchens as such did not feature. At that time cooking would have been done in the living room using a “kitchen range”, a type of coal fired oven and hob. The scullery was the place for washing both dishes and laundry and would sometimes also include the bath, which was not always housed in a separate room. Five basic sample designs were provided in the report – A, B, C, D and E - to guide local authorities, who were permitted to have their own designs drawn up for the houses, as long as they were of a standard size and building quality and included the specified facilities.

Two examples, one each of a “parlour” and “non-parlour” type are shown below.

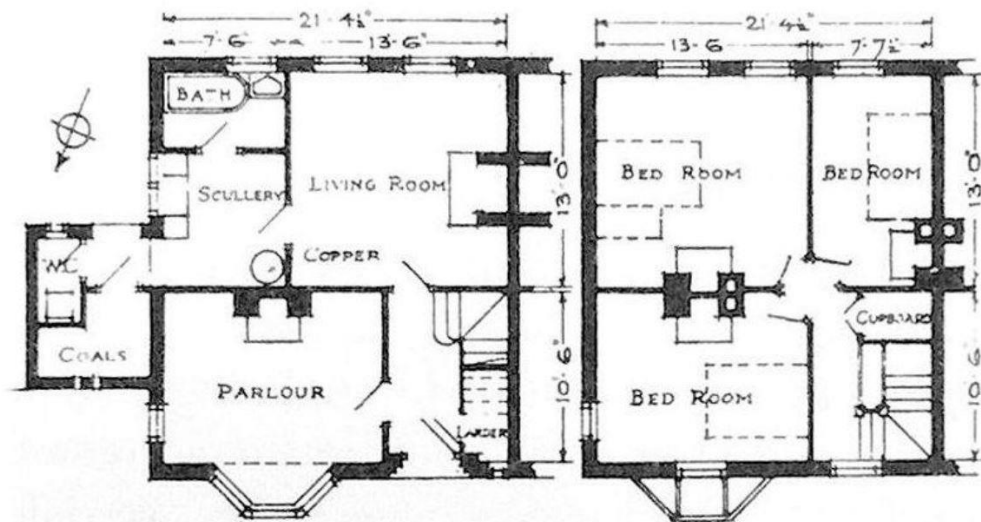
Tudor Walters Type “B”



¹ A “copper” was a large copper receptacle used to heat large amounts of water. Set in brick/stone in the corner of a scullery, it would have a wooden lid and room for a fire beneath to heat the water.



Tudor Walters Type "C"



The 1919 Act set out its own standards and designs for houses likely to be eligible under the scheme, similar to those in the Tudor Walters report, in *"The Manual on the Preparation of State-Aided Housing Schemes"*, which states that "The shortage of working-class housing accommodation is one of the most serious problems with which the country is faced". It advised that homes should be built at no more than twelve to the acre for urban schemes or eight for rural. In addition, the positioning of the houses should take account of the maximum opportunity for sunlight, important for health. Hedges were recommended as fencing where possible, schemes taking advantage of existing trees and shrubs as well as additional planting to ensure an attractive "garden" environment. All this very much reflected the pre-war planning Garden City ideals. The manual also recommended that, when considering the design of its houses, councils "will appreciate the importance of considering the arrangements from the point of view of the housewife, and for this purpose they will no doubt obtain the co-operation and advice of competent women". This, while welcome in that it gives a voice to women, seems to evidence the Government's relegation of women to their pre-war roles of home makers, despite the best efforts of Suffragettes.

The manual also set out in detail the scheme by which local authorities could apply for loans from the Public Works Loan Board to cover the costs of land purchase and construction of the homes and necessary infrastructure. Loans would generally be repayable in 60 or 80 years. In addition, the Ministry of Health would subsidise the cost of building to the value of all excesses that would result in an increase in the rate of over 1d in the £. This generally meant a 90% subsidy. The subsidy was calculated annually to ensure that sufficient income was generated from the rents. Local authorities were allowed for the first time to use powers of compulsory purchase to obtain suitable land, and once acquired, would need to employ architects to design homes to the specified standards, often tweaked to local



preferences and using locally available materials. Builders would then be invited to tender for the work. One major issue was the shortage of both skilled craftsmen and materials, which resulted in many tenders being too high to be approved by the Ministry, leaving councils unable to complete the schemes. Rents were affected too. The Housing Commissioner set the minimum rent for the houses to ensure that the sinking fund did not fall into deficit. However, this resulted in rents which were often too high for the average “working man”. The scheme under the 1919 Act was short lived, owing to the worldwide slump and its impact on Government finance; further schemes under Acts of 1923 and 1924 were introduced. But how did all this affect Battle?

