

Shaftesbury Park

Shaftesbury Park was the most assiduously publicized and widely discussed housing experiment of its day. Built between 1872 and 1877, it was the first major development of the Artizans', Labourers', & General Dwellings Company, founded by a band of working men in 1866–7. The new 42½-acre estate, promoted as the 'Workmen's City', was widely seen as demonstrating a credible solution to the urban housing problem. Initially the Artizans' Company seemed to have cut the knot that tied housing reform to 'philanthropy plus five per cent'. Through 'industrial partnership' and a unique financial model it could build better houses for less than the speculative builder, pay its workmen more than standard wages, sell or let its houses below the market level, and yet produce a return on capital not of five, but six per cent. It offered its inhabitants not only a healthy home environment but the benefits of community living, underpinned by co-operation and self-help.

As a suburban cottage estate, Shaftesbury Park differed in form from the creations of most model-dwellings builders at the time, with their focus on high-density exploitation of city sites. But it owed comparatively little to the British tradition of planned villages and suburbs; closer precedents were the *cités ouvrières* of Second Empire France. Shaftesbury Park proved less directly influential than might have been expected in view of the national and international notice it attracted. Its immediate heirs were promoted by the Artizans' Company itself, which embarked upon three more estates on the same basic pattern: Queen's Park in Kensal New Town, planned in 1874 and built up from 1876; Noel Park in Hornsey, begun in 1881; and Leigham Court in Streatham, begun in 1889. That none of these matched the original in

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celebrity, despite being larger and in several respects superior, had much to do with the loss of the individuals whose promotional skill and flair for creative accounting characterized the management of the company when Shaftesbury Park was founded.

In 1877, with the estate not quite complete and only part of Queen's Park built, the leading figures were ousted on charges of mismanagement and corruption. The entire board of directors was replaced; the manager and secretary William Swindlehurst and the chairman of the board, Baxter Langley, were convicted of conspiracy and fraud, and jailed. A second director, John Shaw Lowe, fled to escape arrest; a third, the vice-chairman Alfred Walton, narrowly avoided prosecution. The company's self-taught architect Robert Austin was sacked. With the loss of these buccaneers and their colleagues on the board, the company's character and psychology were transformed. Their supplanters, mostly of patrician background and impeccable respectability, pursued a cautious policy, initially of retrenchment. Plans already in hand to build a third Workmen's City, for the East End, on the Cann Hall estate in Wanstead, were abandoned and the site sold in order to free up capital for a concentrated effort to complete Queen's Park.

In the years that followed the debacle, Shaftesbury Park faded from the wider public consciousness, and its subsequent reputation reflected the philanthropic paternalism of the reformed Artizans' Company and not the working-class aspirations to which it owed its conception. It was mainly remembered for having no public houses. It retained a certain cachet into the twentieth century, holding on to a slightly higher status than its sister estate Queen's Park, partly because its smaller size allowed closer control by its superintendent and rent collector.¹

A few developments of the later 1870s like the Northern and Eastern Suburban Dwellings Company's Coleraine Park, Tottenham, may owe

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something to the lead set by the Artizans' Company.² Later, Shaftesbury Park may have contributed to the thinking behind the London County Council's Edwardian cottage estates. But its special sense of community is more prophetic of certain middle-class developments, notably Bedford Park (founded at the height of Shaftesbury Park's fame) and the garden cities. Further afield, it was reported on in Europe, the USA and the colonies, attracting attention from social reformers, builders, and national and local authorities and leaders, including the Russian imperial government, Leopold II of Belgium, and Garibaldi; photographs and plans of the houses were regularly sent out by the company to enquirers, and the industrialist Sir Henry Peek claimed to have visited 'a very excellent imitation' of it while abroad.³

If the company was rotten at the core when Shaftesbury Park was developed, this did not appreciably affect the houses there, which were generally well built and well-appointed by the standards of the day, largely free of the inferior materials and shoddy workmanship affecting some early houses at Queen's Park. They incorporated a few minor technical advances over much speculative housing of this class, notably built-in ventilation and an improved system of drainage.⁴ Effort was made to bring architectural variety and interest to the terrace fronts through simple decorative features, and here the company was on the whole successful: there was repetition, but the estate was not so large that this became tedious or oppressive. Otherwise the design and planning of Shaftesbury Park were unremarkable against the norms of working and lower middle-class suburbia.

Little altered except for the banal replacement of some houses bombed in the Second World War, Shaftesbury Park today is a Conservation Area prized for its stylistic character. Soon after the war, well before the spread of popular enthusiasm for Victorian buildings, its tree-lined streets of bijou cottages began to attract middle-class purchasers from across the river, some

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houses having come on to the market. This gentrifying trend has continued, though much of the estate remains social housing, now owned by the Peabody Trust, which acquired the majority of the houses from the original company's successors in a series of transactions in 1962–6, some freehold but most on long lease from Wandsworth Council. The leasehold properties were acquired freehold in the 1980s. Continuing piecemeal sales have reduced the trust's holdings since then.⁵

The Artizans' Company

The company was incorporated on 8 January 1867 with a nominal capital of £250,000 in £10 shares.⁶ Its foundation has been attributed to William Austin, 'the most moneyed of a very modest group of clerks and working men' comprising the original subscribers.⁷ In fact, none was a clerk: two were engineers, one a commission agent, one a shipping and insurance agent, the others a coffee-house keeper and an 'excavator' or navy. An illiterate former navy himself, Austin recalled the origins of the company when he was interviewed at the age of 80 in 1884. Remarks in the company's centenary history, derived from the interview, have allowed the false impression to form that he was not only the prime mover but a philanthropist comparable to Peabody and Waterlow. At a local level, Austin was indeed reported as 'never happy unless he is employed in some work of benevolence'.⁸ But the company was not philanthropic, and nothing in the original memorandum of association suggests the crusading objects which it subsequently espoused. It was set up as a commercial venture, and at the directors' first formal meeting Austin was voted £350 for his 'Labour & preliminary expenses'.

As Austin told it, the idea for the company began with himself and three friends, two of whom were John Shawe Lowe and William Swindlehurst. Austin had made good after taking the pledge in his forties,

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becoming a drainage contractor and speculative builder, starting with four houses in south Lambeth. He was voted off the board in 1870—‘I was too honest for them’—and worked on as a jobbing bricklayer into old age.⁹

Whether or not with money borrowed from Austin, as he claimed, it was Swindlehurst who took the first ten shares, and his appointment as manager and secretary was provided for in the Articles of Association. At his trial he claimed to be ‘the projector’ of the company.¹⁰ Aged 42 when it was formed, he was a mechanical engineer, originally from Preston. A life-long teetotaler, he may have been related to the Preston iron-roller Thomas Swindlehurst, ‘King of the reformed drunkards of Preston’, one of the leading lights in the early development of the English temperance movement. Lowe, the commission agent and a former commercial traveller, was a Londoner by birth, then in his fifties. He too was a teetotaler, as was Amos Raynor, the excavator, said by Austin to have lent the company money early on. Raynor, employed as watchman on the first building development in Battersea, was attacked by the workmen as a ‘sneak and tale-bearer’ and subsequently disappears from the story. John Ruffell, the coffee-house keeper, was on the board until 1877, but was not a driving force. The other founders seem to have played no further part in the Artizans’ Company.

In March 1867 the new company’s aims were made public at a ‘social tea meeting and conversazione’ at the Whittington Club in Arundel Street: ‘to assist the working classes to obtain improved dwellings, erected from the best designs, at the lowest possible cost; to become owners of the houses they occupy; to raise their position in the social scale; to spread a moral influence over their class, tending to foster habits of industry, sobriety, and frugality’—a longer agenda than merely building homes to replace those lost through recent metropolitan improvements, which were cited as having prompted the company’s formation in its prospectuses and elsewhere.¹¹

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Owner-occupation was central: 'Why pay rent?' asked an early advertisement.¹² Also prominent was co-operation. The company boasted that its houses were built on the co-operative principle, otherwise referred to as industrial partnership or associated labour (by which the workmen would have received an equitable part of the profits). That was never the case, but the claim could be upheld because some shareholders (including the directors) worked on or bought the company's houses. The pretence was maintained until 1877 and as late as 1906 it was claimed in a Lords debate that Shaftesbury Park was built 'not out of the rates, but by working men themselves'.¹³ Even now, the company is sometimes referred to as having been a housing co-operative.¹⁴ Co-operation gave the impression that it was a society rather than a joint-stock commercial enterprise, and even a man as closely involved with it as Lord Shaftesbury persistently referred to it as such. Co-operative it may have claimed to be, but it never pretended to be charitable. Nevertheless, it was frequently thought of as charitable or semi-charitable in the manner of most of the leading model-dwellings providers, and attracted most of its capital on the understanding that its work was of vital social importance.

