



Deptford Fun City

**A ramble through the history and
music of New Cross & Deptford**

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Erratum: the statue on Deptford Town Hall (page 8) is not of Oliver Cromwell but of the Admiral in his navy, Robert Blake.

Contents

Introduction	2
1. New Cross Gate: Tollgate - V2 - Railways - The Red Flag - Bus, Trams and The General Strike	3
2. Deptford Town Hall: The Woodcraft Folk - Slavery and Empire	7
3. Goldsmiths College: Livery Companies - Malcolm McLaren & other Goldsmiths musos - St James Church Religious Riots	10
4. Fordham Park and Clifton Rise: Urban Free Festival and music scenes - Songs of the South East - Moonshot Club and Black Music	14
5. New Cross Road: New Cross Fire - Racism and resistance	19
6. Jerningham Road and Telegraph Hill: Green New Cross and Deptford - Robert Browning - St Catherine's Church	22
7. Watson Street: New Cross Empire	24
8. Deptford High Street: Unemployed riots - Deptford Mob - Market - Pubs - Albany - Deptford Fun City & ATV - This Heat - Pagans - Derek Jarman and Jubilee	25
9. Deptford Broadway: Cars - Chartists - Dock Strike - Suffragettes - Anarchists - 1930s unemployed	37
10. Deptford Bridge: Peasants revolt - Jack Cade - Cornish rebellion - Civil War	46
11. Brookmill Road: Poverty - Carrington House	47
12. Deptford Church Street: Workhouse - Irish Deptford	49
13. McMillan Street: McMillan Sisters - St Nicholas Church and the Black Atlantic - The Devil came down to Deptford - Jack in the Green - Christopher Marlowe	50
14. Down by the riverside: Murder - Dockyard - Sailors - Gut Girls - Convoys Wharf - John Gast - Prison Hulks - Deserters - Kate Sharpley	55
15. Stowage and Millennium Quay: Regeneration and the future	63
16. Sources	66

Introduction

Hello, good evening and welcome to nothing much,
A no holds barred half-nelson and the loving touch.
The comfort and the joy of feeling lost
With the only living boy in New Cross.

(Carter the Unstoppable Sex Machine, 1992)

This pamphlet started life as a 'Radical New Cross and Deptford' history walk in April 2002 during the London May Day Festival of Alternatives. 40 people braved the pouring rain to wander from The Hobgoblin at New Cross Gate down to the riverside at Deptford before taking refuge in The Duke. Some of the material has also seen the light of day on a programme I presented on Resonance 104.9 FM a few months later called 'Peasants, Punks and Gut Girls: the history and sounds of New Cross and Deptford'. I also talked about it on Robert Elms' programme on BBC Radio London in December 2003.

The text loosely follows the route of the original ramble, and can be used as a kind of alternative tour guide - there is a map in the centre pages. But stories, like people, cannot always be confined to one place and inevitably there is some wider rambling as related material from different eras and areas gets thrown into the mix at whatever point seemed most convenient.

I have not set out to write a comprehensive history of the area, but to highlight things that interest me. Many of the subjects covered deserve a book of their own - please get writing! To paraphrase an old American TV programme, 'There are eight million stories in the naked city. These are just some of them'. And just to give a flavour of the kind of trivia you will find in what follows, I can't resist pointing out that 'There are Eight Million Stories' was also the title of the 1985 album by South East London indie darlings The June Brides, a band who in their time graced both The Goldsmiths Tavern and The Harp Club.

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Dedicated to Billy and Rose, growing up in New Cross to make history.

Front cover: celebrating the defeat of the National Front in 'The Battle of Lewisham', New Cross, August 1977 (see page 21).

1. New Cross Gate

Once upon a time, New Cross Gate was just that. Centuries before congestion charges, a turnpike gate was set up there to collect tolls from traffic using the road into London. A painting of the scene from the mid-19th century depicts a horse and carriage at the gate, with 'The White Hart' pub behind.

From the early 18th century the original New Cross tollgate was situated at the top of what is now Clifton Rise, and apparently took its name from the nearby Golden Cross inn. The area west of Deptford and the Kent/Surrey border had been known from Anglo-Saxon times as Hatcham – meaning 'Hacci's village' or possibly 'the village in the clearing in the woods'. After the gate moved to the junction of the New Cross Road with Peckham Lane (now Queens Road) in 1813, the whole area tended to become more commonly known as New Cross.

Today, the area remains an important transport connection, with the main A2 road and its bus routes joined by tube and rail lines at New Cross Gate station. On one Saturday afternoon in the Second World War, this area was devastated as the people of New Cross became the unwitting sacrifices to the development of another form of transport – the space rocket.

Disasters of the Second World War

On 25 November 1944, there was a massive explosion without warning at the Woolworth's store in New Cross Road, on the site where the Iceland shop now stands. 168 people were killed, ranging in age from Michael Glover, aged 1 month, to William Frank, aged 80.

The New Cross explosion was caused by a V2 rocket, built by slave labour on the continent. At the end of the war Wernher Von Braun, the architect of the V2 programme, was spirited away by the Americans to design missiles for them, including the launch vehicle for the Apollo space programme. This convenient transformation was satirised in a 1965 song by Tom Lehrer which goes 'Once the rockets are up, who cares where they come down? That's not my department,' says Wernher von Braun'.

Charles Williams, whose sister and niece were killed in the New Cross attack, later commented: 'These rockets are quite similar to some of those they use now. When I see it I think how vicious, how cool and calculating, how foolish, killing people for some other bugger' (Steele, 1994).

The Woolworth's explosion was by no means the only local tragedy in this period - by the end of the war 648 people had been killed by bombs and rockets in the Deptford area. Another V2 rocket which landed near Pagnell Street killed 8 and injured 57 on 28 October 1944. In January 1945, 20 were killed in Adolphus Street, where 'a dazed man walked up and down with a dead infant in his arms, asking where he should put it'. Two months later a rocket destroyed two blocks of flats at Folkestone Gardens in Trundleys Road. 52 people died and 64 were seriously injured (Blake).

During the war, many local children were evacuated from London. While this kept them safely away from the falling bombs, the experience was not a rural idyll for all. Deptford-born Dick Pooley, evacuated with his young brothers to Torquay, recalled times of cold, hunger and neglect (Pooley). To meet their needs, Dick took to stealing food and money, the first step in a criminal career that led to him becoming known as the country's top safe-blower. Pooley spent 20 years in prisons and other penal institutions and helped organise the prisoners' union, PROP (Preservation of the Rights of Prisoners) in the early 1970s.

Railways – The New Cross Tangle

The first railway in London ran between Deptford and Spa Road in Bermondsey, opening in 1836 as the first completed section of the Greenwich to London Bridge Line. Over the next fifty years, New Cross was to become so dominated by the railways that the area became known as the New Cross Tangle on account of its numerous railway lines, workshops and two stations - both originally called New Cross. Sensibly, one was later renamed New Cross Gate.

Charles Dickens must have had this area in mind when he wrote in 'Our Mutual Friend' (1865) of 'the flat country tending to the Thames, where Kent and Surrey meet, and where the railways still bestride the market gardens that will soon die under them'. A few years later Dickens was spending time in the area himself - he rented a house in Linden Grove, Nunhead, for his lover Ellen Ternan.

Hatcham Iron Works in Pomeroy Street was an important locomotives factory, the scene of a bitter confrontation in 1865 between the boss, George England, and the workers. The Strike Committee met at the Crown and Anchor pub in New Cross Road, now the site of Hong Kong City Chinese restaurant. George England's house, Hatcham Lodge, is now 56 Kender Street.

Keeping the Red Flag flying

It was on a rail journey to New Cross that the famous socialist anthem 'The Red Flag' was written in 1889. The author, Jim Connell, was heading home from a Social Democratic Federation meeting to Brockley, where a plaque now commemorates his house at 22a Stondon Park. He later recalled: 'In a train between Charing Cross and New Cross, during a fifteen-minute journey, the first two stanzas, including the chorus, were completed' (Connell).



Connell (left) had worked as a casual docker in Dublin before being blacklisted for his trade union activities. On moving to London he became active in the Irish Land League and the socialist movement, including the Deptford Radical Association. By his own account The Red Flag was inspired by the London dock strike happening at that time, as well as by the execution of four Chicago anarchists, framed after May Day clashes in 1886. Connell died in Lewisham Hospital in 1929.

It is fitting that a song written in New Cross has played a part in local events, most notably on a Sunday evening in June 1932. Following a National Unemployed Workers Movement protest, 'a large body of

people were marching home from an antiwar demonstration at Woolwich when, at Deptford Broadway, some of them started to sing 'the Red Flag'. Policemen who were escorting the procession tried to stop the singing, but the men refused'. In fact, the demonstrators' own band had first struck up the tune and been stopped, after which (a court was later told) Alexander Duncan was heard to say 'Now then, comrades, if we can't play it we will sing it'. Duncan was the husband of Kath Duncan, who had stood in elections locally as a Communist Party candidate.

In the clashes that followed six people were arrested and the police made free use of their batons: 'when the arrested men appeared in court, three of them had large plasters on the back of their heads'. Over the next week there were further demonstrations and riots in Deptford. The following

morning unemployed workers in local training centres went on strike and 'Nearly a thousand unemployed... attended a meeting at Deptford Broadway to protest against the arrest of the six men and to raise funds to support their families'. That evening 'nearly 8,000 people assembled at the Broadway... a number of men attempted to sing The Red Flag. The police drew their batons and had some difficulty in controlling the crowds'.

On Tuesday night, 5,000 gathered in nearby Stockwell Street, Greenwich and blocked London Street, where mounted police charged the crowd. On Wednesday bricks were thrown at police in Church Street. By the end of the week things seemed to have calmed down, although there was a peaceful unemployed demonstration from Deptford to Blackheath; apparently 'The demonstrators were informed of the meeting by chalked messages in the streets' (all above quotes from South London Press, June 1932).

There had been a number of further arrests during the week, and later six people received sentences of between two and four months in prison with hard labour: Alfred Lucas (aged 41, a mechanic from Clandon Street), George Childs (24, a clerk from Vesta Road), Albert Crane (24, a hosier from Shere Street), Edward MacCafferty (22, a salesman from Pagnell Street), William Trott (30, a fitting hand from Adolphus Street) and Victor Hammond (32, a labourer from Coston Street).

The Red Flag was heard again in New Cross during the 1926 General Strike, and still occasionally makes itself heard above the din of the local traffic: in 2002 a local socialist choir called The Strawberry Thieves (named after a William Morris wallpaper design) sang it in New Cross Road during my Radical New Cross and Deptford history walk.

The Bus Garage and the General Strike 1926

New Cross bus garage was formerly the largest tram depot in London, opening in 1906, with its last tram journey in 1952. During the 1926 General Strike in support of the miners, strikebreakers were brought in to drive trams from the depot. On May 7th, police baton charges were launched to clear a crowd of 2-3,000 pickets blockading the entrance (reported as 'Rowdyism in New Cross' by the Kentish Mercury).

The strike seems to have been solidly supported locally, with The Deptford Official Strike Bulletin (published by the local strike committee at 435 New Cross Road) reporting 'mass pickets posted at most works in the Borough' (8th May). As well as the Tram Depot, there were clashes on Deptford Broadway, said to be 'rendered almost impassable by a dense crowd' (KM 15.5.26) and at a bottle factory in Church Street.

Social events included a mass meeting at the New Cross Empire (see page 24), and concerts at the Central Hall in Creek Road for which a notice in the Strike Bulletin advertised 'all strikers and their wives will be welcomed' (11.5.1926).

2. Deptford Town Hall

The Woodcraft Folk – a radical youth movement

Among those active in supporting the General Strike were the local groups of the fledgling Woodcraft Folk youth movement. According to Leslie Paul, groups including 'the Wheatsheaf at Peckham, the Vagabonds at Tooting, the Wayfarers at Catford, the Foresters at Lee Green, the Arrowheads at Deptford' all gave 'loyal support to the strike'. Paul recalled: 'Sydney Shaw and I galvanised the Lewisham Trades Council into forming a Council of Action, and we worked flat-out, sixteen hours a day, for the Council (I addressed four or five open air meetings a night) and were as downhearted as most strikers when the strike was called off with no victory for the miners, who were left to struggle on alone for the rest of the year until hunger compelled them to give in.'

Leslie Paul, who then lived in Forest Hill, was a key figure in the development of the Woodcraft Folk as a radical alternative to the scouts, with its roots very much in Deptford and other areas of South East London. After the First World War, John Hargreave had led a split away from the Scout movement, in opposition to Baden Powell's militarist and imperialist leadership. As an alternative the Kibbo Kift Kindred was founded in 1920. In 1924, at 'A meeting in Deptford Town Hall council chamber to found a local association', the 17 year old Paul was elected 'Headman'. The increasingly dictatorial Hargreave refused to recognise the group as Paul was under 18 and as a result 'The frank, open, argumentative working-class Kibbo Kifters' withdrew from the movement' (Paul).

Leslie Paul helped set up the Wayfarers Fellowship in 1925, which along with the Deptford Arrowheads and several local groups went on to form the Woodcraft Folk the following year. The early Woodcraft Folk was 'a free youth movement by the young people themselves. We were self-governing and had to stay that way'. In Paul's words, they were seeking 'a new way of living, a richer day-to-day life in the present, in fact - a cultural revolution', with a strong emphasis on peace and co-operation. A description of a rail journey back from a camp in St Leonards' forest, April 1926 gives a flavour of their enthusiasm: 'We sang all the songs we knew and finished up in fine

style with the Red Flag [that song again] and the Internationale. There were crowds looking on from all platforms! Eventually we arrived at New Cross Gate at about 10 o'clock very tired but bucked with life'.

The Woodcraft Folk remains active locally through its Brockley Freefolk groups, meeting at Myatt Gardens school.

In his memoirs, Paul disparaged the mainstream Co-operative movement of the time for its 'middle class morality'. Nevertheless the local Co-operative organisations were amongst the more radical sections of the movement. The New Cross branch of the Women's Co-operative Guild (formed in 1919) was active in collecting money for the Miners' lock-out relief fund and for other strikers. As well as the Guild (which had 142 members in 1934), there was also a co-operative youth organisation, the New Cross Comrades Circle, established in 1935, and later a Co-operative Youth Club whose code included the following pledge: 'I believe that the resources of the world and the accumulated knowledge of past centuries should be in the common inheritance of all mankind'. Among the local young co-operators was Les Stannard (1919-1996), born in Rutts Terrace, Dennets Road, and at the other end of his life well known for his role in Lewisham Pensioners Forum (Tomkins).

Slavery and Empire

The old Deptford Town Hall in New Cross Road celebrates the maritime history of the area, with statues of Francis Drake, Admiral Nelson and Oliver Cromwell. From the time of Henry VIII, when the naval dockyard was first built, Deptford was central to British domination of the seas and ultimately of the lands beyond them. Joseph Conrad referred to this in the opening pages of his 'Heart of Darkness':

'They had sailed from Deptford, from Greenwich, from Erith - the adventurers and the settlers; kings' ships and the ships of men on Change; captains,



admirals, the dark 'interlopers' of the Eastern trade, and the commissioned 'generals' of East India fleets. Hunters for gold or pursuers of fame, they all had gone out on that stream, bearing the sword, and often the torch, messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred fire. What greatness had not floated on the ebb of that river into the mystery of an unknown earth!... The dreams of men, the seed of commonwealths, the germs of empires'.

What the statues of the Town Hall don't tell is the consequences of the British Empire for the people on the receiving end, many of whose descendants now live in the area.

Deptford was an important point in the network joining Britain, Africa, and the Caribbean, through which slaves and commodities were circulated. Many of the ships involved in the slave trade and the British Empire were built at Deptford, and many slavers had local connections.

One of the pioneers in developing the slave trade was John Hawkins who had a Deptford residence when he became Treasurer of the Navy. In 1567, Francis Drake sailed with Hawkins on a voyage that saw 500 West Africans captured as slaves and transported to the Caribbean after their villages had been burnt and plundered. Drake was later knighted at Deptford by Elizabeth I.

In the next century, Cromwell was a regular visitor to Deptford to oversee the building of two ships, 'The James' and 'The Diamond'. These formed part of the fleet Cromwell sent in 1654 to capture Jamaica from the Spanish, where sugar plantations were established worked by African slaves. After the restoration of the monarchy, Deptford royalist John Evelyn was appointed to the Kings' Council for Foreign Plantations. His mansion was at Sayes Court.

