Until recently, commercial Woolwich made itself. Its major buildings arose from working-class self-help through the co-operative and building-society movements. The nature of its two public open spaces was owed in significant measure to popular initiatives, and its architects were local men. Powis Street – long, wide and straight, a major shopping parade and increasingly arboreal – has been a place of encounters, the Ramblas of Woolwich (Ills 179, 187). The road was formed in 1782–3 as a broad track, but not built along until the turn of the century after which its sides quickly filled up with modest buildings. By 1900 things had been scaled up to form an opulent shopping centre for a booming town and surrounding districts. It came to house London’s greatest monuments to the co-operative movement and, after another round of rebuilding, the UK’s first McDonalds restaurant, here because Woolwich was deemed a demographically typical place. At the beginning of the twenty-first century Powis Street has lost its opulence, but it has carried on as something increasingly rare, a crowded ‘high street’, ‘with all the noise and mess that the middle-class tourist always takes for “vibrancy”, but which could just as easily be desperation.’

Powis Street is presented here with adjoining parts of the historic commercial town centre (Ill. 183): Hare Street,
a tributary arm, Beresford Square, an early nineteenth-century clearance where a street market that seeded itself has flourished, the north end of Woolwich New Road, formed in 1785–6, and the older remnant of Green’s End that together enclose General Gordon Square, a recently formed open space overlooked by two confidantly classical early twentieth-century buildings, Equitable House, the former headquarters of the Woolwich Equitable Building Society, and the Tramshed, built as a sub-station for the London County Council’s electrified tramways. This part of Woolwich New Road also has Woolwich Arsenal Station, comprising a building of 1902–3, the third railway station here since 1851, and the Docklands Light Railway additions of 2005–8.

**Powis Street area**

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More open communications, and new housing, were sorely needed, so it is not surprising that a straight broad roadway was formed across the fields south of the High Street. However, the origins of what became Powis Street remain obscure. The road provided a neat bypass of the narrow and circuitous Warren Lane route through the town, to link Green’s End near the Warren gate to the High Street east of the dockyard. It might be supposed that it was a military or a turnpike initiative. No evidence for this has come to light, but indirect Board of Ordnance and Admiralty influence may well have been a factor. The road was made following the arrival in Woolwich of William Powis, who, with his brothers Thomas and Richard, took over a lease of the fields in question in August 1782. Paul Sandby recorded the first naked incarceration of Powis Street in views, one of which has been dated to 1783 (see frontispiece and Ill. 180). The road, labelled Broad Street on one river chart, was fenced off and the only building on its margins was an octagonal brick dwelling on the north side near the west end (where the former Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society department store now stands). This enigmatic octagonal structure was demolished in 1833. Its origins were subject to speculative antiquarian guesses in the nineteenth century – it was reported to have been built in 1740 for the keeper of King John’s hounds and later to have originated as a manorial dovecote converted to use as a dairy. But it does not appear on Barker’s map of 1749 and may, in fact, have been of relatively recent construction and an adjunct of the Dog Yard brewery (see page 74), perhaps above a well-head; a laundress lived here in 1841.

**LAND OWNERSHIP AND COMMERCIAL CHARACTER**

### Powis and Ogilby estates

The Powis estate in Woolwich was an approximately square holding of more than forty-three acres, south of the High Street and loosely equivalent to the areas covered in this and the following chapter (Ill. 5). In 1774 Edward Bowater leased the fields here to Richard Hare and Robert Salmon, Limehouse brewers and successors to John Hare at the Dog Yard brewery. After Hare and Salmon had died, the brewery and associated properties passed to the Powis brothers, Thomas, Richard and William, Greenwich brewers, in 1782. William moved to Woolwich and was a member of the vestry by 1784, an important step towards effective exploitation of the estate. George Gwilt, a well-established surveyor for the Surrey and Kent Commissioners of Sewers among other bodies, valued the Powises’ public houses in Woolwich in late 1782 and may also have supervised the formation of the wide new road. But the lease of the fields had under 22 years to run, too little to permit profitable development. Renegotiation was probably envisaged; an Act of 1777 permitted John Bowater to grant building leases in Woolwich. Yet longer tenure was not achieved until September 1799 when seals were put to a 99-year development lease. The delay may have been due to the exiled and debt-ridden stewardship of John Bowater (see pages 6–9), though wider financial or local commercial considerations may also have played a part. The Powis brothers undertook to cover their entire acreage with streets and houses within twenty-eight years, work they had in fact begun in 1788. By 1803 Thomas and Richard, both still Greenwich-based, had died, each, it seems, leaving a son called Richard. William continued to...
live in Woolwich until his death in 1866; he appears to have had an heir called William.6