Plans for a housing scheme – “the cry goes up for more houses”

As in the rest of the country post World War I, Battle had a shortage of housing for working men and their families. A survey of housing available, requested by W R Davidge, the Regional Housing Commissioner, found at least sixty homes in Battle of at best poor quality and at worst likely to be condemned as unfit for habitation. Consequently the Urban District Council decided to explore the possibility of building new homes, taking advantage of the funding subsidies available under the 1919 Act as described above. But where in Battle should they be built?

In April 1919 the Local Government Inspector was shown round proposed sites for a housing scheme in Battle, but had not been shown a potential site at what was locally known as Fair Field, more properly the Wellington Field, owned by the Battle Abbey Estate.² The Urban District Council decided, following the visit, to approach Sir Augustus Webster, owner of the Battle Abbey Estate, to see whether he would be willing to sell four acres of land at Fair Field for the housing development, offering £325 an acre³. Sir Augustus, however, was unfortunately not in agreement with the plan to build on the Fair Field. In April all the various possible sites for the development were discussed further by the council, causing a hot debate. Major Hay offered some of his land on the North Trade Road for the housing scheme, but this was rejected as being too far distant from the school and shops to be of use to families. Drainage and lighting would also pose problems. An alternative site was land between the Gas Works and the railway station (now occupied by Senlac Gardens), initially supported by Cllr Clements. This was rejected as being needed for the allotments it already housed, plus it was felt to be “too near the smell of gas” and “a cold and unhealthy site”.⁴ Cllr Tutt championed the use of the Fair Field for building, suggesting that hundreds of people in

² Fair Field likely got its name from being the location of the annual sheep fair. The Tithe map of 1859 names it as the Wellington Field.

³ Hastings and St Leonards Observer 1 March 1919

⁴ Hastings and St Leonards Observer 26 April 1919



the town supported him, stating that “There was only one place in Battle for building houses. That was at the back of the Police Station, where they could drain and have a gas lamp, or preferably an electric standard later on”. He went on to say “it would be one of the gladdest sights to any progressive man in this town, to any man with common sense, to see homes put up there in the sunlight with that beautiful view”.⁵ The council were convinced and took the decision to seek compulsory purchase of the Wellington Field should Sir Augustus continue to fail to agree to their request to purchase.

Discussion continued locally about the controversial scheme. A letter to the Hastings and St Leonards Observer suggested that the Gas Works field site, far from being an unsuitable place for housing, was in fact eminently suitable. Further, the hope was expressed that the new houses would be visually pleasing, not “brick boxes with slate lids”. By the end of May 1919 the council had heard from the Housing Commissioner that the Local Government Board would likely approve an extension of the scheme so that all sixty houses identified as of poor quality could be replaced. A decision was taken to seek to purchase the whole of the Wellington Field, seven acres in all, plus a strip of land at the rear, where fir trees grew. A fresh approach would be put to Sir Augustus to purchase the whole field, at a price of £800 as suggested by the District Land Valuer. Callow and Callow were engaged by the council as architects for the scheme. At the end of August the local newspaper reported that Sir Augustus Webster had refused to sell the land as “he does not consider it suitable”⁶ for the scheme, suggesting that the council would have to use their powers of compulsory purchase if they wanted to go ahead. Consequently in mid-September the Urban District Council voted to submit a compulsory purchase order for the land to the Ministry of Health for confirmation. By the end of November 1919 they heard that the Ministry of Health had approved the compulsory purchase of the Wellington or Fair Field.