Some slaves spent time in Deptford, some died here. In 1772 it was reported that: 'a Captain at Deptford beat his Negro boy in so cruel a manner that he died'. Olaudah Equiano, the famous abolitionist, recalled being forced into slavery at Deptford in his book 'The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African (1789):

'arrived at Deptford the 10th of December, where we cast anchor just as it was high water. The ship was up about half an hour, when my master ordered the barge to be manned; and all in an instant, without having before given me the least reason to suspect anything of the matter, he forced me into the barge; saying, I was going to leave him, but he would take care I should not... he swore I should not move out of his sight; and if I did he

would cut my throat, at the same time taking his hanger. I began, however, to collect myself and, plucking up courage, I told him I was free, and he could not by law serve me so... just as we had got a little below Gravesend, we came alongside of a ship which was going away the next tide for the West Indies; her name was the Charming Sally, Captain James Doran; and my master went on board and agreed with him for me; and in a little time I was sent for into the cabin. When I came there Captain Doran asked me if I knew him; I answered that I did not; 'Then', said he, 'you are now my slave'.'

3. Goldsmiths College

Livery Companies and landowners

Goldsmiths College is another local site with a maritime connection. The older buildings were originally built as the Royal Naval School, a boarding school for the sons of officers in the Navy from 1843 to 1889. It was bought up by the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, who opened the Goldsmiths' Company's Technical and Recreative Institute in 1891.

In this period the wealth of the City Livery Companies was a major force in the area – while the Goldsmiths were developing the college, the Haberdashers were developing housing and schools in New Cross. They had first acquired this land in the 17th century, a period in which the Haberdashers and the other Livery Companies also led the 'plantation' of the north of Ireland, dividing up between them land seized from the Irish inhabitants. Some of the descendants of the Irish dispossessed ended up in Deptford themselves (see page 49).

The changing patterns of land ownership in the area are a register of the forms of wealth and power over the centuries. In feudal times, the Church was the dominant force, with Hatcham tithes paid to Bermondsey Abbey from 1173 until the dissolution of the monasteries when the Crown took over. A series of wealthy individuals then held land locally before the City Livery Companies moved in.

Today it is the College itself (handed over from the Goldsmiths to London University in 1904) that is an increasingly dominant force in the area – occupying not only its original site, but the Town Hall, the old St James Church, the former St James Primary School (opposite the new school), the Laurie Grove public baths and other buildings that taken together constitute the former town centre of New Cross.

Malcolm McLaren and other Goldsmiths musos

Malcolm McLaren was a student at Goldsmiths in the late 1960s and spent his time there perfecting the skills as a cultural provocateur that he was later to put to use as the manager of The Sex Pistols. In 1969 he had his first go at 'the Great Rock'n'Roll Swindle' when he advertised a summer free festival at Goldsmiths with claims that Pink Floyd, The Rolling Stones and John Lennon were 'awaiting confirmation'. Naturally they didn't turn up, but thousands of people did. There was some music, including 'Local folk singer and guitarist Gordon Giltrap' and 'local folk trio the Strawbs' (KM 10/7/1969). A debate featured radical psychiatrist RD Laing, the Scottish writer Alexander Trocchi and an intervention by a Women's Liberation group complaining about the all-male platform.

The limits of the festival organisers' radicalism were criticised by some of those who turned up; one later recalled that faced with 'student union hacks...preventing non-student union members from going into the free festival-cum-teach-in: our little group opened up a side-door and told everybody how to get in. In fact this was far more interesting than what was going on on the stage, which was little more than just a radical version of a chat show' (Anon).

The local paper reported the event with the headline 'Free festival, free beer, free shambles' and made much of the presence of 'dolly birds' and 'girls [that] seemed to strut about with an 'I'm groovier than thou' expression' (KM 10/7/1969). Goldsmiths now use the fact Malcolm McLaren went there as a selling point to attract students, but his relationship with the authorities was rather fraught when he was there. After the free festival, he was asked to work outside the college for the next two years.

In his book, 'Lipstick Traces: the secret history of the 20th century', the US music critic Greil Marcus makes a great deal of the influence of the Situationist International in the conception of The Sex Pistols. The SI was a revolutionary organisation whose highest point came in the May 1968 uprising in France, when Situationist-inspired slogans such as 'take your desires for reality' and 'beneath the paving stones the beach' appeared on the walls.

Malcolm McLaren and Sex Pistols sleeve designer, Jamie Reid, were on the fringes of the English pro-situationist group, King Mob. Whether the Sex Pistols represented the application of the situationist critique of culture, as Marcus would have it, or its recuperation as a money-making exercise is open to question - I would say a bit of both. But what's all this got to do with New Cross? Well living in New Cross in the late 1960s was one Fred

Vermorel, a friend of McLaren's who had been in Paris in 1968. In his book 'Fashion and Perversity' he writes: 'I introduced Malcolm to situationism at the 36 bus stop, just outside Goldsmiths College in Lewisham Way'.

Another famous Goldsmiths luminary was John Cale, later of the Velvet Underground. He was voted 'most hateful student' by college heads of department and caused a minor scandal at an end of year concert in 1963 by playing avant-garde pieces of music such as La Monte Young's 'X for Henry Flint' accompanied by the radical composer Cornelius Cardew and a rowdy audience. He also got reprimanded on a teaching placement in a local school for reading a class of 8-year-olds 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' - although the kids apparently loved it (Cale and Bockris). Cardew himself ran a class, Songs for Our Society, at Goldsmiths in the mid-1970s.

Over the years there have been various attempts to outrage the Goldsmiths establishment. For instance in 1991, Fred Carter of Thee Temple Ov Psychick Youth (TOPY) had a performance called 'Shock, Information and the Negation of Control' stopped short by the Student Union. It involved self-mutilation, with Carter cutting himself to a soundtrack of drones, industrial rhythms and hymns (Carter).

TOPY founder Genesis P.Orridge was previously in industrial music pioneers Throbbing Gristle, who played at Goldsmiths in 1978 and 1980. A recording of the former gig has been released on CD (Throbbing Gristle Live, vol. 2, 1999). As part of COUM Transmissions, Genesis and Cosi Fanni Tutti also staged their performance art pieces 'Birth of Liquid Desires' (1974) and 'After Cease to Exist' (1976) at Goldsmiths, the latter in the same year that they were denounced by an MP as 'wreckers of civilization' following their 'Prostitution' exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts.

The capacity to really shock has gradually diminished however. A mild dose of outrage certainly did no harm to the career of Damien Hirst, the most famous of Goldsmiths recent artistic alumni. Alongside Hirst's dead sharks and cows, we could also mention in this context the work of the Chapman brothers, one half of whom (Dinos) lived in New Cross until relocating to Hoxton in the late 1990s.

Hirst directed the 'Country House' (1995) video for Blur, a band who played one of their first gigs at Goldsmiths in 1988 under their then name of Seymour. Alex James and Graham Coxon from Blur went to the college and used to live in a squat in New Cross.

Placebo also formed locally, with lead singer and Goldsmiths student Brian Molko living at one time in Drakefell Road. He later recalled as one of his

most treasured memories 'the night I did a gig in a small pub in Deptford called Round the Bend, because that was the first night [band member] Stefan came round to see me play guitar, and at the end of the it he said, 'lets start a band'.' Round the Bend is now the Harp, at the corner of New King Street and Creek Road. Placebo released their first single 'Nancy Boy' and their debut album in 1996, and also appeared in the camp glam classic film 'Velvet Goldmine'.

St James Church – religious riots

In the 1870s St James Church was the scene of bitter religious controversy, at the centre of which was Arthur Tooth, appointed vicar in 1868. Tooth was on the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Church of England, and fell foul of the Public Worship Regulation Act, designed precisely to stamp out Roman Catholic 'ritualism' in the Church. In 1876 he was formally notified of intended prosecution under the Act, for practices including the use of lighted candles and incense. The threat of the law was backed up by Protestant mobs who rioted regularly at the Church on Sundays between Christmas 1876 and January 21 1877, smashing windows and storming the doors. The day after the final riot, Tooth was arrested in Borough High Street, and taken to Horsemonger Lane Gaol, where he spent several weeks before being released in ill-health. In defiance of a ban, Tooth returned to New Cross and climbed in through a window to celebrate Mass one last time (Catholic Literature Association).

Religious intolerance was not confined to the persecution of perceived Catholics – local freethinkers also found their meetings under threat. Deptford and Greenwich Secular Society was formed in the mid-19th century, and in the 1860s and 1870s formed part of a significant national movement critical of religion headed by Charles Bradlaugh. Deptford was one of several places where 'Secularist meetings were broken up by organized bands' in this period (McGee).

Despite this fervour it has been argued that active religion was a minority interest among the 19th century working class, with less than 15% of the population attending any place of worship in areas like Deptford (Paul Thompson). Various dissenting and heretical strands of Christianity were though represented in the local area, along with other religious minorities.

In Victorian Deptford, the New Jerusalem Church in Warwick Street followed the mystical Christian ideas of Swedenborg that had so influenced William Blake (Dickens 1879). The Kingdom Hall of the Jehovah's Witnesses, next to the Bus garage, stands on the site of the old Synagogue.

4. Fordham Park And Clifton Rise

The Urban Free Festival and local music venues

Fordham Park today rarely has more than few dozen footballers and dog walkers in it at any one time. In the 1990s though it was the scene of the biggest annual free festival in London. Deptford Urban Free Festival was put on by the South East London Musicians Collective, not-for-profit promoters SYLVIA and others. It featured local bands and sound systems as well as some more well-known acts from outside the area, including Back To The Planet, Fun-Da-Mental and Skunk Anansie. In 1993, the festival was rounded off by Orbital – the next year they were rocking Glastonbury. The seventh and final event in 1996 attracted 30,000 people. Sadly in a climate of increasing regulation of festivals – marked by the passing of the Criminal Justice Act - the council refused permission for future events.

The New Cross and Deptford area has a history of being a fertile ground for music. One reason is that the area has never been short of music venues. This goes right back to the big music halls and ballrooms, some of which have been recycled over the years.

Max Bygraves, who grew up in Rotherhithe, recalled that in the 1930s 'on a Saturday night you would probably find me at the Palais de Danse at the top of Deptford High Street... It was a typical Palais with a large dance-hall and obligatory mirror-ball in the centre' (Bygraves). The Laurie Grove baths, open from 1898 to 1991, were sometimes boarded up for dances – US rock'n'roll legend Jerry Lee Lewis played there in 1964.

The New Cross Kinema, which opened in Clifton Rise in 1925, had a dancehall as well as showing films. It later became The Harp Club and then in 1989 The Venue, which until a few years ago was one of the top venues for alternative bands in London. In its 1990s indie heyday acts playing there included Oasis, Blur, Pulp, Billy Bragg, Chumbawamba, Radiohead, Suede and PJ Harvey. Irish band Ash filmed their 'Kung Fu' video in The Venue, and some scenes of 'G:MT' were shot there too, a 1998 film based around the lives of a group of aspiring musicians in Greenwich.

Music pubs and bars such as The Amersham Arms, The Goldsmiths Tavern and The Paradise Bar have provided a platform for thousands of musicians and DJs. The latter, formerly the Royal Albert, hosted an early gig by Kate Bush, who lived in Wickham Road, Brockley. The main launch pad for her career though was The Rose of Lee pub, in nearby Lewisham.

The Goldsmiths Tavern was where comedians Vic Reeves and Bob Mortimer started their show 'Vic Reeves Night Out' in 1988 (they had first met in a Deptford bar called Winsons', where Vic was performing his 'Variety Palladium'). Music for some of their New Cross nights was supplied by Eddi Reader and Mark Nevin, soon to have a hit record as 'Fairground Attraction'. After Vic and Bob's Thursday night shows became too big for the Goldsmiths, they moved to The Albany Empire and then on to TV.



The Albany was one of the most important music venues in the 1970s and 1980s (see page 31) The Crypt under St Paul's Church was also the scene of punk and reggae gigs in the 1980s and a regular Friday night Psychedelic club (the flyer, left, is from 1985). Run by Andy More, the club was more like an indoor festival featuring regular appearances from free festival favourites like Ozric Tentacles and The Magic Mushroom Band.

In the 1980s and 1990s many large buildings were left empty and semi-derelict and these too provided musical opportunities. The Lady Florence Institute in Arklow Road had provided a platform for the

young Spike Milligan, who worked for a while at Stones Engineering in Deptford. In 'My Obituary' (1990) he recalled that in 1936 he won a 'silver cup crooning at Lady Florence Institute Deptford'. The empty building was squatted for parties in the 1990s by the Conscious Collective and others. It was a similar picture at 411 New Cross Road in the mid-1980s and the old New Cross Library (122 New Cross Road). The latter became Music City studio and rehearsal rooms in 1991, run by a co-operative of musicians and sound engineers. The studios and rehearsal space have been used by Gregory Issacs, Gong, General Levy and Dennis Brown, among many others. Music City relocated to Tanners Hill in Deptford in 2003.

Squatters, housing co-ops and holy joy

The musical vitality of an area reflects not just the infrastructure of venues and studios but the social mix of the people living there. In New Cross and Deptford this mix has included a student population, and from the 1970s

many other young people who moved to the area in a period when there was a lot of empty housing.

There was an active squatters movement from the late 1960s, and indeed in 1969 Lewisham Council adopted a policy of allowing homeless families to live in empty homes on short term licences following a case in which South East London Squatters helped a woman and a child to squat a house ('Squatters can move in' KM, 3/7/69). Following negotiations with the Council, Lewisham Family Squatting Association was set up later that year and was soon housing around 100 families at any one time.

From the late 1970s, housing co-operatives were set up in the local area, sometimes developing from squatting and short life housing projects. Sanford Housing Co-op, with its row of houses in Sanford Walk, was the first of its kind in London. It was followed by Nettleton Road Housing Co-op, Deptford Housing Co-op (in Rochdale Way), Juniper House Co-op (in Pomeroy Street) and more recently Greenstreet with its self-build project in Drakefell Road.

Free and low-cost housing provided a base for musical experimentation. Test Department were formed in 1981 from a group of people living at 8 Nettleton Road. They broke new ground with their 'metal bashing' industrial sound, using scrap metal for percussion. Their support for the Miners' Strike is documented in their 1984 LP, 'Shoulder to Shoulder', recorded with the South Wales Striking Miners Choir.

The Band of Holy Joy emerged from the same scene in the early 1980s. Vocalist Johnny Brown recalled: 'It was at a time when New Cross was really brilliant... Me and Max used to live in a big house with Test Department. That was how Holy Joy were formed... in Test Department's basement where they rehearse. We found an old organ there. It was this big house with no windows. They had a black door with a wreath on it and the house was haunted' (Melody Maker, 1987).

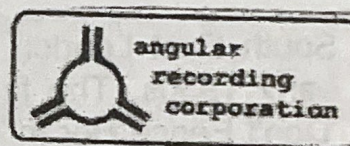
BoHJ's 1986 album 'More Tales from the City' was recorded at Chocolate City in New Cross and captures their unique sound featuring trombones, accordions, and cheap electronic keyboards. Their lyrical tales of infanticide, madness and alcohol drew comparisons with the work of Brecht, Weil and Jacques Brel. The band split up in 1992, but reformed recently to release the album 'Love Never Fails'.

The Crossfields Estate was opened up to single people in the 1970s, after being saved from demolition but still considered unsuitable for families. Most of Dire Straits lived there, playing at the Albany before going on to

become global stadium rockers. The Love Over Gold mural on Deptford Creekside refers to the Dire Straits album of the same name. Their early hit 'Sultans of Swing', gave an evocative portrait of a local music pub in the 1970s. Singer Mark Knopfler recalled that it was inspired by 'a little deserted pub in Deptford where we were all living at the time - the pub was semi-deserted and the band were down at heel and it was just playing these Dixie standards of Louis Armstrong things, the way they always do'.

At the beginning of the 21st century the area was no longer a regular stopping off point for nationally-known bands. The Venue had switched to a policy of only featuring bands covering other people's material, and the Albany was no longer a significant music venue. Some music pubs had disappeared or changed use. The Goldsmiths Tavern in its crusty punk incarnation had closed down shortly after a major police raid, and reopened in 2003 as a bar with an Italian restaurant upstairs. McMillans, a pub which hosted gigs in the 1980s, became Heathers vegan restaurant and continued to hold benefits. In the late 1990s Heathers closed and is now the site of the Fine Bar and Restaurant.

Despite this, there is still plenty of live music to be heard, some of it as good as anything from Deptford's past: The New Cross, a compilation launched on Angular Records at the Paradise Bar in November 2003, features some of the current crop of local bands, including The Swear, The Violets and The Vichy Government.



