This paper presents findings from a study that includes a new investigation of the Tarikaka settlement in Wellington, New Zealand. The housing settlement was constructed in 1928-29 by the Department of Railways with the houses rented to their workers.

The settlement incorporates 67 standard design railway houses and has been listed as a Heritage Area. This paper outlines some of the physical changes to the public and private outdoor areas in the settlement since its inception. These include removal of houses to create an area of public open space and alterations to footpaths and landscaping.

Over the past 85 years, the area has experienced gentrification and the houses are now mostly privately owned. Few railway workers remain and the lifestyle of the present inhabitants is very different from that of the original inhabitants. In order to explore these changes in lifestyle, oral interviews with older New Zealanders have been used to construct a consistent picture of housing and lifestyle during the 1930s and 1940s which has then been compared with other studies and contemporary literature. Use of the outdoor areas and transportation to and from the house are topics discussed. Oral interviews with present inhabitants of the houses have been used to reveal how the houses and the public and private outdoor areas are used today, following the same format as the interviews with the older New Zealanders.
This paper concludes by presenting an overview of these lifestyle changes and explores some of the implications of these for the public and private outdoor areas of the settlement.¹

Introduction

This paper presents findings which are part of a much larger study to develop a hybrid analysis method for housing (HAMH) (Leah, Vale, & Isaacs, 2013) using a case study approach. The Tarikaka settlement was constructed as part of the 1920s New Zealand Railway housing scheme (Kellaway, 1993) and is included in the Wellington City District Plan Heritage List (Wellington City Council, 2013) having its own non-statutory design guide (Cochran & Murray, 2010).

This paper augments the existing history of the Tarikaka settlement specifically considering site planning, community, and the design and use of the garden. The new contribution lies in oral interviews undertaken with older New Zealanders recalling 1930s and 1940s housing and lifestyle, and oral interviews with present inhabitants of the Tarikaka settlement. References to quotations from the oral interviews are given in the following format: Interviewee reference, Hours: Minutes: Seconds, e.g. [NZ_10, 0:03:29].

Housing for Railway Workers: a summary

The Department of Railways was providing houses for its workers in 1895 (Unknown, [Chief Engineer’s Office], 1895) and by 1920, possessed its own forests and mills for construction of houses (Evening Post, 1920, p. 5). North Island settlements existed at Frankton, Taumarunui, TeKūiti, Ōhakune, Taihape and Marton. Gordon Coates, Minister of Railways from 1923 to 1928, wanted to, “see every railway settlement a garden suburb”, so many had their own roads, drainage systems, parks and recreation facilities (Coates, 1923, p. v), (Unknown, [New Zealand Building Progress], 1920, p. 79).

The Frankton Housing Factory equipped with modern machinery opened in July 1923 (Coates, 1924, p. viii). The consequent standardization of house plans resulted in increased efficiencies with a rise in production. In 1921, the average cost of these houses was £700, £200 less than the same class of conventionally built house (Auckland Star, 1923). By 31st March 1924, 255 five-roomed houses had been cut, with 61 completed and occupied (Coates, 1924, p. viii) with 400 houses per annum the aim (Coates, 1924, p. viii). By the time the factory closed in 1929, it had produced almost 1,400 pre-cut houses, as well as pre-cut timber for wagons, signals, office furniture, stockyards, sheds, huts and other buildings (Schrader, 2005). In 1982, when the New Zealand Railways Corporation (NZRC) began selling its housing, it owned about 4000 houses (Cleaver & Sarich, 2009).

The Tarikaka Settlement

In 1927, the Railway Department purchased twenty acres of land in the Wellington suburb of Ngaio for a housing development later known as the Tarikaka Settlement (Evening Post, 1927, p. 10). Eighty, five-roomed, factory-cut houses with electric light, water and drainage were to be let for a weekly rent of one day’s pay. Although identical in plan, different elevations were used to give the
streetscape variety (Evening Post, 1927, p. 10). The houses (Standard House, Plan A.B.1123, Factory Cut) were erected between 1928 and 1929 (Unknown, [Architectural Branch], 1929) (Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1: Tarikaka Settlement, c.1980 (Unknown, 1986).