Soon after incorporation it took on a small building project south of Battersea Park, in Rollo and Landseer Streets (page ###). Progress on a larger scale was hampered by impracticable aims and methods. The company set out to attract working-class investors in towns and cities across the country, with the aim of building houses for owner-occupation by local shareholders. The original plan was that the houses would be built by such of the shareholders who were in the building line 'without the intervention of any contractors'.¹⁵ Most subscribers took the single share apiece which they hoped would entitle them to apply for a house, paying only a small deposit. (Many of these shares were forfeited when their holders failed to pay calls on capital.)

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Individual investments being so limited, there was no prospect of raising the capital for sufficient houses. This was partly offset by taking money on deposit at interest, to bring in additional working capital (which in the very early years sometimes exceeded paid-up share capital). It was also disguised by rhetoric about co-operation and by claims of economies of scale. In practice, the shareholders in various places (including Baildon, Banbury, Deptford, Huddersfield and Oldham) were left disappointed, or only a few houses were built (as at Gosport). So after a while the company gave up the pursuit of working-class subscribers and began systematically to target wealthy investors. This was put explicitly in its 1870 polemic *Unhealthy Houses*: 'in nine cases out of ten it is a most imprudent thing for a working man to invest in shares ... the simple truth is, if the objects of the Company are to be carried out on a scale commensurate with the magnitude and urgency of the evils before set forth, we must not look to working men for the ways and means, but rather to the upper and wealthier classes'.¹⁶

This new focus was one cause of friction within the company, and accounts for William Austin's remark in 1884 to the effect that Swindlehurst let himself be bought by rich men. It also brought increasing reliance on share agents, working on commission, but the result was a sustained surge of investment. Paid-up capital by the end of 1869 stood at a little over £3,000. By the end of 1875 (nominal capital having been raised to £1,000,000 the previous year) it had reached almost £400,000. Meanwhile, deposit accounts, chiefly aimed at the working class, had risen from £4,745 to only £62,334.¹⁷

Shortly before Shaftesbury Park, Archbishop Manning spoke about this alliance of Labour and Capital that the company seemed to embody:

this Artizans' Building Association ... collects together the hearts and the hands of the working men themselves to build their own houses. They literally do this themselves; they know their own wants ... the best work has

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been done by the shareholders, and the shareholders have found out imperfections in work done by other men.

But these shareholders, Manning concluded, could not be those who overwhelmingly supplied the money to build:

the one thing which gives me a very perfect interest in this association is the last words Mr Swindlehurst used, that the wealth of the rich is made to minister to the comfort and salvation of the working man.¹⁸

From the start the company sought support from prominent figures including Manning and Shaftesbury, successfully appealing across political and sectarian divides. Dean Stanley of Westminster became president in 1867, serving until 1874 when Shaftesbury took over. Shaftesbury, with Lords Lichfield and Elcho, who were then serving on the Royal Commission looking into trades unions, and three workmen, were appointed ‘arbitrators’ as part of the apparatus of co-operation – their role being to resolve labour disputes. As the workmen were not employed by the company but by its contract builders or gangers, there was nothing for them to arbitrate.¹⁹

By the time of Shaftesbury Park the company’s public profile was high. Money was reportedly coming in at the rate of £1,000 a day, and its paid-up shareholders included well-to-do citizens from across the country, many of them clergymen or magistrates, together with some of the most prominent names in society: senior peers including the Dukes of Devonshire, Manchester, Norfolk and Rutland, and the Marquesses of Salisbury and Westminster; bankers, notably N. M. Rothschild, Henry Bischoffsheim and Baron Hambro; Joseph Chamberlain and other industrialists including Sir William Fairbairn and C. W. Siemens; MPs, Liberal and Conservative, including Samuel Morley and A. J. Balfour; besides Manning and Stanley, such senior churchmen as Pusey and Bishop Wilberforce; and a roster of

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eminent writers and thinkers, among them Carlyle, Wilkie Collins, Darwin, Francis Galton, Philip Gosse, Thomas Hughes, Kingsley, Ruskin and Tennyson.²⁰

There had also been changes in the personnel at the helm since the early days. John Baxter Langley, a well-known radical newspaper editor and writer, and recent Liberal candidate for Parliament, joined the board in 1870 and became chairman. Langley had a wide range of skills and interests, from surgery and law to botany. Early in his career he had reported on the Irish potato famine, and in 1863 had moved to Swindlehurst's home town as editor of the *Preston Guardian*.²¹

Another middle-class newcomer to the board was the 'political thinker' James Thornton Hoskins, whose main roles were to encourage friends to buy shares and help out with flower-shows and promotional events. More active was Alfred Armstrong Walton, another progressive thinker and Liberal candidate for Parliament, who joined the board in 1870. A farmer's son from Northumberland, he had some training as a builder and stonemason and came to London to work on major projects including the Houses of Parliament. He became an architect, working as assistant to George Gilbert Scott. Walton interested himself in electoral reform and trade unionism, and researched what he called the aristocracy's 'usurpation of the soil', publishing in 1865 his *History of the Landed Tenures of Great Britain and Ireland*.²²

One other important individual was Robert Austin, who became a shareholder soon after incorporation and was briefly on the board. Born in Plymouth, he does not seem to have been related to William Austin. A carpenter in his fifties, living in Wanstead, he acted as architect on all the company's projects until 1877, disappearing thereafter into obscurity. For a few years he appears to have gone under the name of Robert Edgar, having resumed his old trade, but by the time he died in 1883 he was again Robert

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Austin, architect and surveyor.²³ Contrary to what is said in *Artizans Centenary*, Austin did not work as a carpenter at Rollo and Landseer Streets, though he was offered the chance of tendering for some of the work. As well as designing buildings, Austin drew up specifications and contractors' agreements and oversaw work in progress, reporting regularly to the board. As an experienced workman and foreman he was used to architects' plans, and produced his own drawings – in 1871 the board presented him with a set of mathematical instruments in recognition of his (poorly paid) services. Outside the Artizans' estates, the only surviving buildings attributable to Austin were probably his own speculation: three houses in Stormont Road off Lavender Hill, contemporary with Shaftesbury Park and broadly in the same style as its houses (page ###).

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The building of Shaftesbury Park was the high point of the pre-1877 Artizans' Company, but took place against a background of growing suspicion and accusation directed chiefly at Swindlehurst and Langley. First manifest in 1872, this ill-feeling crystallized around the issue of whether the company was right to pay dividends from 'anticipated' profits, in other words from capital not income. There were also allegations of fraud from Liverpool, where the company carried out one development at Old Swan and planned another at Bootle, and where the company's aggressive share-agent, John Royle Martin, held sway as the so-called Manager for the Provinces. From Liverpool, too, Shaftesbury received a call (perhaps unanswered) for 'Arbitration in the dispute between the Stem, & the Branches, of the Society'.²⁴ A cold war for control of the company continued for the next five years, led at first by Lichfield, and later by Shaftesbury's son Evelyn, who joined the board at his father's request in 1874. He attended one meeting only under the Swindlehurst regime, taking an instant dislike to his fellow directors, though

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he helped in the drainage dispute with Wandsworth District Board of Works (see below).

Lichfield and Elcho had no financial interest in the company, and Shaftesbury one token share only. Their concern was that their names were being used to give credence to a company run by a reckless management which was drawing in too much capital through paying unjustifiable dividends. Ultimately the arbitrators resigned, and that might have been the end of their involvement. But Shaftesbury, through his son, saw the struggle through to the end. Though unblemished, he had been taken advantage of and lost money, having agreed to pay half the cost of an investigation into the company's affairs by an actuary, E. Erskine Scott. This was commissioned by Lichfield, and resulted in a lengthy but inconclusive report, and a bill of over £400. Had Shaftesbury had any idea of this expense, he would 'have thrown it, as is due, on the shareholders ... a waste of money, which might have been so much better employed!' His disillusionment with the company was matched by anger at the bill. 'The thing is corrupt; utterly corrupt', he wrote in his diary on Christmas Eve 1875. 'Has cost me – how I regret the waste, £200 to obtain a report'.²⁵

The denouement was triggered by one of the auditors, John Pearce, a resident of Queen's Park. Refusing to stand for re-election in March 1877, he issued a pamphlet setting out a critique of the company, with thinly veiled charges of fraud over the purchase of the Shaftesbury Park, Queen's Park and Cann Hall estates. At an Extraordinary Meeting in June a shareholders' committee of investigation was appointed, chaired by Evelyn Ashley. As confidence in the company ebbed away, the inflow of capital ceased, deposits were withdrawn, and further bank credit was refused. On 30 June Swindlehurst resigned, and that evening was arrested at his home in Lavender Hill. Langley's arrest followed, and by the autumn both were beginning 18-month terms of imprisonment with hard labour. Their co-

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conspirator, Edward Saffery, a land agent, was sentenced to 12 months. As the scandal erupted, John Ruskin held the management up to scorn, ostentatiously dropping the tainted word 'company' from his own new vehicle for an ideal community, renaming it St George's Guild. Langley, who with his mistress had gone through most of his money, was utterly ruined.²⁶ Swindlehurst, who had salted most of his away and was able to return it to the company, remained a popular figure with many shareholders and local people. Joseph Shaw, minister at Battersea Congregational Church, spoke for local residents in asking the board to drop criminal proceedings against him, and hundreds petitioned the Home Secretary for his release. After his imprisonment he not only took the new board to task in print but attempted to start up a new dwellings company.²⁷