I ♥ N X

Songs of the South East

- ♪ 'Pretty Betsy of Deptford' is an old folk song about the love of Betsy for a sailor.
- ♪ 'The Deptford Dip' was a 1939 dance hit written by Eric Cuddon.
- ♪ The Desperate Bicycles – pioneers of punk DIY record production - put out their 'New Cross, New Cross' EP in 1977.
- ♪ Jools Holland's first solo single featured the B-side 'Deptford Broadway Boogie'. 'Valentine Moon' on the 'Jools Holland Big Band Rhythm and Blues' album name checks 'The Dog and Bell' pub in Prince Street.
- ♪ St. Etienne have recorded a track called 'Marcie dreams of Deptford'.
- ♪ The Flying Pickets performed a song called 'Last round up in Deptford'.
- ♪ 'Deptford Days' is on 'Small Mercies', a solo album by David Knopfler of Dire Straits.
- ♪ 'I get the madness in my head, when I lie for days in bed, or when I walk up the New Cross Road, When I'm starved and I haven't been fed' – Mad Dot by The Band of Holy Joy, 1986.

- ♪ *Carter the Unstoppable Sex Machine had a top ten hit in 1992 with 'The Only Living Boy in New Cross'.*
 - ♪ *'Escape from New Cross' is a live album of ska punk recorded locally by The Inner Terrestrials.*
 - ♪ *'Deptford Market Arcade Classics' is an EP of electro breaks from DJ Controlled Weirdness, 2002.*
 - ♪ *Local punk band The Phobics perform a song called 'Down and Out in Deptford Broadway'.*
 - ♪ *Band names with local connections have included The Deptford Wives and The Deptford Beach Babes.*
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The Moonshot Club and Black Music

The (currently empty) Moonshot Club in the corner of Fordham Park next to Pagnell Street is a reminder of another vital ingredient of the local social and musical mix added by the post-Windrush generation of Caribbean migrants that settled in South East London in the 50s and 60s.

South East London was playing a small part in Jamaican music from the early 1950s. The first Jamaican record to be commercially released was 'Don't Fence Her In' by Harold Robinson and The Ticklers on the MRS label in 1952. It was recorded in Jamaica but custom pressed at Decca's Lewisham pressing plant in Lee High Road by Emil Shallit, owner of the London based Melodisc label. Subsequently, Melodisc was the parent company of the legendary Bluebeat label.

Its an interesting thought that some of these early Bluebeat records were pressed in Lewisham and shipped to Jamaica, then brought back to South East London by Jamaican people, maybe ending up being played at blues parties in Deptford and New Cross.

One of the early sound systems in South London was King Ossie Sound, who played out regularly at El Partido club in Lewisham (8-10 Lee High Road) in the 1960s. This was a club frequented by young Jamaicans as well as local white mods. Guests in 1966 included Jimmy Cliff and the Duke Reid Sound System from Jamaica, whilst Bo Diddley played there in 1965.

In the 1970s and 80s, local reggae sound systems included The Mighty Revolutionaries - South-East A1 Sound, Jah Ceaser and Rootsman Hi-Fi. Jah Shaka was particularly associated with The Moonshot Club, and continued to play there until it closed down. For instance, 'On The 3rd Of October 1993, 3 Sound System Giants met. With about 3,000 followers a

ram Moonshot Dancehall shook, under heavy, classic, roots rockers vibrations' (shaka.reggaeclub.org). The three sound systems at this Roots Revival Splash were Jah Shaka, Fatman and Sir Coxsone. Shaka also ran an Arts and Craft Culture Shop in New Cross in the 1980s.

Popular black DJ Mistri grew up in Camberwell and Deptford and started out with Saxon Sound System. Reggae producer The Mad Professor was also based locally - his Ariwa studios moved to Gautrey Rd in 1982. He remained there for four years, producing many lovers rock and roots hits.

The Moonshot Club (also known at times as the Pagnell Street Community Centre) was at the centre of some of the conflicts between young black people and the police in the 1970s. In 1975 the sound system was damaged and there were several arrests when police entered to search people. In April 1977, the Club was occupied by its users after youth workers were accused of having had prior knowledge of police raids on young people's homes. And in 1981, the Club was a focus for the movement that arose after the New Cross Fire (see below).

In the late 1990s the closed and empty Moonshot Club building was briefly squatted for parties before being evicted and left to rot once again. At the time of writing, plans were in place to use the building for an under-fives centre.

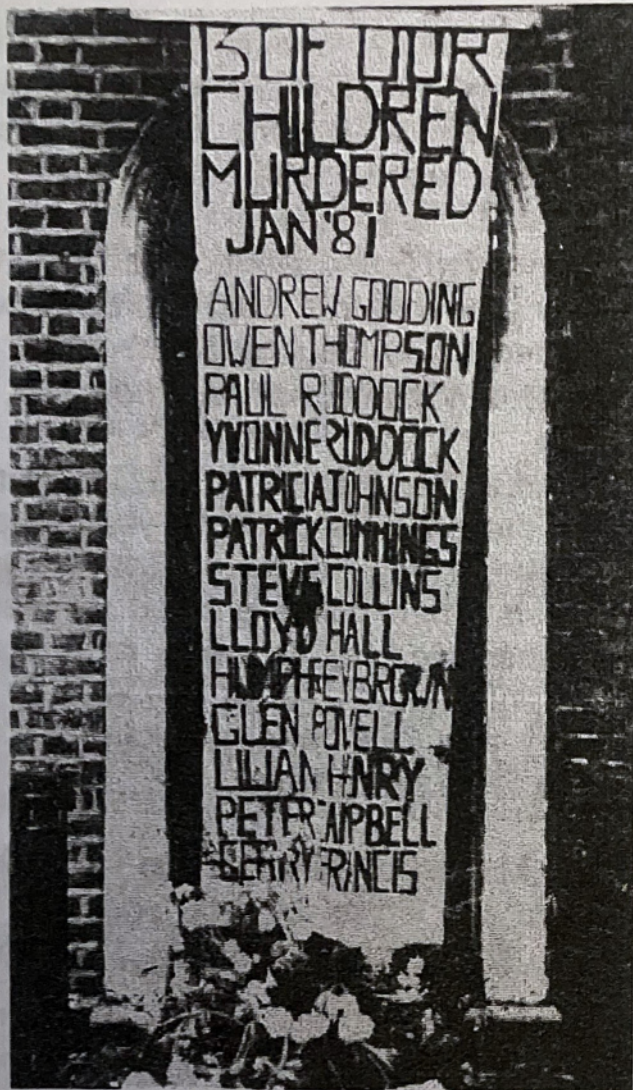
5. New Cross Road

The New Cross Fire – 13 Dead and Nothing Said

On Sunday 18th January 1981, 13 young black people, all between the ages of 15 and 20 years old, were killed in a fire at a birthday party at 439 New Cross Road. The police reported initially that the fire was caused by a firebomb, and many believed that it was a racist attack.

On the following Sunday a mass meeting was held at The Moonshot Club, attended by over 1000 people. From that meeting there was a demonstration to the scene of the fire, which blocked New Cross Road for several hours.

The New Cross Massacre Action Committee organised weekly mass meetings in New Cross. It also called the Black People's Day of Action on Monday 2nd March 1981, the biggest mobilisation of black people ever seen in Britain. 20,000 marched over a period of eight hours from Fordham Park to Hyde Park with slogans including: 'Thirteen Dead and Nothing Said', 'No



Zephaniah's '13 dead' and Linton Kwesi Johnson's 'New Cross Massakkah'.

Police Cover-Up', 'Blood Ah Go Run If Justice No Come'. Although the march was mainly peaceful, The Sun reported it with the headline: 'Day the Blacks Ran Riot in London'.

At the time of writing a new inquest into the New Cross Fire had just opened. Ever since the Fire, the police have leaked stories about breakthroughs, but have never charged anybody. Perhaps it will turn out not to have been a racist attack, but this was not the only issue at the time. The slogan of 'Thirteen Dead and Nothing Said' was a response to the official indifference to the deaths.

The tragedy was commemorated in a number of reggae songs and poems at the time, including Johnny Osbourne's '13 dead and nothing said', Benjamin

Racism and resistance in New Cross and Deptford

The belief that the New Cross Fire was a racist attack was entirely justified in the climate of the time. Racist messages were sent to family members in the aftermath, and the fire came in a period of organised racist activity in the area.

In fact, the far right had had an organised presence in the area for many years. As far back as the 1930s, a crowd blocked New Cross Road to prevent a British Union of Fascists march from reaching Deptford. In April 1962 the British National Party held torchlight parades in Deptford as it contested council elections, and in 1965 the Deptford Union Movement (followers of Oswald Mosely) held a public meeting in the area.

On 3 January 1971, in nearby Ladywell, three petrol bombs were thrown into a West Indian party in Sunderland Road, seriously injuring several

people. Two white racists were later jailed for the attack, and as with the New Cross Fire ten years later, the police were accused of inaction. In fact in the following week, the police arrested eight members of the Black Unity and Freedom Party in a fracas on their way home from visiting the fire's victims at Lewisham hospital. A march by 150 black people and supporters to Ladywell police station a few weeks after the fire saw further arrests.

In 1976, the National Front and the National Party achieved a combined vote of 44.5% in a Deptford council by-election. This was a period in which the far right was increasing its vote nationally and looked to be on the verge of a major political breakthrough. This progress was halted in its tracks by physical confrontations in which the NF was driven off the streets, or only able to march with massive police protection.

A key turning point was 13 August 1977, when a National Front March to Lewisham started in New Cross, in Achilles Street by Fordham Park. The All Lewisham Campaign Against Racism and Fascism marched from Hilly Fields but was prevented by the police from reaching New Cross. Several thousand of the more militant anti-fascists gathered in Clifton Rise where they were baton charged by police. As the NF entered New Cross Road there was hand to hand fighting, and clashes with police and NF continued up into Lewisham. Police used riot shields in Britain for the first time, and 200 people were arrested. In his book 'Beating Time', David Widgery described the scene in New Cross on what became known as 'The Battle of Lewisham':

'An officer with a megaphone read an order to disperse. No-one did; seconds later the police cavalry cantered into sight and sheered through the front row of protesters. So, without the organisation, it might have ended. Except that people refused to melt away from the police horses and jeer ineffectually from the sidelines. A horse went over, then another, and the Front were led forward so fast that they were quickly struggling. Then suddenly the sky darkened (as they say in Latin poetry), only this time with clods, rocks, lumps of wood, planks and bricks... The NF march was broken in two, their banners seized and burnt; only thanks to considerable police assistance was a re-formed, heavily protected and cowed rump eventually able to continue on its route to Lewisham... The mood was absolutely euphoric. Not only because of the sense of achievement - they didn't pass, not with any dignity anyway, and the police completely lost the absolute control [they] had boasted about - but also because, at last, we were all in it together' (Widgery).

If the NF's public activity had been restricted, its supporters were still able to strike by night. In November 1977 a newspaper reported that an NF

meeting had included talk of burning down the Moonshot; on December 18th, it was indeed gutted in a firebomb attack and had to be rebuilt.

The Albany (then at 47 Creek Road) was a centre of local anti-racist activity, including 'Rock Against Racism' gigs, a three day 'All Together Now' festival, a benefit to scrap the suss laws and a successful anti racist show called 'Restless natives'. On the 14th July 1978 the Albany too was gutted by fire. The next day notes were pushed through the door of the shell on Creek Road saying 'GOT YOU'.

It was incidents like these that made it easy to believe that the New Cross Fire had been caused by a racist attack.

6. Jerningham Road

Green New Cross and Deptford

Walking, or better still cycling up Jerningham Road, you certainly get a sense of the size and steepness of Telegraph Hill. Its former name, Plow'd Garlick Hill, reminds us of a time when, away from the industry of the riverside, much of the area was a rural landscape of fields, farms and market gardens.

This was after all an area that once gave its name to a wildflower, the Deptford Pink: 'There is a little wilde creeping Pinke, which groweth in our pastures neere about London, and in other places, but especially in the great field next to Deptford, by the path side as you go from Redriffe to Greenwich' (John Gerard, 1633). Today this once-widespread plant has not only disappeared from Deptford but is in serious decline nationally, being found in only 15 sites across Britain. Also in the 17th century, the famous herbalist Nicholas Culpepper mentioned a herb called Languede Boeuf (a type of borage) being 'plentifully found near London, as between Rotherhithe and Deptford'.

It was while the poet Robert Browning was living in Hatcham that his well-known 'Home thoughts from abroad' was published, an elegy to an England where 'the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows! Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge, Leans to the field and scatters on the clover, Blossoms and dewdrops'.

It is hard to believe that he could have had New Cross in mind when composing these lines, but the Brownings' family home in the 1830s and 1840s included a 'large garden, opening on to the Surrey hills' with 'coach-

house and stable' (Orr). In Spring 'he could hear lambs bleating in the fields... From his window he could see the chestnut tree by the pond, the holly hedge along the lane, the shrubs in the garden and the fruit trees overhanging the garden wall' (Browning Society). The house was on the site of 4-6 Musgrave Road, now demolished with some Haberdashers Aske's School outbuildings on the spot. It was from here that Browning sent love letters to his fellow poet Elizabeth Barrett prior to their elopement, sometimes including a rose from the garden.

In the second half of the 17th century, John Evelyn's garden at Sayes Court became one of the most famous of the period, inspired by his visits to the great Renaissance gardens of France and Italy. For Evelyn, a garden was a 'place of all terrestriall enjoyments the most resembling Heaven'. Today a small park on part of the site is the only reminder of the orchards, ornaments and buildings that once stood there.

Another major estate in the 18th and 19th century was Hatcham Park House, which featured an avenue of elms running from its entrance (situated where Casella Road now joins New Cross Road), as well as a moat stocked with fish and a park.

One of the largest local farms was Manor Farm, an estate stretching from Lewisham to Deptford. In the 19th century it was used for market gardening by Joseph Myatt, credited with first selling rhubarb to be eaten. The plant, originally from China, had previously only been cultivated for medicinal use, but it was Myatt who in 1801 first sent five bunches of Rhubarb to be sold at the Borough Market. Fruit and vegetables were grown on Myatt's land in Lewisham and Camberwell, including renowned strawberries. These gardens are remembered in the names of Myatt Gardens School as well as Myatt Fields in Camberwell.

In a 1946 essay, 'Some Thoughts on the Common Toad', George Orwell noted the persistence of urban wildlife: 'it is remarkable how Nature goes on existing unofficially, as it were, in the very heart of London. I have seen a kestrel flying over the Deptford gasworks, and I have heard a first-rate performance by a blackbird in the Euston Road. There must be some hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of birds living inside the four-mile radius, and it is rather a pleasing thought that none of them pays a halfpenny of rent'.

Through its private gardens, small parks, railway borders and hidden wildlife reserves, such as the London Wildlife Trust site on Vesta Road and Besson Street Community Garden, urban New Cross and Deptford still supports a surprising variety of wildlife from the ubiquitous foxes to the

cormorants on the riverfront. Deptford Creek is one of the key national sites for the rare Black Redstart – indeed the roof of the new Laban Dance Centre at Creekside has been designed to encourage Redstarts to nest there (Kerr & Gibson).

St Catherine's Church

At the top of Telegraph Hill stands the Church of St Catherine's, Hatcham, consecrated in 1894. St Catherine is the patron saint of the Haberdashers Company, who paid for the Church's construction. Those of a more esoteric disposition might wonder at its hill top location, since 'medieval chapels dedicated to St Catherine were often built on cliffs or hilltops', such as at Winchester and Abbotsbury in Dorset, and the mythical Catherine has been identified by some as a Christianised sky goddess (Abbotsbury Music).

In May 1913 the church was badly damaged in a fire blamed by some on suffragettes. There does not appear to have been evidence for this, although it is true that some other London churches were set alight by advocates of votes for women in this period.

Telegraph Hill takes its name from its position on a line of semaphore stations established in 1795 stretching from London to Deal. Messages could be sent southwards to the next station on Shooter's Hill, although on a clear day it was possible to see as far south as Sevenoaks.

7. Watson Street - The New Cross Empire

The New Cross Empire music hall was situated on the corner of Watson Street, where the car wash is now sited. Between 1899 and 1954 it was a major centre of local social life, but it was demolished in 1958. Max Bygraves made his stage debut there as a 12 year old in a talent contest. In 1933, the Empire was honoured with an appearance by Louis Armstrong, and in August 1938 by the Mills Brothers and Fats Waller.

The New Cross Empire was also used for social events and meetings, as in the General Strike. On May 9 1926, thousands attended a strike meeting at the New Cross Empire, featuring the Deptford Labour Choir leading the singing of the Red Flag. As people left the meeting there were clashes with police. That night a convoy of armoured vehicles passed through New Cross (Deptford Official Strike Bulletin).