Figure 2: Tarikaka Settlement Houses, 2013.
A resident of Tarikaka during the 1930s and 40s recalls the houses were painted every five years and kept in good repair by the Department of Railways (Moroney, 2004, p. 2) echoing a Frankton Settlement resident recalling, “...the houses were very well maintained ... painted ... every five years ... wallpapered...” [NZ_17, 0:09:45].

Today, 67 class A.B. 1123 houses remain in their original locations. 11 of these sections have been sub-divided with houses at the rear. The area has been gentrified and the houses are now mostly privately owned.

**Site Planning**

The approved site plan (Figure 3) had a central street (later Tarikaka Street, after nearby Tarikaka Hill), two branch streets (Ngata Street and Pomare Street) and a connecting street which was an extension of Bombay Street and later connected to Swansea Street (Unknown, [Architectural Branch], 1927b). The building line was 15ft (4.6m) back from the road boundaries (Unknown, [Architectural Branch], 1927a). The existing layout of the houses differs slightly from the layout illustrated in Figure 3, with no ‘as-built’ plan in local archives. A resident during the 1930s and 1940s recalls Tarikaka Street, now tar sealed, was a gravel road which was dusty in the summer (Moroney, 2004, p. 2).

![Figure 3: Plan of Housing Scheme for Railway Department, Ngaio, A.B. 1089, c.1927 (Architectural Branch, 1927).](image)

**Standard House, Plan A.B.1123, Factory Cut**

The 1920 report of the Women’s Committee of the N.Z. Town-Planning Association included a list of details considered essential for an average family, where the mother looked after the children and
undertook the housework (Platts-Mills, Crawford, & Watt, 1920, p. 1). A well-planned and functional interior with a simple external style were of utmost importance. This report is archived in the “Railway Department’s House Building Programme” file (Platts-Mills et al., 1920) and appears to have informed the railway houses design (Ferguson, 1994, pp. 81-82). The same committee inspected and approved the Railway Department’s new houses near Wellington (Unknown, [New Zealand Building Progress], 1920).

The class A.B.1123 factory-cut house comprised a parlour with an open fireplace, a living kitchen, kitchenette, bathroom with bath, and three bedrooms (Unknown, [N.Z.R. Architectural Branch], Unknown). The front door opened into a short hall and the back door into the kitchenette, both with porches over. The house and water were heated by a coal range for cooking with a wet back in the kitchen. An interviewee whose father worked for railways during the 1930s recalls, “...and a wonderful thing being members of staff of railway, we got free coal ... the house was always warm...” [NZ_17, 0:03:17]. Clothes were washed in a concrete boiler and a pair of concrete tubs in the detached outhouse, which also contained the coal store and WC. The houses had electricity, with a single light fitting in each room and a single power point in the kitchen.

The houses experienced little change over the years and, by the 1980s, they were inhabited by railways workers with the majority still in original condition (Simons, 1986). “The majority of houses still have outside toilets, substandard wiring, no laundry and in some cases use a coal range to heat their water.” (Clarke, 1989, p. 2).
Original and Present Inhabitants

Original inhabitants of the houses were railway workers including clerks, engine drivers, shunters, cleaners, labourers and firemen (Unknown, [Architectural Branch], 1929). Average occupancy in the 1921 Census was 4.43 in the Wellington urban area (Census and Statistics Office, 1921, p. 15). The houses had their critics, however:

“One of the upsetting things was that a lot of the early residents in Ngaio felt that The Settlement was a bit of a blot on their area and in some cases and in certain aspects of the community the Railway people were not socially acceptable.” (Moroney, 2004, p. 2)

NZRC sold the houses in the late 1980s (Clarke, 1989) and only a few are still inhabited by railway workers. A present inhabitant who purchased their house from the NZRC in 1988 describes the transformation of the area.