The catalogue of failings and malpractices set out in the committee of investigation's report included the land-purchase frauds, an over-charging racket in the purchase of building materials (particularly through a building-materials merchant, Solomon Frankenberg), payment of excessive commission to share agents, poor book-keeping, litigiousness, extravagance and waste. The architect Thomas Chatfeild Clarke, brought in to report, visited Shaftesbury Park and Queen's Park and had few good words to say about them. His main focus was on Queen's Park, Shaftesbury Park being essentially finished, but some of the failings he found were probably repeated from Shaftesbury Park. Organization and supervision of building work, stock purchase and control, materials, workmanship: all were defective.²⁸

Throughout the company, Ashley and his colleagues found 'the greatest state of confusion ... dishonesty reigning almost everywhere'. At Shaftesbury Park they found irregularities in the letting of houses and incompetence or negligence on the part of the resident agent, Swindlehurst's son William. But physically they only had to round off the development, their most important decision being to build over an intended open space at

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Brassey Square, condemned by Swindlehurst senior as a 'great injustice and wrong' to the residents.²⁹

For some years the reformed company's energies were mainly directed towards Queen's Park. Noel Park, their first new project, proved sluggish taking off and was not completed until the late 1920s. Their second new cottage estate, Leigham Court, was a superior development in 'one of the choicest suburbs', designed to meet the rising standard of living and future expectations of the artisan class.³⁰ It was in effect a middle-class development (like the company's final suburban foray, Pinnerwood Park, Middlesex, begun in 1931). There was little or nothing to distinguish it from the latest products of the better speculative house-builder. Leigham Court marks the end of the experiment begun at Shaftesbury Park.

From 1885 the Artizans' Company also turned its attention to the tried and tested model of urban block dwellings for the working class. These projects began with Portman Buildings in Lisson Grove, Marylebone (opened 1888), continuing over the next few years with a succession of developments in Clerkenwell, Mayfair and again Marylebone. After this short-lived burst of activity, attention was concentrated on the completion of Noel Park and Leigham Court. At Shaftesbury Park and the other cottage estates, the policy of selling to tenants was abandoned, and sold-off houses were gradually bought back. Forfeits of part-paid shares reduced the working-class membership, and such new capital as was required was obtained from existing shareholders or their friends. These changes of approach did not please Abednego Bishop, one of the earliest shareholders, who complained that block buildings were 'in opposition to the foundation principle' and pointed out that 'We intended to assist working men to buy their own houses; but now I find they will not sell the house to the working man'. (Bishop was the original purchaser of one of the Rollo Street houses, and in 1883 took over the leases of the whole of the company's Rollo and Landseer Streets

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development.) The company's rationale, explained by the chairman Ernest Noel, was that where houses were sold, they usually ended up on the open market and would get into the hands of private landlords, with consequent overcrowding and deterioration.³¹

Socially radical in its first ten years, the Artizans' Company after 1877 became profoundly conservative. As 'strictly an Investment Company', it sought security above the possibility of high returns: 'a safe 5 [per] cent. for our capital'.³² Any surplus was disposed of in rent reduction, low rent being the key to selecting and retaining good tenants. The company continued to build, but set itself against anything speculative. Despite the check on growth imposed by risk-aversion, and the disposal of the hard-to-manage (and unprofitable) provincial estates, the Artizans' outstripped other model-dwellings companies in the number of homes it provided. After the Second World War, in the changing climate of statutory rent control and taxation, it turned to developing offices and shops at home and abroad, and its portfolio of low-rent dwellings passed into the hands of other social landlords.

The origins of Shaftesbury Park

Shaftesbury Park was first referred to as the Workmen's City by Lord Shaftesbury in his inaugural speech in 1872. At that date, workmen's or workman's city was the usual translation of *cit  ouvri re*, a term popularized by the workers' housing estates built in eastern France during the Second Empire. The English phrase would have been well known to the originators of Shaftesbury Park. It had been given some currency in the 1860s, by journalists and notably by the evangelical writer Charlotte Ward, who used it to describe the first and best-known of the *cit s ouvri res*, that at Mulhouse, begun in 1853. Mrs Ward published an enthusiastic account of the Mulhouse project in 1866, the year in which both the Artizans' Company and the Suburban Village and

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General Dwellings Company were conceived. Both were probably inspired to some extent by Mulhouse, and though the Suburban Village Company soon collapsed, the Artizans' Company was eventually able to build a real workmen's city in the form of Shaftesbury Park, adapting the French model to the conditions of suburban London and the demands of a limited liability company.

Common ideals at Mulhouse and Shaftesbury Park were an emphasis on owner-occupation above renting, with purchase on easy terms over a period of years; provision of social institutions such as a library, co-operative shops, schools, baths and wash-houses; family houses of various sizes, with gardens; a central square or *place*; trees to line the roads; and the award of prizes to encourage pride in house-keeping and gardening. Sale of alcohol at Mulhouse was strictly controlled; at Shaftesbury Park banned altogether. Both were based on a grid-plan of streets: Shaftesbury Park had the more salubrious location, being less affected by industrial pollution. The main points of difference were in the corporate and financial structure and the grouping of the houses. At Mulhouse, the original capital was subscribed by a dozen enlightened employers, augmented by state funding for roads and drainage. In contrast, the capital for Shaftesbury Park came from mortgages of the company's estates, including Shaftesbury Park itself (mortgaged for £20,000 on purchase), from deposit accounts and from new share capital, most of it raised in small sums from a large number of philanthropically minded shareholders (2,393 by 1877). There was no help from the state, and although resort to the Public Works Loan Commissioners was considered, no application was made by the pre-1877 board, ostensibly because the terms would have prevented the sale, as opposed to letting, of the houses. (When the new board did try to get a Public Works loan to develop Queen's Park, it was turned down on the grounds that the houses were too high-class.)³³

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Unlike Shaftesbury Park, the Mulhouse estate mixed one and two-storey family houses with rooming-houses for single men. Houses were built in small groups, typically double pairs built back-to-back, an arrangement not uncommon for industrial housing in France and Germany. Shaftesbury Park followed the conventional London pattern of terraced houses on narrow frontages.

In outcome, the most important differences were rate of development and type of tenure. Mulhouse got off to a fast start with the immediate building of 384 dwellings, and 660 were built in the 'second city' extension between its commencement in 1856 and the outbreak of war in 1870. This achievement was easily eclipsed at Shaftesbury Park, where a thousand houses took only four years to build. But whereas most houses at Mulhouse were bought by their occupiers, the number of sales at Shaftesbury Park (almost all of them long leaseholds) was small and many buyers soon reverted to renters.

In England, Shaftesbury Park was preceded by the Loughborough Park scheme of the Suburban Village Company, set up specifically to build dormitory cottage estates near railway stations in outer London. The Metropolitan Association for Improving the Dwellings of the Industrious Classes also built a similar small development in the 1860s (Alexandra Cottages, Beckenham), but the parallels between the former's estate and the Artizans' venture are more striking.³⁴

Like Shaftesbury Park, the site of Loughborough Park 'village' in Lambeth was market-garden ground alongside the railway. There too it was intended to build houses in several classes, containing from four to eight rooms, each with a small garden. As initially with the Artizans' Company, houses were allotted to shareholders according to a system of priority, and various community facilities were planned. There was a strong temperance

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connection, for the founders included Jabez Burns and the trustees George Cruikshank, vociferous temperance campaigners. Provision was also made for 'arbitration' in the event of dispute between the company and its members or employees. Though not a founder, William Austin was an early investor, taking 50 of the £10 shares. Shaftesbury was involved too, laying a commemorative stone in March 1869. Most important, the houses were intended for purchase by the occupiers through instalments paid as enhanced rent. But the Loughborough Park experiment soon fizzled out into standard suburban development.³⁵

Less than a year before the beginnings of Shaftesbury Park, suburban or further-flung housing topped the agenda of the engineer John Scott Russell's 'New Social Movement', in which Swindlehurst was involved as a member of the 14-strong 'Council of Skilled Workmen', alongside the eminent labour activists Robert Applegarth, George Howell and George Potter (who was to bid unsuccessfully for the job of secretary at the Artizans' Company when Swindlehurst went to prison).³⁶

'To rescue the families of our workmen from the dismal lanes, crowded alleys, and unwholesome dwellings of our towns', ran the first of the council's seven resolutions, drawn up for presentation to Lichfield and other sympathetic peers as a plan for legislative action, 'and plant them out in the clear; where, in the middle of a garden, in a detached homestead, in wholesome air and sunshine, they may live and grow up, strong, healthy, and pure, under the influences of a well-ordered home'. The whole package was widely condemned and ridiculed for its utopianism, not least by working people. Sydney Waterlow dismissed the New Social Movement's call for housing 'six or seven miles from London': even if a father could pay the railway fare, he argued, that might not be true of the other working members of his family. Some faint traces of the New Social Movement's ideals can perhaps be detected at Shaftesbury Park.³⁷