Developing more than forty acres was ambitious, especially at a time when house-building across London was still suffering from the credit squeeze that had followed the outbreak of war in 1793. There were, however, special circumstances in Woolwich. War brought prosperity – work, population and demand for housing. A great deal was done up to 1814, but peace thereafter brought hard times, population decline and a stop to building. In 1821 the Powis Estate leasehold, now divided at law between the two younger Richards, the widow and daughter of the elder Richard, and the younger William, had around 400 houses and other buildings, most held through sub-leases of 61 years. A new centre for Woolwich had taken shape (III. 181). Powis Street was fully built up with 358 mostly small properties, and Richard (Hare) Street was also complete. To the south there was a new grid of streets, densely built up near Green’s End, less so further west where subsequent building in the 1830s and 1840s did include some bigger houses (see chapters 5 and 6).6

Through the second half of the nineteenth century the Powis estate was, despite its divided ownership, managed as one by Henry Hudson Church (1827–1914), a surveyor and architect who gained eminence in Woolwich, though nowhere else. Born on Powis Street, he was the son of Timothy Church (1756–1802), a coal merchant who had a wharf at Hog Lane and premises on William (Caldewood) Street. His father-in-law was George Hudson (1766–1834), a builder (often as Hudson and Burgess), auctioneer and undertaker based on Brewer Street. Hudson was the agent of the Burges Estate and a Woolwich Town Commissioner in the 1840s, when he opened an auction house on the north side of William Street, which had become the hub of professional Woolwich. By 1866 he was representing Woolwich on the Metropolitan Board of Works and operating from a large Powis Street property (on the site of the east part of Kent House).7 In the late 1840s the young H. H. Church would have been instrumental in the establishment of T. Church & Son as another firm of auctioneers, surveyors, land and estate agents on William Street. When they opened their auction room in 1830 its ‘chaste “Italian” front
194. Central Woolwich from the south-east, c. 1925. Showing Beresford Square with (clockwise from lower left) Woolwich New Road, Green's End, Powis Street, Beresford Street and (above right) the Royal Arsenal.
was deemed ‘no mean ornament to the town’ surpassing ‘anything in a street notorious for its public buildings’. 7

Henry Hudson Church’s most important early design commissions were local public works’ projects for sites in Plumstead: the Woolwich and Plumstead Cemeteries (1856) and the Woolwich Workhouse and Infirmary (1871). In the early 1860s he laid out new roads between Powis Street and William Street for Richard Powis Monk – Monk Street, Eleanor Road and Clara Place (named after Monk’s daughter and mother, respectively). He was also busy in the 1860s forming numerous shops on Powis Street, this in partnership with William Rickwood, a local architect who had worked in the Arsenal. 6 In the 1870s Church reportedly became a ‘co-owner’ of the Powis estate, probably through mortgages. He was also surveyor of Woolwich Polytechnic, Woolwich Baths and Woolwich Street and Green’s End, as well as for the first buildings set to fall in, an ambitious ten-year rebuilding scheme. It shows that the street had then been named and building work began. Progress appears to have been steady, even rapid. By 1869 there were 123 rateable properties on the street, rising to 141 in 1881, leaving only small amounts of unrented for the next decade. Frontages were highly variable, measuring from 14ft (4.2m) upwards, some quite large. Sub-leases were numerous and it seems that builders’ takes were generally small. Development was accordingly incoherent. One builder on Powis Street, typical perhaps, was Thomas Nevill Hopkins, a Woolwich shipwright, who in 1860s put up a small timber-framed house towards the west end of the south side. It was entirely usual for dockyard artisans to venture into house-building. 8