“When we first moved in here, both our parents came down and turned white as a sheet ... they identified these as being sort of run down places that the underclass lived in ... Since then, it’s just kind of transformed to now they’re actually quite trendy and fashionable...” [TS_10, 0:10:44].

The interviewee continued by discussing the potential of the area and knowing that gentrification would come, “...we just thought we couldn’t go wrong.” [TS_10, 0:11:39].

Average occupancy in the 1996 Census was 2.77 persons/dwelling (Statistics New Zealand, 1998, p. 45) and 2.64 in this survey of 14 households, with 4 having a single inhabitant, 1 occupied by a couple, and the remainder inhabited by couples with young children.

Housing and Lifestyles: 1930s and 1940s

Recorded oral interviews were undertaken with 17 elderly people willing to share memories of their housing and lifestyle during the 1930s and 1940s (Leah et al., 2013). None had grown up in the Tarikaka settlement, although one had lived in two different railway houses in Frankton and Morrinsville [Interviewee ref. NZ_17] and one had lived in an adjacent street [Interviewee ref. NZ_01].

The recruitment and interviewing took three months. Elderly people were identified by a ‘snow-ball’ method, each interviewee being asked if they knew someone else willing to be interviewed. All of the interviewees now live in the wider Wellington region, although the majority were born and spent their childhood elsewhere in NZ. Interviewees were from a variety of backgrounds, being a mix of poor and wealthy families, and were able to share memories of their housing and lifestyle in city, town and rural settings. An extremely high degree of repetition was discovered in the answers to many of the questions, which was why the recruitment ceased. The fact that interviewees did not live in the Tarikaka settlement was not an issue, as the purpose of these recorded oral interviews was to gain insight into the common issues and attitudes towards housing during this period, and verifying these against the relevant literature. Interestingly, the majority of interviewees stated their housing and lifestyle had been very ordinary, and similar to that of most people living at the same time.
When asked about their households, 8 (47%) of the 17 interviewees lived with a person outside their nuclear family (most commonly a relative, such as grandmother, but also a family friend or boarder). In this group, average occupancy was 5.10 persons/dwelling. Of the 17 interviewees, parents owned (or had a mortgage for) 13 (76%) with the remaining renting.

In 16 (94%) of the households father was employed full-time, with mother not engaged in paid employment. The exception was a household where mother had been widowed. One interviewee recalls that his mother left work as soon as she was married.

“...that was a wife’s role ... when she first got married ... she immediately left work and her employer ... was a Canadian and said, in Canada you know, women carry on working after ... they are married, and she thought this was utterly ... out of the question ...” [NZ_16, 0:13:46]

For all interviewees the kitchen was the centre of activity and the room most regularly heated, with the parlour seldom used. 14 (82%) interviewees state that mother was solely responsible for household work with the home a place of production. During the Depression soap was made in the coppers which were also used to cook the Christmas ham [NZ_17, 0:32:20].

Gardens: 1930s and 1940s

Many of the 17 interviewees recall a flower garden at the front and a vegetable garden at the rear of their house, with father mainly responsible for the latter. Exceptions include fathers not in good health and one interviewee whose parents employed a gardener. “The sections were quite large and everyone endeavoured to put down a large vegetable garden and the competition was fierce.” (Moroney, 2004, p. 2). In some cases, children were also involved, “I had my own veggie garden; I used to sell veggies, even to my mother.” [NZ_03, 0:34:15]. For most interviewees, a large percentage of vegetables came from the garden, “...we had quite a large vegetable garden, and grew potatoes and kumara and cabbages and beans, peas sometimes, so ... we ate a lot from the garden.” [NZ_09, 0:18:07]. When money was short during the depression the gardens, “...were a great source of food for the table...” (Moroney, 2004, p. 6), “…we were very hard up during the depression and, my word, the garden was a very essential component in our standard of living.” [NZ_11, 0:12:10]. Preserving fruit was important, “...mother used to preserve, because there weren’t any freezers, and she had a large cupboard ... it would be full of these preserves ... we had to stone peaches and things, it took ages...” [NZ_02, 0:22:27]. Chickens were kept by 7 (41%) interviewees and one who lived in a Frankton railway house recalls, “…there was a man along the road who turned his whole place into a poultry ... farm ... we bought eggs from him ... he was a Shunter ... he made quite a thing of producing eggs and fowls you know...” [NZ_17, 0:35:39].

