

Transcript

This podcast brings to life a chapter from my PhD thesis 'Back-to-back houses and their communities in 21st century Leeds.' If you're not already familiar with the form and general history of back-to-back houses, you might want to check out my blogs or articles first – see <https://harrisonarchitecturalheritage.co.uk/about/publications>

Here, the focus is on life in the back-to-back houses in Harehills in the early to mid-20th century. Daily routines will be explored through the lives of three case study families, told by three oral history participants who knew them, with contributions from a further seven former residents and two memoirs written by former residents.

The first family are the Crosslands who lived at 30 Bexley Grove. Frank 26, his Wife Lilian and son George, 2, moved into the house in 1910. Frank and Lilian later became the grandparents of Patricia, who contributed to this research. She grew up in the house herself. The family stayed in the house until 1988.

Ernest Armitage (39) and wife Mary (29), with children James (8), Mary (6), Francis (4) and Ernest (2) lived at a shop-house at 52A Harehills Road / 87 Bayswater Row from 1912 to 1955. Francis was the father of Mary, another oral history interview participant. She regularly visited her grandmother during her childhood in the 1940s and 50s.

Finally, James Fraser (47) his wife Mary (46), and their daughters lived at 21 Darfield Road from 1912 to 1956. They were the neighbours of Jean, an oral history participant.

I'll start by introducing the neighbourhood, and then I'll move on to the houses.

Harehills was described as being a healthy neighbourhood, and Wood (1994, 47) notes that it was considered to be "posh". This is certainly a key theme in the oral history evidence, indicating that its reputation as a good neighbourhood persisted for several decades.

They always said that when they moved to Harehills they felt that they'd really come up in the world because they'd moved into a scullery house.

While the built environment may have been superior in terms of its sanitary and drainage provision, and its then proximity to countryside, the reality of living in a densely populated area close to industry, could be rather different.

The district... was alive with the sights and sounds of small factories... the clatter of horses hooves and rattle of carts moving up and down the streets delivering and collecting goods from the factories was heard throughout the day. Occasionally black smoke issued from the factory chimneys, causing a soot-laden atmosphere.

Not only that, the experience of home varied depending on the orientation of the house.

We got the sun, all the time. And the houses facing... they were like 10° colder... my mother was always 'I wouldn't want to live on the other side of the street.' Or sometimes... we used

to have all our curtains drawn to keep the sun out and then you could go over the road into somebody's house and they might have a low fire on.

Living in Harehills did however, bring many advantages, not least the convenience of trams and the many shops. A small study of businesses operating between 1897 and 1906 shows that turnover was varied, with some proprietors operating only fleetingly, while others were present for several years. Most shops specialised in a limited range of products, for example food shops sold either general grocery, green grocery, confectionery, meat or fish. It was only when they grew larger, perhaps taking over an adjacent property, that they might sell both general grocery and meat for example. This long-term investment in the area and the apparent willingness for newcomers to begin trading suggests that the community was economically sustainable, if not buoyant. This is further supported by the known presence of organisations familiar today such as the Co-operative Society, the Town Sub-Post and Money Order Office, and the London City and Midland Bank.

The former residents of Harehills remember a tight-knit community, not least because families often lived nearby. There is a sense that while neighbours treated each other as equals, they recognised that some families needed support, and were willing to assist.

She loved it, all the neighbours were nice and... you never felt envious of anybody else's house.

You'd see people up and down the street borrowing dining room chairs and that if you had a visitor.

In the case of Mr and Mrs Fraser, there was evidently trust between neighbours, genuine affection, and a desire to nurture a mutually beneficial relationship.

I used to go round for handwriting lessons and... he got me to enter handwriting competitions and if I didn't win he was bitterly disappointed... They were very precise, older people... It was very sad. Having encouraged me all the way with my schoolwork... Mr Fraser died a couple of days before I... passed my eleven plus so he never knew. Mrs Fraser was absolutely distraught. She said 'Oh... he would have been so happy Jean.'

It is not surprising, given these relationships, that many former residents recall their time in Harehills with great fondness. For some, the feeling is so strong, they are drawn back to the area, never able to fully leave the place behind them – the intangible aspects of their lives are absolutely embedded in the physicality of the neighbourhood.

I had a nice life... I still love Harehills. It feels cosy when I go. I know it's not the same but it still feels like home.

I loved it... To me where I lived was a happy place.... I've been back to Darfield Road so many times just to sit there and look at it... when I was younger the street seemed wider, the garden seemed bigger.