Poupart's farm and the Parkfield estate

The site of Shaftesbury Park had for a century previously been used for market gardening. The tenant from 1833 was Samuel Poupart. His original holdings under Earl Spencer and the Archbishop of York, soon to be diminished by the railway, consisted of closes and open field strips between Sheepcote Lane in the north and the Heathwall sewer in the south, and bounded by Pig Hill (Latchmere Road) on the west. Poupart soon set about building a substantial east-facing farmhouse, shown on the 1838 tithe map and recorded in a photograph of the farm in its last years.³⁸ Outbuildings, including stabling, sheds and a 'binding house', had become more extensive by the late 1860s, clustered around the farmhouse just south of the railway lines, near what is now the junction of Eversleigh Road with Birley Street. In 1861 Poupart, then employing 33 labourers, was living there with his family and two married couples, workers on the farm.³⁹

In 1867 Poupart gave up the farm, which was sold by Lord Spencer to the developer James Lord, the conveyance being made in June 1868. Lord's surveyor George Todd drew up a layout plan, which became the basis for the eventual development up of what was now called the Parkfield (or Clapham New Town) estate. Several versions of the layout survive, variously drawn by Todd or the architects Beeston, Son & Brereton.⁴⁰ They show essentially the street pattern of Shaftesbury Park, the chief differences being the inclusion of another north-south road (either in continuation of the then Acanthus Road, or further to the west); the absence of Brassey Square; and some simplification of the layout at its west end. Intended street names – Armitage, Cattermole, Eastlake, Poynter, Pugin – suggest an artistic and architectural theme.

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Thanks to Todd, several builders agreed to take on plots at the west end of the estate, but with the property market in the doldrums the development soon ran into the sand. A scheme by Todd to sell the estate to a proposed company called the Constitutional Freehold Ground Rents Trust came to nothing. Subsequent transactions concerning the Parkfield estate are somewhat unclear, but in 1872 it was apparently purchased from Lord's receivers for £30,000 by Miles Stringer, a former Dragoon officer and lieutenant-colonel in the 3rd Royal Surrey Militia, using the proceeds from the sale of an estate near Leatherhead. He was probably a relation of Edgar Pinchbeck Stringer, one of four individuals to whom Lord had mortgaged the estate.⁴¹

When the Artizans' Company acquired it later in 1872 there was already a contract for some road-making, which was completed as part of the purchase deal; Poupart's farmhouse and buildings had apparently already gone. The purchase was made for only £25,000, via the estate agent Edward Saffery, to whom an additional £3,000 was paid by the company for his supposed interest. Another party involved was Sawyer Spence, a land agent whose name also occurs in connection with land at Southall and Northolt, probably intended to supply bricks for Queen's Park. Spence seems to have set up the deal and received a substantial backhander, for the new board was able to recover £500 and legal costs from him.⁴² Whether Col. Stringer really made a loss of £5,000 on reselling the estate so soon after buying is uncertain.

Development of Shaftesbury Park

After Rollo and Landseer Streets the Artizans' Company became involved in several schemes in London and the provinces, most of which came to nothing or were small-scale; the largest were in the Phoebe Street area of Salford and at Old Swan, Liverpool, each consisting of a few notionally suburban terraces.

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The company was deep in work at Old Swan and in Birmingham and Gosport when, on 9 May 1872, the site of Shaftesbury Park was first discussed by the board. Walton had 'surveyed' the site and felt that the £28,000 asked was below the market price. Langley expressed agreement, and it was left to him and Swindlehurst to look into the matter; both (perhaps all three) knew the real price was £25,000. The figure of 1,200 houses mentioned at this meeting no doubt derived from the existing Parkfield development plan. At Swindlehurst's urging, the purchase went ahead in June. Robert Austin's building plan, adapted from the Parkfield scheme, was ready at the end of the month, providing for 1,191 houses, a three-acre open space and a site for schools and stores. Austin's plan was lithographed in at least two versions; Illustration 12.2 shows the modified version with the street names approved in 1874, by which time the garden square had apparently been much reduced in size.

Even at its inflated price the ground was a bargain, and as local development took off land values shot up. Consequently, when the company was offered ground in Wandsworth Road in 1883 it had to turn it down as too expensive for workmen's cottages to be built on. For the same reason, the company preferred to let its Lavender Terrace estate to a builder rather than develop it itself with model dwellings (page ###).

Shaftesbury Park was formally inaugurated on 3 August 1872 (a Saturday afternoon, to suit working men) with the laying by Lord Shaftesbury of a memorial stone at the site of what are now 65 & 67 Grayshott Road. It bears the slogan 'Healthy homes, first condition of social progress' (recalling the New Social Movement's demands), which also appears on the earlier memorial stone surviving at Shaftesbury Terrace, Old Swan, laid in November 1871. Switching from first to second person, Shaftesbury sought to emphasize the role of the prospective residents themselves:

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We have founded this day a workman's city ... and we have founded it upon the very best principles ... of self-help and ... independence. You have founded the workmen's city upon your own efforts, and by your own contributions; and for the great and wise purpose of advancing your social position and bodily health as well as your intellect and general prosperity.⁴³

He congratulated the workmen on their decision to allow no public houses on the estate, and for the various amenities proposed. All this was met with cheers. But the workmen had decided nothing, and the capital for the development had come from the wealthy, not workmen. The houses intended to be built where the stone was laid were not even intended for workmen, being of a superior type designated 'clerk class'. Shaftesbury's diary shows that he had been taken in:

to Lavender-Hill ... to lay the first stone of a 'Workman's City', to be called by my name ... Here is a new arc in the social progress of the Working-man – a Town on all the modern principles of sanitary arrangement, with recreation grounds, Clubs, Schools, Libraries, Baths, and no public Houses... the whole to proceed on the co-operative system ... It is a great experiment, and a doubtful one – Yet, after 30 years of thought & trial, see no other mode of improving, on a large scale, the domiciliary condition of the people. Charity cannot do it. The Capitalists will not do it. The People themselves must do it – And here they have attempted it.⁴⁴

Building began almost at once with the terrace where the stone was laid, on the west side of Grayshott Road between Elsley (then called Ashley) and Sabine Roads. The builder was George Bass, who won the contract against three other builders, including the London Co-operative Building Society. He died a few months later, and the terrace was completed in February 1873, probably by his son. Bass was also among several builders tendering in November 1872 for the seventy houses of Shaftesbury Terrace, on the east side of Elcho (now Tyneham) Road along the eastern boundary of

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the estate. Here the job went to Jonathan Parsons who, having provided good references and a £2,000 surety, was taken on as the estate's main contractor.

Parsons was an experienced builder in his late fifties, whose track record included much house-building in Pimlico and Battersea but also two bankruptcies. Among his local achievements was the nearby Latchmere Tavern, of which he was the first licensee in 1868 (page ##). In the course of 1873 Parsons went on to build the 48 houses on the west side of Tyneham Road, together with a 'temporary, though commodious, and even beautiful' lecture hall at the south end, and the 108 houses in Elsley Road between Tyneham and Grayshott Roads. There his luck again ran out. He overspent to the tune of £1,900, and was sacked that October.⁴⁵

Meanwhile, another builder, H. J. Bowen, had contracted for another seven houses in Grayshott Road. After this the work was handled differently, contracts being made with individual tradesmen for labour, and building materials being supplied by the company following the normal piece-work system adopted by most speculative builders.⁴⁶ About the time that Parsons was fired, the firm of Bax & Ward contracted for the brickwork of the twelve-house terrace in Latchmere Road south of Sabine Road, and George Austin (a son of William Austin) for the nine houses to its north.

The system was explained by Alfred Walton: 'We do not let contracts to the large contractors who want 12 or 15 percent ... we, as a company, can do better. We select, for instance, ten or a dozen of the best men belonging to the bricklayers, men we have tried on the other Estates, and we give them contracts of 20 or 30 houses, as the case may be, and say to them, now, if you will undertake these contracts, and do them in an efficient and satisfactory manner by the employment of your own men, you may have them ... Each one of them is as good as a foreman to us; but in addition to that, we have competent foremen over every branch, and the architect, so that you will see a

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proper superintendence is effected, perhaps, in a more efficient and complete manner than in any other building firm in London'.⁴⁷

The first phase of the estate, comprising about 350 houses, mainly in the eastern part of the estate including Tyneham Road, was opened on 3 November 1873 by Lord Shaftesbury. In his address he praised Shaftesbury Park as 'a city founded, raised, regulated, and paid for by the working people of England'. 'It was a great success', he wrote to Lord Lichfield the following day, 'The houses with all their adaptations, are really most striking & satisfactory'. But at the same time he urged Lichfield: 'continue your enquiries – The more the better'.