Interviewees generally struggled to recall what happened to house and garden waste, although 9 (53%) mentioned composting, “...my father had a trenching system with the garden, that all the vegetable scraps went into a trench which he would cover over and create another trench ... it was a very elementary form of composting.” [NZ_13, 0:13:43]. “My mother had dug a hole in the garden, and she would use that as a compost hole ... what other rubbish would we have? ... all the vegetables peelings and stuff went into a hole in the garden ... so we were green-ies even in those days.” [NZ_15, 0:09:10].
A present Tarikaka inhabitant discovered a lot of rubbish buried at the bottom of the garden, “...there was no rubbish collection for the people living in these houses ... so digging in the garden was an adventure ... trees went in where I could get them in.” [NZ_01, 0:13:40]. Another stated their garden was full of filled-in hangi pits which had dropped down,

“...there were lots of stones, which obviously had been used for the heating, but also, probably because they were railway workers, they had used excess bits of railway iron, and they were down in the hangi pits as well ... they would have conducted the heat brilliantly.” [TS_03, 0:28:15].

Many interviewees recall washing day, “...we had a copper ... it did have firewood when I was little and that was changed to gas at some stage ... Monday was always known as the wash day, but if the weather wasn’t quite so good, then it did have to move from day to day...” [NZ_15, 0:07:00].

Community: 1930s and 1940s

Car ownership was uncommon and 9 (53%) of the interviewees’ families had no car, 7 (41%) had one and 1 (6%) had two. Bicycles were well used by 12 (71%) interviewees,

“...I'd made my own bike up from bits and pieces, and I painted it red ... from leftover paint from the house roof ... I got a lot of use from it ... and my father went to work on a bike, brother went to work on a bike, and my mother had a bike that she would go to pick up groceries on...” [NZ_10, 0:34:51].

The train was the main transportation to and from work for the Tarikaka workers. An interviewee recalls that, “...from the mid-fifties on, more families in the street had a car and we were one of the few families that didn’t, and my father was incredibly conservative as far as ... buying new things were concerned ... they had a policy that they didn’t buy anything until they had saved for it...” [NZ_13, 0:12:49].

Moroney (Moroney, 2004, p. 4) recalls milk being delivered by a horse drawn cart and dispensed into billies. Interviewees mention putting out a billy and coloured coupon discs to indicate how much milk to leave [NZ_15, 0:26:53]. An Indian fruiterer visited the settlement selling produce and wares from his van. An interviewee who lived in Wadestown recalls the same gentleman, “...a green grocer would come around on a truck, he was an Indian and he was always, ‘the Hindu’, and he would park his truck ... on the corner, and all the housewife’s would go up and go into the truck ... he’d take all the money, then he’d drive onto the next bit...” [NZ_14, 0:20:39]. Bread and buns were delivered by van from Denhard Bakeries, and stale buns were given to children and greatly appreciated (Moroney, 2004, pp. 4-5).

During the Depression many Tarikaka housewives walked to Thorndon to collect the pay from their husbands, pick up fresh supplies and catch the steam train home. This trip would often be turned into a picnic and was a good outing for the children (Moroney, 2004, p. 7). Interviewees spent a lot of time outside, “...in the early days in Frankton, there was so little traffic ... we played tennis up and down the road, we’d just have to scatter off when a car came along...” [NZ_17, 0:49:04]. “Well we were always encouraged to be outside, unless the weather was really bad and we would play on the lawn ... often we would play with other children on the street...” [NZ_13, 0:15:49].
Blackberry picking, gathering wood, biking trips to Titahi Bay, trolley races down Colway Street, and fishing on the wharf at night to catch mackerel were activities undertaken by children (Moroney, 2004, pp. 16-17).