Buildings were generally of two storeys, occasionally three, comprising mostly flat-fronted brick houses. Any approximation to the regularity of terraces was disrupted at irregular intervals by small gaps, and by non-domestic buildings (Ill. 189). By 1869 there were Presbyterian and Congregationalist chapels at opposite ends and, towards the east, a theatre and a Freemasons’ Hall, all pediment- or gable-fronted boxes of a plain classical character. Richard and William Powis had established the Shakespeare and Star and Garret public houses by 1857, keeping these large hostesses in their own hands. The breadth and straightness of the street gave the place something of an American look (Ill. 194). There was development of a similar character, scale and date at the far west end of the street on what remained Bowater property (see page 78). 9

In the late 1840s the North Kent Line of the South Eastern Railway swept through open ground south of Powis Street in a brick-lined cutting (Ill. 182), leading to the commercially convenient Arsenal station on the far side of Woolwich New Road. By this time Powis Street had become home to about 1,000 people. There were several shipyards (most at the west end), ropemakers, a parson maker, at least one foreman from the Arsenal, and many more skilled workers as well as labourers. Woolwich was already ‘the emporium for all the surrounding towns and villages’. 10 There were also, and probably always had been, a great many shops, mostly towards the east or Arsenal end, near the large open space that had been cleared at the bottom of Green’s End in 1822–23 and become Beresford Square. Further west a draper’s called Kent House was the biggest shop on the street from the 1830s. Occupancy continued to be distinctly mixed, while shops gradually became more numerous amid a smattering of rebuilding. By 1860 commercial use was widespread, and roomy Powis Street was a magnet for more and more people as the Arsenal expanded, barracks spread and housing extended across Plumstead. Five shopfronts were approved in 1848–52, four in 1858, and in 1861–6 Church and Rickwood put up more than twenty shops, almost all on the south side of the street; the buildings at Nos 51–53 and 79–81 are the only surviving reminders of this period.

The swinging defence cuts that hit Woolwich in 1869 knocked but did not foreclose on prosperity. In 1873 the street’s population had dropped somewhat to about 3,900, and there was further slow decline. But commercial use had extended to around 120 premises in the early 1890s, when only the west end of the street remained dominantly residential, though here the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society (RACS) had occupied a number of houses since

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Chronology of development

A stone inscribed ‘Powis Street 1778 and reset in the wall of 172 Powis Street (see page 78), at the west end of the street’s north side, on the site of what was originally 1 Powis Street, is all that survives from the first phase of buildings. 6

While Church made hay with rebuildings, Octavius Hansard, the Ogilby Estate surveyor, had little direct impact, though he did take a hand in larger projects. His successor from 1867, Henry Percyve Monckton, intervened here and there, but once redevelopment had essentially finished around 1902, attentive management subverted here and there, but once redevelopment had essentially finished around 1902, attentive management significantly played a role. New leases from the 1950s reflected local prosperity, and Williams Powis had established the Shakespeare and Star and Garret public houses by 1857, keeping these large hostesses in their own hands. The breadth and straightness of the street gave the place something of an American look (Ill. 194). There was development of a similar character, scale and date at the far west end of the street on what remained Bowater property (see page 78). 9

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1875. Commercial Woolwich was booming, a confident place with sufficient local employment to provide a concentration of young consumers with surplus income. In 1866 a car park had held nine drapers’ and milliners’ shops. Trams ran along much of Pows in Street from the early 1880s, but Woolwich’s street market, long since displaced to Beresford Square, was legally established there in 1888. This relaunch attracted more shoppers to Woolwich and the east side of the square was grandly redeveloped. Another step change came in 1891 with Sidney Cuffs’ erection of a large fancy drapery shop to overshadow neighbouring Kent House (by then Garrett). The latter responded quickly, rebuilding on an even larger scale to form a ‘gigantic emporium’.

Lease release in 1898 provided the opportunity for general redevelopment, necessary to retain trade, inspire confidence in quality and stay fashionable (Ill. 189). Pows in Street was smart – on the High Street ‘a cheaper class trade is done’ and street prejudice as to whether this change was deemed worthy of investment, Cuffs and Garrett having set the lead. Woolwich was transformed in the last Victorian decades virtually all rebuilt from Beresford Square to Hare Street, to a new scale at three and more stores, and owed to some extent to the controlling hand of H. H. Church. His taste for ornamental gable fronts gave uniformity to some extent through the controlling hand of various architects, and local roots. In 1899 H. H. Church. His taste for ornamental gable fronts gave unified to some extent through the controlling hand of the architect to ease gradually. Middle-class customers tended not to go to the RACS was stiff, forcing restrictions on credit purchases and the phased completion of the RACS Central Stores the decline of Woolwich. Another wartime crest followed a slump in Woolwich. Another wartime crest followed a slump in Woolwich, its commercially weaker end.