8. Deptford High Street

Deptford High Street is well-preserved with many of the buildings dating back to the early 19th century or beyond – for instance parts of 227 Deptford High Street are thought to be nearly 300 years old. In an interesting case of historical continuity this building hosted a bakery for 200 years, from 1791 when Thomas Palmer converted it until the 1990s when the 'English West Indian' bakers closed (KM 16.10.2002). Other bakers at 227 along the way included Thomas Pearce in 1882 and Henry Kuhn in 1894 (Post Office London Directory). The empty building has been saved from dereliction since it has been occupied by Use Your Loaf Centre for Social Solidarity, run by a collective as a free space where people can meet together and share their knowledge and skills on a non-commercial and non-institutional basis. Although it is no longer a bakery it still serves up food and drink at regular café nights, as well as hosting South London Radical History Group and other meetings.

The Unemployed riot of 1867

Bakers in Deptford High Street came in for some attention in January 1867. At a time of high unemployment, the hungry crowd in Deptford were told that the depot which dispensed food to the poor had run out of bread. What happened was reported in one local paper under the headline 'The Unemployed Riots':

'On Wednesday evening some 300 or 400 of the unemployed perambulated the principal streets completely clearing out the bakers and other shops on their way. They commenced at the bottom of Church Street and by the time they reached the Broadway, most of the shops, including the public houses, were closed, and a large body of police on the place, who soon succeeded in restoring comparative quiet, though some bakers' and other provision shops in High-Street have been since entered and denuded of their contents.

Business in the town is at a complete standstill, armed mounted patrols and police on foot are to be seen in every street, whilst crowds of hungry-looking, worn-out artisans saunter about the pavements, presenting a most heart-rending picture. The shops in the town are closed, and the whole district presents a restless feverishness not witnessed for many years... there is no doubt that the poor men, worn out by cold and hunger, their tools pledged, and nearly every article of furniture gone to provide food for their wives and children, have been gradually verging into not caring what becomes of them' (South London Journal, 26 January 1867).

There were a number of arrests, including Henry Clubb of 5 Blackheath-Hill, who was charged with throwing stones at mounted police in Church Street (SLJ, 2.2.1867).

The day after this outbreak of desperate looting, people marched on a meeting of the Poor Law Guardians in Greenwich. The riot did result in some improvements – a Deptford General Relief Fund was 'founded on the occasion of the late bread riots' (SLJ, 4.5.1867).

Rumours of the Deptford Mob

In the following years the Deptford 'Mob' seemed to have had a fearsome reputation, such that rumours of its mobilisation could strike fear into the heart of the 'respectable classes'. In 1886 there were unemployed riots in Trafalgar Square and in the same week 'the whole of South London was panic-stricken by the report that a large body of unemployed rioters were on their way to the Borough and Newington Causeway from New Cross and Deptford', smashing shops on their way. Shops were boarded up and extra police sent down the Old Kent Road. A telegram was sent to The Times from the Old Kent Road: 'Fearful state all round here in south London. 30,000 men at Spa Road moving to Trafalgar Square. Roughts in thousands trooping to the west. Send special messenger to the Home Office to have police in fullest force with fullest military force to save London' (Times 11.2.1886).

There was a crowd of around 2000 gathered in Deptford Broadway but no sign of a riot. In fact in Deptford the rumours were of a crowd heading towards them from the Elephant and Castle. Not for the first time, stories and rumours flowed up and down the old road to Kent as well as people and goods. Rumours were also rife at the time of the 1889 dock strike, including one that 'Deptford meat market is in the hands of the insurgents who won't allow London to be fed' (Quinn).

In November 1887, Deptford people really did see action on what became known as Bloody Sunday, when socialists and radicals staged a demonstration in Trafalgar Square in defiance of a ban. Reynolds' Newspaper (20 November 1887) reported:

'The contingents from Rotherhithe, Bermondsey and the South-Eastern Division consisted of fully 20,000 persons. . . at four o'clock the processions from Peckham, Bermondsey, Deptford and Battersea made their appearance at the Westminster end of the bridge.... Superintendent Dunlop then gave orders to his men to disperse the assembly.... Borne by members

of the Procession were about 15 banners and for these the police made.... During the melee, the police freely used their weapons, and the people, who were armed with iron bars, pokers, gaspipes and short sticks, and even knives, resisted them in a most determined manner....'

The Times (14 November 1887) was less sympathetic, claiming that 'The most savage and determined attack upon the police was, however, made by contingents from the Surrey side, composed of choice spirits from all the slums between Battersea and Greenwich... The South London contingents, composed of agitators and Radicals, who have 'free speech' as their word of order, Home Rulers... and the Socialists who desire universal anarchy... One contingent, which came over Westminster Bridge, included the rough elements of Woolwich, Plumstead, Deptford, Greenwich, Rotherhithe, Bermondsey, Southwark and Lambeth'

Several people were killed by police including William Cunner, an unemployed Deptford painter who died from his injuries a couple of weeks later.

Hostility to the police seems to have been a common part of local working class culture. In 1839, a policeman was killed as a crowd of 500 battled to release a man arrested outside the Navy Arms in New King Street and taken to the Telegraph pub in Broomfield Place (Steele). The Navy Arms is still standing, with its most recent incarnation being as a gay pub.

Before the Second World War it was common for local people to get seasonal work in Kent picking hops. On a Deptford hop-pickers' reunion in 1995, Hilary Hefferman picked up the following verse, which gives a further insight into local attitudes to the law:

We are the Deptford girls, We are some of the lads
We know our manners, Spend all our tanners
We are respected wherever we go.
We go marching down the Old Kent Road,
Doors and windows open wide.
If you see a copper come, Hit him in the eye and run
We are the Deptford girls.

Deptford Market

In his 'London Labour and the London Poor' (1861), Henry Mayhew identified Deptford as one of the costermonger (street-seller) districts of London. For Mayhew, being a costermonger was not just an occupation, but a way of life, with a peculiar sexual morality (with many couples living

together unmarried) and politics: 'The politics of these people are detailed in a few words – they are nearly all Chartists... As regards the police, the hatred of a costermonger to a 'peeler' is intense'. Street-sellers were one of the 'wandering tribes' of London, with their own distinct areas: 'The costermongers usually reside in the courts and alleys in the neighbourhood of the different street-markets. They themselves designate the locality where, so to speak, a colony of their people has been established, a 'coster district'.

Despite its local costermonger population, Deptford does not seem to have played a big part in the 'pearly king' phenomenon, which started out with street traders in the St Pancras area in the nineteenth century. Certainly there was no local Pearly King in place in 1958, when George Pinaud, some-time Greenwich market stallholder and drag artist, set himself up as the Pearly King of Greenwich and Deptford (Binder).

Costermonger culture may largely have died out, but Deptford Market remains very busy. The Market was one of the locations for the 1959 film version of 'Look Back in Anger' with Jimmy Porter (Richard Burton) as the archetypal 'angry young man' running a sweet stall by day and playing jazz by night. The suggestions in the film of racism against a new Asian stallholder were prescient – in 1992 Sher Singh Sagoo, a market trader, was killed by a gang in a suspected racist attack.

Deptford Market also features briefly in Patrice Chéreau's 'Intimacy' (2000), as the place where the male lead loses the scent after following his lover from his house in Alpha Road. As the French director explained: 'I wanted Gary Oldman for the film, but he wouldn't do the sex scenes. But he did help me a lot - he showed me the Old Kent Road, Peckham and so on, and then I went off and discovered New Cross for myself'. Admittedly the film is better known for its sex scenes than its sexy South London locations, being referred to in one review as 'Last Tango in New Cross'.

Pubs, clubs and temperance

Ben Gidley of Goldsmiths has written of the development of a 'proletarian public sphere' in 19th century London, with working people developing their own clubs and institutions where they could meet, talk and socialise on their own terms. Among the examples he gives is the Hatcham Liberal Club in New Cross 'one of the largest working men's clubs, where Fabian and SDF socialists debated with secularists, progressives and radicals'. The Hatcham was also, incidentally, the venue for Charlie Chaplin's mother's last public performance (she had been a music hall singer).

Another local example was the Deptford Working Mens' Club and Institute in Creek Road which had as its object: 'To afford social and instructive amusements to working men in the shape of newspapers, history, light literature, discussions on social and topical subjects, lectures, concerts, &c., games of all kinds, athletic sports, rowing club'. The qualification for membership was to be 'A working man, bona fide (not those who pretend to be above that class), who must be proposed and seconded by two paid-up members who know him' (Dickens).

Less clearly proletarian was the Deptford Mechanics Institute. Like similar institutions elsewhere this offered a library, periodicals reading room and lectures on scientific and other subjects. The Deptford Institute was located in a couple of buildings after it opened in 1827, but from the early 1850s until it closed in 1892, it was located at 133 Deptford High Street between the railway station and the Catholic church. The building also served as the headquarters of the Deptford and Greenwich Radical Association and the Deptford Secular Co-operative Society (Post Office London Directory 1881).

Among those who raised funds for it was John Wade (1788 – 1875) 'a draper who lived in Evelyn Street and had a shop in the High Street' (Steele). Wade had been the editor of the radical paper 'The Gorgon' (1818-19) which supported the strikes by Manchester cotton-spinners and the efforts of Deptford's John Gast to organise the London dock workers. He also wrote and published 'The Black Book: Corruption Unmasked' (1819), detailing the revenues of the aristocracy and clergy, and the relationship between government and the East India Company, among other examples of corruption and inequality (E.P. Thompson). By the 1840s he had adopted a more moderate position, and like other reformers looked to the Mechanics Institute to promote the self-improvement of the working class. In practice, the Institute was inaccessible to much of the local population who lacked the basic literacy skills to make use of its facilities and the means to pay its subscription fees.

A completely different kind of night out was offered at the St Helena Gardens, which stood for over a hundred years near Deptford Lower Road where Deptford joined Rotherhithe. First opened as tea gardens in 1770, the five acre site provided music, dancing, fireworks and other entertainment. There were walks laid out with chestnut, elm and plane trees. In the early nineteenth century it was said to have been 'frequented... chiefly by the dockyard population of the neighbourhood' (Wroth). The gardens closed in 1881 and were built over, but are recalled in the name of St Helena Road in the area.

Much more typical were the pubs. In 1840, Pigots directory listed 85 pubs and taverns in Deptford/New Cross. Some of these are still surviving with the same name – if not the same building – such as the Dog and Bell, Hoy Inn, Montague Arms, Five Bells and Marquess of Granby. The names of the lost pubs of Deptford recall a whole world of maritime associations (the Neptune, Sheer Hulk, Fishing Smack, Ship Defiance, Ship and Sailor) and popular legends (Robin Hood & Little John, Druid's Arms). As well as places of refreshment and entertainment, pubs were a meeting place for all kinds of unions, benefits societies and the whole network of mutual aid institutions that people relied on to survive before the welfare state. This could overlap with masonic type bodies. The Griffin pub in Deptford was recorded as the meeting place of a chapter of the Freemason 'Rite of Harodim-Rosy-Cross' in December 1744.

Pubs were also places of exploitation, particularly for workers who were paid in them and encouraged to spend their money there. In the 1840s, Henry Mayhew recorded an account from a Deptford lumper, a labourer working on the unloading of ships. He was told that the 'men are employed by the master lumpers', some of them also publicans who 'always pay the men they employ at the public-house'. Workers needed to go to the pub three nights a week to get their pay and of course were expected to drink while they were waiting: 'The reason why he keeps the public-house is to have the right of supplying the beer to the men. He wouldn't, of course, like to see us take beer from any other public-house than his. If we did, he would give us the sack.'

In this context it is not surprising that there was also an antipathy to drink among sections of the working class. Temperance banners were prominent on the gas workers demonstration in 1889 (see page 41), and it is notable that in the same year the Deptford branch of the Social Democratic Federation held meetings at Hadleys Coffee Shop, Deptford Bridge and at 20 Frobisher Street, Greenwich, rather than in local pubs (Mills). The SDF was the largest Marxist organisation at the time; according to Annie Besant in 1888 the Deptford branch of the SDF consisted 'mostly of the very poor; I should say fully one half of them are men who are out of work each winter' (Paul Thompson).

Many old local pubs have closed, a trend that seems to be accelerating with the conversion of all available space for housing. The Arrows in Pomeroy Street has gone this way recently, and the Dew Drop Inn – a key drinking hole for 'alternative' Deptford in the late 1980s/early 1990s – is empty and awaiting a similar fate.

The Albany

The Albany on Douglas Way is the latest incarnation of a project that dates back to 1899, when the original Albany Institute was opened in Creek Road (see page 59). In the 1970s and 1980s it was a key music venue for Deptford and the wider area.

The current building opened in the early 1980s, and has featured performances from, among others, Christy Moore, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Nico, Bo Diddley, That Petrol Emotion, The Fall, John Cale and Curtis Mayfield. Channel 4's Raw Soup programme (early 1990s) was filmed there, with performances from the likes of Manic Street Preachers and Radiohead. Since then it has been relatively dormant as a music performance space, but this may change following a recent refurbishment.

The earlier building in Creek Road seems to have been a hotbed of radicalism in the 1970s, with links to South East London Claimants Union and Lewisham Family Squatters, as well as socialist theatre. The Flying Pickets were an a capella band that grew out of the 7:84 Theatre group ('7% of the population owns 84% of the wealth'). Their first LP was 'Live At The Albany Empire' (1982) and they went on to have a number one hit with 'Only You'. The group's Brian Hibbert wore a 'Today Deptford, Tomorrow the World' T-shirt on Top of the Pops.

The Albany was a venue for both 'Rock against Racism' and 'Rock Against Sexism' gigs in the late 1970s. (RAS). In May 1979, Carol Grimes, Belt & Braces and Tour de Force played, with a rave review in a one fanzine: 'The Albany, Deptford RAS gig: mile-long queues. Crowds inside... there were lots of people arguing about sexism and music and having a good time too' (Temporary Hoarding, June 1979). Another RAS gig on Valentine's Day 1980 featured The Raincoats and Young Marble Giants.

Deptford Fun City

The Albany was one of the springboards for punk and new wave bands in the late 1970s, along with The Oxford Arms (now The Birds Nest) in Church Street. Squeeze played early gigs at both before becoming famous for slice of life pop songs such as 'Take Me I'm Yours', 'Goodbye Girl' and the South London romance 'Up the Junction'.

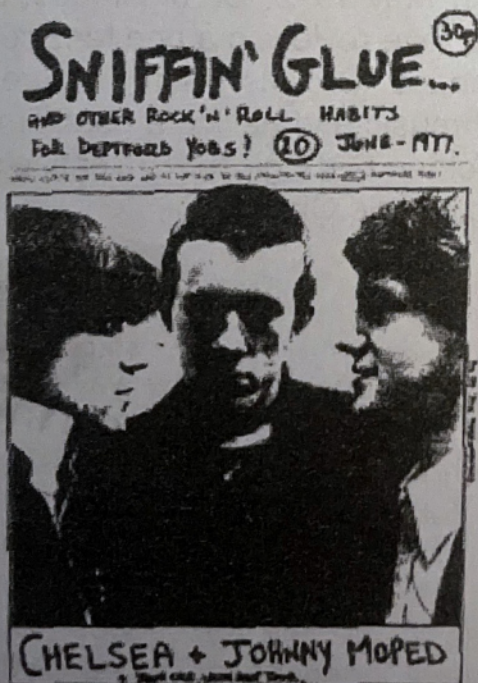
Some of the best music from the area in the late 1970s was issued on Deptford Fun City records, one of several independent record companies run by Miles Copeland. The label of DFC records featured a different

picture of Deptford High Street on each side. Deptford Fun City released early material by Squeeze and the first solo record by sometime Squeeze keyboardist, Jools Holland. It also provided a platform for Alternative TV.

ATV were founded in March 1977 by Mark Perry and Alex Fergusson and released their first single, 'Love Lies Limp' later that year. Two albums soon followed: 'The Image has cracked' and 'Vibing Up the Senile Man'.



Mark Perry lived in Deptford and was a key figure in the London punk scene even before ATV as the editor of the legendary fanzine 'Sniffin' Glue' (published from 24 Rochfort House, Grove Street). Fellow Deptford boy Danny Baker also contributed, going on to write for New Musical Express and later to become a radio DJ. 'Sniffin' Glue' embodied the DIY ethos of punk, showed that if you had something to say, all you needed was access to a photocopier and you could start your own magazine.



