

# Lessons from the history of daily life in Stocksbridge

*Mapping the complexities of keeping warm at home*

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# About the research

Researching the history of housing and the lives of residents to better inform the design of measures to achieve reductions in domestic energy demand.

Case studies: Stocksbridge, Stevenage New Town and London County Council

History of council housing from local archives (1920 – 1970)  
-Shay Lane, Wilson Road, Royd Estate, Spink Hall (pre- and post-war), Stubbin, East Whitwell

Oral history interviews with residents (1920s – today)  
-11 interviews, covering 16 Stocksbridge/Deepcar dwellings, of which 9 in one of these estates + four focus groups

# Keeping warm at home

Coal fire > gas fire > central heating?



# There is great variety in heating systems and their pathways

Time	Stocksbridge council housing	National standard
Interwar	Open coal fires and range	As in Stocksbridge
1940s	Solid fuel central heating w hot water radiators, gas cooker	More efficient coal fires with backboiler and electric or gas cooker
1950s	More efficient coal fires with backboilers and electric or gas cooker	As above
1960s	Gas warm air or electric underfloor heating, cooker according to central heating fuel	As above, increasing amount of heat
Late 1960s	As above	Parker Morris: at least partial central heating

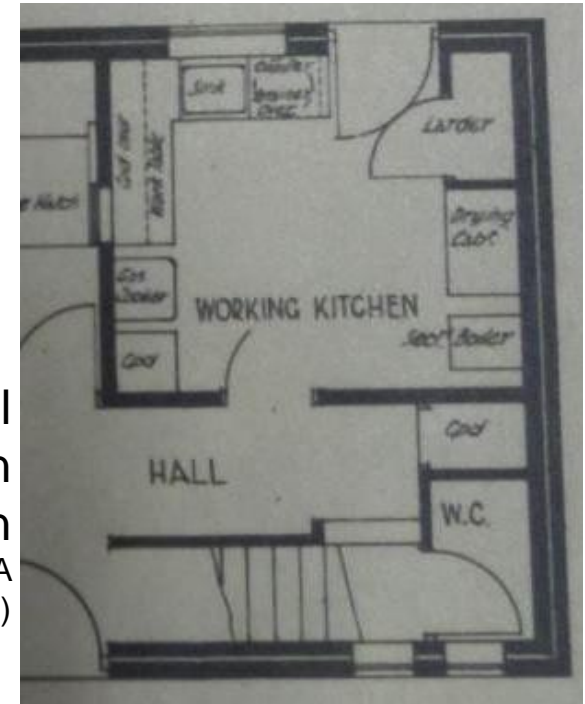


# There is great variety in heating systems and their pathways

-Variety in heating systems going 'back' and 'forward':

- Post-war Spink Hall and early Stubbin Estates: solid fuel central heating and hot water
- Later Stubbin Estate (post May 1950): open fire with backboiler
- East Whitwell: central heating again

