

Financing Women's Pioneer Housing

Raising capital after 1921

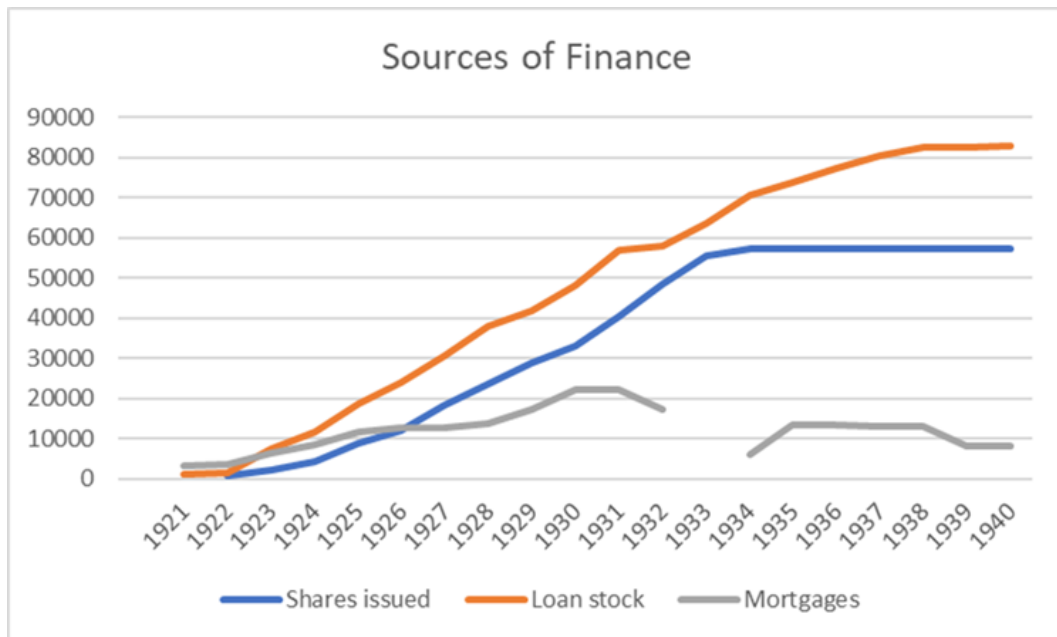
The very early investors were only asked for small sums in order to become members of Women's Pioneer Housing, with the idea that the money raised would be used for administrative purposes and that the purchase of houses would be covered by government subsidies following the Addison Act. Etheldred and Florence Lily Carre's efforts in writing letters to and seeking contacts with well-known women had raised about £117 in shares and £130 in loan stock (of which £100 came from Dorothy Peel) by the time of the financial crisis in April/May 1921.

First Financial Crisis

in April/May 1921 it was discovered that the government subsidy was not going to be forthcoming in the way Etheldred and her team had expected initially. They had hoped that Women's Pioneer would only need to raise the deposit on a house and that the balance would be forthcoming. In March 1921 they discovered that this was not so and as the loan from the Government toward the purchase of 67 Holland Park Avenue would not be available for some time after the completion of purchase the Bank had refused the overdraft necessary. £2500 was needed (the equivalent of £123,300 in 2019), Lady Rhondda had ignored requests for £500 and the vendor was suing. With about £20 in the bank a motion was passed putting WPH into voluntary liquidation. Ray Strachey asked that she be given a week to come up with an alternative suggestion before the winding-up process was started. She was successful, finding someone who was prepared to advance money for the purchase of 67 Holland Park Avenue and establishing Torr & Co as WPH solicitors.

SERIOUS FUNDRAISING

After the financial crisis, the reconstituted Committee of Management under the chairmanship of [Ray Strachey](#), turned its attention to the issue of raising capital. They realised how important it was to raise the finance to buy/lease and convert properties so WPH could put its vision into reality. The graph below shows the amounts that were raised between 1921 and 1940.