[M]any older folk that I've known over the years... have got to that point where they can't physically do the stairs... And so really reluctantly, people have ended up moving away... and there's one gentleman who regularly comes back to the launderette. He doesn't do any washing, he just comes... Because then he meets up with people; it's his excuse to come into Harehills...

This sense of community however, portrays only the positive aspects of life. Although one former resident commented that her home meant everything to her and was a place of comfort and security, she was acutely aware by the middle of the twentieth century, of how humble it might have appeared to outsiders.

When I went to high school at eleven... I used to be invited to other places for tea and I'd think oh look at these houses... and the gardens... so I then realised what a big difference there was...

But the worst thing was having schoolfriends home... And having to show them where to go to the loo was very embarrassing, even more embarrassing when I went to university.

Some residents, perhaps as a consequence of the stigma of the back-to-back house form and the long-standing concerns for health on the part of Government and reformers, had an uneasy relationship with their home, to the extent that it prompted their move from the area.

My grandmother was worried about health as her parents had both died young with respiratory problems and her first child had died in 1920 in Harehills. I think this, and the extension of the tramlines to Austhorpe in the early twenties propelled the family to leave Harehills.

There was an epidemic. And mum had the idea that with there being no through draught, that's how we'd all got scarlet fever. So we then moved...

It was not just the influence of outsiders that caused unease in the minds of residents however. Behind closed doors, relationships could be strained and day-to-day life for some married couples could be dominated by power struggles originating from gender-based assumptions.

The household and financial management practices of the Harehills residents appear to have mirrored those found in the wider working-class population. Women proudly took on the role, in part to assert their value and status, but for some, this role was necessary. Husbands addicted to alcohol and gambling caused not only financial hardship, but difficult family relationships.

She left everything in boxes when she went into hospital to have me, to pay all the bills and it went on the drink and no bills had been paid... So... she had to be in charge of it... There wasn't much to go round... I remember a lot of quite violent scenes...

Money was always in short supply because my dad had a gambling addiction. So sometimes on a Friday night when he got his wages he'd just blow the whole lot, on a losing horse and my mother had to borrow off family members to cope through the week.... So my mother... took over and my dad had to hand over when he did have money...

In houses with multiple workers, the oral history evidence suggests there was a fair contribution to living costs, with some men taking 'pocket money' for their weekly extras (such as cigarettes), and others providing 'house-keeping' money and retaining the rest for themselves – of course, the reality may have been that there was not much difference between the two alternatives. Possibly in defiance of the latter however, and some husbands' unwillingness to contribute to the heavier

household chores, women guarded their financial independence and the household decision-making.

I don't think my dad ever found out what my mum earned. She wouldn't tell him.

We did everything, me and my mum. My father was not even consulted about new curtains or new carpet.

So if women were taking control of the household and financial management, what did this mean for their working day, and that of the other residents in the home? The probable routines of the case study families will now be explored.

Historian Betts suggested that the kitchen was a significant space for Victorian working-class families as it was the place for cooking, eating, and for parents and children to spend time together. Meal-times could be irregular in working-class houses however, dictated by shift patterns for the working members, and therefore the whole family was not necessarily present for each meal. The oral history evidence for Harehills indicates that in some houses, the working man woke first, and had set off for work before the rest of the family rose. In the Crossland, Armitage and Fraser households however, the wives did not have paid work outside of the home so they might have served their husbands at the start of the day as they prepared for their own daily tasks within the home. Some prioritised their husband's need for nutrition, and perhaps status, even if that left little opportunity for the rest of the family to eat a nutritious meal before work and school.

So my mother was up and he always went out with a cooked breakfast... [H]e used to leave the house at quarter to seven, seven o'clock. So then she'd shout me and I'd come down... I didn't have cooked breakfast but I'd have my breakfast...

Sign-writer Frank Crossland, and bookbinder James Fraser and his working daughters probably started their commute to work by 7.30am, whereas self-employed home-worker Ernest Armitage, might have enjoyed a more leisurely start to his day. While working from home undoubtedly brought the advantage of convenience for Ernest, it also meant a fluid boundary between work and homelife that may have made it difficult to separate the two, especially given the multifunctional nature of the kitchen and its near continuous use adjacent to the shop.

There was a cellar kitchen where they did the cooking... over a fire, boiling it... there was a biggish table, one of those that you scrubbed... And... chairs that had a back like that [arched]... they were heavy... old fashioned table and chairs. And... an easy chair... I can remember it being quite shabby... not loads of furniture. And I think there was like a velvet curtain that divided the shop from the house... because they talk about going into the shop and 'Oh it's in the shop.'

Furthermore, working from home did not necessarily bring the benefit of home comforts. [I]t was cold. Because... it was stone floor in the shop... my dad always... stood on a wooden board because he said the flags struck up and gave you... rheumatic pains.