Many punk bands in this period followed a predictable trajectory on to big record labels, with formulaic songs pitched at the charts. ATV did not play this game. While other bands were going off on national tours of the usual commercial venues, ATV set out on the free festival circuit with the hippy band Here and Now. Their music became progressively more experimental - as part of their live act they would sometimes pass a microphone around the audience and invite people to speak.

In the last few years, ATV have started gigging again. Mark Perry no longer lives in Deptford, but did crop up not

too long ago performing a song at an Exploding Cinema film night at the Hatcham Social Club.

Exploding Cinema, the underground/DIY film collective, started out in the early 1990s at the Cool Tan squat in Brixton but have become Hatcham regulars. A similar film night, My Eyes, My Eyes, has been put on at The Centurion in Deptford High Street. In fact, I talked there myself to introduce Mikey Tomkins' film on the Association of Autonomous Astronauts.

This Heat

This Heat were contemporaries of ATV and also operated outside the mainstream (including the new punk three chord orthodoxy). They formed in 1976 and earned a reputation for playing in the dark at loud volume, with a use of tape loops prefiguring sampling by a good 10 years. Two studio albums were released: 'This Heat' (1979) and 'Deceit' (1981), described by Ed Baxter as 'an LP which put its finger on that fearful era's g-spot, decrying the nuclear arms race and media disinformation'.



The group's Gareth Williams died in 2001, but drummer Charles Hayward, who lived in a squat in Deptford during the This Heat period, is still musically active in the area. Since This Heat he has put out material with Camberwell Now and various solo work, as well as contributing to records by The Raincoats, Coil, Everything but the Girl and many others. In the past few years he has been involved in a number of projects in Deptford including the Out of Body Orchestra, Anti-Clockwise and Albert Newton, and composed music for the opening of the Laban Dance Centre – where my daughter danced. Charles Bullen, the third member of This Heat, has released electronic music with Mixmaster Morris and others.

Joseph Porter, drummer in anarcho-punk bands Zoundz, The Mob and Blyth Power, has described a visit in the late 1970s to friends living in 'Speedwell House, a condemned block of flats just off Deptford High St. Technically they were squatting, as the council had given up on trying to collect rent there. The whole place was a magic maze of brickwork, stairways and balconies, covered in graffiti and full of lost souls... Coming back one day after a hard day posing in the West End, I found a minor music festival happening in the courtyards below. The Realists, This Heat, and a host of Deptford's alternative heroes played and jammed until late at night, the whole scene illuminated by the beams of a car's headlights. This was Deptford Fun City at its finest'.

Deptford and New Cross

(sites shown in brackets are no longer there)



The magicians of Speedwell House and other pagans

The now demolished Speedwell House in Speedwell Street was also a laboratory for the development of Chaos Magic in the 1970s, an attempt to update occultism in an age of punk rock, chaos theory and cybernetics. A number of magicians were living in Speedwell House in 1977/78 where their experiments included invoking the Celtic underworld deity Gwyn ap Nudd (sometimes known as the King of the Fairies) and forming a rock band Vitriol to perform at the time of planetary eclipses (Frater Choronzon). Among the Speedwell sorcerers was Peter Carroll, who wrote up some of his Deptford research in his book 'Liber Null', considered to be one of the founding texts of the Chaos current.

New Cross and Deptford seem to have had a fair concentration of pagans ever since. The area has acted as a base for the Dragon Environmental Network, originally set up to carry out eco-magic to save Oxleas Wood from road building, and Rhea's Cauldron, a Wiccan coven. Not forgetting of course the pagan mice featured in Robin Jarvis's 'The Deptford Mice' series of children's books. These friendly rodents 'honour the green spirits of the land as Man once did and every spring they hold a celebration for the awakening year, calling to the Green Mouse to ripen the wheat and see them safe' (The Dark Portal), whilst their enemies the sewer rats perform dark sorcery on Blackheath for their evil god Jupiter (who turns out to be a cat!).

Derek Jarman and Jubilee



Derek Jarman's film 'Jubilee' (1977) combines the worlds of magic and punk. Beginning with Mortlake magician John Dee summoning the angel Ariel at the request of Queen Elizabeth I, it moves swiftly to an apocalyptic 1970s South London landscape populated by nihilistic punks and violent cops.

Early on we are introduced to Angel and Sphinx, two brothers 'from Deptford', whilst in one of the films more memorable sequences Amyl Nitrate (played by Jordan) dances in a tutu around a bonfire on which burn books and a Union Jack. This scene was filmed at a derelict wharf in Deptford. Doubtless Jarman would have been aware of the irony of filming this scene of post-Imperial decay on the site from where Elizabeth's ships once set out to conquer the world.

They also sang: more bands with Deptford & New Cross connections

- ♪ 1970s glam rocker and 'Cockney Rebel' Steve Harley (best known for 'Come up and see me, make me smile') lived at Fairlawn Mansions, New Cross Gate and went to Edmund Waller Primary School and Haberdashers' Aske's.
- ♪ The Realists - single 'I've got a heart' on Stiff Records (1978).
- ♪ The Fabulous Poodles – late 70s albums including 'Mirror Stars' and 'Think Pink'. Former Poodle Bobby Valentino later played regularly at The Duke on Creek Road with Cajun rock'n'roll band The Electric Bluebirds. He now plays in Los Pistoleros.
- ♪ The Chords, late 1970s south London mod revivalists, played early gigs at the Kings Head, with lead singer Billy Hassett coming from Deptford. Their hits included 'Maybe Tomorrow'.
- ♪ 1990s heavy rock outfit 'Thunder' (albums: 'Backstreet Symphony' and 'Laughing on Judgement Day') had their origins in a school band formed at Haberdashers' Aske's.
- ♪ The Haberdashers' Aske's school choir featured on the 1994 East 17 Christmas number one 'Stay another day' and on 'Christmas time – don't let the bells end' by The Darkness in 2003.
- ♪ South London soul singer Gabrielle went to Hatcham Wood secondary school in Wallbuton Road. Capital Radio DJ Chris Tarrant taught at the same school, which has now closed.
- ♪ UK rapper Blade (debut single 'Lyrical Maniac', 1989) was born in Armenia but got involved in music while living in New Cross.
- ♪ Athlete, nominated for the Mercury music prize for 'Vehicles and Animals' (2003), were based at the time at the Bear in Deptford High Street.
- ♪ Ninja Tune punk funksters Pest have been described as sounding like Frank Zappa's 'Mothers of Invention if they worked in a caff in Deptford (and the boys from Pest actually do)'.

9. Deptford Broadway

The cars that ate Deptford

The Creekside-based artist David Mach has produced a number of collages of urban landscapes transformed by the incongruous presence of human figures. People lie on a beach next to the Tate Modern, bathe in the nude by Edinburgh Castle and perhaps most incredible of all in 'Lewisham College Brick Façade' (1998), stand around as if partying in the middle of the road at the junction of Deptford Broadway and Church Street. Incredible because standing in the middle of this busy highway is not something most people would want to risk.

In the earlier days of motor vehicles, New Cross was a centre of motor sport. The New Cross Speedway and Greyhound Stadium, off Ilderton Road, was featured in the speedway movie, *Once a Jolly Swagman* (1948), in which Dirk Bogarde organises a union of riders. The stadium was also the scene of the country's first stock car race at Easter 1954, with 26,000 in the crowd and thousands more locked outside. Cult TV obsessives can look out for a poster advertising New Cross Stock Car Racing in the 'Escape in Time' episode of *The Avengers* (first broadcast in 1967).



The Stadium was next to The Den, home since 1910 to a football team formed in 1885 by the (mainly) Scottish workers of the JT Morton jam factory in the Isle of Dogs: Millwall. The Den has now moved, and the site of the Speedway track is now Bridge House Meadows – a grassed area where young people ride their motorbikes.

Today the cars seem to have spilt out of the stadium to swallow up the streets. According to a recent survey: 'Almost all traffic travelling to central London and back from Kent and outer SE London, as well as much of the traffic from continental Europe via the Channel crossings, must come across the River Ravensbourne on one of three bridges – Creek Bridge, Deptford Bridge or

Lewisham Bridge. As a result, residents of North Lewisham suffer the polluting effects of over 35 million vehicle journeys on our streets each year' (Citizens' Traffic Strategy for North Lewisham). All of this in an area with low levels of car ownership – in New Cross, 55% of households have no car, compared with 27% nationally (2001 Census).

Apart from the noise and pollution, the domination of the car represents an enclosure of public space. Nowhere demonstrates this better than Deptford Broadway. Along with New Cross Road and the Old Kent Road, Deptford Broadway has for thousands of years formed part of the historic Roman road from London to Kent (now the A2). This was the pilgrims' route to Canterbury, immortalised in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer himself was robbed of his horse in the Hatcham area in 1390. Inns cropped up along this route to replenish travellers, a tradition upheld at the Montague Arms in Kender Street, where coach parties of foreign visitors on their way into London are still regularly welcomed.

Before the advent of the motor car, there was also space at Deptford Broadway for the main meeting place for the area. In 1899, the Broadway was described as 'Triangular open space, paved with cobble stones. Stands for barrows and the meeting place of the neighbourhood. Political and other meetings held here' (Steele 1997). The Broadway was the focus for meetings by many movements, including the Chartists, Suffragettes, strikers, socialists, anarchists and the unemployed.

'Chartist Disturbance at Deptford'

The Chartist movement to extend the vote to working men was active in Deptford and Greenwich, making its most dramatic impact in 1842 with what the Kentish Mercury reported as a 'Chartist disturbance at Deptford'.

The occasion was a meeting called in the Dissenting Chapel in Deptford High Street to discuss the 'present existing distress of the country'. The meeting was to have been addressed by George Thompson, nationally known for his activities in the Anti-corn-law league and the movement for the abolition of slavery, but in the event he was unable to attend. 2,000 people squeezed into the hall, with hundreds more outside.

When The Rev. Mr Pullen announced that Thompson would not be attending 'a body of Chartists... rose and proposed that the Chair should be filled by a working man' and then 'attempted to get possession of the table'. The minister called the police and fighting erupted as 'their attempt to secure the principal parties induced their friends and partisans to join the fray and prevent their being captured'. The meeting resumed with a man named Taylor speaking 'on the condition of the working classes' before fighting resumed when another man denounced the minister for 'sending for bloodhounds to rob those who spoke their minds of their liberty'. The meeting dissolved with 'three cheers for the Charter, and three for Feargus O'Connor', and a proposal to reconvene in the Broadway.

Dr. M'Douall, a well-known Chartist who had participated in an uprising at Newport, addressed the crowd in the Broadway from the top of a pump, denouncing 'the tyrant aristocracy of the country who are trampling upon the rights of poor men'. The police ordered the meeting to disperse and when this was ignored, arrested M'Douall and several others. Police superintendent Mallalieu complained that he had 'never seen an assemblage in this neighbourhood so mischievously inclined' and that there had been 'several attempts to rescue the prisoner' (KM 30/7/1842).

In court M'Douall complained that 'the Broadway is a public way, and that the householders have a right to meet there'. The events were also raised

in Parliament by Thomas Duncombe, one of the few MPs who supported the Chartists. He presented a petition 'from 4,000 of the inhabitants of Deptford' complaining that the police had violated the constitution. This did not impress the conservative local paper which complained that the petition 'was got up by another itinerant of the name of Phillips, and an assemblage of no more than 300 persons, chiefly of the lowest description in one of the corners of Blackheath'. The 'Deptford Riot' was denounced as the action of 'brawling reckless vagabonds' incited by an 'itinerant rebel' (KM 6.8.1842).

On Wednesday 15th March 1848 another mass Chartist rally was held by the Greenwich and Deptford Chartists on Blackheath. The Chartist paper Northern Star reported 'No sooner did the placards announcing the meeting make their appearance, than the minions in power set to work to destroy the meeting if possible. Hundreds of special constables were sworn in, and the whole of the police from the neighbouring stations were ordered to attend on the day of the meeting likewise the mounted police from London' (NS 18.3.1848).

Leading local chartists included George Floyd, a Deptford baker, Joseph Morgan, a tallow chandler, and Thomas Paris, a Scottish smith (Steele). One of most prominent figures on the left wing of the Chartist movement was George Julian Harney (1817-1897), born in Deptford, the son of George Harney, a sailor. Harney was tried for taking part in the 1842 'Plug Riots' in Manchester and started the 'Red Republican' and other papers.

There were links between some English radicals and their continental counterparts. Harney met Marx and Engels and was a member of the Brussels Communist Correspondence Committee (Liddle). In the aftermath of Chartism, there seems to have been a Deptford group linked to the International Working Men's Association. In a letter dealing with events in 1865, Marx mentions that a French refugee, Victor Le Lubez attended Committee meetings 'as the delegate from the Deptford section'.

1889: Dockers and other strikers

The 1889 London dock strike was one of the most significant disputes of the 19th century. As well as bringing the docks to a standstill it also sparked off a strike wave of low paid workers across the capital and beyond.

The South Side Central Strike Committee had its headquarters at Sayes Court, Deptford and there were meetings in the streets throughout the duration of the dispute. In August the Evening News and Post reported that 'a procession of about 1,000 persons with bands and banners had been perambulating New Cross today' (26/8/1889) while on the 4th September,

Tom Mann spoke to 'Bermondsey, Rotherhithe and Deptford men at a mass meeting at Deptford Broadway at the conclusion of which the men marched in procession to Southwark Park' (Times 5.9.1889). A few days later he was back in the Broadway at 'a midnight meeting of the Deptford men' (Times 7.9.1889). At the conclusion of the strike 5,000 marched from Bermondsey through Deptford on their way to a rally on Blackheath.

Shortly after the dock strike another bitter dispute erupted at the South Metropolitan Gas Company, with its works on the Old Kent Road and in Deptford. On 11 May 1889 a half mile long procession of gas workers, with brass band and silk banners, had converged on Deptford Broadway calling for an eight hour day, in place of the then current 12 hour shift system.

Although the eight hour day was achieved, in December the workers refused to agree to a 'no strike' clause. The management brought in strikebreakers including workhouse inmates and prisoners, who lived in corrugated iron huts inside the works. There were frequent clashes between strikers on the one hand and police and scabs on the other. In one incident there was a fight in the Dover Castle pub on Deptford Broadway, where one of the strikers, William Derry, was accused of taking two herrings and a haddock from a strikebreaker's pocket.

Support in the local area for the strike included a 'grand dioramic and vocal entertainment' put on by Deptford Social Democratic Federation and a concert at Trinity Hall, Deptford, featuring the Greenwich gas stokers' brass band. The strike was called off in February 1890 at a mass meeting at the Hatcham Liberal Club, with the management gaining the upper hand (Mills).

One long-lasting consequence of the strike was the development of Telegraph Hill Park. As the programme for its 1895 opening put it, George Livesey, the Chairman of the gas company, had initiated the laying out of the park with 'a sum of money which he had received as a testimonial to the energy and resources by which he had maintained the supply of gas during the severe strike of gas workers' (Arnold, 1895). This can be seen as a PR exercise to restore his philanthropic reputation in the aftermath of a brutally managed dispute.

In 1936 the Gas Company was again at the centre of local conflict, this time because of planned rises in gas prices that would hit poorer gas users most of all. The South London Press reported 'Amazing scene at Deptford Protest Meeting - Thousands throng roads outside Town Hall' as a packed meeting at the end of September demanded the withdrawal of the new scale of charges (SLP 2.10.36). The following week, a demonstration consisting mainly of women marched from Deptford Broadway to the Gas

Company headquarters in Old Kent Road with a banner declaring 'Down with the new gas charges – we fight to win' (SLP 9/10/36). And win they did, as the gas company backed down.

Women's Suffrage

The Lewisham branch of the Women's Social and Political Union was very active in this area. In the space of a couple of weeks in May 1908 they 'spoke to a crowd of 4,000 – 5,000 working men and women in Deptford Broadway', held a similar size meeting on Blackheath, and had a meeting on 'the Enfranchisement of Women' in the New Cross Hall on Lewisham High Road. The latter, held on May 6th was advertised as chaired by 'Mrs Bouvier, speakers, Miss Christabel Pankhurst, Mrs Baldock, Miss Naylor. All the above have undergone imprisonment for the cause' (South London Observer, 2 May 1908).

Suffragette direct action between 1912 and 1914 saw post boxes burned and blown up in Deptford, Greenwich, Brockley and elsewhere and fires at Dulwich College and, in January 1914, at a cricket pavilion in Burnt Ash Road. May Billingham, a founder of the Greenwich branch of the WSPU in 1910, was jailed for 8 months for an action against a letter box in Blackheath in December 1912. Billingham was a disabled wheelchair user who lived at 7 Oakcroft Road in Blackheath and was responsible for a number of letter box 'outrages' (Dove).