While all this had been going on, Callow and Callow had been busy designing a scheme with housing which would meet the Government standards. The number of houses was agreed as sixty, forty non Parlour and twenty Parlour. Each type would have the prescribed three bedrooms, the largest with a floor space of 130ft, a living room of floor space 130 to 180ft, a parlour (where required) of 100ft floor space, a scullery, bathroom and “the usual offices”. The houses were to be arranged in groups of two and four and be a minimum of twenty feet from the road. The twenty seven blocks would be of five different designs, having tiled roofs, with brick, tile hung or rough cast walls as traditional in Sussex. In line with the recommendations set out by Government, the homes would take advantage of the maximum amount of sunshine, and externally would carry on the traditions of the locality. The average garden size in the “Cottage Garden Estate” would be one tenth of an acre, with

⁵ As note 4

⁶ Hastings and St Leonards Observer 30 Aug 1919



boundaries marked by hedges in the recommended manner, reflecting the trend for Garden Cities and Garden Estates. By 16 April 1920, Callow and Callow reported that the Ministry of Health had approved the housing scheme. The scheme was so well thought of that in June 1920 the drawings of the “Wellington Field” Scheme were chosen by the Ministry to be exhibited as part of the British delegation’s contribution to the Inter-Allied and Town Planning Congress held in the Central Hall, Westminster. The Congress was a pan-European meeting to consider the best ways to meet housing and town planning needs going forward in the aftermath of the First World War – the inclusion of Callow and Callow’s plans was a recognition of the high standard of their designs for Battle. At the Congress Lloyd George is reported as saying that “the main object is now to inspire the activities of local municipal authorities who were charged with the responsibility of fulfilling the urgent demand for housing throughout the country”⁷. Battle’s council certainly seemed to be taking its responsibility seriously.



The only obstacle remaining to the much admired scheme was now Sir Augustus Webster, owner of the land. The arbitration hearing to set the price for the land, eight acres at the Wellington Field, was set for June 25th at the Surveyors Institution, London. At this hearing, Sir Augustus’ true reason for not wanting the estate to go ahead was revealed when Leslie Viger, surveyor speaking for Augustus Webster, stated that “Sir Augustus Webster naturally did not want to have a lot of cottages there that could be seen from the Abbey”⁸. Sir Alexander Stenning, surveyor and architect for the claimants, had valued the land at £300 per acre, a total of £2,460. Leslie R Viger, also a surveyor for the claimants, estimated the value at £250 per acre. Mr A E Killick, formerly District Valuer for East Sussex for the Inland Revenue, valued the total land at £800. The amount to compensate the claimants, Sir Augustus Webster as tenant for life of the Battle Abbey Estate and the trustees Sir Thomas Herbert Cochrane Troubridge and Colonel Norman A Corry, was finally announced as £1,163. The

⁷ Dundee Evening Telegraph 4 June 1920

⁸ Hastings and St Leonards Observer 3 July 1920



council immediately set about getting Ministry approval for an application for a Government loan of £1,350 to enable them to make the purchase, which was granted by the Ministry of Health by mid-September 1920. It was now “full steam ahead” for Battle’s exciting new housing scheme!

Work begins on the new scheme

Requests for tenders to build 60 houses had been advertised by Callow and Callow in early July 1920, and on 4 September the Council accepted that of R Cook and Sons of Crawley to complete the work at a rate of £913 per home. Applications were invited for the post of “clerk of the works” to oversee the day to day running of the project for the council. By the end of September local papers reported that work had begun on the scheme – clearing a hedge around the Wellington Field - and by October construction had begun, starting at the western corner. The site was described as being of “admirable position and outlook” flooded in the October sunshine, an aspect viewed by the Government as so important for health of the new tenants.

In January 1921 controversy was initiated when a last minute change was proposed by the Land Commissioner that all the houses should be of “parlour” type, as being cheaper than “non-parlour”. The Council firmly rejected this, on the grounds that not only had the scheme progressed too far for change, but the original plans suited the needs of the town best. The council was pressed further on this decision by the Land Commissioner, who suggested that they may not have fully understood his reasons behind the suggestion, which was that non-parlour houses, costing £921 to build, were more expensive than parlour houses at £879, and yet a higher rent could be commanded by the cheaper parlour houses which made the change very economically desirable. With twenty two non-parlour houses yet to be built, a meeting was scheduled with the Land Commissioner. Council was opposed to the change as it felt that parlours were often of little practical use and often just for “show” or on Sundays and suggested that little saving would be made by the time contractors had been compensated for the change. A letter to the Sussex Agricultural Express gives insight into a very different view on whether workers should be allowed parlours in their homes. Sunday, it argues, is the one day of the week a worker has time to use his parlour, and “why should not the workers have a little comfort in their homes as well as those who do not work?” and “If it was necessary for the worker to have a little comfort in his home before the war, why should they be worse treated now? Is that the way to uplift human life, especially as we learn the houses with an extra room are cheaper to erect?”⁹ Following a further meeting of the housing committee, it transpired that the figures quoted by the Land Commissioner were incorrect, parlour houses would cost £897, not £879 to build, reducing