It goes without saying that women's work in the home was hard and uncomfortable too.

As discussed previously, women took pride in their domestic work, and this along with the 'hard-working housewives' theme are dominant in the oral history narratives for Harehills.

I suppose in most streets they took a real pride in it...

We tramped all our dirt straight into the living room and yet she somehow kept it spotlessly clean. The furniture always gleamed with wax polish and everything was in place to such an extent that one of my brothers said 'This is a house not a home. Everything has to be clean and tidy all the time.'

Some women worked rigidly to a routine, carrying out the same chores on the same days each week, observing the accepted norm of Mondays for laundry where possible (Cutts 2019; Norris 2019). For Lilian Crossland and Mary Armitage, the back-breaking task of laundry was done while looking after their small children. In common with the earlier back-to-backs it appears there was no water supply in Lilian's basement so the process was split between two floors of the house.

I can remember it all being done in the sink with a scrubbing board... And this mangle in the cellar so it was taken down in the cellar and had to get all the water taken out of it and be carted back up again.

Mary Fraser, living in a later back-to-back had the advantage of a wash cellar, while Mary Armitage used her basement kitchen. For these women, the butler's sink and access to the garden, made their routine a little easier.

My pride and joy was, you could get to the cellar from the outside. There were steps to go down and a door and a window and I thought that was absolutely brilliant.

Nevertheless, the first stage of the laundry process had to be completed in time to get the washing out to dry the same day. Even while it was drying however, the residents of the street-lined back-to-backs needed to keep a close eye on it.

And some of the streets that didn't have gardens, they had special pulleys and they'd pull the washing higher, say if a van was coming to deliver or the dustbin men were coming.

The whole street was just one sea of sheets... We were lucky that... we could all put our washing in the garden.

This very visible display of laundry probably acted as an incentive to conform to social expectations, not only in terms of the quality of the clothing and linen, but also the ability of the housewives to perform their duties to a high standard. This arguably resulted in a community that was closer and held more influence over its individuals than in working-class neighbourhoods comprising only through terraces with private rear yards.

The house did not escape the turmoil of washday once the clothes were clean however, and the multifunctionality of the living-kitchen is evident from its use in the laundry process as well as the dining, relaxing and leisure functions it served which will be discussed later.

There was clothes lines in the cellar for when it was raining... But she used to dry the clothes round that fire and I can remember as a child, getting... between the clothes horse and the

fire, and feeling like I was in a little den... Above it there was a brass rail that you could put things on to air when they'd been ironed...

The range was essential to heating the flat irons, and dining tables doubled up as ironing boards, which demonstrates an interesting juxtaposition of uses given that in some households they were considered to be of too high a status for everyday dining.

Children were sometimes expected to assist their mothers with the housework, though the hazards of carrying out this work while negotiating the peculiarities of the house were a struggle for some.

Flo asked me to bring the chamber-pot down to empty. Well it was pretty full and... Ted always smoked in bed, so he used that as an ash-tray. The bedroom steps in those houses were a bit hazardous...I must have put my foot down on one of the narrow bits... and I came flying down the steps. Now it didn't matter that I might have hurt myself, and that I had wee all over me, all that mattered was the mess it had made on the stairs, so she laid into me good and proper.

The notion of women's work went far beyond the general household tasks such as laundry, tidying, cleaning floors and dusting however. Women had a range of larger and outdoor jobs that were incorporated into their weekly work, and as the women in the case study households did not have paid employment, it is likely that such jobs were their sole responsibility rather than their husbands'. Oral history participants for example, recounted stories of women sitting on window-sills with their backs to the street, and the sash windows trapping their legs so they did not fall out while cleaning the glass; amazingly, window cleaning seemed to only occasionally result in an accident. While some families were able to employ decorators, in others, this too was a job for the women, often without the assistance of their husbands.

She kept that house regularly decorated... [S]he would go to work all day and come home and decorate...

The cellar... was whitewashed with lime wash once a year, and that was part of my job helping my mum. You'd think my dad and my brother might have done that wouldn't you, but no. I used to help my mum with that.

Although possible to view this from a perspective of women asserting their control and their indispensable status, some may have felt obligated to carry out this work. It remains uncertain whether they felt singularly responsible for providing the labour to create a comfortable home for their families or whether they were driven by the social expectations to maintain standards that were 'enforced' by community peer pressure. This peer pressure might have been experienced at a more intense level in back-to-back communities; the whole house faced the primary street where it was subject to public scrutiny, whereas in a through terrace, the rear elevation and yard hosting everyday activities and servicing, were at least partially hidden from view.