The peace that followed the Second Boer War meant that full following the Great War and the Second Boer War meant a slump in Woolwich. Another wartime crest followed a decade of trade dearth and further slump in the early 1920s. Going against this pattern, the Second World War did not bring good times to Pows in Street – rationing was universal. Through the first half of the twentieth century competition between the three biggest traders, Cuffs, Garrett and the RACS was stiff, forcing restrictions on credit purchases to cut down the black market. But the corner shops tended not to patronize RACS, and Garretts stayed more fashionable.

Other chain stores had gradually become prevalent. Some even had local roots. In 1866 George Mence Smith, an oil- and colour-man, opened one of the first of his chain stores. Its corner site at the west side of Beresford Square near the Pows in Street corner. He had several other local branches in Woolwich by the 1880s and Pows in Street by the early 1890s. John Upson began selling goods in Woolwich market in 1895 and his first shop was in Pows in Street premises for his London Boot Company was one of Pows in Street, where Marks & Spencer now stands. Upson had numerous branches in Woolwich in the 1890s when he was active as a speculator in the area’s commercial redevelopment. His firm became Dolcis in 1920, one of Britain’s largest shoe retailers until its demise in 1980. There was much to discuss, and in 1937 the council deferred consideration of six development schemes in Pows in Street and Hare Street pending resolution of wider problems – the diversion of through traffic associated with the ferry, for which traffic charge was incurred in Hare Street, and the provision of multi-storey car parking and new back service roads. At the same time it was conceded that ‘it might not be wholly desirable to redevelop Pows in Street to a uniform pattern and continuous height.’

A decision to introduce parking meters on Pows in Street was taken in February 1928 (London’s first public parking meters came into use in Güssing Square in July 1938), and later that year the LCC circulated a wide-ranging scheme for the co-ordinated development of Woolwich town centre. Progress with particulars was delayed by the war. In 1947 a central block of shops at the end of any pedestrian area, did come into use in May 1956, on the same day that the Costume Literature featured Woolwich. The LCC’s scheme of 1956 included a project for a large site behind the south side of Pows in Street, between what had become Calderwood Street and Barrow Close extending across the railway. This was to incorporate an office block and shopping precinct – a nearly de rigueur feature of town-centre developments – and multi-storey car parks.

One abiding childhood memory of shopping in Woolwich (around 1930) is of small groups of three or four ex World War One soldiers, blind, disfigured or crippled and be-medalled and ever present in Woolwich. From the Midland cities, and in the process lost its Midland drabness and taken on alertness and savoir faire. But the closure of the Arsenal in 1967 and of the former Siemens factory in 1972 meant strolling out of the local economy, and decline set in. Commercial properties were hit from two sides, by the loss of local custom and by increasing in business rates. Garretts closed in 1972 and Cuffs a decade later.

Once to the fore among south-east London’s commercial centres, Woolwich was now losing ground to Lewisham and Bromley (though it was here on Pows in Street that McDonald’s opened its first UK branch in 1974). Pedestrianization of the east end of the street (with brick planters) finally came in the early 1980s (Ills 179, 187), but at the other end the RACS shops closed in 1981, Beresford Square, now bypassed by the dual-carriageway Plumstead Road on its north side, was also pedestrianized, while demolitions south of General Gordon Square allowed a new public and green space to be formed in 1984. By the early 1990s discount shops, Poundstretcher and Primark among the largest, characterized Pows in Street and Hare Street. In an effort to lift things the pedes- trian precinct was remodelled in the mid-1990s. The two big office blocks, Churchill House and what had been Morgan Grampian House, emptied and proved unattractive; Woolwich had become an undesirable location for offices. In a return to the area’s formerly more residential: a cosmopolex, ‘stuffed with goods, yet never impersonal’. Window-shopping here is really fun. Powis Street, a commercial gold mine from end to end, has come down from the Middlesex cities, and in the process lost its Midland drabness and taken on alertness and savoir faire. But the closure of the Arsenal in 1967 and of the former Siemens factory in 1972 meant strolling out of the local economy, and decline set in. Commercial properties were hit from two sides, by the loss of local custom and by increasing in business rates. Garretts closed in 1972 and Cuffs a decade later.