In July 1874, the company managed a publicity coup with the opening of the Latchmere Road entrance to the estate by the new prime minister, Benjamin Disraeli, who expressed himself astonished by what had been achieved, and the apparent solution, to some degree, of 'a question which has perplexed Parliaments'. But several of the greatest names associated with the company as shareholders, including the Duke of Devonshire, the Marquis of Salisbury and Earl Derby, failed to turn up, as did the president, Dean Stanley. A year later, more than half the estate had been built up, and 300 new houses were under construction, but the cracks in the company were spreading.⁴⁸

By the end of 1875 most of the remaining spaces on the estate were either occupied by temporary structures or earmarked for uses other than housing. In the centre were the intended garden at Brassey Square and the adjoining site on Grayshott Road for the proposed hall, library and co-operative store. North of this was the London School Board's Holden Street School, then erecting. The company had opposed its building here on health grounds, contending that it would overshadow the open space at Brassey Square, so it was turned to face Holden Street. Further north was a large space

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towards the end of Eversleigh Road, comprising house-plots and a proposed railway station site. The other large undeveloped sites were on Elsley Road between Grayshott and Eland Roads, taken up by offices, workshops and stores for the building workforce.

The builder of most of the houses on the estate between Parsons' dismissal and the resignation of the old board was Thomas Penny of Ashley (Elsley) Road, no doubt the Mr Penny involved with the Shaftesbury Park Temperance Society. Whether he was an employee of the company or a contractor is not clear. W. J. May, named as builder of houses at Shaftesbury Park from 1877, was the estate superintendent of works.⁴⁹

Design and planning

'I walked through broad and well paved streets', wrote the journalist Samuel Carter Hall of a visit to Shaftesbury Park in 1875, 'where the atmosphere is pure and the air free: I saw houses well constructed with a modest approach to architectural grace, each with a little well-kept garden in front, some of them with decorative vases, and most of them with blooming and carefully tended flower-pots in the windows. I saw children about the doors, well clad, healthy and happy'. Inside, he found that the houses 'lacked no accessory to cleanliness, comfort and health'. Hall was sufficiently impressed to subscribe for ten shares. Another early visitor was particularly struck by the air of cleanliness. The houses were 'built of the ordinary London bright-coloured bricks, which look so clean when new ... Neighbour seemed to vie with neighbour in laudable rivalry to obtain and maintain the best reputation for cleanliness and neatness, both as regards the exterior and interior'.⁵⁰

Such comments are a reminder that the novelty of the estate was in the overall conditions there – with their beneficial effect on sickness and mortality

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rates – not so much in its architectural character, in which the company had limited interest. It claimed only ‘well-arranged, honestly-built houses, such as would delight Mr. Ruskin by their thoroughness of workmanship’. But the company could draw on respected names from within the building professions for support. It was stated in 1874 that an ‘eminent Architect’, Thomas Miller Rickman (actually a quantity surveyor), had been to inspect Shaftesbury Park, ‘upon which he reports in terms of high praise. He has taken 50 shares’.⁵¹ Arthur Blomfield, Alfred Waterhouse and the retired Decimus Burton were also shareholders. But the pre-1877 management made no attempt to secure the services of a professional architect, though it might have made capital from the fact.

Instead, it retained Robert Austin, whom the architectural press did not deign to name in its accounts of Shaftesbury Park. However, as work got under way in late 1872 or 1873, the young, architecturally trained James George Buckle was taken on as Austin’s assistant. Buckle, who later claimed to have designed more than a thousand houses for the company in the 1870s, most of which must have been at Shaftesbury Park, was described by the auditor John Pearce as having ‘considerable talent’. He was completely exonerated of any involvement in malpractice, but discharged early in 1878 to save money.⁵² In 1874 Buckle, who was then living on the estate, in Elcho (now Tyneham) Road, made drawings of the houses for a presentation volume for Leopold II, King of the Belgians, though the company’s *Social Review* was careful to make clear that the actual designs were by Austin. Very likely Buckle was also responsible for the charming Shaftesbury Park estate plan lithographed that year (Ill. 12.2). But it was Swindlehurst, not Austin or Buckle, who dealt with the local authorities, chiefly oversaw the building at Shaftesbury Park and made contracts with suppliers and workmen. It was Swindlehurst too who supplied the company’s defence of its stylistic design at Shaftesbury Park: ‘we do not profess to adhere strictly to the canons of

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architecture ... All we have attempted to do is to endeavour to relieve, by ornament, what might otherwise be rather dull and monotonous'.⁵³

The Shaftesbury Park houses are almost all two-storey terraced houses of two bays, without basements and mostly without attic rooms. (The main exceptions are a few houses with towers or attics, some basement houses in Grayshott Road and the two corner 'Gothic houses' in Eversleigh Road). They were designed in four classes, first or 'clerk' class having eight rooms: a bay windowed front parlour, a dining room or back parlour, a kitchen, larder and scullery, with three bedrooms and reportedly a bathroom on the first floor. Few if any bathrooms were actually fitted up, and the only first-class house plan illustrated in the Davis & Emanuel report of 1875 had no bathroom. The upstairs was divided into four bedrooms, two of them very small, and a second WC (Ill. 12.3). The smaller houses nearly all had flat fronts apart from entrance canopies, but a few had bay windows for emphasis at either end of some terraces. Class 2 houses lacked the bathroom or fourth bedroom; so did those of Classes 3 (six rooms) and 4 (five rooms, two of them bedrooms). Since even the Class 4 houses proved out of the reach of the really poor, Alfred Walton suggested that the company should build 'a few small cottages on our Estates' for the 'lowest class' – but the idea was not acted upon.⁵⁴ The higher-class houses had wider frontages, higher ceilings and a better standard of finish. Davis & Emanuel considered the smaller houses well planned, but criticized the larger ones for their 'dark and ill-ventilated staircases'. Overall, they did not much differ from the many similarly planned terraced houses of the time.

Inside, the houses were supplied with cupboards, shelves, plate-racks, coppers and kitcheners, window blinds and 'in fact, with everything which belongs to an ordinary well fitted-up house'. One report described the best parlour of a first-class house as being fitted with dwarf cupboards, no doubt either side of the fireplace, which had a chimneypiece of enamelled slate.⁵⁵

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Rooms were finished with wallpaper and grained and varnished woodwork, and front doors were also grained not painted. A long-time resident recalled that the door numbers, letter-boxes and knockers were all bolted on for easy removal by the decorators. Ventilation, considered vital for reducing disease, was provided throughout, in the walls, over doors and under floors, by flues in the external walls (dismissed by Davis & Emanuel as 'an entire failure'). Much modernisation was carried out by the Peabody Trust in the early 1970s and few of the houses can now retain many original fittings.⁵⁶

Externally, the new houses were generally considered a success and even the *Builder* conceded their 'very respectable appearance'. (Later it sneered at the Shaftesbury Park Estate, 'for which we have never been able to manifest any admiration'.)⁵⁷ They were more decorative than the company's provincial houses. Davis & Emanuel thought them 'well designed', and an unnamed consulting architect 'of large experience' who inspected the estate in 1875 for the Improved Industrial Dwellings Company (probably John Griffith) found the houses 'pretty & taking to look at ... better built a good deal than was customary in the case of such dwellings 30 years ago'. *The Times* found the estate 'really pretty ... each house having a graceful little portico, and the different blocks varying in colour, to break the monotony of the long lines'.⁵⁸

The architectural treatment tends towards Gothic, chiefly embodied in the entrance canopies described below, but more fully developed in the few larger houses designed for architectural emphasis. The most important are the two 'tower houses' at the estate entrance in Eversleigh and Grayshott Roads, the detached 'Gothic houses' in Eversleigh Road, and the turreted houses in Elsley Road (Ills 12.11, 12, 18). An exception is the former Shaftesbury Terrace on the east side of Tyneham Road, with detailing in red brick and a loosely classical central pediment topped by miniature urns (Ill. 12.9). The wording in the tablet here was changed from Shaftesbury Terrace to Shaftesbury Estate when it was repaired in 1885.⁵⁹ These houses, and some other early houses

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such as those on the east side of Latchmere Road are relatively weak designs. In Latchmere Road the houses behind their incongruous entrance canopies are decidedly old-fashioned, some with flat gauged window arches. The estate is seen at its best along Grayshott Road and the eastern part of Elsley Road, where the house-front designs are better resolved and the pointed slate roofs of the turrets give attractive vistas. Turrets are again used to some effect in Eversleigh Road. Elsewhere, notably Sabine Road and Morrison Street, a few gabled attics lit by small lancets are less effective in relieving otherwise uniform terraces.