Many workers came home at lunchtime if they were able to return easily by foot or tram, but the nature of this meal depended on the circumstances of the household. For example, in the Crossland, Armitage and Fraser households, it is possible the wives cooked a hot meal midday so that the evening meal could be light, and quick to both prepare and clean away. A light tea would have been a distinct advantage in a back-to-back house as the scullery was a multifunctional room

combining most of the functionality of modern-day kitchens and bathrooms. The implications of this will be discussed later. Not all workers could return home however, not all wives were home-based and able to cook midday, and not all children ate at school, but with family often living close by, alternative solutions were possible.

Rather than have school dinners I would go to my Auntie Louis's and have dinner there... so I don't think we had a dinner at night-time...

In households where all the adults worked, the evening meal was usually the main meal of the day. Despite differing shifts and the needs of hungry children, some wives managed to maintain a family mealtime.

When I came in there'd be something for me... because the dinner wasn't cooked until my dad came in from work... so I had a dinner at dinner time at school and this snack... and then, a dinner with my parents and my grandad.

Although the addition of a scullery in the standard sized Type 2 and Type 3 back-to-backs was an advantage over the single living-kitchen in the Type 1s, there was still not the convenience of a single room that accommodated the food storage, preparation, cooking and washing-up facilities. In many houses, including those of the Crosslands and Frasers, this was distributed between three rooms — the cellar and / or cellar steps, scullery and living-kitchen.

Fitted cupboard... had everything in there, all the dinner plates and anything you needed in the scullery for cooking... [I]t didn't come down to the floor... because the bath was there... then... when you open the cellar door there was a shelf there... and... anything that needed keeping cool.

It's this cupboard in the alcove that kept most of the pots... Every time we washed up we had to come back to here so there wasn't much storage in the kitchen, except under the sink for washing things... Food was kept largely in the cellar because that's where it was cold. There was a big table and two alcoves with stone slabs on in the cellar so that was the storing area.

In what appears to be a direct contradiction of Muthesius's findings, historian Daunton notes that the use of gas cookers in West Yorkshire lagged behind the rest of the country, however this might be a consequence of terminology, where Muthesius uses the term in relation to gas rings, and Daunton in relation to an all-in-one hob and oven. In Harehills, the questionnaire data suggests that gas cooking was preferred to coal, even in the 1890-1913 period. This early example of gas cooking in working-class housing is significant given the house type has long been considered the poorest and least 'advanced' type of housing. It is also interesting, because the coal fire ranges were only installed during that period, which may indicate that the technology was reaching the end of its life as the houses were built. Consequently, despite Daunton's acknowledgement that an effort was made to separate cooking and washing from general living space, this was not fully achievable in the standard back-to-back design as the cooking process could be split between the range in the living-kitchen and a gas ring in the scullery, persisting as late as the 1950s in some cases.

Seeing as the set-pot wasn't in use my mother had a two ring, gas thing... like something in the school lab... with the rubber pipe...

As discussed previously, the mother's role in the home was to provide for her family, and as diets changed, so did the mother's work. In Leeds, for example, there became a greater reliance on convenience foods as evidenced by the number of bakery / confectionery shops, and fish and chip shops, and historian Atkinson noted a correlation between women working outside the home and the reduced time they spent on preparing meals. There was a noticeable presence of such convenience food retailers in Harehills, however, taking account of the growth of the neighbourhood, there is no evidence of a growing demand. Indeed the oral history evidence indicates that the full transition to convenience foods took several decades.

Although the gender-based division of tasks is evident in many houses, there were households in the neighbourhood where the men would cook. One father's dinner-time treat for his family may have been a combination of his forward-thinking attitude to family life and a desire to demonstrate provision:

The other thing about the fire... my dad would come home with steak... And he used to cook it on the hot coals.

By contrast, in other households, the bread-winning and home-making or childcare roles were reversed out of necessity, for example if the father's ill health limited his ability to work.

Oral history evidence suggests that despite the 'working' nature of their living-kitchens, families made an effort to adhere to the social expectations around mealtime etiquette in their everyday life.

We always sat at the table to eat. We never sat with our meals on our knee.

And we never put a milk bottle on the table, always the milk jug.

For the majority of residents living in Type 2 and 3 houses like the Crosslands and Frasers however, the separation of everyday and best uses that a through terrace parlour allowed, had to be achieved in other ways, such as categorising the use of individual items of furniture in the living-kitchen to everyday or best.

We were never allowed to eat off the polished table, unless there were guests, but that was a very rare thing. We had all our meals sitting round a little card table in the middle of the room.