The New Cross Bomb

The Suffragettes were not the only people targeting post boxes in South London – perhaps because they were both symbols of the state and easy targets.

In August 1894, the Penny Illustrated Paper reported the following: 'The Residents of New Cross Road were, on the night of August 14 roused by an explosion, which occurred at the post-office, 177, New Cross Road. The P.I.P. representative who visited the premises the next morning found two of the plate-glass windows shattered, and the brass letter-box literally torn from its holdings... a brown paper wrapper was found, in which the explosives were placed. It appears that the primitive bomb was ignited and then placed in the letter-box. The perpetrator could hardly have gone far when the explosion occurred. The outrage appears to have but one object – that of disturbing the public peace'.

The Postmaster, Mr. Morgan, was a corn-dealer and stationer, but subsequent events suggest that he was not personally targeted. In January 1896, the post office at 139 Lewisham High Road was similarly damaged by an explosive device placed in its letter box. Another year passed before a bomb was found in the letter box of the post office at 61 Trafalgar Road, Greenwich. All of the bombs were small and timed to explode at night – the intention was clearly to cause minor damage rather than threaten lives.



A message left with the New Cross device proclaimed: 'In memory of Ravachol, Bourdin, Vaillant, Henri and Santo' and 'Vive l'Anarchie.' Similar sentiments were expressed on the wrapper of the Greenwich parcel: 'In warm appreciation of Nov. 4th, 1894 and of Tynan, No.1, and his friends. In memoriam: Fornaro, Polti, and Santo. Down with the Queen. Death to the police. Justice to Ireland, Long live anarchy' (Kentish Mercury, 8.1.1897).

These statements would appear to align the writer very clearly with the anarchist proponents of 'the propaganda of the deed', and the short and bloody episodes of dynamite and guillotine in the early 1890s. Ravachol, Emile Henri and Auguste Vaillant were all anarchist bombers who had been executed in France in the preceding years. Martial Bourdin had been killed, apparently by his own bomb, in an explosion by the Royal Observatory in Greenwich in February 1895. Francis Polti and Guiseppe Farnara were two Italian anarchists, associates of Bourdin, who were arrested in London in

1894 and jailed on explosive charges for 10 and 20 years respectively (Oliver).

Shortly after the final explosion, a man was allegedly 'heard talking at an Anarchist meeting in the Broadway, Deptford, and saying that it 'was easier to place a bomb in a letter-box than in a church'' (KM 16.4.1897). The man's house at 168 Edward Street, Deptford, was soon raided by police led by Chief Detective Inspector Melville and Detective Inspector John Walsh, Scotland Yard's head anarchist catchers (previously involved in the Polti and Farnara case and several others).

Rolla Richards, a 30 year-old watchmaker living with his parents, was charged with causing the explosions and jailed for seven years in April 1897. This would appear to be a straightforward case – in Edward Street the police found a small amount of gunpowder and other materials that could have been used in bomb making. But there are still unanswered questions. Richards denied being involved and indeed he did not fit the description of a young man aged 19 to 21 seen running from the scene of the New Cross explosion (KM 5.2.1897). Questions were also raised about his sanity during the trial – a witness, George Jarvis of Alexandra Street, said that 'The prisoner fancied at other times that he was a locomotive' (KM 16.4.1897).

There certainly were those amongst the 1890s European anarchist movement who believed in the efficacy of bomb attacks by individuals and small groups. But there were others who favoured instead building a mass working class movement to bring about a stateless, classless society. Amongst some of the latter, there was a strong suspicion that at least some of the bomb attacks had been inspired by provocateurs in order to discredit the anarchists and socialists.

WC Hart, at different times secretary of both the Deptford and Peckham anarchist groups, cited a case of a man receiving an unsolicited guide to making bombs through the post and then being raided by police the following day. Hart also accused the police of using gangs of 'roughs' to break up anarchist meetings (Quail). Whatever the precise truth it is clear that the attacks on the movement did have an effect. In the late 1880s and early 90s, the movement had expanded, with the Deptford anarchist group one of the largest in the country, said to have 100 members (although it is doubtful that these were all active). By the end of the 1890s the movement was in national decline.

So who was Rolla Richards? A single-minded revolutionary? A mentally unstable bomber? An innocent man framed? A vulnerable individual

manipulated by provocateurs? A combination of these? As with the bombing featured in Joseph Conrad's 1907 novel 'The Secret Agent' (based on the Bourdin affair), 'An impenetrable mystery seems destined to hang for ever over this act of madness or despair'.

The Unemployed Movement

Working class areas like Deptford bore the brunt of mass unemployment in the 1930s and were also at the forefront of the struggles of the unemployed for a better life. A sample of activities from just one month, October 1932, gives a flavour of the movement locally.

'The Red Flag Riots' of June 1932 have already been mentioned (page 5). In early October, two of those jailed, Albert Crane and George Childs, were met by 'a small band of Deptford Communists' on their release from Brixton prison, going on to address a meeting of 400 people in Deptford Broadway where they 'said they would not be afraid to go back if there was any chance of it doing any good to the working classes of Deptford'.

On Monday 10th, 'Nearly 2,000 unemployed marched, accompanied by a strong force of foot and mounted police' from Deptford Broadway to the Brockley homes of London County Council members for Deptford – Alderman Green in St Asaph Road and Mr Speakman in St Margaret's Road (SLP 12.10.1932). Interestingly, leading National Unemployed Workers Movement activist Tom Mann also lived in Brockley – his address in 1927 was 1 Adelaide Road.

Eight days later, Deptford marchers joined a demonstration to the London County Council headquarters at County Hall to demand better support to the unemployed. Police stopped the march from reaching its destination and there was fighting around Waterloo.

Then on 26th October, 130 marchers from Kent taking part in a national hunger march arrived in Deptford 'accompanied by police. Two thousand unemployed met them at Woolwich, and marched with band playing to Deptford Town Hall'. The marchers 'all wearing red rosettes in their caps' were put up at the Borough Hall, Laurie Grove, being given dinner, a mattress for the night and free use of the public baths.

The next morning they 'joined the main body of unemployed at the Broadway and, nearly 2,000 strong, set off for Hyde Park, headed by a drum and fife band. They marched along Queen's Road and Peckham Road, accompanied by a large force of foot police, several mounted police, and preceded by men with collection boxes' (SLP, 28 October 1932).

10. Deptford Bridge

Revolting Peasants and the Battle of Deptford Bridge

Deptford is defined by rivers. Its name means 'deep ford' and its settlement was determined by its position where the river Ravensbourne meets the Thames at Deptford Creek. Its whole history is tied up with working on the river. Yet strangely these rivers are fairly invisible today. It's actually hard to see the Thames from much of Deptford, with the shorefront blocked by the high walls of Convoys Wharf and other buildings. As for Deptford Creek, it is mostly channelled through concrete banks and can also take an effort to get down to.

Deptford Bridge is now not noticeably a bridge at all – the road crosses it without so much as a hump - but at one time it was of strategic importance as the point where the road from Kent crossed on its way into London. In medieval times it was crossed three times by rebel armies within a hundred years and was the scene of one of the bloodiest battles ever fought in the London area.

1381 saw the peasants revolt against a new poll tax. 60,000 rebels from Kent set up camp at Blackheath where they were addressed by the radical preacher John Ball who argued that all things should be held 'in common'. They passed through Deptford on their way to destroy prisons and kill the Archbishop of Canterbury before the rebellion was crushed, with the deaths of thousands of rebels including Wat Tyler.

Tyler was from Kent, but it is unclear where exactly. Interestingly, the 18th century radical Tom Paine maintained that 'The person known by the name of Wat Tyler, whose proper name was Walter, and a tiler by trade, lived at Deptford. The gatherer of the poll tax, on coming to his house, demanded tax for one of his daughters, whom Tyler declared was under the age of fifteen. The tax-gatherer insisted on satisfying himself, and began an indecent examination of the girl, which, enraging the father, he struck him with a hammer that brought him to the ground, and was the cause of his death. This circumstance served to bring the discontent to an issue'. (Rights of Man, 1791).

In 1450, Jack Cade led the Kentish rising, with grievances again including the excessive taxation of the common people. As in 1381, they established a camp at Blackheath before moving their headquarters to the White Hart in Borough High Street, Southwark. After a bloody battle on a burning London Bridge, the rising was defeated.

In June 1497 it was the turn of 5,000 Cornish rebels, who marched on London in revolt against a new tax to pay for King Henry VII's planned invasion of Scotland. The rebels reached Blackheath Common and secured Deptford Bridge. It was here they were engaged by the King's forces, with at least two hundred Cornishmen killed compared with eight of the King's soldiers. The leaders were hung, disembowelled and quartered, with their heads stuck on pikes on London Bridge.

Deptford also saw action during the English Civil War. In 1648, a royalist rising in Kent saw Deptford seized. The Kentish insurgents were defeated at Maidstone, but some of them made their way to Blackheath. Led by the Earl of Norwich they headed into London expecting to be welcomed – instead they found the city gates locked to them.

11. Brookmill Road

Down and out in New Cross and Deptford

South London poverty has long been a staple of British cinema. Gary Oldman's brutal 'Nil By Mouth' (1997), was filmed on the Pepys Estate and in The Five Bells pub in New Cross Road. Oldman himself grew up in New Cross and went to Monson Primary School. Mike Leigh's 'All or Nothing' (2002) is a similarly bleak tale filmed on an empty estate on the Greenwich side of Deptford Creek.

Unfortunately there is nothing new about poverty in Deptford. The results of inquests, usually held in pubs, provide an insight into the lives and deaths of the local poor. One held in 1848 at the Royal Oak, Deptford High Street, found that Thomas Sturges Nichols, a labourer aged 50, had died of starvation (Illustrated London News 15.1.1848).

In the later nineteenth century, a succession of middle class explorers went forth in the 'jungles' of the city to uncover the lives of the poor. Naturally their accounts tell us as much about their own prejudices as about the objects of their scrutiny.

The most comprehensive survey of London poverty was carried out by Charles Booth and his team, who clearly identified parts of Deptford as the home of the dangerous classes. Of Baidon Street it was said 'if any men and women have the criminal brand upon their faces, these seem on my two visits unmistakably to bear it'. Addey Street was reckoned by the police inspector to be 'the worst part of Deptford' inhabited by 'Some prostitutes and criminals, low rough class' (Steele, 1997).

Prostitution seems to have been fairly widespread in the 19th century. In 1857, the Metropolitan Police estimated that in 'Deptford, Greenwich and Neighbourhood' there were 148 brothels (compared with 122 in 1841) and 401 prostitutes divided into the three categories of 'Well dressed, living in brothels', 'well dressed, walking the streets' and 'low, infesting low neighbourhoods' (Acton).

Some of the worst poverty was to be found in the cheap lodging houses (sometimes known as doss houses). In 'London Labour and the London Poor', Henry Mayhew mentions a number of 'Low (cheap) Lodging Houses' in Deptford in Church Street, Gifford Street and Mill Lane. The slums of Mill Lane (later Brookmill Road) were notorious, with its mainly 18th century buildings lodging 'criminals, prostitutes and poor immigrants, especially Italians' (Lewisham Council). A Greenwich magistrate, Montagu Williams, gave a detailed account of a lodging house there in his 'Round London: Down East and Up West' (1894):

'The establishment in question was in Mill Lane, Deptford... The courts and alleys of Deptford abound with rotten houses and tumble-down tenements that are the abodes of thieves and unfortunates... At the windows you see some hideous human heads, male and female, with blotched, bloated, and bestial faces, matted and tangled hair, and hungry, desperate eyes... Now, what are these fellows?' said I to the sergeant, when we had returned into the street. He replied: 'Tramps of both sexes- mat-sellers, griddlers [street singers], hawkers of lace, makers of fire-screens and fly-papers, brush-makers, street flower sellers, and so on.'

Street singers are also mentioned in Eileen Elias's memoirs of a New Cross childhood in the early 20th century, 'On Sundays we wore white'. She recalled 'That there was no joy about these emaciated street singers, draggletail women in men's caps, or men in long baggy shapeless coats and battered shoes... their eyes fixed with painful intensity on the windows, from which, they hoped, coppers would come down like manna from heaven'. Other New Cross street musicians included a man with a barrel organ, an 'Irish whistling man' and a one-man band whose 'clashing and clanging made merry music' (Elias).

Carrington House

The Mill Lane slums were demolished by the London County Council at the turn of the twentieth century and replaced by a new institutionalised poverty with the construction of Carrington House as a common lodging house.

In the First World War, 800 Belgian refugees were put up at Carrington House, and their arrival at a time of atrocity stories about the German forces in Belgium sparked anti-German riots. For two nights in October 1914, thousands of people gathered in Deptford High Street and wrecked German-owned shops, including a sweet shop run by J. Goebel and a butchers belonging to F. Arold. Troops were ordered on to the streets to restore order. There were similar scenes on the Old Kent Road and at the Old Tigers' Head in Lee Green, which had a German landlord.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Carrington House was the home to African seamen, who complained bitterly of racist treatment including being banned from pubs. The most serious incident came in July 1949, when they were besieged in Carrington House by a racist mob (Panayi). The building has now been converted to flats and renamed Mereton Mansions.

12. Deptford Church Street

Workhouses

In the early 18th century, a House of Correction - essentially a prison for paupers - was built where the Crossfields Estate now stands. Later in the century this became the St. Paul's workhouse, with another St Nicholas workhouse nearby. Rules were harsh: 'Rising bell at a quarter before six, at six prayers and afterwards employment, retiring to bed at nine, children at eight. Breakfast shall be at 8, the dinner hour at one, and supper at 7. All other hours shall be considered working hours. No person permitted to leave the house... Grown persons who shall refuse to work shall be confined and kept on bread and water' (St Nicholas, cited in Steele, 1993).

If the workhouses were a punitive assault on the poor, there were others who wanted to go further. Karl Pearson, one of the founders of eugenics (involving enforced selective breeding to 'strengthen the race'), lectured to a Deptford working men's club in 1884, while his views were shared by Sidney Webb, elected to London County Council for Deptford in 1892, and a founder of the Fabian Society. Webb worried that the breeding habits of the 'the thriftless and irresponsible' would result 'in this country falling to the Irish and the Jews' (cited in Gidley).

Irish Deptford

Charles Booth's reporter wrote of Giffin Street that it featured: 'Slatternly women standing about, some shoeless children. Low class, some

prostitutes, hawkers etc.' He also described 'the block between the Railway and Hales Street' (including Giffin Street) as 'Irish streets', reminding us that Irish people were a significant section of the Deptford poor in this period, and indeed later.

In the nineteenth century this included Irish workers who came in search of seasonal work at the docks. The 'lumper' interviewed by Mayhew in the 1840s (see page 30) reported 'I am a working lumper, or labourer at discharging timber and deal ships... I should think that there are more than two hundred men in Deptford who are constantly engaged at the work... In the summer a great many Irish labourers seek for work as lumpers... I should say there are altogether upwards of 500 regular working lumpers, but in the summer there are at least 200 more, owing to the number of Irish who come to England to look for work at that time of year.'

Unsurprisingly the politics of the Irish situation also found an echo locally. In the 1880s, the Irish National League rallied at Sayes Court. Its leader, Charles Parnell also had another local interest. His mistress, Kitty O'Shea, lived in Tressillian Road, Brockley.

A hundred years later, Lewisham Irish in Britain Representation Group held events at the Albany and Deptford Town Hall to highlight issues including plastic bullets, the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the treatment of prisoners. In October 1987, Annie Maguire spoke at the Town Hall, a couple of years before her nephew Gerry Conlon and the rest of the 'Guildford Four' had their convictions quashed.

13. McMillan Street

Rachel McMillan Nursery School

Rachel McMillan Nursery School stands on the site of the original open air nursery started by Margaret McMillan with her sister Rachel in 1914. The sisters moved from their native Scotland to London, where they became active in the socialist movement. They met William Morris, the Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin, and the Paris Commune Louise Michel, and were involved in supporting the 1889 dock strike.

In 1910, Margaret helped establish a pioneering child health clinic (called the School Treatment Centre) in Deptford Green, later moving it to Evelyn House (353 Evelyn Street). The nursery came soon afterwards and was given its present name in memory of Rachel, who died in 1917.

Margaret McMillan's writings on childhood criticised schools for just preparing working class children for unskilled work. At a time of rigid discipline she opposed corporal punishment and stressed the importance of free play. In Deptford she tried to put into practice her vision of the school as 'a garden city for children', with children playing, learning and sleeping outside. Her description of children sleeping under the stars has an almost mystical quality: 'sleepy eyes looked from their pillows at points of starry fire in the indigo blue depth; the night wind cooled their little heated bodies, and a primrose dawn called them awake. Will these children ever forget the healing joy of such nearness to the earth spirit as is possible even in Deptford?' (quoted in Steedman).