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and represented Woolwich on the Metropolitan Board of Works. Another rebuilding in 1876–7 (at Nos 1 and 3), for Hugh Reed, was overseen by H. H. Church. This was altered in 1906 to give the corner shop premises to the London, City and Midland Bank (Ill. 184), with a more impressive Portland stone-faced lower storey, designed by Whinney, Son and Austen Hall. Nos 5 and 7 had been rebuilt together in 1896–9, in similar vein, and with pediments, before Church hit his gabling stride, in which mode 12–16 Green’s End were also rebuilt in the late 1890s, with Purvis Brothers, grocers, in the biggest shop.  

The whole group was redeveloped in 1958–60, with Hector Hamilton Associates as architects. Hector O. Hamilton was a British architect who had, improbably, launched his career from New York in 1932 as one of the winners of the Soviet Union’s design competition for a Palace of Soviets, but then returned to relative obscurity. Here Thomas & Edge built these smart premises for the London National Pension Insurance Association (Services) Ltd., broadly contemporary with the store type built at Nos 19–27, with R. W. Wates and Sons as builders. In 2008 some new multiples began to line through with the corner development, to provide a toy and nursery-goods shop for Sidney Ross and Co. The scheme, by Lander, Beddell and Crompton, architects, was taken over by Ian Fraser and Associates, architects, with R. W. Wates and Sons as builders. This building was refronted and converted for another bank in 2008–9 by the Douglas Moat Practice with Coleman and James (Services) Ltd.  

Nos 15–21 is a three-storey building of 1939–40, broadly continuous with its eastern neighbours. It was put up as shoe shops for Freeman, Hardy, Willis, with Nadine Beddington as in-house architect and Higgs and Hill as builders. In 2005 it was refaced and converted, the larger unit for Lloyds Bank (placed at 20 Green’s End), with offices above.  

Nos 23–27 are all that survive of a uniform row of seven shops (Nos 15–31). This was designed by Church and built in 1896–1902, for the most part by James Chapman of Liverpool Road, Islington, prolific on Powis Street around this time (see below). There were three paired gables and oriel windows to centre and ends, with upper-storied stucco pilasters and enriched bands. The gable on No. 23 remains as a lingering hint of what this end of Powis Street used to look like. No. 24 was originally a dentist’s surgery, for W. W. Bryant, with his home above; Nos 23 and 27 had dwellings above shops for a milliner and the Public Benefit Boot Co.  

Nos 29–31 is on the site of Joseph Cohen’s Powis House Academy, a commercial school here from the 1870s to the 1890s. The present building of 1962–3 was put up for G. A. Dunn and Co., hatters, with Stone, Toms and Partners, architects, and Thomas & Edge, builders. It is another three-storey shop and showroom block of the type built at Nos 1–24, presumably with a view to continuity once Nos 23–27 followed.  

Nos 33–35. A Freemasons’ Hall on this site, first leased in 1861, was used as a National School by 1821 up to 1840 (Ill. 188). It then became the Harmonic Hall, for musical performances, lectures and meetings, and for printing. It passed through other uses, as a builder’s workshop around 1879, a temperance hall and billiard room. By 1886 there was an inserted floor. H. Pryce and Son, printers (established on Woolwich High Street in 1875), had a shop and printing rooms, and the RACS the upper room as a Cooperative Hall and occasional ‘bijou theatre’. Prices took the whole building around 1890. The present three-bay shop and showroom building here was built in 1923 for W. Hinds, jewellers, with Thomas & Edge as builders (Ill. 175). Its red-brick front carries a pediment, an echo of its larger predecessor.  