“There was no time to get bored with fishing at Boom Rock at Makara and also on the Wellington wharves and opposite the floating dock. There was sport to which we walked or biked, family picnics, swimming, making canoes from old corrugated iron, gathering pine cones, trolley races and in general thinking up ideas that would keep us occupied.” (Moroney, 2004, p. 15)

Many interviews recollect with fondness the freedom that they experienced as children and the community spirit, “...there was more friendship, or more sort of co-operation among people...” [NZ_07, 0:39:42]; “…well I think there was a greater sense of community ... of necessity really because ... at the beginning, most people didn’t have cars and there were no shops ... some people found that very oppressive…” [NZ_13, 0:56:17]; “…I was not aware of being a member of the lowest sections of society when I lived there [Frankton] ... [people were] all the same, that was really the great thing…” [NZ_17, 0:58:42].

### Historic Places

There is some confusion over the listing of the Tarikaka settlement as a Historic Area by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (NZHPT). The documents referenced below are in the archives, but the settlement is no longer on the list.

In a 1980 report to the Historic Places Sub-Committee on the Tarikaka settlement, the Wellington City Planner wrote,

“The area as a whole is very untidy and in need of an uplift and comprehensive clean up. Street litter includes ... beer bottles, clothing, shoes, paper and ... on the whole, does not reflect very well on [the] Railways Department. There are a number of cars parked along the roadside and some of these are obviously immobilised, which add to the detraction from the amenities of the neighbourhood.” (Clarke, 1980)

Fences also needed repair and grass verges required mowing. Garages had been constructed by residents at the western end of Tarikaka Street and were considered unsightly. Clarke concluded the area was in need of significant upgrading, but felt that, unless the Department of Railways spent money, conditions would remain the same (Clarke, 1980).

Following this, in 1983, the NZRC sought to upgrade the roads, water and drainage to Wellington City Council standard, so these roads could be legalised and handed over as public services. This would allow subdivision of the site and offering of the houses for sale (Harding, 1983). In response to the proposed subdivision, the Director of Parks and Recreation recommended paying the reserves contribution partly in land and partly in amenity works (Director of Parks and Recreation, 1983). Creation of the larger area would necessitate removing five houses. Amenity works included planting up the larger area, developing a park and planting road frontages. The City Planner advised that all but 20 properties (on the southern side of Tarikaka Street) could achieve off-street parking (McCutcheon, 1983) and dispensation was later given from the off-street parking requirement for
these due to the difficulty of achieving access. Another dispensation was needed to retain the existing 40ft (12.2m) section widths (which were too narrow for the requirements of the Council's district plan) (Truebridge Callender Beach Limited, 1985).

Figure 5: Recreation Reserve, 2013.

In 1986, a member of Onslow Historical Society campaigned for the preservation and restoration of the houses and area through having it zoned by the NZHPT (McArthur, 1986b).

“These cottages are deteriorating at present and are a constant source of embarrassment to local residents and a dampener on property values ... the cottages could become the leading area in Ngaio and Khandallah showing by example how old houses respond to restoration and colour schemes.” (McArthur, 1986b)

Not all residents were happy about this prospect, “A home is what you make it, how you see fit, particularly where finance is concerned. We are not on exorbitant wages, but manage to live happily and comfortably.” (Te Whare, 1986).

Binning, a member of the Ngaio Progressive Association at a meeting stated 45% of the inhabitants were permanent tenants whose houses had been allowed to deteriorate by the Department of Railways adding, “They have now become a singular community within the broader community ... it is critical that something be done to upgrade these house as soon as possible.” (McArthur, 1986a). The Ngaio Progressive Association wanted to avoid the sale of the now sub-standard houses to tenants who might later find that they could not afford the necessary repair and maintenance work. Despite these and other concerns, “…Tarikaka Street housing should remain affordable to those in lower income brackets.” (Fanning, 1986). The settlement was classified as a Historic Area by the NZHPT in March 1986 (Daniels, 1986) but, as mentioned previously, the settlement is no longer on the list.
Sale of the Houses