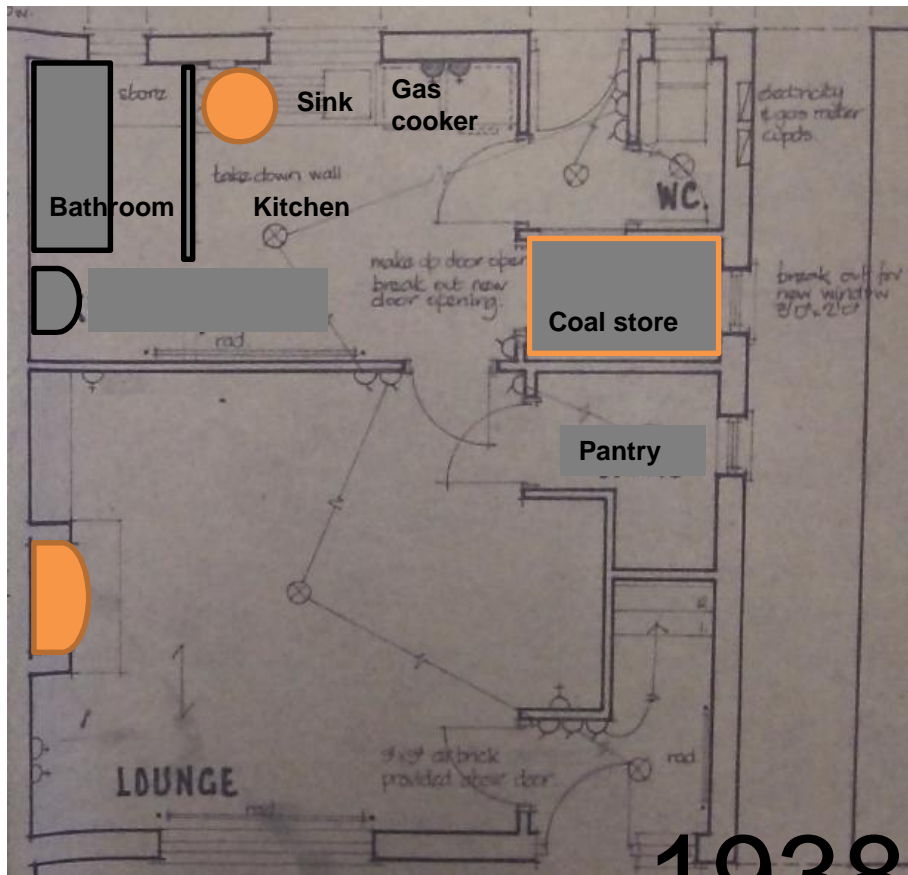
Spink Hall house kitchen plan  
(Sheffield Archives: CA 96/6)



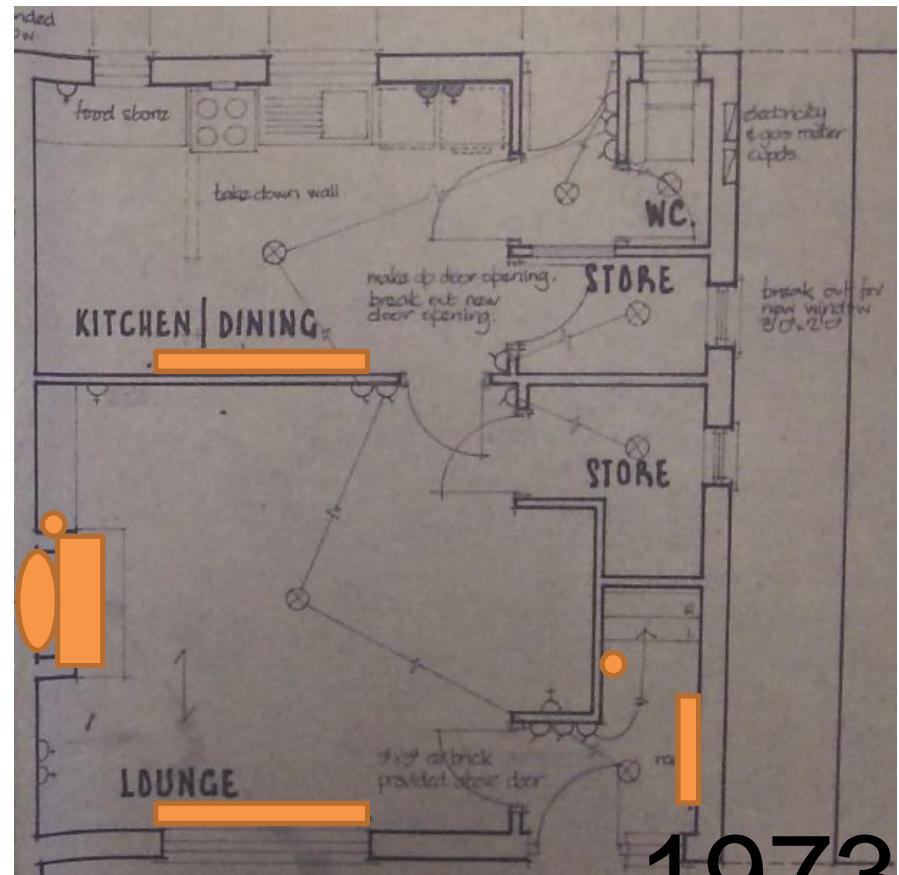
New Marathon Fire  
(Sheffield Archives: CA 97/2)