MORTGAGES

The first mortgage was offered by the mysterious Mrs Arnott (who our research has not managed to identify), backed up by some temporary loans from COM members and contacts. She may have been one of the clients of the lawyers Torr & Co who were introduced by John Rowlatt and his partners and proved an important source of finance which continued until 1930. Some wealthy individuals such as Mary Cunliffe and Florence Hickens came directly to the COM offering to invest by securing a mortgage of £1000 on a specific property.

In addition, as the assets of Women's Pioneer grew, so their bankers were prepared to make loans against those assets. By 1930 £22,000 was listed as the total of mortgages, of which £9450 had been advanced by the Midland Bank. These figures would have included some repayments against the original cash raised.

The following put forward cash on the security of a mortgage on a WPH property:

- In 1921 – Mrs Arnott – loan of £2500 for 67 Holland Park Avenue
 - Mrs Brooke (£500)
 - Capt Reiss - £250 temporarily
 - Miss Browning offered a temporary loan at 6% of £100
- 1922 - Torr & Co £500 as 3rd mortgage on 67 Holland Park Avenue
 - Miss Cunliffe 28 Philbeach Gardens for £1000 in favour of Miss Eva Steel
 - Bank advance of £1000 on the security of the freehold of 134 Holland Park Road
- 1923 Paid to Torr & Co £260 deposit on purchase of 62 Ladbroke Grove
 - 62 Ladbroke Grove – £1500 mortgage deed in favour of Mr Fowler
 - Nov - further loan from the Midland Bank for £1000
 - From late 1923 WPH secured a rolling extra loan from the bank to cover cash flow issues, with a programme of regular repayment which was often altered
- 1924 Jan – 14 Ladbroke Gardens - Mrs Mary Ann Lawrence, John George Scott, Rev Levett Edward Warley Thorston
 - 22 Stanley Crescent June £1,000 Mrs Florence Marie Hickens
 - 21 Stanley Crescent to Messrs Macdonald, Sougrigg & Pye-Smith

- 1925 12 West Eaton Place and 151 Cromwell Road in favour of Allen Culpepper, Sealy and Philips & Pine Sealy
 - 1 Nevern Road with Midland Bank
 - 13 Ladbrooke Gardens mortgage signed in favour of John Friend Rowlatt and Richard Hoddings Fox
- 1926 11 Ladbrooke Gardens signed in favour of John Friend Rowlatt and Richard Harding Fox
- 1927 14 Collingham Road – Mortgage in favour of Bank
 - 28 Philbeach Gardens – resolved to repay the whole £1000 and Sec instructed to borrow from the Bank until new mortgage can be arranged
 - Bank advancing £1000 to the 7th July for PHG28. 99 Oakley Street as Lady Shelley-Rolls had invested a further £1000
 - Bank had transferred £1000 from loan to current a/c to meet repayment of mortgage on 28 Philbeach Gardens – (rolling loan now 5825, had been £6775 in May)
- 1930 13 Ladbrooke Gardens – Mortgage £2000 Mrs Gwendolen Wallace Laurelston, Bembridge IOW.
 - 28 Philbeach Gardens - £500 from Messrs Martin & Nicholson
 - 28 Philbeach Gardens – mortgage of £500 for Mr Louis Symonds of 17 Pinfold Road Streatham SW
 - 14 Oakley Street – mortgage in favour of Sir Edward Francis Knapp-Fisher of the Chapter clerks office, Westminster Abbey, solicitor, Eric John Wickham Noakes of West Beer Cheriton Bishop Devon, a captain in his Majesty's army (retired) and John Edward Holdich Wartnaby of the Chapter Clerks office, Westminster Abbey, solicitor
 - 15 Bramham Gardens- mortgage for £2500 for Claude Holroyd Jupp of Blandford, Lovelace Gdns, Surbiton, Maltster and Edward Whitaker Green of 38 Bedford Row Solicitor. (Torr & Co.)