During the 1980s, the NZRC were restructured. In 1983, income from rental of their houses was $2.5 million, but costs incurred in connection with these were $7.5 million and consultants recommended that NZRC act quickly to reduce its housing stock (Cleaver & Sarich, 2009, p. 249). In 1989, the Chief Executive of NZRC explained that it was no longer essential for Railways to provide housing as employees no longer worked in remote areas with operations becoming more centralised. As the majority of the housing stock was located within cities, the need for housing to attract staff had become questionable. The houses, which were not let at market rents, were both expensive to maintain and administer (Cleaver & Sarich, 2009, pp. 250-251).

The disposal of railway houses by NZRC was firstly by sale to occupants, followed by sale to Housing Corporation or Maori Affairs, sale by ballot to other Railways staff and finally on the open market (McQueen, 1986) although over 1000 railway houses elsewhere in New Zealand were reportedly sold to Stone Key Investments Ltd and this sale remains controversial (Dyer, 2010).

In March 1988, a Trust was formed by the Ngaio Residents’ Housing Committee to buy the houses and maintain the character of the settlement (Clarke, 1988). One year later, 10 of the 95 houses had been sold publicly, 8 were vacant, and the remaining 77 were purchased by original railway tenants through the Trust, 50 of which had qualified for Housing Corporation assistance. In a report the City Planner stated that,

“The area has a lot of community spirit with over 50% being Maori or Pacific Islander and the families age groups starting in the early 20’s [sic] with the oldest person being 55 years. Although the Housing Corporation has offered some funds for the renovation of the properties, these funds average $5,000 per house and [are is] to bring the property up to Health standards which does not include the full extent of the renovations needed to be done to each property.”

(Clarke, 1989, p. 2)

Tarikaka Railway Settlement Community Improvement Area

In 1989, Wellington City Council approved the Tarikaka settlement as a community improvement area due to its special characteristics (Hume, 1989). At the first two public meetings residents suggested planters be constructed in the street to slow vehicles and make the area safer for children, and that play equipment be installed in the park at the junction of Tarikaka and Ngata Street. Hume noted an apparent large number of children living in the area (4 per household being common) with 12 children in one family. In 1990, the Council approved $65,000 for the Tarikaka Street environmental improvements (Renovation Advice Office, 1990) which funded the construction of numerous railway sleeper planters the length of Tarikaka Street and additional planters at the junctions (Figure 6). The play equipment was not installed.

Housing and Lifestyles: Present Day

Of the 77 houses purchased in 1989 by railway tenants through the Ngaio Railway Housing Trust, few remain inhabited by railway workers, none of whom volunteered to participate in this study. Recorded oral interviews were undertaken with 14 volunteer households and the data was
processed as for the 17 interviews discussed previously (Leah et al., 2013). Interviewee’s occupations included accountants, solicitors, lecturers, teachers, ICT and other professionals.

Interviewees were predominantly middle aged, with 12 (86%) aged between 21 and 50 years, 9 (64%) were born in New Zealand. Couples with one or two school aged children comprised 8 (57%) households and 4 (29%) were single person households. Only 2 (14%) of the interviewees were renting their house and, of the remaining 12, 9 had bought post 2000. The most popular reasons for choosing to buy or rent were house location, followed by the character/history of the house, and size of the section. Interviewees commented that the houses are often for sale with one interviewee mentioning the size of the house as being a reason for this, “The worst thing about the house is its size, which didn’t used to be a problem, but it is now, and I think that these houses, they suit people for a time, but then you almost get over being in a little cottage, and you want to move on ...” [TS_05, 0:24:22].