The nursery and the clinic were both practical efforts to answer the question McMillan herself posed: 'We all hate the poverty – and the riches – of capitalist society. But the real poverty goes deeper than wages. It is in the starved, cramped, diseased bodies and minds: the eyes that do not see; the ears that do not hear: how can we change them?' (quoted in Steele, 1999).

Margaret McMillan is commemorated in the name of the park at the end of Douglas Way. Part of the park was built on in the 1980s – the remainder was saved as a result of a campaign by the Deptford Residents Action Group. The site of the training college that she started in Creek Road was recently sold off by Greenwich University to property developers Jarvis, and is now a huge student accommodation block.

St Nicholas Church and the Black Atlantic

St Nicholas Church dates back at least as far as the 12th century, although the oldest part of the present building, the tower, was built around 1500. The Church has had a long association with seafarers, hence no doubt its dedication to their patron Saint.

The pillars at the Church's entrance are crowned by two large skulls with laurel wreaths lying on crossbones, perhaps symbolising victory over death. A local legend also states that Captain Henry Morgan took these as the basis for the 'Jolly Roger' pirate flag (Gurnett). Although there is no evidence of this, Deptford certainly had connections with many pirates, official and unofficial. It was from here for instance that the pirate Captain Kidd set sail on his ship, the 'Adventure Galley' in 1696.

While working at Goldsmiths in New Cross, Paul Gilroy wrote his book 'The Black Atlantic' in which he sketched the lineaments of a transatlantic black culture linking Britain, America, Africa and the Caribbean. Sailors played a key role in the development of this culture, 'moving to and fro between

nations, crossing borders in modern machines that were themselves micro-systems of linguistic and political hybridity' with ships 'the living means by which the points with in that Atlantic world were joined'.

The radical historians Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker have likewise identified a 'revolutionary atlantic', with a seaborne multi-cultural proletariat circulating between sites of piracy, war, slave revolts and mutinies from the 17th century onwards. Deptford was a key point in this network, a place from which ships and their occupiers set off to all corners of the world, but also a place to which travellers from elsewhere journeyed or stopped off at on their voyages across the trade routes, bringing with them songs, stories, ideas and dreams. To really write the history of Deptford would be to engage with the whole history of Empire and its discontents, a task beyond the scope of this pamphlet!

We have already heard of Equiano's local experiences, but he was by no means the only black seafarer to pass through Deptford. We hear accounts like that from 1721 of a 'free Negro' seaman from Deptford who led 'a Mutiney that we had too many Officers, and that the work was too hard' (Linebaugh and Rediker). The records of St Nicholas Church tell us of the marriages and deaths of black people in this period, like Thomas Berry, described as a 'Negro Mariner' who was buried there in 1724 and George Jameson, a 'black man from on board ship' buried in 1726. In the summer of 1796, 15 'lascars' (sailors from India) were buried at St Nicholas, seemingly from an epidemic on board a ship at Deptford (Anim-Addo, 1996).

Whilst sailors from distant shores sometimes found their final resting place in Deptford, local sailors likewise ended up buried far from home, like Edward Fowler, a ship's carpenter from Deptford on the 'Valleyfield' who died of yellow fever at Sierra Leone in 1853.

The Devil came down to Deptford

A 17th century pamphlet bore the following rather lengthy title: 'Strange and Dreadful News from the Town of Deptford in the County of Kent, Being the full, true and sad relation of one Anne Arthur, who, according to her own report, had diverse Discourses with the Devil, on the Third of this Instant March 1684, who offered her Gold and Silver; telling her many strange and Wonderful things; And, in the end carried her in the Air a Quarter of a Furlong'.

The tale went on: 'In Deptford, near a Place called Flaggon Row [now McMillan St], dwells one Anne Arthur, that had a long time got her Living, by

selling things about the street... A little beyond the halfway house, a house so-called, standing between Redriffe and Deptford, a human shape, in a dark Habit approached her... she was taken up, together with her Basket, a considerable height, and carried, piteously crying out for help for the Space of a quarter of a Furlong; and there, with great Violence, thrown amongst the Bushes... She confesses further She has been a notorious Liver, often given to swearing, and calling upon the Devil; breaking the Sabbath, and the like'.

Anne Arthur's tale takes us into a popular culture of folk beliefs and customs. Another pamphlet from this period, 'A True Relation of a Ghost at Deptford' (1673), tells of a female spectre haunting The Three Mariners pub (near the dockyard). Ghost stories continue to crop up from time to time. Staff at the old baths at Laurie Grove, before it closed in the early 1990s, believed it to be haunted by a poltergeist nicknamed 'Charlie' because of his habit of whistling the tune 'Charleston.'

Another weird and wonderful tale from 1908 concerned the case of the 'Human Salamander', Anthony Ryder of New Cross Road. Ryder described himself as a 'genuine English Human Fire Freak', apparently able to handle red hot pokers and coals with no ill effects (Sieveking).

Ryder would not have been out of place at the Deptford Fair, held every May until well into the nineteenth century, with its freak shows and fortune tellers. Deptford was also on the route of the annual Horn Fair, held on October 18th, when people would march from Cuckold Point in Bermondsey through Deptford and Greenwich and on to Charlton with horns on their heads, the men dressed as women. The Horn Fair was banned in the mid-19th century after a fight between dockers and army cadets.

Another disreputable manifestation of popular culture was The Deptford Theatre in Church Street, which stood next door but one to the Oxford Arms (now The Birds Nest) until it closed down in the 1860s amidst 'respectable' disapproval of its clientele. An 1853 programme included a play 'Emigrant, or, Labour, Wealth and Want' and a pantomime 'The Three Witches! Greenwich, Woolwitch, and Dullwitch!, or; Harlequin, and the Magic Pipe'. Scenes promised included 'Blackheath by Moonlight' and an 'Enchanted Flower Garden, the Abode of the Fairy Queen' (Sutton).

Jack in the Green and the May Queen

May Day was enlivened in the 19th century by the appearance of the Jack in the Green – a frame covered in greenery and flowers with a man, who

carried it, inside. The Kentish Mercury reported on 18th May 1906: 'It is not more than 3 or 4 years since such a band were seen in the streets of Deptford. Jack in his greenery, twirling, and the male and female dancers with him pirouetting something after the traditional style - but there was a sad falling off. In olden days the dancers used to be sweeps, to whom money collected was a sort of annual perquisite and sweeps were very jealous of their privileges in this direction being usurped, latterly however, this rule was by no means adhered to'.

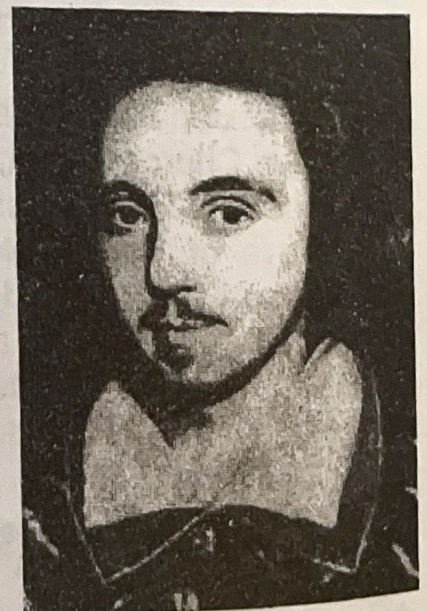
A photograph survives of the Deptford Jack in the Green, accompanied by a big drum and boys and girls in fancy dress, on the back of which is a note from the photographer believed to have been written in about 1934, which reads: 'Jack in the Green. Fowlers troop of Mayday revellers 'Jack in the Green' was an old institution in Deptford and regularly kept up until about twenty years ago, when the police stopped all such customs'.

Even after the disappearance of the Jack in the Green, May Day festivities continued. When Betty Wadsworth (aged 11) from Deptford High Street was crowned London May Queen in 1930, a reception was held at New Cross Cinema (off Lewisham High Road) with the Mayor of Deptford in attendance. Maybe it helped that Betty's dad was an international footballer who was playing for Millwall at the time (SLP, 9.5.1930).

The Fowler's Troop Jack in the Green was revived by members of Blackheath Morris Men and friends in the early 1980's. They have performed in Deptford, Greenwich and elsewhere on May Day since then (Crofts).

Christopher Marlowe

Anne Arthur's account from the late 17th century recalls the encounters of Dr. Faustus with Lucifer, Belzebub and Mephistophilis, featured in Christopher Marlowe's play of a hundred years earlier. Marlowe was stabbed to death in Deptford 'at the house of Eleanor Bull, widow' on 30 May 1593. Various theories have been put forward as to the circumstances of his death, with suggestions that he was caught up in the power struggles of the Elizabethan secret state and that he was a heretical freethinker.



Such speculation informs Anthony Burgess' fictionalised life 'A Dead Man in Deptford' (1993), in which Marlowe is 'soothed by the noise of the waterside

taverns, where there was much hard drinking' in an imagined 16th century Deptford: 'the shipbuilders early awork... A faint stink from the Queen's slaughterhouse. But was not the whole land her slaughterhouse? A firmer stink from the tanneries. Inland gulls wove over the waters and craked. Sails, sails, a wilderness of them'. A more outlandish fictionalisation by Rosemary Laurey, 'Walk in Moonlight' (2000), has Marlowe as a vampire!

After Marlowe's death Richard Baines, an informer, claimed in a note to the Privy Council that Marlowe had said that 'all they that love not tobacco and boys are fools' and persuaded 'men to Atheism... utterly scorning both God and his ministers' (Steane). He was said to have proclaimed the heresy 'That Saint John the Evangelist was bedfellow to Christ and leaned always in his bosom; that he used him as the sinners of Sodoma'.

If Marlowe's views did play a part in his death, he was not the first heretic linked with Deptford to be killed. Richard Whyche, a Deptford priest, was burnt at the stake in 1439 for heresy. Whyche was a follower of the radical Lollard ideas of John Wycliff and corresponded with like-minded believers elsewhere such as John Huss of Bohemia, also burned in 1414.

A plaque in St Nicholas churchyard commemorates Marlowe, with an annual service there which in 2004 featured madrigals sung by The Deptford Warblers. The precise location of his grave is unknown. Wherever he is at St Nicholas he has plenty of company, including 1,200 buried in a plague pit in the north-east corner of the churchyard in 1665-66.

Plague, pestilence and disease have taken a terrible toll in the area over the centuries. New Cross Hospital, formerly in Avonley Road, was originally opened in 1877 to cope with a small pox epidemic. More recently, HIV/AIDS has been responded to, with The Positive Place in Deptford Broadway opened by and for people living with the virus.

14. Down By The Riverside

Aliens, Vampires and Murderers

'Your Favourite London Sounds', compiled by Peter Cusack (London Musicians Collective, 2001) is a CD featuring recordings of the sounds of the city originally chosen for broadcast on Resonance FM. As well as packing up time at Deptford Market, the CD includes Charles Hayward talking about the 'Deptford Grid sub-station at the edge of Thames... I like the drone of the electricity... I especially like the strange conjunction of that with the sound of the river... it seems quite a secret place to me'.

There is a solitary air of desolation and decay along parts of Deptford's two riverfronts, reflected in the area's use as a fictional setting. In the Hammer Horror classic 'The Quatermass Xperiment' (1955), an astronaut returns from outer space harbouring a deadly alien life-form. He runs away and spends a night on a derelict boat at Deptford Creek, before causing havoc at London Zoo and Westminster Abbey.

Despite being set in New Orleans, San Francisco and Paris, Neil Jordan's 'Interview with the Vampire' was also partially filmed at Deptford Creek with Brad Pitt and Tom Cruse. Meanwhile Francis Ford Coppola's version of the story, 'Bram Stoker's Dracula' starred New Cross-born Gary Oldman as the Count.

Another monster figures in 'The Adventure of the Deptford Horror' (1953), a Sherlock Holmes story by Adrian Conan Doyle (son of Arthur). In this tale giant killer spiders from Cuba are used to deadly effect in 'a lane of mean slatternly houses sloping, so far as I could judge from the yellow mist that was already creeping up the lower end, to the river's edge... Usually I am not unduly affected by my surroundings, but I must confess that I was aware of a feeling of depression at the melancholy spectacle that lay before us'.

Doyle was not the only writer to see Deptford as a suitable setting for crime. A murder in a Deptford almshouse features in Molly Brown's restoration mystery 'Invitation to a Funeral' (1995), while in 'Go' by Simon Lewis' (1998), the story starts in a Deptford nightclub presided over by murderous gangsters, before moving on with its backpacker characters to Goa and Hong Kong. In 'The Family Arsenal' (1976), Paul Theroux uses the area as the base for a group of urban guerrillas, living close to 'the river at Deptford, showing like a band of bright snake scales; but the snake lay hidden, and here when the wind was right on the creek it was a smell – a tidal odor of mudbanks and exposed pebbles, a blocked sink holding a dead serpent'.

In Peter Ackroyd's novel 'Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem' (1994), the killer responsible for a series of atrocities in Victorian London is revealed to be living south of the river, although in this case it is the middle class villas of New Cross that provide anonymity rather than the riverside mist.

Of course there have been plenty of real murderers in Deptford. Alfred and Albert Stratton, from Brookmill Road, were hanged for the 1905 'Mask Murders' of Mr and Mrs Farrow at their shop at 34 Deptford High Street, so called because of the stocking masks left at the scene. Unfortunately for

the Strattons, they also left their prints and became the first people to be convicted of murder on the basis of fingerprint evidence (Beavan).

There was a suspicion of a local connection to 'Jack the Ripper' with the Times reporting (10.9.1888): 'On Saturday evening a somewhat suspicious incident occurred at Deptford. About 7 o'clock a man in a hurried manner entered the shop of a newsagent in Grove-street, near the entrance to the Foreign Cattle Market, and in an excited tone asked for a copy of the special Star containing an account of the Whitechapel murder...[he] rushed out of the shop, and, by the light of the gas in the shop window, appeared to eagerly and excitedly read the account of the tragedy. Indeed, his manner and appearance were so remarkable, that the newsagent suspected that he might be in some way connected with the murder'. A man was later arrested in Deptford, but released without charge. Montague John DrUITT, one of the prime suspects for 'Jack the Ripper', lived at 9 Eliot Place in Blackheath. He was found drowned in the Thames in the aftermath of the murders, prompting speculation that he was linked to them.

The Royal Naval Dockyard

Any quiet solitude to be found by the rivers today is a function of the area's industrial decline. At one time the whole Thames riverfront at Deptford between Greenwich and Rotherhithe was packed with maritime industry, whilst the Royal Naval Dockyard was set up in 1513 at the instigation of Henry VIII and continued in operation until 1869. There were also private shipyards, such as that John Dudman established in the 18th century, later known as Deadman's Dock. Deptford Creek too supported factories and workshops

To the West of the Royal docks from 1742 stood the Victualling Yard (later the Royal Victoria Yard), a storehouse for the Navy. Most of the site is now covered by the Pepys Estate, but the gates still stand on Grove Street decorated with stone anchors and cattle skulls. There are a few other old maritime buildings in the area, including the Master Shipwright's House in Watergate Street (used in the film 'Sylvia' about the life of Sylvia Plath).

In the 18th century, the Royal Naval Dockyard itself was one of the biggest workplaces in London: 'Deptford Yard employed shipwrights, quarterboys, caulkers, oakum boys, joiners, house-carpenters, wheelwrights, plumbers, pitch heaters, blockmakers, bricklayers' labourers, sailmakers, scavelmen, riggers, riggers' labourers, armourers, smiths, compass-makers. The yard as a whole might employ 900 men and boys during peace and 1,100 to 1,200 during wartime' (Linebaugh).

Deptford was also a place where workers and sailors often went months without pay. Samuel Pepys was a frequent visitor to Deptford to eat at the Globe and to pursue his amorous affairs as well as for naval business. He recorded in his diary in March 1662: 'to Deptford... We settled to pay the Guernsey – a small ship... the poor men have most of them been forced to borrow all the money due for their wages before they receive it, and that at a dear rate, God knows'.

In the Royal Naval Dockyard, it was custom and practice for the workers to supplement their money wage by taking home 'chips' - bits of wood left over from ship building. Indeed the local poor as a whole benefited from this – in 1767 it was reported that 'upwards of two thousand, mostly Women' came into the Yard twice a week to collect small chips for fuel. As Peter Linebaugh shows in 'The London Hanged', there was a bitter struggle throughout the 18th century as the management attempted to restrict this custom as part of a process of increasing control over work. In 1739 and 1758 workers at Deptford went on strike over this issue, and the naval authorities resorted to tactics including setting up a whipping post inside the Yard, banning the wearing of trousers (in which wood might be concealed) and blocking gaps in the walls around the site to limit access.