# There is great variety in heating systems and their pathways: home 'heating lives'



1938

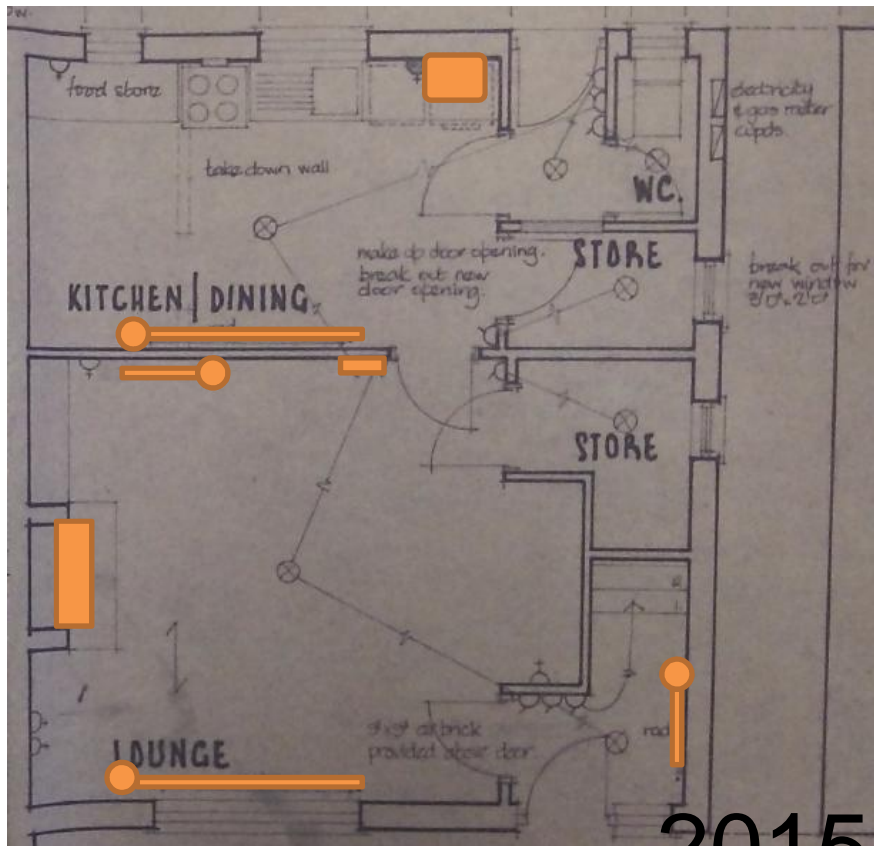


1973

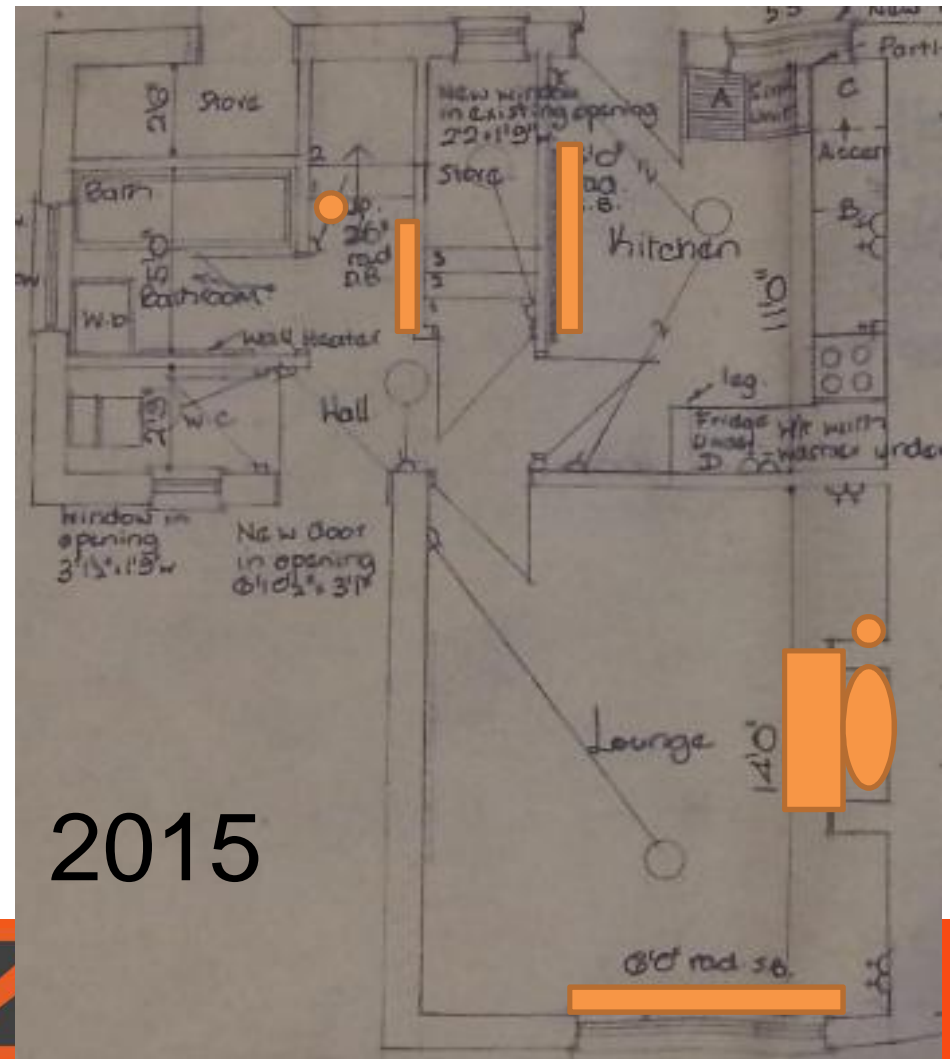
Images: Sheffield Archives: CA357/416



# There is great variety in heating systems and their pathways: home 'heating lives'



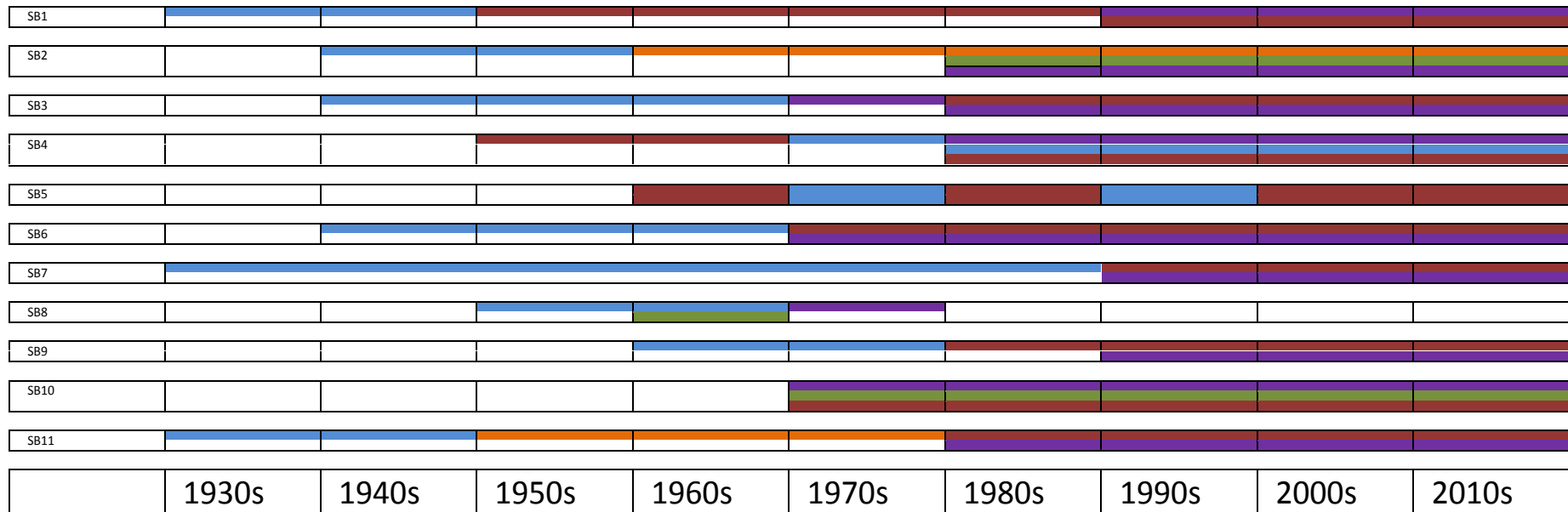
2015



2015

Images: Sheffield Archives: CA357/416

# There is great variety in heating systems and their pathways: people 'heating lives'



Coal fire	Gas fire	Electric fire	Gas hot air	Electric storage	Gas central heating	Other – e.g. paraffin
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# There is great variety in heating systems and their pathways: layering of systems

*‘even in the summer you had to light the fire if you wanted a bath’ (SB5)*

Housing Committee, 17 October 1961:

‘that the applications [to install fireplace and remove range] be approved, subject to the provision of cooking facilities’



# There is much more to keeping warm than space heating: portables

*'We use the **blower heater** for upstairs in the bedroom, we put that on before we go to bed like, well while we're getting ready to get in bed to make it warm like. Once we get snug in bed its warm enough'* (SB10)

*'We took **hot water bottles**, and an **oven plate wrapped in your apron**. We took that to bed to warm the bed'* (FGwarm)

*['We have] radiators in all the rooms, except in the kitchen.[] because when you're in there you're working and you've got **the oven** on. In fact, the oven now actually shuts off the whole heating'* (SB3)



# There is much more to keeping warm than space heating: insulation

*'In the winter we'd all be wearing **thick jumpers** and things like that' (SB8)*

*'when the **duvets** came in it was really funny at first because you didn't think that you had anything on you. You know after having all this weight in bed, and then you didn't need all these electric blanket on because they were really nice and warm the duvets.'* (SB2)

*'it's a cold floor. I2: It's ok when you've got your **slippers** on but [] Because I remember before we had it altered we had a **carpet** down in here didn't I? I had a kitchen carpet down. One of those really thin, it was nice to walk on as well. Warmer than this [tiles].'* (SB10)



# There is much more to keeping warm than space heating: activity

*'Well now if I was going to do any **cleaning** I wouldn't put any heating on.'* (SB2)

*'[my mother] had a fire like that, a plug in thing. Yeah she'd say 'I'm not putting the fire on for you to just **watch telly** for an hour'* (SB3)