Nearly all the original houses are of grey or yellow stocks, but the terraces in Tyneham Road between Sabine and Ashbury Roads have red-brick fronts. Red and occasionally black brick was used for decorative effect throughout the estate, for the corbels under the eaves, and in stringcourses, diaperwork, voussoirs to windows and the projecting canopies over the front doors. These canopies, carried on large stepped corbels, are among the estate's defining features. Some are merely flat-roofed, but in the grander and more overtly Gothic examples, with artificial stone arches, they rise so steeply that the tops reach almost to the eaves. Though these prominent canopies were applied to the larger houses they are absent from the first-class houses in Grayshott Road, where the coloured brick voussoirs of the windows and porches and the ornamental corbelling are the most striking features. Some of the later Grayshott Road houses, built in 1876 on the intended public hall site between Ashbury and Sabine Roads, and those on the west side of Brassey Square, have recessed Gothic porches with moulded ornament in the pediments, refining the earlier canopy designs (Ill. 12.15).

Much use was made of artificial stone for decorative lintels, sills and colonnettes, though the ubiquitous plaques intricately modelled with the date and company monogram are mostly terracotta (Ill. 12.10). Some of the artificial stonework was made on site, as was all or most of the joinery. Brick and stone

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decoration was augmented by cast-iron railings on the front walls and window sills, which were deep enough for displaying pot-plants. Many of the iron pot-guards have survived, but the garden-wall railings were mostly replaced by the company in the 1890s, local boys having discovered how easy it was to knock off the 'rather prominent' heads. Some of the originals survive in Grayshott Road.⁶⁰

Pot-plants, creepers and ornamental hedges were all to which the Shaftesbury Park gardener could aspire in the diminutive front plots. One early resident settled for deadly nightshade. The back gardens or yards were more generous (some occupiers finding room for keeping hens), but the overall tightness of the layout was criticized; the *Building News* would have preferred fewer houses, and some semi-detached pairs instead of terraces.⁶¹ The yards originally contained brick-built dustbins, emptied at long intervals. These were demolished about 1889 when Battersea acquired a municipal incinerator or dust-destroyer, allowing more frequent refuse collection and portable galvanized-iron bins. Sanitary arrangements were not particularly advanced, the original WCs being without flushing cisterns, which all had to be modified or replaced in the 1890s. Tenants' expectations quickly rose. In 1885 a social club deputation told the directors that the lack of baths was the cause of tenants leaving, 'houses on other estates being provided with baths'. They suggested putting baths in the basement of the Shaftesbury Hall building, but the board dismissed the idea, pointing out that the local authority was reviving its plans for public baths.⁶²

Most of the complaints made about the houses were minor. At the annual meeting in 1878, the former auditor John Pearce criticized the new board for perpetuating poor elements of design and construction begun at Shaftesbury Park, including the chimneys, which required a plate or 'blower' to stop them smoking. J. V. Sigvald Muller, the company's new manager and surveyor, spoke in defence of the old regime's buildings and workforce. What

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Swindlehurst had done 'as to the whole system of building and all the details of the business was good and sound'. That implicitly contradicted Chatfeild Clarke's report of 1877. However, the houses were built with low-quality mortar, and in 1887-93 the company ran a programme to re-point the entire estate with Portland cement mortar. Many parapet walls had likewise to be repaired.⁶³

A feature of Shaftesbury Park which caused great trouble was its combined back drainage system, by which the rainwater and sewage from the back of the house were carried into a common drain behind, which connected with the main sewer beneath the street. This avoided the usual London system whereby each house had a separate direct connection to the street sewer, usually calling for a pipe to be laid under the house itself. Though well suited to piecemeal building, this arrangement was considered unacceptable by the company because of the risk of the pipe beneath the house cracking.

From a sanitary point of view, the company was right; combined back drainage was already standard in several parts of the country and had many advocates. But Wandsworth District Board of Works was opposed to it (as, apparently, was Bazalgette of the Metropolitan Board). A long-running and costly battle ensued, involving a Chancery suit by the company and a Parliamentary Bill. The issue was only resolved well after the new directorate took over, so intractable was the District Board. (One of the new directors later recalled a meeting at which 'we were treated as criminals ... very roughly used indeed. Ever since then I have been afraid to approach the Wandsworth Board of Works on anything'.)⁶⁴

Part of the original scheme was the planting of lime and plane trees along the roadsides; many of the original trees died and were replaced with planes in 1882. More trees were planted in the late 1890s.⁶⁵ The footpaths were

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originally asphalted, probably because this was seen as the most sanitary surface available; the roads were simply gravelled.

Social character and management

Early on, *The Times* objected to the 'workmen's city' epithet as factually inaccurate and tending to social divisiveness:

We would very much prefer that name being suffered to die out ... Do not let so sensible a Company, with so excellent an aim, add one more to the class-walls which divide rich and poor. The "City" is not – and well it is that it is not – a strictly "Workmen's City." We were pleased to see the large and the small houses standing together, and we hope yet to see larger houses still, adjoining a great many more small ones, and the inmates of both doing something to solve another great social problem – the bringing of East-end and West-end to a better knowledge of each other ... there must not be any "Workmen's City".⁶⁶

It was even argued at the Church of England Scripture Readers' Association in 1875 that from a political, moral and social standpoint workmen's communities such as Shaftesbury Park were 'dangerous'.⁶⁷ Yet in some circles the concept of the workmen's city as a community for the proletarian elite survived the harsh realities of building, as in this panegyric of 1880 from J. Ewing Ritchie, glorifying the completed estate:

Such a place as a Workman's City has no charms for the class of whom I write. Some of them would not care to live there. It is no attraction to them that there is no public-house on the estate, that the houses are clean, that the people are orderly, that the air is pure and bracing. They have no taste or capacity for that kind of life. They have lived in slums, they have been

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accustomed to filth, they have no objection to overcrowding, they must have a public-house next door.⁶⁸

Certainly, the estate was as self-segregating as any neighbourhood and the houses intended for middle-class occupants mostly ended up in working-class occupation. Residents were drawn by low rents, but the company made strenuous efforts to encourage a sense of community.⁶⁹ A Temperance Society was set up in 1873 under Swindlehurst's presidency, and the following year a Sunday school, to which he donated a small library. Choral classes were held (president, W. Swindlehurst). A Shaftesbury Park Volunteer detachment was founded, the 26th Surrey Rifles, with 300 men (Captain Commandant, W. Swindlehurst).⁷⁰ A Band of Hope was formed. Evening classes were held in connection with the South Kensington Science and Art Department, for residents to study building construction, practical geometry and machine drawing. Bazaars, fêtes, concerts, flower shows and cottage-garden competitions – all arose at Swindlehurst's instigation. Flower-show prizes (*articles de luxe* in glass and china) were given by the Swindlehurst crony and supplier of building materials, Solomon Frankenberg. In 1876 Swindlehurst set up the Shaftesbury Park Co-operative Society, which affiliated with the Co-operative Wholesale Society and opened a temporary shop in Grayshott Road, selling bread, flour, groceries, coal and garden seeds. He invested £100 in the venture, of which he was president: the rest of the members and the managing committee were all '*bona fide* working men'.

There is no reason to doubt Swindlehurst's claim that he began them 'with a view of inculcating habits of thrift, sobriety, education, and self-reliance among the residents'.⁷¹ His flower shows were especially important, day-long fêtes with the estate hung with flags and banners and ending with a concert. Unusually, flowers were judged where they grew (by professionals from Kew and Battersea Park), in gardens, yards or window sills. Along with his villa in Lavender Hill, company brougham and driver, these initiatives

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helped boost Swindlehurst as de facto squire of Shaftesbury Park. When his son, the estate agent, married in 1875, the tenants and estate workmen presented him with a clock, and praised him for having 'followed in the footsteps of your esteemed father, and imbibed his spirit of perseverance and devotion'.⁷²

With Swindlehurst out of the way, most of the ventures faded, although the new board continued to hold flower shows. Shaftesbury Hall (see below) proved unviable, as did the public hall at Queen's Park.⁷³ At Queen's Park, Noel Park and Leigham Court, churches or missions helped make up for lack of social amenities, but at Shaftesbury Park the only available sites for a church were built over with housing. By chance, the estate fell within the parochial district of the Church of the Ascension on Lavender Hill, the 'Highest' of Battersea's churches. Probably better fitted to most residents' taste was the Primitive Methodist 'Workman's Chapel' in Grayshott Road (page ##).

The 'workman's city' model encouraged pride among the inhabitants in their class status, and the ban on public houses fostered some sense of detachment from the wider district: it did not prevent residents from visiting pubs and as Swindlehurst remarked, 'it was not the wish of the promoters of the Company to lead men by the apron strings, nor ... that a man should not have his bottle of beer if so disposed'. But the company under Swindlehurst repeatedly petitioned against the licensing of public houses anywhere near the estate. In retaliation the *Licensed Victuallers' Gazette* published a ludicrous report of illegal shebeens and endemic drunkenness, street-fighting and wife-beating on the estate, for which it was successfully sued by the company.⁷⁴

By no means all the intended self-sufficiency initiatives came into being, notably the recreation ground or garden, the library, coal-depot, railway station, gymnasium, swimming pool, baths and wash-houses. Nor

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did the gates planned for the estate entrances in Grayshott, Tyneham and Sabine Roads.⁷⁵

The change of management in 1877 ended the drive for publicity and community development. Rent rises, begun under the old regime, were a sobering change. Gradually, the aspirations of the residents dwindled. Early on, a deputation from the Shaftesbury Park Social Club urged on the new board the need for the long-promised railway station and a footbridge over the tracks, as well as a club building and library, and recreation ground at Brassey Square. But if this last brought an increase in rents, they preferred that the open space should be built over, as indeed happened. The station was also eventually abandoned and the site built over.