⁹ Sussex Agricultural Express 4 November 1921



the potential saving if the change to parlour houses were made. Bearing this in mind and following a visit to the site, the Land Commissioner agreed with the Council that the scheme was indeed too far advanced for any changes to be made.

The next difficulty to be encountered was the provision of a sewer, gas, roads and water for the new development. The council had hoped that monies for a new sewer running from the corner of Mount Street to the new homes, costing £1,176, could be charged to the Government as part of the new scheme. If the council were to be liable it would mean a further 3d on the rates, which the council was eager to avoid. By April 1921 an estimate of £1,500 for a new water main from Police Station was supplied to the Housing Commissioner. The new main would leave the supply to the Workhouse (now Frederick Thatcher Place), already paid for by the Guardians, undisturbed, meaning that no monies from the Guardians would be lost. April moved into May and still no decision had been communicated by Government on who would pay for the sewer and water main to the new estate. The council was becoming concerned as already fourteen houses were ready for occupation apart from sewage and water mains. Eventually the Ministry confirmed that both the sewage and the supply of water were public health matters and therefore payment for them was the responsibility of the council and ultimately the ratepayers. The Clerk, F C Sheppard, informed councillors that he had written to the ministry querying the decision as the 1919 Act stated that "incidental and consequential provisions necessary for a housing scheme" ¹⁰ could be included in the claim for assistance. There was even discussion of seeking legal counsel on the point, but, as Councillors Sinden and Tutt pointed out, this would be costly and cause further delay to occupation of the much needed homes. A Government loan would be sought to cover the cost.

Even so, the debate rumbled on through the summer. R Cook and Sons provided an estimate for construction of a water main for the houses which the Housing Ministry felt was too high. In August the tender for the sewer was deemed by the Ministry as too high, given the reduction in cost of materials since the original estimate had been provided. The Council became concerned that they could be blamed for the delay in water supply and sewage arrangements causing the houses not to be occupied and rental income therefore lost. It was not until early October 1921 that the estimate for the provision roads and sewers for the new houses from R Cook and Sons of £3896 was finally agreed. At last thought could be given to the rents and criteria for acceptance of new tenants.

¹⁰ Bexhill Observer 4 June 1921



Choosing the tenants for “Wellington Gardens”

The Ministry asked the Council to supply details of prevailing rents in the town, average wages of the likely tenants and local industries in order to assist them in agreeing the rents for the new homes. The Council agreed 7s¹¹ as the figure for prevailing rents in the town, but with industries as diverse as jam making, tanning, coach building, agriculture and general trade an average wage was difficult to assess. Not until early December did the Sussex Express report the basis for rents and criteria on which tenancies would be allotted. Applications would be considered in three groups, with ex-servicemen in any of the groups being given preference. These were, in order of preference, as follows: firstly) local applicants; then secondly) people from outside the district but employed in the district; and thirdly) people neither living nor employed in the district. Councillors agreed that the homes facing the North Trade Road and those facing the triangle at the entrance should command a higher rent as being more desirable. Having sought advice as to whether they would be allowed to set differentiated rents, the council learnt by late December that the Ministry would agree to this provided they could find tenants willing to pay for the best positions. The Council agreed that the name of the new development should be “Wellington Gardens”, a name which reflected both the historic name of the land on which it was built and the “Garden Estate” style of development of which it was a good example.