In contrast to the 1930s and 1940s lifestyle interviews, only 2 (14%) households contained an adult not engaged in some form of paid employment. One was a retired person and the other a stay-at-home mum. In 5 (36%) households, father worked full-time and mother part-time and in the rest all adults worked full-time. This highlights the biggest change in the use of the houses between the 1930s and present day; the house is no longer continually inhabited, but usually occupied only during the weekday evenings/nights and for part of the weekends. Unlike the 1930s and 1940s, household work is no longer only undertaken by the mother, but is the responsibility of the sole inhabitant (29%), both mother and father (14%), or a cleaner (14%).
All of the owner-occupiers had undertaken alterations to the house and in many cases these were extensive, including remodelling the rear of the house, fitting a new kitchen and/or bathroom, and considerable landscaping. When asked about things they liked least about their house, 6 (43%) mentioned the cold and the difficulty of heating it. Its small size (92m²) was another dislike (6 (43%) interviewees), as was the lack of storage space and continual need for maintenance, “...it’s not a lock and leave house ... there’s a constant round of mowing, pruning, cleaning, sweeping...” [TS_10, 0:44:46].

Gardens: Present Day

Vegetable gardening is popular amongst interviewees, with 10 (71%) growing vegetables, however gardens are far less productive than in the past, as 6 (43%) estimate they grow less than 5% of all their vegetables and the remaining 4 (29%) between 5 and 10%. Composting kitchen waste is undertaken by 9 (64%) interviewees and 1 (7%) keeps chickens. Garden maintenance is either undertaken by the sole inhabitant (14%), the male member of the household (21%), or is shared (29%). In 5 (36%) households a gardener is employed, or assistance is given from a person outside the household. Far less time is spent gardening now than in the past, “I don’t tend to use the outdoor area for much, except for gardening. I do enjoy gardening, so that’s good, I probably don’t get out as much as I should...” [TS_13, 0:12:57].

Many interviewees have invested considerable time and money landscaping their gardens, “...we flattened out the back and we built some retaining walls and moved some earth about ... we built a new fence out the front and concreted various areas ... planted a few trees...” [TS_07, 0:14:38]. When asked about alterations made to the house, work to the garden is the most common answer, mentioned by 13 (93%) interviewees, followed by installation of insulation (79%) and internal decoration (79%). Outbuildings have been changed by 9 (64%) interviewees. This contrasts to the 1930s and 1940s interviewees where only two recalled work to the garden, both times being the construction of a wood shed. For 2 (14%) present day interviewees, the garden is the main reason for choosing to buy the house and 2 (14%) gave the deck and indoor/outdoor flow as being the best thing about the house. Many interviewees appear to appreciate having a good sized section, although few spend much time outside (apart from those undertaking landscaping work themselves). In contrast to the post and wire fences which divided rear gardens in the 1930s and 1940s, many interviewees have erected fences to contain children or animals, making the once transparent boundary lines more solid as inhabitants seek to make their property more secure.

Double doors to the rear are evident in 11 (79%) of the houses, commonly opening onto a deck or area of hard landscaping. Clearly, indoor/outdoor flow is extremely important to the inhabitants and many mention having these doors open when the weather permits.

Community: Present Day

Most households have one car, 7 (50%) households contain at least one member using public transportation regularly, with 2 (14%) never using public transport and the remainder using it occasionally. Many households have bicycles for recreational purposes, but in only 1 household is a bicycle used regularly for transportation to and from the workplace. The street is no longer a place
where children play, but is dominated by the car. None of the interviewees mentioned using the 1983 Recreation Reserve.

A current inhabitant felt there was not a strong sense of community, but explained that there were friendship groups [TS_01, 0:34:13]. This was reiterated by a number of other interviewees, one of whom described how they had united with neighbours in an application to Wellington City Council (WCC) for plants for the roadside. Together, they obtained and planted 150 native plants, helping to maintain the areas adjacent to their houses, which would ordinarily be the responsibility of WCC [TS_11, 0:47:48].

Conclusions

It would appear from the interviews that the Tarikaka settlement is no longer inhabited predominantly by families. The family households who volunteered for the study were mostly young, with many interviewees feeling that the house is too small for teenagers, “...when the kids are a bit older, we might actually rent, rather than selling this house ... because it's such a nice house to keep ... for two people...” [TS_07, 0:19:52].