The back-to-backs with a kitchen and separate living room did have the advantage of being able to separate kitchen and living functions, however it seems that even these families had to make decisions about how best to achieve the social norms. The Armitage family for example, separated their everyday use in the basement kitchen, from best use in the ground-floor living room (or parlour, as it is also known), though this meant that everyday living, cooking and laundry occurred in a single space. The evidence suggests that there was a widespread awareness of behavioural norms, and that even if they had to be approached in a slightly different way in a back-to-back house, they could be achieved at least in part.

A woman's work was not done even after the evening meal had been cleared away. Before they could relax, women might be engaged in sewing or rug-making, either for their own home, or for neighbours, providing them with a side-line income. Evening however, was generally seen as a time

for families to spend time together, and Betts found that the bonds between parents and children defined the purpose and structure of homes. The oral history evidence for Harehills reveals that parent / child relationships in Harehills were typical of those found in other working-class areas, and that fathers, and indeed other male relatives, made a significant contribution to the upbringing of children. In the Crossland household, it seems likely that Patricia's childhood experiences were similar to those of her father in the 1910s.

My father were great fun... the favourite uncle in the family, the favourite neighbour in the street... As a family, I just had such a wonderful childhood and I love them all dearly, my grandad, my uncle, my mum and dad. And we just lived so happily.

The back-to-back house form, with one exterior wall, brings thermal benefits for the interior environment, but for many families, their evening family time was spent indoors huddled around the living-kitchen fire trying to keep warm. Notably, the chair by the fire, so prevalent in the literature, is also mentioned by some former residents.

I remember sitting on his knee... dad's chair... That was always nearest the fire, at the side. And where he used to smoke cigarettes. He smoked an awful lot of cigarettes...

There was a rocking chair by the fire and as a small child I remember being cuddled and rocked in this chair and my mum... used to sing to me before I went to bed and that was a great comfort.

While several questionnaire respondents describe this as a cosy atmosphere, for others, the house was distinctly uncomfortable. In the Crossland house, Patricia recalls:

The draught from the cellar that came into the scullery that came into the room plus the draught from the front door, plus the draught that shot down the bedroom stairs, you got your chairs strategically placed...

As with the change from gas to electric lighting, the adoption of gas heating was slow to progress, and questionnaire data suggests that coal was the primary means of heating in some households until the 1966-1989 period. Many women came to realise when they did finally upgrade to gas, that they had overlooked one of the important uses of the fire – the incineration of waste, from eggshells and potato peelings, to food packaging and sanitary towels.

Since many of the houses had a plumbed-in bath in the scullery, it became a multifunctional space accommodating culinary, laundry and personal hygiene activities and was also a through-route to the basement. While the design may have been practical in terms of plumbing, it did necessitate compromise on the part of residents.

Well you only bathed... once a week and you just had your set time and that was it. Because it couldn't be around a mealtime... Other than that everybody got washed in the sink in the scullery... [M]y father, he would come in and have his dinner. The first thing he would do then is wash up and then once all that were cleared then he would... have a wash.

Because everything was kept on top of the wooden top, all the baking materials and household things, baths were quite rare. It was such a performance to get everything off the top.

We didn't have locks on the door between the kitchen and sitting room and I'd be in the bath soaking, and... my dad would [*knock, knock, knock*], 'Come on Jean I need to get some coal, get out the bath.'

Other than the inconvenience of bathing in the scullery, it could also be a fearful experience. Recalling the bath lid, one resident noted:

It was hinged. So basically you lifted up and then there was... a drop-down hook catch embedded in the wall that would then catch the lid and keep it up... I think you would be dead if it landed on you because it would give you a hell of a thump.

In later years when gas cookers came into use in the scullery, ovens were used to heat the room and warm the towels, making the experience much more comfortable. The Armitage family, living in a shop-house, had a first-floor bathroom with basin and bath, and this undoubtedly, provided them with a greater degree of privacy and more freedom in the use of their living areas. Being remote from any source of heating however, it would have been a particularly uncomfortable space in the colder months.

For the minority of families who were fortunate enough to have an indoor toilet, accessing and using it would have seemed luxurious relative to their neighbours' experiences of using the toilet facilities. The three case study families were fortunate to each have their own WC (albeit outdoors), however this aspect of life remained, on the whole, an unpleasant experience, with 61% of questionnaire respondents first resident before 1945 citing the sanitary facilities as being the worst thing about their house. Muthesius implied there was an increasing degree of privatisation of back-to-back houses, brought about by the inclusion of WCs in basements rather than yards between house blocks, and residents in Harehills were certainly aware of a distinction between these facilities.