By late December the clerk reported that of the eighty expressions of interest received over the past months, fifty had responded positively to his enquiry as to whether they still wanted to rent one of new homes. He also advised that there were more applicants for the better “houses in front positions” than there were homes to supply. In other good news it was reported that the Ministry of Health had accepted R Cook and Sons tenders for laying a cast iron water main of £736, plus £1,300 for the sewer and had sanctioned a loan to cover the cost. Gas was an issue yet to be dealt with. Weekly rents were finally agreed as 12s 6d for front parlour houses; 11s for rear parlour houses and 10s for front non-parlour houses and 9s for rear non-parlour houses, all well above the council’s estimate of a 7s average rental for a home in Battle at that time. Indeed, by March 1922 it was noted, unsurprisingly with hindsight, that only one application for a Wellington Gardens home had come from someone currently renting one of the sixty homes the scheme was designed to replace. These were certainly not the “affordable homes” that councils were expected to provide in later years and rents were out of the reach of many Battle residents, as is born out in the following reports. In 1924, for example, the Bexhill-on-Sea Observer, reported that a Mr Hobday of Mount Street had been offered a house in Wellington Gardens by his landlord, Mr Douch, but Hobday was adamant that he could not afford the rent of a Wellington Gardens house. Indeed by November 1926 the Hastings and St Leonards Observer reported that certain housing in Battle was insanitary and should be demolished, noting that, despite

¹¹A note on pre-decimal currency: d = penny; s = shilling. 12d = 1s; 20s = £1.



Wellington Gardens having been built to replace it, the current occupants of Wellington Gardens were not “people of the working class in the widest sense”. Indeed, in May 1927 it was reported that two of the homes were occupied by Police Constables (a relatively well paid occupation) and that a third had applied for one, suggesting that the Police Force did not have enough of its own housing to supply its force and were depriving poorer locals of homes meant for them. Rates for the new homes were set at £25 and £28 10s per annum for parlour houses and £22 10s and £20 for non-parlour houses, adding to the cost of the already expensive houses.

By early 1922 there were still no tenants occupying the new homes. Eventually, in 1925, this lost the Council £100 from the grant for the housing expected from the Ministry, who withheld the money as the homes had not been occupied as soon as they could have been. This, the Ministry claimed, had lost the Council three months rental income on all the houses and justified the reduction in the grant.

The first tenants arrive

Final preparations were made in Spring 1922 for the arrival of the tenants. Permission for the Battle Gas Company to lay the gas main under the footpath was granted subject to it being re-instated. Connection to the main and supply of meters and fittings would be charged to the tenant. The Sussex Agricultural Express noted in February 1922 that the homes had been built with water butts, described as an eyesore, looking like something from “Ali Baba and the forty thieves”. They were most disliked by the prospective tenants and indeed shortly after tenants moved in became something of an issue when water from them flooded the bathrooms of some of the houses. Even as late as April 1922 the occupation of the homes was being delayed by the laying of the sewage and water mains. Tenants asked for permission to store furniture in the homes prior to moving in, but this was refused on the grounds that once furniture was moved in, they would be liable for rates. On 29th April the Hastings and St Leonards Observer reported that the first ten or twelve homes would be ready for occupation on 1st May – some full twenty months on from the start of the project. The whole estate was expected to be completed by the end of the summer. Early May saw regular furniture removals into the new homes reported in the local newspaper.

One of the first new tenant families¹² was that of Ted Nash, a Battle born man with his own business as a fishmonger and poulterer, at 52 High Street. The family of five including two girls aged eleven and seven, and a boy aged four, had previously lived above the shop and

¹² A list of residents of Wellington Gardens 1923-1930 can be found in the Appendix



Ted and Bertha Nash, at their new home.

L to R: Bertha, Doreen, Edna, Cecil (Bill) in toy car, unknown friend, Ted

were looking forward to the opportunity of moving to a brand new house at number 7 Wellington Gardens, with a garden for the children and, more exciting still, a plumbed in bath. This was for them, and many others at the time, a huge improvement on their current living conditions. Doreen Nash, a child of seven in 1922, recalled the prospective move as being very much looked forward to. The only modern convenience it would lack was electric light, which they had been used to at 52 High Street where a supply had been made available from electricity generated by Jenner's Mill at the rear of no. 52. Ted's nephew, Sid Holland, had been involved in making this electricity supply available while working at Slade's Electricians.