Nos 37–45. This block was redeveloped as a four-shop unit in 1959–60, for George Carter and Sons, hatters, hosiers and tailors, originally of the Old Kent Road, but with branches across London. Church acted as both developer and architect, and gave the block outer cross-step gables (Ill. 188). Save for two pilaster-strip-fronted...
party walls, the site was redeveloped in two almost matching phases, Nos 41–43 in 1934, and Nos 37–39 in 1935. The earlier development was a shoe-shop for W. Barratt & Co. of Northampton. Barratt’s architects were Arthur Swift and Partners, their builders Lavender, McMullan Ltd. Central square-patterned brickwork and a heraldic panel finely carved in Portland stone enliven the symmetrical five-bay front of hand-made Buckinghamshire bricks. The panel bears the arms of the town of Northampton, with the motto ‘Castello Fortior Concordia’ (peace is stronger than a fortress) – surprising, even cheeky, in Woolwich. The similar but more anonymous block to the east followed, for George Carter and Sons, with Montagu Evans and Son as architects. The upper stores were converted from offices to a dental surgery in 1945, and Nos. 41 has been a branch of the Abbey National Building Society and its successors since 1976.\n\nNos. 47–49 became an empty site in August 2011 after arson during looting destroyied premises that had been built in 1899–1900 for John Harris and Co., who promptly let to Lyes Ltd, clothes, J. B. Sanford & Co., Woolwich builders, probably worked to Church’s designs. The symmetrical five-bay block had a gable over a central canted window, an unusual feature in the street. Upper-storey flats were converted to showrooms and offices in 1935 and 1972.\n\nNos 51–53 was built in 1868 by William Harris, a local builder, and first occupied with two shops run by Hugh Hammond, a stationer, and Judah Hart, a hardwareman. Nos 51–53 continued in use as a shoe shop and Italianate front windows are twisted iron colonnette mouldings on the first floor. The floral stucco band below the upper-storey windows (Ill. 181) is stylistically out of place and sits rather oddly on top of projecting brick courses. It may have been inserted by Harris around 1882, when he installed identical decoration in Hare Street (see below).\n\nNos 55–69. The Marks & Spencer store in Woolwich has a complex building history. The façade of the block that formed Nos 55–63 was occupied into the 1860s by Joseph Grisbrook & Co, cabinet makers and upholsterers, who ran Kent House across the road (see below). There was a rebuilding in the late 1860s along the lines of the building at Nos 51–53, and Samuel Barnes and Co continued cabinet-making use. An open ground floor was let in the late 1860s to Herbert Bray and Co, house furnishers, who then took and divided the upper parts as tenements in 1896. In 1907 Gaiety Arcades’ automatic machines and shows ‘bazaar’ occupied the ground floor. This had become a ‘bazaar’ by 1912, perhaps for Marks and Spencer Ltd, originators of the term and purchasers of the premises in 1934. The premises were reconstructed in 1941–2. Thereafter the company began a campaign to rebuild its shops as they called ‘super-stores’, and in 1954 took on Robert Lutyens as a consultant architect. He introduced a modular design system for façades, based on a ten-inch grid, and artificial-stone tile cladding. This came to Woolwich in 1954–5 through the firm’s usual executor architects and builders, W. A. Lewis and Partners, and Bovis Ltd. The result was a symmetrical five-bay open-plan store with upper-storey stock rooms and offices (Ill. 182). In 1976 this was extended westwards behind the corner block and back over the railway line, Mere and McLellan acting as engineers. The store was given a plain facade with approaching Cumberland Place, which survives, and service access at 50–52 Thomas Street.\n\nThe adjoining properties at Nos 65–67 and 69 were buildings of 1839, the former for John Upson, here since the 1870s to supply boots to the military, the latter for A. W. H. Coles, contractor for the facing work. A further extension to the rear on Thomas Street, predominantly brick-faced, was added in 1944. This was a reclassification from a more firmly modernist scheme of the mid-1930s (30 Cumberland Street) after them, would have taken the whole frontage up to Green’s End. Finally, the premises on the Pows Street-Cumberland Street corner (No. 69) were acquired and rebuilt to match with a spay at the corner in work of 1966–7 by the same parties.\n\nThe enlarged store of the 1960s carried lines normally only found in the department stores in London and also in the simple forms that have been such that Marks & Spencer now trade here with an outlet store for bargain shopping. It retains an increasingly rare façade lettering of the 1960s on the external elevations of the ceilings within reflect the building’s multi-phase expansion.\n