Under the new board, Shaftesbury Park was closely managed. A small committee of directors began to meet regularly on site, acting as an intermediary between the full board, the architect Rowland Plumbe and the estate superintendent. New building was largely put into Plumbe's hands, the work itself being managed by the Manager and Surveyor, J. V. Sigvald Muller (formerly of Peto, Brassey & Betts), appointed late in 1877. In the early 1890s the company took on its own salaried architect, Harry B. Measures, Plumbe continuing to act as consultant architect on the cottage estates. The committee introduced an exemplary system of building maintenance and repair, dealt with tenancy matters and regulated the opening of shops, aiming to avoid too many little shops and competing shops in the same vicinity. Through continual micro-management the elevated tone of the estate was maintained. Undesirable tenants or lodgers (such as the costermonger who turned his front parlour into a potato store) were got rid of, and efforts made to tackle Sunday opening, vandalism and other nuisances.

The attempt to attract middle-class residents proved a failure. The first-class houses in Grayshott Road were invariably occupied by a family with a

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lodger or else stood empty. In 1881 six were converted each into two separately let dwellings, and others were similarly altered over the next few years.⁷⁶ The two detached 'Gothic houses' in Eversleigh Road also proved difficult to let.

The 1881 census reveals Shaftesbury Park as not quite a 'workmen's city'. Its mixed population included carpenters, clerks, domestic servants, dressmakers, factory workers, joiners, labourers, policemen, porters, printers, railwaymen, schoolteachers, shop assistants, tailors and warehousemen. A high proportion belonged to the upper levels of the working class or the lower middle class. Many fulfilled lowly duties for official bodies such as government departments, law courts, the military and the British Museum. Individual residents included a book-keeper at Dulwich College, a sub-editor on the *Gardener's Chronicle*, and a journalist on the *Horticultural Gazette*. Along a stretch of about a hundred houses in Elsley Road at this date, the proportion of houses with a single head of household as against those with two was something like three to one. By 1901 this had narrowed significantly, and in some parts of the street the proportions were almost equal. This probably says as much about increasing densities in working-class north Battersea as about the management of the estate.⁷⁷

INDIVIDUAL STREETS

The street names were mostly chosen by the early management and approved by the Metropolitan Board of Works in 1874. Eland, Grayshott and Tyneham Roads continued streets established on neighbouring landholdings to the south (the original, southern part of Grayshott Road has now been renamed Acanthus Road). The northern part of Grayshott Road was briefly called Shaftesbury Road.

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Most of the streets were named after individuals connected with the company as shareholders or supporters. Elcho (now Tyneham) and Lichfield (Eversleigh) Roads were named after Shaftesbury's fellow arbitrators. Kingsley Street, originally Stanley Street after the Artizans' first president Dean Stanley, commemorates Charles Kingsley. He subscribed for just five shares in 1871, but the company may have been aware that Battersea was the boyhood home of his artisan hero Alton Locke. Eversleigh is therefore presumably a Kingsley reference, being the old spelling of Eversley in Hampshire, where Kingsley was rector. William Swindlehurst also took the name Eversleigh for his house in Lavender Terrace. Elsley Vavasour was the assumed name of the working-class poet John Brigg satirized in Kingsley's *Two Years Ago*, but Elsley Road is more likely named after Charles Elsley, Recorder of York, who took five shares shortly before the estate's inauguration. It was initially called Ashley Road after Shaftesbury's family name. The short north-south returns of Eversleigh and Elsley Roads were originally paired under the name Mabel Street, chosen for unknown reasons.⁷⁸

Brassey Square

Brassey Square was among the names approved in January 1874, and commemorates one or more of the sons of the contractor Thomas Brassey: the Liberal MPs Thomas (later first Earl Brassey) and Henry Arthur, and their younger brother Albert, later a Conservative MP. Each had £500 invested in Artizans' Company shares, but do not seem to have had any close involvement, although Thomas was invited to become a director soon after the new board took over. The square was to have been a garden or recreation ground, and Robert Austin's plan shows it perfunctorily laid out with planting at the corners and quartered by straight paths with a central bandstand or other feature. This open space was important in Shaftesbury

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Park's claim to be more than just a collection of residential streets, giving a symbolic centre to the community as well as an amenity. The idea seems to have been Langley's. In 1871 he had tried to interest the directors in a plan for laying out a square at an estate in Brixton which the company were then negotiating to buy, and he afterwards elaborated on the idea at a company *soirée*, where he spoke of his wish to see a better class of houses specifically for clerks, who were often poorer and 'in many respects worse provided for than many of the working classes'. He envisaged 'a sort of Clerks' Square springing up in the neighbourhood of London, with floral gardens', and thought it would be 'one of those beautiful and pretty sights about London which people would come long distances to see'.⁷⁹

Austin's plan shows houses on the east side of the square, which were duly built in 1875, in two terraces of eight each (seven on the plan).⁸⁰ The site to the west, extending to Grayshott Road, was intended for a single large building, comprising schools and a lecture hall, library and club. This Gothic-style edifice is shown in elevation on the same plan. In the event no schools were needed, as the London School Board took ground for two schools in the immediate area, one in Holden Street, backing on to the square, the other just outside the estate on Gideon Road (with an entrance in Elsley Road). For the time being the temporary hall in Tyneham Road served both for public meetings and school purposes, and nothing was done about building up the lecture hall site until 1876. By then the company was in financial difficulty, and Swindlehurst ordered work on the plans to stop, he and Walton claiming that something suitable could be built for less than half Austin's estimate. Three houses were built on the west side of the square in 1876-7, and two comparatively small buildings were put up at the north and south ends of the site, their characteristic features being a strange series of attenuated turrets capped with oversize pinnacles resembling onion domes. Only those on the southern building survive.

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The south building consisted of a workmen's club and institute, with reading-rooms, built over two shops. It is now numbered **1 Brassey Square** and **78 Sabine Road** and was converted to a private house in the 1990s (Ill. 12.16). The north building consisted of a hall, called the Masonic Hall, and three shops with living accommodation below, taking up the ground floor and basement.⁸¹ There was some thought of building a large lecture hall in the space between the buildings, but in March 1877 Swindlehurst advised using the site for large houses or, better still, a church or chapel, which would bring in a good ground rent. The scheme came to nothing. Meanwhile the Grayshott Road frontage was built up with comparatively large houses (see below).

The building of the Masonic Hall was doubtless done at the urging of Langley, who was behind the founding of a masonic lodge at Shaftesbury Park; Solomon Frankenberg, the crooked builders' merchant, was a lodge member. It is said to have been the first purpose-built masonic hall in South London, but was probably never used as such.⁸²

Construction was under way when the new board took over in July 1877. Austin survived in post for a while, one of his new tasks being to substitute plain stone chimneypieces in the Masonic Hall for more expensive ones he had designed. The new names Shaftesbury Hall and Shaftesbury Hall Buildings (for the shops) were adopted. The shops were soon let to the Shaftesbury Park Co-operative Society, which failed a few years later. The hall too proved a white elephant. It was used for a time by the Shaftesbury Park Co-operative Literary Institute and for occasional public meetings. George Holyoake lectured there on co-operation. It was given over to a social club, which supported a choral group, dramatic society, library and cricket club. But the board (which retained the teetotaller and self-help ideals of the founders) was not pleased to learn that the main attraction was billiards and that many members wanted alcohol to be sold. The hall 'degenerated into a dancing-saloon', which closed in July 1888, by which time it had been decided

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to turn the building into flats, subsequently named **Shaftesbury Park Chambers**. These were completed in 1889, providing 7 two-room and 15 three-room apartments, to designs by the company's block-dwellings architect F. T. Pilkington. It involved extensive reconstruction, particularly of the upper parts, producing a block of striking incongruity among streets of cottages (Ill. 12.17).⁸³

The site of the intended garden was built over in 1879 with second- and third-class houses in four rows of a dozen each. The building was done on contract, to see how this compared with direct labour. Tenders from two builders were selected, Austin & Emery of Landseer Street for the northern 24 houses, and W. H. Steer for the rest. Austin was William Austin's son George, who had built some early houses on the estate, while his partner Arthur Emery was a family connection. The experiment convinced the company that it could build more cheaply using direct labour.⁸⁴

The twelve bay-windowed (first class) houses on the west side of Brassey Square seem to have been built in two or three stages: three by Thomas Penny while he was building the Masonic Hall; another seven by the company in 1878–9 (nominally by W. J. May, superintendent of the estate, but under the supervision of the new manager and surveyor, J. V. Sigvald Muller. The last two may have been built on the site of an iron billiard hall belonging to the Shaftesbury Park Workmen's Club. Most of these houses were let before 1910.⁸⁵

Houses on the east side of the square were destroyed by a flying bomb in July 1944. The houses between Morrison Street and Sabine Road were replaced in 1956 with the present three-storey block of flats, designed by the company's architect H. L. Meed (Ill. 12.19).⁸⁶

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Other streets

Ashbury Road is named after James Lloyd Ashbury, the railway-carriage manufacturer and transatlantic yachtsman, a shareholder from 1872. It was originally Derby Road, after the Earl of Derby, a supporter and shareholder, on whose estate at Bootle the company planned to build. Ashbury Road was built up by the end of 1875, except for the houses on the Brassey Square site.