Ted was not the only local businessman linked to the new Wellington Gardens. Ted's brother in law, Alf Holland, butcher of 20 High Street, seeing a business opportunity in the new estate, opened a new shop - what we would now call a convenience store - close to the estate on North Trade Road, known as the Wellington Stores. Shops in the High Street would have been some distance for the new occupiers of the estate to walk to – the site now housing Jempson's supermarket was at that time still a cattle market. A notice posted in the local paper indicates that it would sell everything from fruit, veg and flowers, to cold meats, tobacco, sweets, butter cream, milk and even fresh meat brought up from his High Street shop. Deliveries would be made to Catsfield and Crowhurst by motor delivery van on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, leaving at 10am, supplementing the business from the



new estate. In the Hastings and St Leonards Observer of 29th May 1922 Alf Holland “begs to inform the residents of Battle and District that his new premises at Wellington Gardens will be opened on 29th May, with goods of quality and price to suit all requirements”. Certainly deliveries by “motor delivery van” were very up to date for the time and show Alf Holland to have been a keen entrepreneur! The residents of Wellington Gardens benefitted from the local store for many years.

The end of the story

By mid-June the housing site was near completion with most of the homes occupied. The roads were being laid out, turf laid and the estate was taking on a “trim appearance”.¹³ In August 1922 the council agreed that Wellington Gardens should be lit – the Gas Co would be informed of the number of lamp standards the council would provide. Callow and Callow were asked to prepare estimates for kerbing the green at the entrance to Wellington Gardens, plus the footpath as far as the top of the green. However, the supply of gas and street lighting had yet to be delivered when the first tenants moved in. Heating and cooking would have been by solid fuel (wood or coal) and lighting by candles and/or oil lamps at this stage, hardly a modern home by today’s standards! In November 1922 the Battle Gas and Coke Co. applied to the Ministry for assistance with the cost of connecting the houses to the mains and supplying fittings. They wanted £900 to help them with costs as they were a small company. They further announced that they would charge tenants £5 to supply and fit cookers, payable by cash or quarterly instalments. Not until March 1923 did the Ministry agree a grant of £200 towards laying on gas, on condition that the Company would supply all meters, light fittings and complete installation without additional charge (except for gas cookers). Meanwhile the Council faced further expense when the Lamplighter applied for an increase of 3s in his wage to account for the additional gas street-lights he would have to light in Wellington Gardens. The difficulties in getting a gas supply to the homes rumbled on for several years. In June 1924 the Council had yet to hear from the Gas Co. as to when all the new homes would be supplied and letters were sent to try to speed things up. By October 1925 there was still no gas and the Battle Gas and Coke Co had been taken over by the Hastings Gas Co. who had requested assistance from the Ministry with the cost of laying on the main. By June 1926 work was still not completed and in January 1927 the Ministry ruled that the original agreement no longer stood as only eighteen of the sixty houses had been supplied since the agreement to assist with costs had been made.

Alongside the issues with gas, water supply to the new estate was a concern which was discussed by Councillors. The Hastings and St Leonards Observer reported in May 1924 that the new houses meant that an additional 276,250 gallons of water were being consumed

¹³ Sussex Agricultural Express 23 June 1922



every month – no doubt partially as a result of the plumbed in baths! There were serious concerns that the water supply would fail in a dry summer and that there would be no surplus to put out a major fire. The Water Committee duly commissioned an engineer to assist in preparation of a scheme to increase the town's water supply.

The high rents very soon became an issue for the tenants, with 61 tenants signing a petition in January 1923 for a reduction in the rent. The Ministry of Health was approached for advice. Councillors, concerned at the plight of some of their tenants, requested the Ministry approve rents of 10s for a front parlour house; 9s for a back parlour house; 8s for a front non-parlour and 7s for a back non-parlour house. The response from the Ministry was that a home with a living room, scullery and three bedrooms (non- parlour) could have a rent no lower than 8s 9d per week, while one with a parlour, living room, scullery and three bedrooms could be no lower than 10s 6d per week, both, it must be remarked, well above the average rent for Battle of 7s previously quoted by the Council. The Council agreed reductions as follows: Front parlour houses reduced from 12s 6d to 11s; back parlour houses from 11s to 10s 6d; front non-parlour houses from 10s to 9s 3d and back non-parlour houses from 9s to 8s 3d.