DEPOSITS FROM TENANTS

A principle in the early conversion of properties was that the tenants should raise the cash needed for conversion which is why the early tenants in HDP67 were expected to invest £900 altogether to secure their flats. The first tenants at 67 Holland Park Avenue invested via shares and loan stock:

Tenant	Shares purchased	Loan stock purchased
Victoria Alldred	75	75
Stella Fife	75	150
Isabel King	150	150
Dorothy Nye	150	150
Marjorie Strong	150	150
Totals	600	675

The total of £1275 which paid for the conversion of this property is equivalent to nearly £63,000 in 2019 prices and obviously these first tenants were not the needy working women that Etheldred had aimed for. Later on this requirement diminished as more finance was raised and tenants were only expected to purchase a minimum of one share.

SHARES AND LOAN STOCK

The very early investors were only asked for small sums in order to become members of WPH. Etheldred and Florence Lily Carre's efforts in writing letters to and seeking contacts with well-known women had raised about £117 in shares and £130 in loan stock (of which £100 came from Dorothy Peel) by the time of the financial crisis in April/May 1921.

However problems arose early on:

- Interest rates – the payment of a generous rate of 6% on loan stock was a heavy expense for WPH, and in 1923 this rate was reduced to 5% which still sufficiently attractive rate for the total invested to be £53800 by 1930 (with just over £5000 in the original 6% stock.)
- Because of WPH's need for capital there was a great deal of reluctance to repay any investor who wanted to redeem their holdings
- A repayable 4.5% loan stock was introduced in 1925 for investors who were putting their money into WPH on a short-term basis which allowed more flexibility and the COM agreed to hold a reserve for small repayments so, for example, Miss Carcand's £25 loan stock was repaid In September 1926
- This was further formalised in July 1927 - B Loan Stock @ 5% was issued and a sum equal to one tenth of all subscriptions was held available in the Bank Loan for purposes of repayment. However the certificates were deliberately printed without the word 'redeemable'.
- Repayments of shares – again, because WPH was desperate for capital in the early 1920s there was a reluctance to pay back investors. The Rules of PUSs meant that shareholders were only able to get their money back if:
 - Sufficient funds were available
 - At a rate not exceeding par value to be agreed by member and COM in writing
 - But that priority could be given to tenant members if they ceased to be tenants


This inflexibility about repayment put off potential investors, and it was the publicity sub-committee who recommended that subject to the approval of the Soc's solicitor, some kind of terminable loan stock should be issued in the near future

- In practice there were some early repayments :
 - Mrs Spring-Rice (a Dublin colleague of Etheldred's) changed her mind in June 1921 about investing and as the allocation of shares was only made officially that month, she was able to have her cheque returned.
 - When flats were re-let tenants were encouraged to transfer their shares to incoming tenants which overcame the problem – for example In June 1925 Miss Sasse, a tenant giving up her flat asked for the return of her investment of £15. (5 shares and £10 loan stock) It was decided that the money invested in shares could not be refunded; the shares needed to be taken over by the new tenant of the flat, though a cheque for £10 was authorised for repayment of her investment in loan stock.
 - It was more difficult if a tenant wanted to realise their assets, and did Miss Beale in March 1926 who was told she could not cash in her £50 shares but only transfer them. Worse when a tenant or investor died and their estate looked to realise assets; for example In September 1926 the COM considered correspondence about the late Dr Aldrich-Blake's share and stockholding and the shares were transferred to Violet Durand.

Publicity paid off in late 1920s

After 1921 it became obvious that a more rigorous approach was required and a number of initiatives were undertaken. In September 1923, a discussion arose at the COM as to the best method of making this work more public and it was agreed that a publicity sub-committee be appointed, and the Lady Shelley-Rolls be asked to act as chairman with Eva Harte and Aline Smallwood as members. They recommended holding a Public Dinner at the Hyde Park Hotel the price to be paid 12/6 per head. Lady Nancy Astor (one of the speakers) suggested that it be held on May 1924, when parliament was sitting. The publicity sub-committee it was agreed that the approximate estimate of £11.10.0 for 100 copies of the booklet submitted by Mrs Wood should be accepted as also the estimate of 17/- per 100 for invitation cards. This first fund-raising dinner raised about £1100.