# There is much more to keeping warm than space heating: patterns

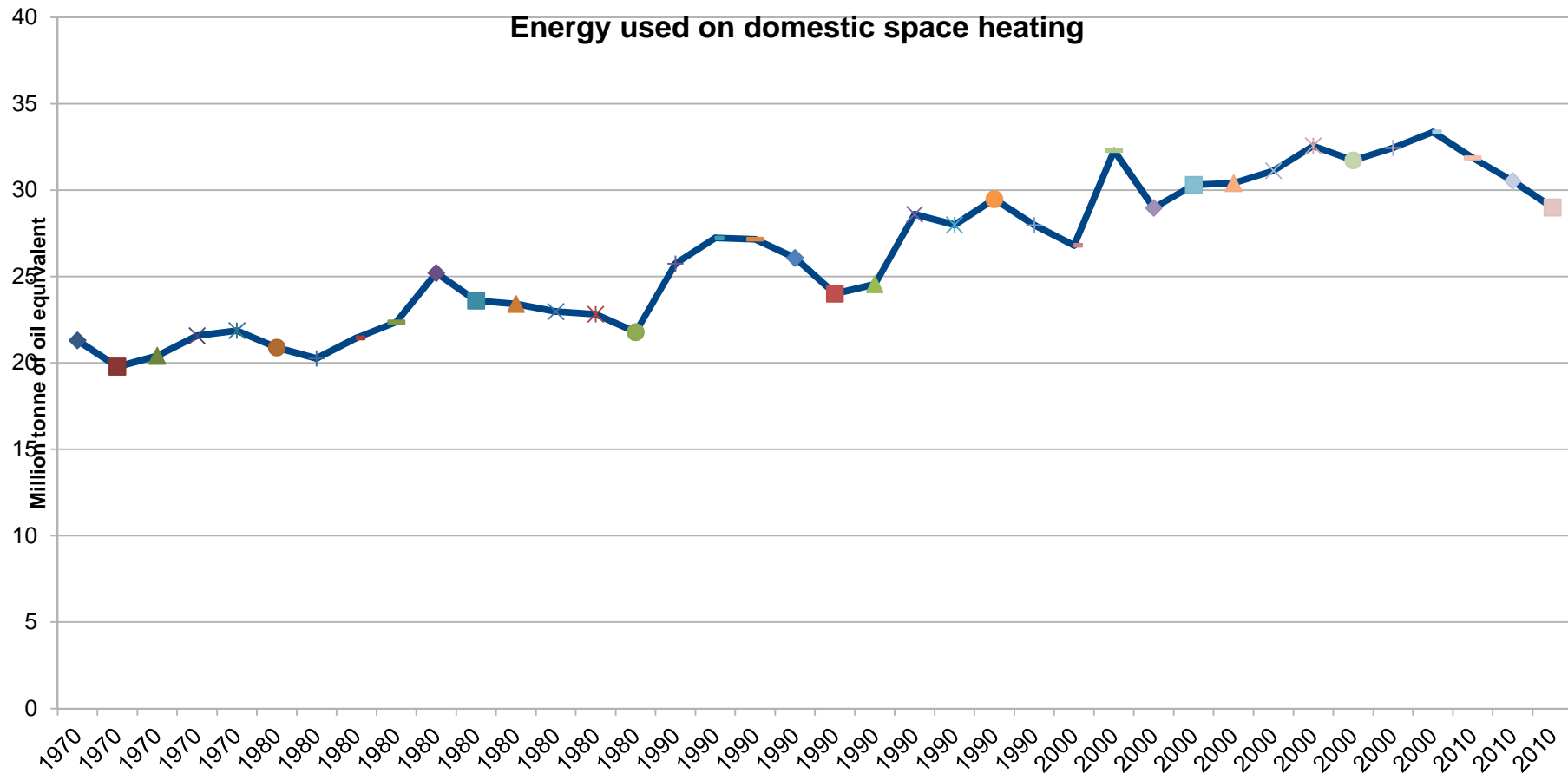
*'Well I mean everything happened in the kitchen [] The kitchen was always incredibly warm'* (SB3)

*'if I just have the fire on, [the lounge] is warm but you go into the kitchen and you think it's a bit pikey in here'.*(SB11)

*'we only needed a small amount of coal because there was nobody in the house [] during the day. So we just had a fire at night and that was it'* (SB3)



# Things *have* changed: energy used for domestic space heating



# Things *have* changed: easy heat

*'Yes you can't believe what it felt like when I got here and I could turn this [gas fire] on, **just turn this on.**' (SB8)*

*'Well [the gas fire] stopped the yellow carpet - which we were stupid enough to buy in the first place - getting dirty. Because we had to bring the coal through []. **And then of course it was instant.** Wonderful, you didn't have to put the sticks in, the paper and the sticks, and the coal on top, then light everything and wait for it start, you know setting the coal going. It used to take ages to warm up when we came home from work. So having a gas fire, that was wonderful.'* (SB3)



## Things *have* changed: patterns of space

*'we were **out all the time** apart from when it was raining and all that sort of thing.'* (SB2)

*'what about the children would they complain about the cold or? I: Oh no they used to play, I think they were used to it. **I used to put them out you see, to get them acclimatised.**'* (SB7)

*'rarely did you put the fire on in the living room []. You really didn't live in the living room **because there were no tellies**'* (SB3)



# Things *have* changed: ‘proper’ heating

1960s housing standards (Parker Morris):

65 degrees F (18.3 C) in living areas and 55 F (12.8 C) in kitchens and circulation areas: central heating at least to ground floor

*‘First thing young people will do is have that [1973 gas fire with back boiler] **out** and put a more decorative modern one in, and radiators, put these radiators upstairs as well because they’ll just have an ordinary gas or electric fire and they’ll have a boiler either in the toilet with the exhaust going outside sort of thing from it. I mean **it wouldn’t do for a young person.**’ (SB11)*



# What can we learn from this



# A special thanks to

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