Tenants were still running into debt, however, with twenty five being identified as rate defaulters by May 1924 and there were suggestions that the rents were still too high, despite the reduction, in the current depressed economic climate. The Sussex Agricultural Express reported that month that Cllr Mephram had stated, at a meeting of the Urban District Council discussing the matter, "the houses were built for the working people but a working man could not live there unless he let part of his house". He suggested that restrictions on re-letting the homes should be removed and that rents should be inclusive of rates to make budgeting easier while the Hastings and St Leonards Observer reported that "many of the working class people said that if they paid their rates every week they would not get behind so much". Cllr Woodhams commented that even the current rents by no means provided a return on the capital outlay made by the Council on the scheme – he did not see why the housing should be further subsidised by rate and taxpayers. Mr Jenkins, the Wellington Gardens representative on the council, said that the twenty five rate defaulters confirmed that the rents were too high for most people. In Dec 1924 £10 rent arrears was written off by the Council – Cllr Woodhams suggested that this could be avoided in future if more attention was paid to applicants' financial situation. Not until April 1928 did the Ministry of Health finally approve collection of inclusive rents and rates, provided they were increased according to any rate increase.



Finally, having sorted out water supplies, gas supplies and sewage disposal, fresh controversy arose with the potential to supply electricity to the homes in 1928. Should cables to supply the electricity be underground or over-ground? The town surveyor consulted the Hastings Borough Electrical Engineer for advice. The Urban District Council was advised that the additional cost to lay underground cables to the front of Wellington Gardens would be £119, with a free connection to any house within 60ft of the cable. If overhead power lines be used, free connection could be provided to a distance of 130ft. The council agreed that overhead lines from the Police Station to the end of Wellington Gardens would be “unsightly”¹⁴ and should be avoided, but they would, however, be used in North Trade Road beyond Wellington Gardens. Debate, however, continued and by October the Council had decided to merely state its preference for underground cabling, rather than objecting formally to overhead wiring. By 21 December the Sussex Express reported that several residents of Wellington Gardens had already had their homes wired in readiness for the electricity supply and did not mind whether it came over or under ground as long as they had a supply. Indeed one was reported as having had gas installed as they were tired of waiting for electricity. It was not until as late as 1931, however, that Wellington Gardens seemed to have a means of electric lighting to all its homes. In February that year the Electricity Co. applied to erect poles to supply the homes as most residents wanted electric light – something we take for granted now. Underground supply would carry prohibitive costs and the council agreed to the erection of the poles. The supply to Wellington Gardens is still by overhead lines to this day.

In conclusion

Apart from a few remaining issues – a gas lamp standard was moved in 1935 following a petition so that the road outside nos. 16-20 would be better lit and a delay in making up the road in 1938 – work to the “Cottage Garden Estate” was complete by the early 1930s. Whether the homes, initially without means of lighting other than by candles or oil lamps and without means of cooking or heating other than by fire were “fit for heroes” returning from World War One is open to debate. Certainly they were better than the other accommodation available at the time and perhaps should not be judged by today’s standards. The “Garden Estate” layout favoured by Government provided a pleasant environment in which to live and the site had been chosen and houses designed to take full advantage of sunshine and, before further housing was built in North Trade Road, all with a wonderful view, partially saved, at least, by the Recreation Ground sited opposite. It was, and still is, conveniently placed for access to the town and its facilities; no doubt Sir Augustus Webster was fully aware of its potential for development and this may have been a further explanation of his reluctance to sell. Many families, just as the Nash family had been, would have been very pleased to live in a new house with running water, plumbed in

¹⁴ Sussex Agricultural Express 14 September 1928



baths and a good sized garden. A further detailed study would be needed to find out exactly how many of the initial occupants had actually fought in World War One, the “heroes” for which the homes had been provided – certainly Ted Nash had been exempt and had not had any war service other than with the Cinque Ports Rifle Volunteers towards the end of the war. Cross referencing the list of residents in 1923 (See Appendix) with the list of “Those Who Survived” in George Kiloh’s *The Brave Remembered*, which details the First World War service of local men, reveals only six names appearing in both, although a few more, such as Percy Wait, may have become tenants later. It seems puzzling that the rents were set too high for the people who really needed the housing – those living in the sixty homes the estate was built to replace - with the first tenants instead being in good jobs, some even with their own business. This, of course, was largely not the Council’s fault – they were tied to the minimum rents set by Government. The council seemed at times unprepared for the finer detail of the scheme to fund the building of the homes (although perhaps this rings true even today of Government funded schemes?), for example not realising the additional costs of water and sewage the rates would have to bear. Cllr Tutt and some of his colleagues on the council such as Sinden and Clements are revealed as champions of the working man in Battle, deserving of recognition, as without their vision and determination several generations of Battle residents would have been the poorer.

