

Construction

The cottages were probably originally built in the 16th century – though possibly earlier.

They are built with a timber frame, infilled with lath and plaster. At a later date the ground floor infill (and the East end) was replaced with brick.



The timbers are of green (i.e. unseasoned) oak, which naturally shrinks as it dries. They are joined using wooden studs – no metal nails are used at all.

As you can see from comparing the photographs, chimneys and windows have been changed more than once.



A thatched roof has to be replaced at regular intervals. The roof of 155-156 has been destroyed by fire at least twice – it now has a fire-proof lining.



Restoration

By the late 1980s the building was in a derelict state, and in May 1989 the owner applied for permission to demolish it. However, in November 1990 the Sussex Heritage Trust agreed to join with Arun District Council to save the building. In 1990 permission was granted to remove the modern brick chimney stack on the eastern end, to underpin and repair the timber frame, and to rethatch the roof.



In 1994 the SHT successfully applied to carry out full restoration: 'substantial reconstruction and alterations to underpin, provide new fire resisting roof with Long Straw, new insulated oak frame and infill panels, new floors, new services, parking area and landscaping'. However, it took some time to bring together the necessary grant funding.

For some years the whole building was enclosed in a 'box' to protect it from the weather. Traditional craft techniques were used in the restoration. However, the floor had to be lowered to comply with present-day building regulations. Old features such as the kitchen range, the bread oven and the washing copper were all retained.



Restoration nearing completion



Hall House as it looks now

By November 1996 the restoration was complete and the building was sold. As the plaque by the front door shows, the restoration project won a 20th Century Conservation Design award.

Who lived here?

- *1891 census:*

10 people were living in No 156: Harvey Spooner (an agricultural labourer), his wife Martha (nee Burcher), 6 of their 9 children (William, Alice, Mabel, Amy, Harvey and James), and lodgers Hannah Walls (nee Welden) and her son George. Hannah was 'kept by the parish'; George was blind. George's sister Charlotte was married to John Kinnard.

At No 155 lived Frederick Hazelgrove (he was also an agricultural labourer), his wife Sophia (nee Kennard) and their lodger Charles Oliver, who was from Patching. Their home consisted of four rooms.

- *1901 Census:*



No 156 was occupied by George Avis, who was a carter on the farm. With him was his wife Sarah, his 9-year-old son Albert and a lodger, George Cleavett who was a shepherd on the farm. George and Sarah were to have five other children, three of whom died before 1911.

No 155 was uninhabited.

- *1911 Census:*

Alfred Blunden, a hurdle maker from Cocking, lived at no 155. His wife Martha (nee Lucas) was a patient in Graylingwell Asylum; it's not clear who was looking after their two children, Ethel and one other. The census records that the house at that time consisted of just two rooms.

It's not clear who was living at No 156.

Who lived here?

Ernie Field was born in No 156 in 1921. He remembered "There was no electricity, no mains water and an earth closet up the end of the garden, which often had to be shared with two old frogs. Yet I can remember the old cottage being cosy and warm especially in the winter. We literally lived in one not very big room. I remember how low the ceiling was, especially across the centre where a big timber beam took the weight of the upstairs floors. Also in this room was an old-fashioned kitchen range under a big open chimney, from which my mother produced some excellent meals."

Eileen Staker (nee Latter) grew up around the same time in No 155; the Field boys next door were her earliest playmates. She said "I guess my father took up the tenancy of the cottage on his return from the war... Although we had few luxuries we were well fed with home-grown vegetables, eggs from our own chicken



Ernie Field, Ralph & Eileen Latter



Mrs Daisy Latter, Ralph, Eileen and a young visitor

and fresh milk from Clapham Farm. By 1925-6 my father had started his own small carpenter and wheelwright's business and had built his workshop in the garden behind the cottage." The well at the front of the house was concreted over, for safety reasons, before 1927.

In the 1930s, Sir Philip Ward recalls that the 'very old' cottages were occupied by Mr White and Mr Booker respectively. Residents in the 1940s and 1950s included Mrs Olive Warren (nee Potten), Mrs Etherington, and Dickie Cox (who was in the Navy). By the 1980s the building, now derelict, belonged to Mrs Leatherbarrow, who built the large house behind it, 'High Rising'.



May and Ernie Field and Eileen Staker revisit the house after restoration

(acknowledgements to 'Bricks and Water', Friends of C&P Churches)