Railway work is no longer something inhabitants hold in common and interviewees tended to know only adjoining neighbours, with small clusters of friendships being common within the settlement. In contrast to the 1930s and 1940s, inhabitants do not travel to work together. In many of the volunteer households, women are in paid employment, often leaving the houses uninhabited during weekdays. Houses appear to be owned by the middle classes (accountants, solicitors, lecturers, teachers, ICT and other professionals) and house prices reflect this. Many interviewees are investing considerable time and money in their houses, updating and renovating these often to high standards.

Cars prohibit children from playing in the street and every interviewee owned at least one. Interviewees tend to use cars for travel to and from clubs or activities and to spend time with friends and relatives that live in different areas of the city. Clubs no longer need to be local.

During the 1930s and 1940s, the streets would have been full of activity; food delivery vans, children playing and people walking or cycling. Today, cars are used to fetch shopping and children often play in rear gardens, hidden from view. The street is a transportation zone, primarily for the car. The 1983 Recreation Reserve was not mentioned by a single interviewee suggesting that this area is not considered to be important.

Interviewee’s gardens are no longer highly productive, but are being landscaped with outlook to and connection with the garden being of great importance. Landscaping is often designed around the intention of the garden being “low maintenance” (paved areas, decking and flat areas of lawn). Many interviewees no longer spend a lot of time gardening as they work more and other forms of recreation have become popular, gardens no longer need to be productive.

Interviewees, although sharing a genuine love for their houses, do not have the shared in and out of work interests that characterised the area during the 1930s and 1940s. The community was not what it once was, although houses in the settlement are much sought after, fulfilling the aim of those campaigning for the area to be zoned ‘historic’ during the late 1980s (Simons, 1986, p. 1).
houses and gardens are generally well maintained, and pavements and street planting is attractive, but in contrast to the 1930s and 1940s, the public areas appear under-utilised and people have retreated into their private rear gardens. Community spirit and friendships between inhabitants around the street are not perhaps as necessary as they once were. The built form has been successfully preserved, but the essence of the place has not. In a way, it could be argued that the settlement has lost its uniqueness.

Shortly after the Ngaio Railway Housing Trust had signed a contract for the bulk purchase of Tarikaka settlement houses in the late 1980s, the inhabitants celebrated together,

“Just about all of the mixed Maori/Pacific Islander/Pakeha neighbourhood showed up that afternoon. This "extended family of railway employees" ... were there to savour and celebrate a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to become homeowners. While kids and dogs played in the grass and dirt, these shunters, guards, signalmen, linesmen, fitters, turners, boilermakers, welders, yardmen, engine drivers, bus drivers and all manner of other railway workers and their partners enjoyed the moment and talked about the future. Most of the chatter involved their houses ...” (Dyer, 2010)

Today the houses are no longer affordable to those on low incomes. However, they have endured the test of time, being appreciated and valued by those who live in them today and the settlement must be considered a success. The location, design and quality of construction of the houses are three important factors which have contributed to this success.

Changing lifestyles over the past 85 years have greatly impacted the use of the public and private areas of the settlement. The changing needs, aspirations, and priorities of the different inhabitants have not only affected the use, but also the appearance of these areas. This is not unique to the Tarikaka settlement, but is a reflection of what has happened in housing developments throughout the city and the nation.

When reflecting on the history of the Tarikaka settlement, questions emerge for those involved in the planning and design of houses today. Is it possible to plan and design houses that encourage community and if so, is it important to do this, or is a local community no longer important in the way people live today?

“...we've got all sorts of advantages [today] that we didn't have then, we didn't even think of then ... we've got a car, we can trip around the countryside ... but you weren't conscious of ... restrictions because you weren't conscious of the other possibilities ... television came along, so everybody had to have television, and you can’t imagine living without it, but we did live without it ... I think this is just generally true of all people, all times, everywhere, you actually settle into an environment ... you make it fit you the best you can and then you accept that ... as time goes on, things will change...” [NZ_14, 1:03:47].

1 All photographs by author unless source is given. All other images reproduced with permission from Wellington City Archives.
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