Georgina Doherty

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Appendix – Residents of Wellington Gardens 1923-1939

No	Name 1923 – Pike's Directory	Name 1930-Pike's Directory	Name 1939 Register
1	Miss Wingrove	James Jenkins	Leslie Crouch
2	Walter Heron	Alfred Edmonds	Alfred H Edmonds
3	Miss Fox and Miss Denny	Mrs Oliver	Emily Oliver
4	P Piper	Mrs A Connock	William H Cooper
5	Mrs Moss	Miss C E Moss	Charles Chacksfield
6	H Hardiman	H Hardiman	Henry Hardiman
7	T E Nash	T E Nash	Herman C Portch
8	F H Fletcher	Mrs Russell	Albert S (Solomon A) Spray
9	L E Jezzard	George Dann	George H Dann
10	R A Lusty	R A Lusty	
11	Charles Balfour	Charles Balfour	Emily E Russell
12	J H Blackman*	E V Page	Henry C Hutchinson
13	Mrs Rowe	William L Lowry	Clifford H Crouch
14	James Glazier	James Glazier	Ronald J Freeland
15		Harold James Walters	Harold J Walters
16	Arthur Goodsell	Arthur Goodsell	Frank T Hussey
17	George Parkes	George Parkes	George Parkes
18	H C Stonestreet	H C Stonestreet	Henry S Stonestreet
19	W R Weller	James Pierce	James Pierce
20	S Virgo	B Hobday	Benjamin T Hobday
21	W Watson	W Watson	Benjamin Miller
22	William Smith	Herbert Thomas Hurl, Walter Heron	Benjamin Taylor
23	Miss Danks	Mrs Miller	Douglas Spence
24	R Pearson	R Pearson	Reginald Pearson
25		P J W Tookey	Percy J W Tookey
26	Mrs Fuller	P J Wrenn	Percy J Wrenn
27	C P Priest	C Unicombe	Robert Lowther
28	F R Sayers	Charles R Fuller	Winnifred R Gates
29	W Bignell	Albert Marchant	Albert Marchant
30	H E Crouch*	H Crouch	Henry F Crouch
31	W Barnard	W D Christian	William D Christian
32	H H Avann	F H Avann	Percy J Relf
33	Frank Brown	Frank Brown	Leslie G Dann
34	S Torstick	Frank Harris	Charles E G Christian
35	W Thomas	C E Gaymer	Frank Harris
36	Mrs E Pritchard	James Francis	James Francis
37	Arthur Oliver*	Sidney Walter Tickner	Walter L Smith
38	John Mitchell	John Mitchell	John Mitchell
39	F Winchester	Percy Wait	Ellen Wait



No	Name 1923 – Pike’s Directory	Name 1930-Pike’s Directory	Name 1939 Register
40	W J Holland*	W J Holland	
41	F Ballard	Frederick Ballard	Elizabeth Ballard
42	Bertram Winchester	Bertram Winchester	Bertram Winchester
43	Robert Suggitt*	Robert Suggitt	Robert Suggitt
44		Owen Albert Wren	Edith Wrenn
45	George Cosham	J H R Marchant	John T R Marchant
46	Mrs Foster	C Gander	Charles Gander
47	Miss Thompson	Tom Crowhurst	Beatrice E Crowhurst
48	Harold Pont	Harold Pont	Harold Pont
49	William T Simmons		James H Blackman
50	Miss Cocking	John William Brackpool	John W Brackpool
51	James Jenkins	Mrs Bell	Emme L Bell
52	C H Sutton	Mrs Saxby	Florence K Saxby
53	Harry Sellens	Ernest Victor Hewson	Arthur S Potter
54	W T Cruse	Frederick Cruttenden	Florence A Champion
55	J Harris*	Henry Sargent	Cecil H Unicombe
56	A Humphrey	A Humphrey	Alfred Humphrey
57	J N Ball	N R Bull	William T Robins
58	R P Spreadbury	A A Austin	Harry Lawton
59	L Heather	T Scarlett	Thomas H Scarlett
60	O Butler-Browne		Frederick J Bashford

*Names which appear in the list of local survivors of the First World War in *The Brave Remembered*