Sailors in revolt

In May 1768, at a time of rising wheat prices (and hence bread prices), sailors at Deptford helped spark off 'almost simultaneous demands and demonstrations by sailors, watermen, coopers, hatters, glass-grinders, sawyers, tailors, coal-heavers and silk-weavers'. The Gentlemen's Magazine (5 May 1768) reported that 'a great body of sailors assembled at Deptford, forcibly went on board several ships, unreefed the top-sails, and vowed no ships would sail till the merchants had consented to raise their wages'. In this way, every ship on the Thames was prevented from sailing until shipowners agreed to increase pay (Rudé).

Six years later, sailors on a warship at Deptford had enough of going without pay and food, and came ashore to take what supplies they could from local market gardens and farms. Five were arrested, after which 300 armed sailors stormed the watch house at Deptford Broadway to release prisoners. They were joined by sympathetic locals and a crowd of 2000 marched on Greenwich to break open the watch house there where the remaining prisoners were held. The sailors were said to have sworn 'most bitter oaths they would hang in the market place at Greenwich every magistrate and constable they could find' (Steele 1993).

Gut Girls

After the closure of the Royal Naval Dockyard, the site housed the Corporation of London's Foreign Cattle Market from 1879 to 1913. This was the key point for the import and slaughter of animals for London's meat trade. Before refrigeration, animals were shipped in live from all over the world to die at Deptford.

Many of the workers were young women whose job it was to clean out the innards of the slaughtered animals, and therefore earned the nickname 'Gut Girls'. While this might not have been the most enjoyable work, it was relatively well paid compared with other options for women at the time. The Gut Girls' financial independence, behaviour and even taste in clothes were a source of moral panic for the respectable, with complaints that they spent their wages on outlandish hats instead of underwear!

In response, a Deptford Fund Committee was set up by the well-to-do to train 13-16 year old girls in the 'essential' arts of cookery, laundry, needlework and dressmaking. The intention was to prepare the girls for what was deemed more suitable and ladylike employment. The Albany Institute, which opened in 1899, grew out of this work. In July 2002, Sarah Daniels' play 'The Gut Girls' was performed on the site of the slaughteryard by South East London Community Access Theatre.

The Albany Institute and the Deptford Fund continued their work after the Cattle Market closed. In the 1930s they were alarmed that it was 'a struggle to get the boys interested in anything but Communism' and started keep fit classes as an alternative (Coulter).

Convoys Wharf and News International

The Dockyard site now belongs to Rupert Murdoch's News International and is known as Convoys Wharf. In 1986 there was a major dispute at News International, as Murdoch pushed through plans to relocate the printing of The Times and The Sun to a new site at Wapping and simultaneously to break the power of the printworkers. At the time, Convoys Wharf was used to import newsprint by ship for News International. Lewisham Print Support Group and striking printers held regular pickets of Convoys Wharf on Friday mornings. A strike newsletter reported one such picket: 'About 60 printers and Lewisham support group picketed Convoys Wharf at Kings Street, Deptford. There was some contact with drivers... Some delay was caused' (Picket, no.8, 20.4.1986). It seems that some strike supporters may have favoured a more direct approach - on 2nd June

1986 there was a major fire at Convoys Wharf, with arson suspected. Dockers there took part in a national dockers strike in June 1989, but the use of Convoys Wharf for importing newsprint has now come to an end.

John Gast and the Shipwrights

Deptford-based John Gast was a key figure in the struggles of the workers in the shipyards of the Thames and elsewhere in the early 19th century. Gast (born in Bristol in 1772) started work at Dudman's Yard in Deptford in 1797, and wrote in 1825 that he 'there assisted in building not less than from 20 to 30 sail of men-of-war... exclusive of merchant ships'.

After a shipwrights strike in 1812, Gast helped set up the Hearts of Oak Benefit Society to organise mutual aid amongst its members, collecting contributions and paying out in the event of sickness, death and accident. A flavour of the shipwrights' culture is given in a description of a London union procession in 1825 which featured a blue silk banner proclaiming 'Hearts of Oak Protect the Aged' and a ship drawn by six horses, with the members wearing blue rosettes and sprigs of oak (E.P. Thompson).

At this point, Gast was also a dissenting preacher and ran the King of Prussia pub at 6 Union Street (now Albury St.). However in 1813, Dudman's Yard was sold off and he fell on hard times. He had to give up the pub and in December of the following year he was jailed by Deptford magistrates for fortune telling, spending time in Dartford Bridewell. His involvement in fortune telling may have been linked to his interest in the prophetic and millenarian religious currents in London at the time. It certainly seems to have been more than a quick attempt to make money - in 1832 he was still giving lectures on 'Raphael's Prophetic Almanack' (Prothero).

Gast recovered to continue to play a key part in London radical politics. He attempted to organize the 'Philanthropic Hercules', the first General Union of all trades in London and Manchester. On the release of the radical Henry Hunt from prison in 1822 Gast welcomed him to London on behalf of the 'Committee of the Useful Classes,' (E.P. Thompson).

Gast became secretary of the Thames Shipwrights Provident Union on its foundation 1824, and the following year the Union called the 'Great Strike' of shipwrights. It lasted for most of the year before being defeated when the state used the Royal dockyards to undermine it by carrying out work usually performed by the private yards.

In the 1830s, John Gast was still active in the National Union of the Working Classes. The Poor Man's Guardian (18 May 1833) reports him speaking in

Borough High Street to denounce a police intervention at a meeting as the 'ferocious attack of these armed ruffians'.

Prison Hulks

The Thames off Deptford was one of the locations for the notorious 'Prison Hulks', ships on which convicts could spend years, sometimes as a precursor to being transported to Australia or elsewhere.

Among the Deptford residents jailed on the hulks and then deported were John Caesar and Billy Blue. Caesar, described as a 'black servant' from Madagascar, was convicted of theft at Deptford in 1786. Ten years later, he was shot dead in Australia by Bounty hunters after escaping and living as a bushranger. Billy Blue was convicted in 1797 of stealing sugar from a West Indian owned ship, the Lady Jane Halliday, at Deptford where he worked. He spent nearly five years on prison hulks on the River Thames before transportation to Australia.

Richard Pelvin, a 16 year old military recruit, described a transportation journey in his diary: 'We marched from Chatham to Gravesend one miserable, wet day, 25th October 1837, and were put aboard a lighter or barge, wet as we were and without fire or light or food, and went up with the night tide to Deptford which we reached next morning and embarked aboard the convict ship Moffatt. The next day we took on board from Deptford dockyard 200 convicts with irons on one leg, and the other end was fastened to a strap around the waist' (Pelvin).

Deptford Deserters

Deptford was a place where people on the waterfront lived in fear of the press gang, who could conscript people into the navy on the spot. In 1795 there was a strike at Deptford and all along the River until a shipwright was released by the press gang. In certain special circumstances, individuals could obtain a 'certificate of protection from impressment'. The National Maritime Museum has an example of one issued to John Chew, a labourer at Deptford dockyard in 1805.

Those conscripted sometimes took the opportunity to desert. Publications like the Police Gazette included descriptions of deserters and absentees to help in their capture. From such sources we hear of individuals like Charles Matthews from Deptford, missing from HMS Wolverine in Australia in 1877 with 'light brown hair, blue eyes, pale complexion, bracelet tattooed on both wrists, letter 'C' on right arm'. James Huxham from Deptford, deserted from

HMS Cormorant in Australia in 1880, aged 26 with 'brown hair, hazel eyes, fresh complexion' (NSW Police Gazette). Forty years later, Deptford-born Frederick Roberts, a 28 year old labourer was being looked for after deserting (PG 14.3. 1921).

The penalties for desertion could be very severe. In 2001 a memorial was unveiled at the National Memorial Arboretum in Lichfield, Staffs to the hundreds of British soldiers shot by their own side during WWI. It depicts the Private Herbert Burden of the Northumberland Fusiliers, executed at Ypres in 1915 for desertion. Burden was born in Lewisham, where his father worked as a gardener, and was just 17 years old when he was shot. It is likely that he had lied about his age to join the army, since he was only 16 when he joined up. According to some reports he at one time deserted the Fusiliers for another regiment, the East Surreys at Deptford (www.shotatdawn.org.uk).

Kate Sharpley and Opposition to the First World War

The horrors of the First World War were denounced by some from the start, but they did not always find a sympathetic hearing amidst the violent patriotic sentiments of the early days of the war, as Wilf McCartney recalled: 'My old Anarchist comrade Fotner and I were having a meeting in Deptford Broadway. Fotner only asked the crowd what they would gain by this bloodbath. That was all. They charged the platform, knocked Fotner down, smashed the platform, and he and I lay in the road helpless, covered in blood' (Wilf McCartney, *Dare to be Daniell!*, 1942).



Another local opponent of the War was Deptford-born Kate Sharpley. She had worked for a German baker but went into munitions work in Woolwich where she was involved in the shop stewards movement as well as the anarchist movement in South London.

During the war, 'Kate's father and brother were both killed in action, while her boyfriend was conscripted and not heard of again... Called on to receive her family medals, she threw them in Queen Mary's face, saying 'If you like them so much you can have them'... she was beaten up by police and warned off selling anarchist papers on the streets or face prosecution 'as a prostitute' (Meltzer).

Albert Meltzer (1920-1996) first met Sharpley on the day of the Lewisham anti-NF riot in 1977 when he got into an altercation with some racists on the train home. As he recalled: 'One of the passengers was a frail lady in her eighties, going up to Guy's, who was saying 'if I had been able to get on the platform fast enough I'd have waded in with my stick'... That was my introduction to Kate Sharpley'. Meltzer himself spent 60 or so years in the anarchist movement, including a period as a member of the Deptford branch of the Direct Action Movement. DAM members were involved in The Red and Black Club, which set up a short-lived space at 489 Theatre Place in the early 1990s.

An anti-militarist current has also continued down to the present, from the 1980s anti-Cruise Missile mural at Sanford Housing Co-op to the anti-Gulf war school strikers at Haberdashers and other Lewisham schools in 2003.

15. STOWAGE AND MILLENNIUM QUAY

Stowage

The recent housing development at Millennium Quay stands on the former Stowage site, the base for the East India Company stores from 1600 until 1782. In the 18th century the Company ended up running most of India with its own private army and trading monopolies in salt, tobacco, opium and other commodities. In 1769 and 1770 they created 'famine over wide areas

by cornering rice and refusing to sell it except at exorbitant prices' (Morton).



Later Stowage became the repair works for the General Steam Navigation Company, who ran paddle steamers and other ships (the picture shows apprentices there in 1916).

At the site today, a statue of Czar Peter 'the Great' looks out across the river, commemorating the time he spent in Deptford learning the secrets of shipbuilding and getting drunk at Sayes Court.

In this booklet I have paid little attention to the doings of Kings, Queens, Generals and Czars, but it is noteworthy that Deptford is a key place in Royalist and Colonial

mythologies. This was after all the place where Raleigh laid down his cloak for the Queen, where, the legend has it, Nelson's body was brought to shore in a barrel of rum, and from where explorers set forth to distant lands. Captain Cook provisioned the Endeavour at the Victualling Yard before sailing to Botany Bay, while George Vancouver sailed from Deptford on the Discovery to North America.

Generations of local children were brought up on these tales, and some of them went on to contribute their own stories. Edgar Wallace (1875-1932), who grew up in Deptford, was one of the most popular writers in inter-war England. Born in Greenwich, he was brought up by his adoptive family in Norway Court, in what is now Creek Road. Wallace published 170 novels including his 'Sanders of the River' stories and other tales of Imperial derring-do.

Regeneration and the future

Czar Peter was a pioneer of urban regeneration, although his methods were particularly draconian. Thousands died in forced labour conditions to build St Petersburg, financed by punitive taxes including the notorious beard tax.

Regeneration has been a buzzword in this area for years, from the Deptford City Challenge to the New Deal for New Cross. Nobody could deny that people need better housing, better community facilities and a whole lot more. It is easy to romanticise the 'gritty authenticity' of urban dereliction if you don't have to live with the poverty and violence that often accompany it. Even within Lewisham, people born in this area can expect to live for six years less compared with other parts of the borough: the life expectancy for women in New Cross (Marlowe ward) is 78.06 years compared with 84.14 in Horniman; for men it is 71.58 compared with 77.46 in Blythe Hill (Cooke and Beckingham). Poor housing is one of the causes of this, even if poverty and dispossession cannot be abolished by bricks and mortar alone.

Still, rhetoric about making Deptford the new Clerkenwell or Camden can only make people nervous of the kind of social cleansing seen elsewhere. Publicity for a recent development declared 'Deptford comes of age', a strange statement given its long history; are we to really believe that thousands of years count for nothing compared with the fact that with the Docklands Light Railway 'Deptford is brilliantly placed for anyone working in the City'?

Millennium Quay itself lays claim not only to associations with Russian royalty but to a Greenwich address, despite being clearly on the Deptford

side of the Creek. Fairview New Homes, the developer, originally marketed it as 'Millennium Quay, Greenwich', presumably because Greenwich sounded more 'aspirational'. Similar transformations are on the cards elsewhere in the area. On the Pepys estate the Aragon Tower, with its riverside views, has been sold off to property developers Berkeley Homes for £11 million. Its 144 former council flats are being converted into luxury apartments. The Convoys Wharf site is set to be redeveloped, with current proposals including a mixed commercial/residential site with three tower blocks. The development of luxury flats at the riverside is a reversal of historical trends. In previous centuries, houses got poorer nearer to the river, the better-off avoiding the smells and noise of the working Thames.

Is the future of Deptford and New Cross a gradual erasure of its diverse, multi-ethnic and predominately working class character (albeit with a middle class 'bohemian' edge)? Will redevelopment and spiralling rents and property prices force out those who can no longer afford to live here? In some parts this process seems to have already started. A recent academic study by Tim Butler and Garry Robson described 'Telegraph Hill' as a middle class 'enclave' marked by 'an element of smugness that is somewhat off-putting' and a 'denial of the wider area (New Cross) in which Telegraph Hill is located'.

In some ways this is a return to an earlier pattern of local social polarisation. Eileen Elias, writing about her childhood at 123 Waller Road in the years 1910 to 1920, remembered New Cross as a 'desirable district' whose affluent households were serviced by 'daily girls' and 'an army of step-ladies' cleaning the local door steps twice a week, not to mention 'little street boys' bringing round 'buckets of horse manure' to the tradesmen's entrance. Elias was taught at an early age the distinction between 'rough' children, who went to the Council School (now Edmund Waller) and 'nice' children who went to Haberdashers' Aske's (now just a secondary school but in those days including a kindergarten)

This pamphlet has partly been an act of celebration and remembrance of history's marginalized, but as Iain Sinclair has written about Spitalfields, there is also a danger of creating 'a mythology to underwrite the property values', some historical colour to add to estates agents' hard sell. Perhaps this is the time to shut up...

So Goodnight, Godbless and Goodbye,
There's not a star that left in the sky.
(Band of Holy Joy, 1986)

Sources

There are already two very good books covering the history of New Cross and Deptford: Jess Steele's 'Turning the Tide' and Joan Anim-Addo's 'Longest Journey – a history of Black Lewisham'. Both of these are published by Deptford Forum Publishing (along with other interesting titles) and are available from Lewisham libraries. Rather than duplicate these books I have tried to focus on things they do not cover, or to include additional information on some of the things they do – so if you want to know more, track down these books. Most of the other sources I have used are listed below. Where a reference is marked with an *, the text can be found on the internet - a search under the title should locate it.

For a local history trainspotter it can be hard to stop – there always seems to be at least one more book you just have to read. I never did track down a book someone mentioned which refers to Second World War deserters hanging out in a Deptford bottle factory, or have time to pester The British Library for a copy of W.C. Hart's 'Confessions of an anarchist' (1905), which may have lots to say about his time in Deptford. If you come across anything else interesting, please let me know!

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Also available: 'Subterranean Southwark' by Christopher Jones,
 'Nine things that aren't there: a manoeuvre around
 Elephant & Castle' by Christopher Jones

SE8... SE14... All life is here (or has been)... punks, revolting peasants, gut girls, slaves and slavers, sound systems, suffragettes, speedway riders, sailors, dock strikers, deserters, metal bashers, may queens, pearly kings, ghosts, vampires, tramps... come and meet them all on this alternative tour of New Cross and Deptford.

**Past Tense
South London
2004**