Nos 71–77 (with 23–30 Calderwood Street). A major component of post-war plans for the improvement of Woolwich town centre was a scheme to redevelop the entire block. In 1936 Marks & Spencer took on Robert Lutyens as a consultant architect. He extended the block westwards behind the Marks & Spencer block and Castle Road (Barnard Close) over the railway line, the bridging of which would permit off-street loading. These plans were partially realized in the early 1970s, as the history of the southern part of the site is brought in here.\n
A large house on the western corner of Pows Street and William Street (Calderwood Street) was adapted in the early 1940s to be a branch of the London and County Bank. This was rebuilt in an Italianate idiom in 1896, with Church and Rickwood as architects. Adjoining properties at Nos 73–77 were plainly rebuilt in 1878–9 under Church’s supervision. By 1957 the local Labour Party had its Central Committee Rooms here.\n
The north side of William Street was mostly houses until a couple of survivors from the first development that had begun around 1807 (see pages 250 and 254). George Hudson’s auction house of 1849, which faced Thomas Street, had been adapted by the 1880s to be the Woolwich Radical Club. The Elender Chapel, which had begun around 1800 on a site further west, moved to the back of a William Street plot (opposite the town hall) and was later adapted for a Masonic Hall Church extended his own premises here, rehabilitating in 1863 with some flair. The hall became an auction room. The LCC’s town-centre redevelopment scheme of 1958 saw this block as a suitable site for a shopping complex, car parking and a ten-storey office block, to provide ‘a Castle Road premier’ and approach to shops from Hare Street. The Ogilby Estate gained approval in 1974 for a scheme designed by Arthur Swift and Partners, then responsible for Riverside House, but sold up to Chesterfield Properties in 1975. Within a year Sir John Burnet, Tait and Partners, architects, had prepared plans that included a shopping precinct. Meanwhile the LCC had acquired Nos 95–103, and in 1976 the developer sold off 79–113 Pows Street to facilitate the rest of the site. What was achieved was a single large shop at Nos 71–77 that extended across the railway and linked to a nine-storey office complex, all built in 1979–80, the office block first by George Wimpey, the shop by G. E. Walls and Sons. Magazine publishers were ‘captured’ for the offices, which were named Morgan Grampian (an acronym of Market Grampian). Public servants (health-authority staff) had two lower stores. Littlewoods Mail Order Stores took the shop and finished off that part of the project. The architecturally unified modernist development is robustly faced, blue-smartening the silver-grey rustics or mosaic granite, aluminium windows survive on the street. The 1970s office block that formed the offices was always bulky (Ill. 477).\n
From 1837 there were plans for a car park on the adjoining Monk Street Place block. The offering of the ceilings within reflect the building’s multi-phase expansion.\n
Nos 79–81 were built in 1867 for Oliver Henderson, a clothier and outfitter, as a shop and dwelling (Ill. 190). Of pale brick and flat, a corbel lost, the first-floor elevation is one of the few remnants of Pows Street prior to the transformations of the 1980s. To keep up with these and to provide two shops under four flats, Henderson had had the building raised a storey in 1843, with J. B. Sanford & Co., then of Charlton, as builders. In 1910 there were fifteen people in the flats, fourteen in three families of service workers.\n
Nos 83–85 were built in 1899 as a shop below offices (‘Commercial Chambers’). This more florid building (Ill. 387) was produced by Church (a shaped gable has been removed), working with William Vogel Goad, a Camberwell Road builder, for G. Bishop and Alfred Hayly, lessees, who housed their London Equitable Finance and Discount Company here alongside the Woolwich District Electric Light Co., the Woolwich, Monument House Company, and a solicitor’s. A tailor’s shop was below. Later upstairs occupants included Eley and Allen, architects and estate agents.\n
Nos 87–89 were built in 1874 through Church and Sanford for Edward and Herbert James Palmer, ‘woollen