We went down our house steps and down some more steps and shared the toilet with the lady next door. Whereas on the other side of the street it was four houses to a toilet... in a yard. So from two points of view we were a little bit superior.

However, the basement WCs could still not be thought of as private.

We lived opposite the shoe factory... I always remember... my mother shouting out of the scullery window 'How much longer Jean are you going to be down there?' And I can remember thinking I'll be down here till everybody's left the factory. You know, letting everybody know I was on the loo.

The toilets themselves varied. The earliest were earth closets, but even WCs had varying degrees of sophistication, and modernity did not necessarily make a more comfortable experience. It appears there may have been a different approach to using and cleaning the toilet, depending on whether it was in a yard or shared with one neighbour, but in both circumstances, the trip demanded caution. One resident preferred her grandchildren to use a bucket in the kitchen rather than the communal facilities, though it is not clear whether this was based on hygiene, convenience, privacy or some other factor. Oral history evidence suggests that the outdoor WCs of the Type 3 houses such as those occupied by the Crossland and Fraser households would have been clean but difficult to access at times. While some residents made the trip regardless, others preferred the chamber-pot alternative at bedtime, a decision undoubtedly influenced by the lack

of privacy, safety and comfort inherent in the design. Negative associations were not limited to the toilet however, as cleaning teeth and washing (in the scullery) and changing into bedclothes could also lack privacy and comfort; having a warm drink was perhaps the only part of the routine that could be enjoyed.

It was clean but... if the steps going down were icy or snowy it was treacherous.

Used to get washed in the stone sink. Get undressed, but always by the fire because it was so cold, even in summer it was cold... but in summer, we didn't have the fire on so we just had to suffer... my dad used to sit by the fire and we used to go behind the sofa and get undressed... going out in the dark to the toilet, that was the worst...

We had... gazunders... There was one of those under my mum and dad's bed and there was one under my bed. ...my dad would go out to the toilet but.. when I was really small, I can remember having a potty under the sink in the kitchen and I'd go on that potty before I went to bed... I can't remember my mum going out in the dark to the toilet but my dad did.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century there was an expectation that houses would have at least three bedrooms so that parents, girls and boys could be accommodated separately, thereby conforming to the social expectations of decency. Betts however, found cases in London, York and Middlesbrough where children shared beds with siblings, parents or lodgers, and beds were located in downstairs rooms, all of which raised questions of decency in the minds of social reformers. It appears that there were similar practices in Harehills, but unconventional room-sharing and high room occupancy occurred in only around 8% of households. Only a small minority of houses in Harehills were built with two bedrooms so most houses did provide the minimum number of rooms for 'decency.' Analysis of the 1901 census data suggests that residents living in the larger houses and shop-houses with four bedrooms could have achieved the socially desired separation regardless of household size. Indeed, most households comprising a single family unit (i.e. parents and their children) were able to easily abide by social norms in their three-bedroomed houses, albeit some siblings of the same gender shared a bedroom despite large age differences, and in one house, a brother and sister (aged under eleven) shared a bedroom to allow their widowed father and live-in housekeeper to each have a room. However, the sleeping arrangements in 39 of the 473 households analysed appear to have been more complex. There were two contributory factors: large families, and the accommodation of extended family members and boarders.

A small spatial study of sleeping arrangements suggests that some families had no option but to pair their children or extended family members with boarders, or accommodate elderly relatives in living-kitchens. Similarly, widowed parents may have shared with their adult children, and one family of seven in a two-bedroomed house possibly slept in a single room while their three boarders shared the attic. It would also have been necessary for siblings to share beds in some households, though this was not common for teenage children. In some instances, the husband and wife of large households may have chosen to share the smallest bedroom, allowing four or five people to sleep in each of the larger two bedrooms. This may have been desirable logistically but the oral history evidence suggests that the inability to accommodate bedroom furniture may have been distinctly undesirable, reducing the status of the occupants who would ordinarily expect to have the largest and best furnished bedroom. The questionnaire dataset tentatively corroborates that this would have been a 'last resort' as there are no instances of adults sharing the small bedroom.

The Armitage, Crossland and Fraser households were easily accommodated in their houses in 1912, with no more than two people sleeping in each bedroom. It is likely that they lived much like those who recalled their lives a generation later; the husband and wife occupying the large, well-furnished first-floor bedroom, while children had minimal furniture. Moreover, anyone sleeping in the attic had to rely on somewhat creative solutions to furnishing their room because the compact design of the stairs prevented the possibility of moving wardrobes to the top floor.