Presumably the booklet referred to is the Prospectus for 1924 :



Council :
 Miss M. F. BELL, B.A.
 Lady EMMOTT, J.P.
 Miss CLOUGH
 THE HON. MRS. FRANKLIN
 Miss C. S. MACTAGGART
 Lady CYNTHIA MOSLEY
 OSWALD MOSLEY, Esq.
 Mrs. RICHARD REISS
 Viscountess RHONDDA
 Mrs. OLIVER STRACHEY

Registered Office :
 92, VICTORIA STREET,
 LONDON, S.W. 1.
 Tel.: VICTORIA 4494.
 Office Hours 10-5 daily.
 Mondays and Thursdays 10-6.30.

TO PROVIDE HOUSING ACCOMMODATION FOR WOMEN

Committee of Management :

Mrs. RALPH DURAND (<i>Chairman</i>)	Mrs. C. S. PEEL, O.B.E.
C. S. PEEL, Esq. (<i>Vice-Chairman</i>)	THE HON. LADY SHELLEY-ROLLS
Mrs. ARCHDALE	Miss NETTLEFOLD (<i>Tenant's Representative</i>)
Miss DIXON	Miss SMALLWOOD
CLAUDE HARRISON, Esq., F.R.I.B.A.	Miss SOREL-CAMERON
V. W. ORY, Esq., M.C.	

Secretary—Miss E. A. BROWNING.

Architect—Miss GERTRUDE W. M. LEVERKUS, A.R.I.B.A., 5, Gower Street, W.C. 1.

Solicitors—Messrs. TORR & Co., 38, Bedford Row, W.C. 1.

Auditor—Miss M. M. HOMERSHAM, M.A., A.S.A.A., 106, St. Clement's House, Clement's Lane, E.C. 4.

Bankers—MIDLAND BANK, LTD., 127, High Holborn, W.C. 1.

PROSPECTUS.

"WOMEN'S PIONEER HOUSING, LTD." was formed as a Public Utility Society under the Housing Town Planning, etc., Act 1919.

OBJECT.

The Object of the Society is to provide dwellings at rents which professional and other women of moderate means can afford.

Owing to the shortage of housing accommodation life has become increasingly difficult for self-supporting women: flats once within their reach are now inhabited by married couples who can no longer maintain their pre-war standard of living; housing schemes under Local Authorities must provide for families; and private enterprise, naturally, is chiefly interested in "High Class Flats" at high rents. It was felt therefore that unless some special effort was made on a co-operative basis to provide suitable housing at reasonable rents, the professional woman would be banished in her career for want of a proper home and would see her standard of life and comfort reduced to vanishing point. Women's Pioneer Housing, Ltd., has for the last three years been endeavouring to meet this need.

The prospectus, which was reprinted and then rewritten in 1935, emphasised the dual benefits of investing as 'doing good' – that is, furthering the provision of accommodation for single women and of 'a good return' offering a dividend on shares of 6% and an equivalent rate of interest on the loan stock. Nearly £33,000 shares had been sold by 1930.

According to rules of PUSs no one shareholder was able to invest more than £200 in shares, but many wealthy women (and a few men) invested this maximum (see the list at the end of this document).

In addition advertisements, a mailing list and press campaigns were initiated, newspapers contacted and asked to report on WPH AGMs and stalls taken at appropriate exhibitions. In 1935 the COM agreed to spend £25 on a stall at the Exhibition of Women's Progress, Sunderland House and another in October 1937 at the Women's exhibition at the American Women's Club. At one point there were suggestions that cards should be hung in two ladies' hairdressing salons.