Birley Street (originally Henrietta Street, possibly after Robert Austin's daughter), of 1875–6, is named after the Manchester MP Hugh Birley, a shareholder who may have been helpful over the Salford development.

The two long eastern terraces of **Elsley Road**, part of Jonathan Parsons' work in 1873, make up one of the most successful architectural composition of the estate, punctuated by turrets. The ends are defined by a pair of houses with a single, divided bay containing the front doors, an experimental feature not repeated elsewhere on the estate. One house on the south side was lost to make a double entrance to Gideon Road School. In the twentieth century, possibly in connection with wartime use of the site, this entrance was enlarged with another two plots, since rebuilt with replicas of the original houses.

Eversleigh Road, the longest on the estate, originally ended at the junction with Tyneham Road. In 1893 it was extended eastwards to join up with Arliss Road on the Beaufoy Estate (page ##). This involved the demolition of four houses on radiating plots at the corner of Eversleigh and Tyneham Roads, and these were replaced in 1893–4 by four new houses on the north side of the extended road (now 261–267 Eversleigh Road).⁸⁷ These were presumably designed by the company's architect Harry B. Measures. They are plainer and more institutional-looking than those of twenty years before, and have brown glazed-brick surrounds to the front doors.

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The Shaftesbury Park estate office and stores were on the corner of the cul-de-sac formerly the south end of Culvert Road, at 221 Eversleigh Road, replacing a temporary office in Elsley Road. Nos 219 & 221 were rebuilt in the late twentieth century as the Peabody Trust estate office. The very plain, pale-brick building incorporates one of the old Artizans' Company monogram stones on the Culvert Road return.

East of the cul-de-sac, houses occupy the site originally intended for a railway station. Most of these were built in the last months of the old Artizans' board in 1877, leaving just a double plot on the corner for the station. This was built over in 1882 with two shops (now Nos 223–225), designed by Rowland Plumbe to match the rest of the terrace. On the return front to Culvert Road, at what is now separately numbered 223A, he adopted more of a Queen Anne style, with a shaped gable and a merely decorative red-brick adaptation of one of Austin's canopies, with a sunflower and other moulded brick ornament. The shops have a lower-quality cement version of the original company plaque. In the late 1920s a dairy was built at the back of the shops, in connection with a milk shop nearby. This has been demolished and a new house built.⁸⁸

A level crossing at the Culvert Road cul-de-sac, known as Poupart's Crossing, pre-dated by some years the creation of Shaftesbury Park. Culvert Road and the crossing were originally used in connection with Samuel Poupart's market garden, but once Shaftesbury Park was built became an important public thoroughfare. But the crossing was dangerous, and after several years a narrow footbridge was grudgingly provided by the railway companies, opening in 1880. At the same time Poupart's Crossing was closed, ending vehicular access between Culvert Road and Eversleigh Road. The bridge was too narrow and the approach too steep for the numbers crossing. Its replacement was delayed for years by indifference on the part of the railway companies and resistance from the Artizans' Company, which was

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reluctant to sell land behind the houses in Eversleigh Road that would have provided a shallow ramped approach on that side.⁸⁹

The two detached 'Gothic houses' (18 and 42 Eversleigh Road) occupy triangular plots at the junctions with Kingsley and Ashbury Roads, relieving what might otherwise have been a monotonous vista of two-storey terraces. They have date-stones similar to those on the terraces throughout the estate, but incorporating the initials of Robert Austin (at No. 18) and William Swindlehurst (at No. 42), instead of the company monogram, suggesting that they were intended as their respective residences. Further visual interest is given by turrets with pointed roofs at the ends of the terrace between Grayshott and Ashbury Roads. The attempt to mix workmen's cottages with bourgeois villas in this way was ideological as much as artistic, and both houses were slow to let. A doctor's offer for one in 1877 was turned down because he wanted a guarantee that no other physician would be allowed a tenancy on the estate. By 1881 both were occupied: No. 42 by a commercial clerk and his family, and the larger at No. 18 by three families, two headed by carpenters and the other by an artist, Arthur Austin.

Grayshott Road. Nos 57–69 are the oldest houses on the estate, begun in 1872. The remainder were built in 1874–6; the two 'tower houses' at the south end denoting the estate entrance (now Nos 32 and 45) bear date-stones marked 1874, while the majority were occupied before the end of 1875. Among the last were Nos 62–86 on the east side between Ashbury and Sabine Roads, started in 1876 by Thomas Penny on part of the site which had been intended for the central hall building; yet the central pair again has a date-stone for 1874, suggesting that these stones cannot always be relied upon. These houses have basements, and were presumably designed so as to bring in a higher rental, the company then being in an increasingly difficult financial position. Most of the Grayshott Road houses were made into 'double tenements' or cottage flats in the 1880s–90s. The earlier conversions, on the

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west side of the street, involved adding bay windows to the kitchens and the former bedrooms above. These first-floor rooms were fitted with ranges and dressers, and sinks were put into the little first-floor rooms 'originally intended as bathrooms'. In a later conversion by the company (at No. 59, by Martin T. E. Jackson, architect), in 1938, a new ground-floor addition was built containing a WC and fuel store, while the scullery and WC were made into a strange hybrid room containing sink, copper, cooker and bath, still separate from the kitchen proper. The upstairs was fitted up similarly, though the WC retained its old place immediately off the landing.⁹⁰

The 'tower houses' (Nos 32 and 45) were converted into shops in 1883–4 to plans by Rowland Plumbe, one being run by estate superintendent May, selling sweets, toys, stationery and tobacco. The flats on the corner of Sabine Road at Nos 58 and 60 were among a few post-war reconstruction jobs on the estate allocated to outside architects, Bostock & Wilkins.⁹¹

Holden Street takes its name from the machine wool-comber Edward Holden of Baildon near Bradford, who took 200 shares in 1870, making him the largest investor in the company at that time. He and the company fell out over a plan to build houses at Baildon, which was set aside when Shaftesbury Park was built and finally abandoned when Holden refused to underwrite the scheme. (For Holden Street School, see vol. 49.)

Morrison Street (originally Langley Street, after the Artizans' chairman) is almost certainly named after the industrialist and businessman Walter Morrison, Liberal MP for Plymouth and a strong supporter of the co-operative movement, particularly with respect to housing reform. An early shareholder of the Artizans' Company, he was an associate of several eminent figures who also supported it, including Darwin and Kingsley. Building here was completed in 1876. Several houses on the south side (Nos 37–49) were

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destroyed in 1944 by the V1 bomb which hit Brassey Square and rebuilt along with houses in Sabine Road, described below.

Sabine Road (originally Devonshire Street, after the Duke of Devonshire, a shareholder) is probably named after a distinguished, if minor, shareholder, the scientist General Sir Edward Sabine. Except for the frontages to Brassey Square and the proposed lecture hall site, it was entirely built up by the end of 1875. Several houses (Nos 24–30, 36–58 on the north side, 41–67 on the south) were destroyed by the Brassey Square flying bomb in 1944. The initial post-war replacements here, as in Morrison Street, are austere faced in brown ‘rustic’ flettons and red brick round the front doors, with concrete window surrounds. Designed by H. L. Meed, they were built following the acceptance of revised tenders from the builders Orchard & Peer at the end of 1948.⁹² By the time Nos 54–58 came to be built, in the mid 1950s, the earlier rather grim style had given way to pale sandy brick and wide windows, matching Meed’s Brassey Square flats opposite.

Tyneham Road was originally called Elcho Road after the company’s co-arbitrator, the politician Lord Elcho (later 8th Earl of Wemyss and 6th Earl of March). It was early on renamed Tyneham Grove, being a continuation of Tyneham Road to the south, with which it was formally merged in 1881.

The temporary lecture hall built by Jonathan Parsons (page ###) was pulled down by the new board in 1877 and replaced by seven houses with shops built by the company (now 35–47 Tyneham Road). They appear to have been designed by J. V. Sigvald Muller, on whose recommendation a small hall (known as Tyneham Hall or the Temperance Hall) was included above the two shops on the corner of Elsley Road.⁹³