A huge... double door wardrobe... and... dressing table, with... three mirrors on it that you could move... Then... the tallboy... my mum's side was a round table... And my dad's side, there was a little shelf on the wall... And a huge double bed.

Into the attic, my grandad's bed... was a single bed. And my uncle was at the far end, but he was in a double bed.... And then in that left-hand alcove my uncle created... a wardrobe by... putting a shelf up and rail underneath and then a curtain across... And then in the other alcove was this dressing table... after my grandad died, the dressing table... came down into my bedroom... but until then I don't think I'd had anything other than this bed and the bookcase...

Although at least one of the bedrooms in the houses had a small fireplace, it appears these were almost never used, despite the need for heating in the winter. Residents possibly preferred, or had the necessity, to keep warm using low-cost alternatives.

I don't really ever recall it being lit... maybe when my father was once very poorly with bronchitis... bedrooms were bitter. Bitter cold... in wintertime, there'd be ice on the inside... I used to have three blankets and an eiderdown and then the bedspread. And then you'd sometimes have socks and a cardigan on... And of course you'd hot water bottles...

I only remember that once... taking... ashes out of the fire to take upstairs and put them in the bedroom fireplace and lighting a fire there. And taking the oven plate out of the oven and putting it in bed in a blanket.

Despite this frugal use of fuel, residents did generally have an income that was sufficient to enable participation in leisure activities in and around the home, as explored next.

According to Betts in his study of working-class homes in urban communities between 1870 and 1914, the time that could be spent on leisure activities may have been limited as it was linked to the space available in the home. In Harehills however, it appears that a wide variety of activities could be accommodated. Much of this took place in the living-kitchen, although underutilised attics and basements provided a good alternative to a second reception room (Appendix F Figure 312). Since bedrooms were used exclusively for sleeping in most houses, the availability of these rooms was welcomed by children for their indoor play.

I played in the cellar as well when the weather was bad... And... my dad fixed a swing so I could play down there... But I learnt to roller skate in the attic.

[Grandma's] attic, was our playground... she let us make shops there... Scales up there and... in the first part of Bayswater Mount... there used to be a greengrocer's and she used to say 'Go tell them to give you a bag of apples' and we'd play all day...

[W]hen it rained... we could go in the cellar and play and have our friends around... play whip and top down there... never in the front room.

Music was a popular activity. For some, playing an instrument appears to have been a solitary pastime, but for many, it was at the heart of weekend family entertainment.

My uncle, he played six different instruments... So he'd be up in the attic tootling on his saxophone or his clarinet.

Always at the weekends our house was full and we all sang, and it was always her brother that played [the piano]... But it was always being played was that piano. I never learnt it but I think it was part and parcel of the furniture really in those days, whether you played it or not.

Bell's study of early twentieth-century Middlesbrough (Bell 1985, 149-154 cited in Betts 2014, 120) concluded that reading was a popular activity that brought families together in working-class households, and that, along with creative activities and games, were particularly popular in Harehills.

I think they read a lot to their children... And I think there was a lot of that in the house... They were... cultured without being educated.

I had table tennis sets and we put that on the table... We used to play cards, dominoes, that sort of thing. At one time we... used to sit there all three of us just doing painting by numbers. We used to read a lot... we'd only one room to do it in.

And then on the right of the fireplace was a cupboard... one up one down. The down was for toys and shoes and the up was for mum's... sewing and knitting...

The variety of home-based activities available to residents, and particularly the possession of musical instruments, indicates that residents had both the time and the financial means to include leisure activities in their lives. Furthermore, they were able to use their rooms flexibly to accommodate multiple functions, and the lack of a parlour did not prevent them from enjoying the same activities as their counterparts living in through terraced houses in other towns and cities.

The approach to socialising in the home varied considerably between households. In some, an open-door approach was adopted. For the Armitage family for example, socialising seemed to revolve around community relations and political activism.

I used to find it absolutely fascinating because it was always full of people and kids and, I was always a bit frightened because... there was an awful lot of coming and going... and everybody seemed to know everybody else and neighbours were dropping in all the time. And they were... a very friendly family and they were very politically involved. They were always arguing, but they all got on...

For others, having visitors was perhaps more light-hearted, with an agenda that extended no further than demonstrating generous hospitality. It appears that the absence of a parlour did not limit the number of guests that would be invited into a back-to-back house, or the frequency at which this happened.

Well the visitors, all the stops were pulled out. She had a grand baking day... They were all friends of my mum and dad's... so some used to come regularly and they used to have a game of cards... Christmas Day... I've been sat many a time with my cousins on the bedroom steps... all the chairs were taken up... sixteen [people]... All in one room...