CRISIS IN 1932 – A MAJOR REORGANISATION OF WPH FINANCES

After the stock market crash in the early 1930s and the difficult economic circumstances which followed, WPH again found itself paying too much interest on its mortgages and shares (6%) and loan stock (5%). WPH became even more attractive an investment and in July 1932 the Secretary reported a daily flow of investments. It was possible to increase income by raising rents as they became vacant, but the effect of this was minor.

A major reorganisation of its debts was needed and in July 1932 Charles Peel wrote to the COM suggesting the need for consulting an outside opinion re future policy. It was agreed that 'a firm of accountants be engaged to work in collaboration with Miss Watts and the Chairman and report generally on the business and finance of the Soc.' Their findings, confirmed by a sub-committee of William Norman, Dorothy Evans and Etheldred decided:

- a 4.5% transferable loan stock be issued from 4th October 1932 under similar conditions to the original issue for transferable stock. And that 'that holders of all classes of loan stock should be invited to accept the conversion of their stock into 4.5% loan stock, transferable but not withdrawable
- Every stockholder was written to in November 1932 – their existing holding could be transferred into the new 4.5% loan stock or repaid. In the event, by January 1933 81% of stockholders wanted to retain their holdings at the lower rate of interest and 18% asked for repayment.
- All the outstanding mortgages were paid off (they tried to reduce some interest rates first which had limited success) using an increased loan from the Bank (initially at 4.5%, then reduced to 4%). by October 1932 all the mortgages were paid off.
- A programme of gradual reduction of the debt to the bank was agreed, but it was soon overtaken by more borrowing as the markets picked up and more properties could be bought. Later new mortgages were arranged for Nightingale and Brook House.

Repayment of Shares

After the crisis, WPH's finances picked up so that a special clause could appear in the annual accounts from the 1936 AGM onwards. A sum of £1000 was placed at the disposal of COM for use during current financial year if and when felt fit for the repayment of Ordinary Capital of the Shareholders of the Society. This sum came out of reserves.

Dividends

The annual dividend of 6% on shares which had been paid since 1922 was maintained after the initial difficulties in 1932, however it reduced to 5% in 1934 and the issuing of new shares was discontinued for the time being except for the issue of one qualification share to tenants. Shares could still be transferred between investors. In the 1939 accounts the dividend was further reduced to 4% to reflect the additional challenges resulting from the War and ceased altogether in 1940.

Maximum shareholders:

1. Miss Elizabeth Allen Aird
2. Miss Mary MacColl Aird
3. Miss Margaret Alford
4. Viscountess Astor
5. Mrs Agnes Atkins
6. Miss Constance Monica M Bacon
7. Miss Ethel Joan de Beaumont Bacon
8. Miss Annie Louise Begg
9. Miss Grace Matthews Begg
10. Miss Jessie Begg
11. Ralph Morton Begg (father – dec'd)
12. Mrs Mary Berncastle
13. Mrs Jessica Blagden
14. Mrs Ada Jane Blair
15. Miss Fanny Freda Bolloten
16. Miss Amelia Mary Bristow
17. Miss Sarah Muriel Brotchie
18. Miss Laura Bullen Smith
19. Miss Gillian Margaret Clarke
20. Miss Ethel Laura Cobbe
21. Lady Louisa Cohen
22. Miss Constance Cross
23. Miss Frances E Dennis
24. Miss Mary Downey
25. Mrs Elizabeth Modwenna Droop
26. Miss Agnes E Clayton East
27. Lady Mabelle Egerton
28. Miss Phyllis Mabelle Egerton
29. Mrs C H Elliot COM
30. Mrs Alice May Rowland Garrett
31. Miss Helen Amy Gordon
32. Mrs George Graham
33. Miss Edith Jane Haines
34. Mrs V Hamilton
35. Miss Hamilton
36. Mr Geoffrey Hamlyn
37. Mrs A Lindo Henry
38. Mrs Margaret Alison Hicks
39. Miss Mary Hoc
40. Miss Beatrice Alice Holme
41. Mrs Teresa Hood
42. Mrs Dorothea Byron Howell
43. Mrs Phyllis Clara Hunt
44. Miss Catherine Hester Jack
45. Miss Mary Jackson
46. Miss Florence Ellen Knowles
47. Hon Lady Violet Adelaide Cicely Levenson-Gower
48. Lady (Ruth)Lewis
49. Miss Rosetta Celsina Lietti
50. Mrs Florence Alice Beatrice Lloyd

51. Herbert Lloyd-Johnes Esq
52. Mrs Adelaide Vernon Keane Lyon
53. Miss Alice Mary Mannering
54. Miss Anna Rose Marten
55. Mrs Ethel Mary Medley
56. Miss Kathleen Maude Milburn
57. Miss Leonora Maria Milman
58. Miss Anne Lewis Moffat
59. Mrs Ida Neale
60. Miss Annie Orton
61. Miss Sara Orr
62. Miss Winifred Ada Maude Palmer
63. Mrs Christina Ellen Graham Pascoe
64. Miss G S Pierse-Duncombe
65. Miss Eleanor Grace Powell
66. Miss Dorothy Preston
67. Mrs Mabel Frances Price
68. Miss Eleanor Louisa Rammell
69. Miss Elaine Florence Rees
70. Sybil, Dowager Viscountess Rhondda
71. Miss Mary Richards
72. Miss Alice Hill Richardson
73. Miss Constance L Rivington
74. Miss Eileen Ismena Lilian Rohde
75. Horace Dewick Sawtell Esq
76. Miss Charlotte Louise Searson
77. Sir John Shelley Rolls
78. Hon Lady Shelley Rolls COM
79. Mrs Helen L Skrine
80. Miss Helen Mary Street
81. Miss Mabel Annie Taylor
82. Miss Oonagh Tighe
83. Miss Florence Ellen Turing
84. Miss Julia Turing
85. Miss Blanche Mary Vesey
86. Miss Frances Ella Louisa Walrond
87. Miss Nora Walsh
88. Mrs Watson Russell
89. Miss Winifred Mary Weeks
90. Mrs Ursula Coston Western
91. Miss Fanny Emily White
92. Mrs Marian Wildgoose
93. Rev William Henry Wilding
94. Miss Isabel Emma Wilkins
95. Mrs Dorothy Maud Wimbush

TENANTS:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Miss Geraldine Georgina Campbell | CLG5 |
| 2. Miss Julia Robinson Chitty | WCR65 |
| 3. Mrs Estella Clive Smith | NER1 |
| 4. Miss Mary Frances Colvin Smith | GG25 |

5.	Miss Constance Elinor Katherine Darby	LAG34
6.	Miss Evangeline Dickenson	STG08
7.	Mrs Annie Douglas	BRG16
8.	Miss Lucy Constance Elphinstone	CLG5
9.	Miss Laura Fairburn	GG25
10.	Mrs Minnie Fulton Galloway	STC22
11.	Frank Graham	LAG12
12.	Mrs Jane Graham	LAG12
13.	Miss Lucy Havers Hall	LAG15
14.	Miss Maria Elena Hall	LAG15
15.	Miss Hilda Mary Harding	ELR17
16.	Miss Jane Harrap	ABR130
17.	Miss Ruby Holland	LAG13
18.	Miss Dorothy Louise Inness	HAG65
19.	Miss Ada Mumford	COR14
20.	Miss Mary Ann Pugh	LAG14
21.	Miss Ethel Amy Shorman	LAS16
22.	Miss Katherine F Stafford	PHG28
23.	Miss Gertrude Stones	POS2
24.	Miss Jessie Stronge	GG24
25.	Miss Sybil Mary Weeks	HRC2