Some however, visited family much less frequently, and did not appear to socialise with friends or neighbours. According to two questionnaire participants, those on lower incomes felt they could not afford to have guests.

Although several residents recall their garden being well-tended with flowers and herbs which might showcase their respectability or contribute to the household income, the space was not used for adult leisure to any great extent.

On the right-hand side my mum used to grow a lot of mint and the neighbours used to come and buy two-pen'worth of mint which was a great asset to her income believe it or not. And then on the left, on the bigger side... there were lovely displays of marigolds because that's what my grandfather specialised in. But we didn't sit out in it a lot.

Nobody sat in the garden as such. People used to ... stand and talk... If it was a nice summer's evening my father would get a buffet and the buffet would sit on the top step and he'd... say hello to people as they passed but there was no garden furniture... sometimes people on the other side of the road... would... say 'Do you mind if I come and sit in the garden?'... sit on people's steps, come across. Because... it was cold on the other side.

Children however, did play in the gardens, and also in the street when the weather permitted.

We used to play in the garden, and... because I'm an only one, my mother eased her conscience by letting everybody come and play... But in winter time if it was dark we'd... gather, under the lamp post.

We did just play in the street... Skipping and... hopscotch... on the pavements...

We'd sit on the wall... and... have a good natter. Or we'd... go exploring... And climb on the factory roof. Yes just go exploring the neighbourhood... we were just given free rein.

These words chime with the findings of Betts who reports that children in working-class neighbourhoods played in outdoor spaces on the periphery of their home, and that as they got older, they began to think of their whole neighbourhood, including industrial premises, as an extension of their home. The outdoor spaces that children occupied in Harehills were overlooked to a greater degree than in through terraced houses because every room of almost every house faced the garden and street. In reality however, smaller children might be supervised by their older siblings rather than their mothers, and their 'playground' therefore spread further than their street and even the neighbourhood.

The street however, remained an important communal space into adulthood. Bonfire night was a highlight in the year, and each street would have a bonfire and celebrations, which doubled as an opportunity for disposing of rubbish.

About half a dozen blokes carried t'piano out in the street... The whole street used to be out yes. Chestnuts on the fire and all that sort of stuff.

There were chairs and buffets and all sorts and then at the end of the evening they'd say 'Oh you can throw settee on the bonfire, we don't want it'...

The street was an important space for residents, being wholly within the public domain, yet facilitating a sense of 'ownership' centred on community relations. Gardens supported this role, but their primary function as a private space was for utilitarian purposes rather than leisure or socialising. Residents did enjoy spending time outdoors for leisure, but this tended to be further afield.

The neighbourhood was economically successful and hosted a thriving community. Most residents were happy to be living in their 'superior' back-to-back houses and have retained a lifelong affection for the neighbourhood, but the stigma of earlier back-to-back housing and their association with ill health persisted to some degree. Furthermore, as some residents were exposed to other neighbourhoods and their communities from the interwar period onwards, they became aware of how humble their homes might have appeared to outsiders.

Residents were certainly conscious of the social expectations and customs of the period, and in general, their lives, both in terms of their daily routines and their familial relationships, mirrored those of their counterparts in other types of working-class housing. The special form of back-to-backs however, led to possibly more complex use of the space and the careful negotiation of conflicting activities, as residents sought to achieve the developing ideals brought by the separation of utilitarian functions from living space, and by the separation of everyday living from 'best,' that are most commonly associated with a parlour.

The residents' success in achieving these ideals is indicative of their creativity and open-mindedness in reconciling conflicting needs within a static built form. Furthermore, it demonstrates the ways in which the space was re-purposed on a long-term basis (such as using a spare attic for play or hobbies), and also used flexibly on a very short term basis (such as when the living-kitchen was used for cooking, dining, laundry, family-time and entertaining at different, and no doubt overlapping periods within the same day). Based on the slow transition to installing improved services and appliances, the separation of activities such as cooking or laundry across rooms or even floors, appears to have been either an accepted inconvenience, or a problem whose solution was beyond the residents' financial means.

In conclusion, the house form itself evidently did not exclude the possibility of achieving social norms and standards of behaviour. Furthermore, while the lives of residents did differ from those living in other types of housing, this was only in quite nuanced ways, and the determination to keep building the back-to-backs was perhaps mirrored in residents' determination to integrate with wider society despite the differences in their housing preferences. The perceived compromises around the use of space, and the implications this had for family and community relations, did not prevent residents from making life 'work' in the houses and neighbourhood. Rather, the apparent lack of privacy and enforced multifunctionality arguably brought people together and contributed to the unique intangible associations that are embedded in the physicality of the place.