and Manchester warehousemen’, clothes and army contractors whose father had operated from this site since about 1862. However, Richard Naylor, an ironmonger and 21st agent, occupied the new building as a shop below a home for his family of five.\footnote{Nos 94–95 are a remnant of a large block that extended to Nos 101 in a ten-bay, four-shop development of 1896, once articulated by three pedimented gables (Ill. 100). Probably overseen and designed by Church, Nos 91–97 were for John Upson of the London Boot Co., and Nos 99–101 for Hemnes Vicas, a butcher named after a famously pious soldier. The builders were J. J. Jerrard and Sons of Lewisham, and Sanford. David Greig, the multiple grocers, were at Nos 92–93 from the outset into the 1970s. The upper stoves were in mixed use, with some flats, a surgery and refreshment rooms, from 1948 J. Lyons & Co. had Nos 97–99. It has latterly been an outlet for Burtons and Dorothy Perkins.\footnote{Nos 97–101 are vestiges of the Chesterfield Properties shopping precinct scheme for which Sir John Burnet, Tait and Partners were architects. These unprepossessing unprepossessing units were built in 1907–8, in anticipation of other parts of the project, Nos 97–99 (for Dukiss, Upson’s renamed firm) by Davis House, builders, and Nos 103–105 by Trollope and Colls. The site of Nos 103–105 was to have had a ramped over into the indoor precinct.\footnote{Nos 103–104 appear to have been a relatively early rebuild of 1891–2, carried out for Joseph Heyworth & Son, clothes, to form one of this national manufacturer’s more than 100 shops (Ills 185, 190). With flats above, it had been adapted as offices by 1907, and then became a branch of Boots in 1910.}\footnote{Nos 105–109 were built in 1896–7 for Ehenezer Harmer, a tailor, through Church and Sanford. Pedimented gables have again been taken down and here the brick has been painted. Boots’ Cash Chemists had No. 109 from about 1945 and one of their ‘bookkeepers’ libraries was established on the first floor. The expanding Woolwich Equitable Building Society took on these premises in 1910, and extended on to Nos 107 in 1925.\footnote{Nos 111–113, the Woolwich Equitable Building Society’s headquarters, were built to a design by Tait and Partners in 1892–7. Nos 115–117, 1893–7, Nos 119–121, 1895–7, Nos 122–125, 1897–9 (pilot development). Nos 111–113 by H. H. Church (Ills 192, 193), leased to Joseph Grisbrook, a draper, in 194\footnote{Nos 113–115, the Woolwich Equitable Building Society’s headquarters, were built to a design by Tait and Partners in 1892–7. Nos 115–117, 1893–7, Nos 119–121, 1895–7, Nos 122–125, 1897–9 (pilot development). Nos 111–113 by H. H. Church (Ills 192, 193), leased to Joseph Grisbrook, a draper, in 1949.} and the Society’s Board from 1891, presumably a relatively early rebuild of 1891–2, carried out for Joseph Heyworth & Son, clothes, to form one of this national manufacturer’s more than 100 shops (Ills 185, 190). With flats above, it had been adapted as offices by 1907, and then became a branch of Boots in 1910.} and the Society’s Board from 1891, presumably a relatively early rebuild of 1891–2, carried out for Joseph Heyworth & Son, clothes, to form one of this national manufacturer’s more than 100 shops (Ills 185, 190). With flats above, it had been adapted as offices by 1907, and then became a branch of Boots in 1910.} and one of their ‘bookkeepers’ libraries was established on the first floor. The expanding Woolwich Equitable Building Society took on these premises in 1910, and extended on to Nos 107 in 1925.\footnote{Nos 111–113, the Woolwich Equitable Building Society’s headquarters, were built to a design by Tait and Partners in 1892–7. Nos 115–117, 1893–7, Nos 119–121, 1895–7, Nos 122–125, 1897–9 (pilot development). Nos 111–113 by H. H. Church (Ills 192, 193), leased to Joseph Grisbrook, a draper, in 1949.} and the Society’s Board from 1891, presumably a relatively early rebuild of 1891–2, carried out for Joseph Heyworth & Son, clothes, to form one of this national manufacturer’s more than 100 shops (Ills 185, 190). With flats above, it had been adapted as offices by 1907, and then became a branch of Boots in 1910.\footnote{Nos 111–113, the Woolwich Equitable Building Society’s headquarters, were built to a design by Tait and Partners in 1892–7. Nos 115–117, 1893–7, Nos 119–121, 1895–7, Nos 122–125, 1897–9 (pilot development). Nos 111–113 by H. H. Church (Ills 192, 193), leased to Joseph Grisbrook, a draper, in 1949.}}
CHAPTER FOUR

POWIS STREET AND GREEN’S END AREAS

Small brick houses, possibly always with shops, went up on the site of 6–9 Beresford Square in 1800–4 (III. 221). From 1866 the southern pair (Nos 8–9) housed a shop for George Mence Smith, an oil- and colour-man from Deptford. He quickly opened several other branches in Woolwich and spread further afield to establish an early chain. Nos 6–9 were rebuilt in 1895.65

The whole Powis Street-Beresford Square corner block was speculatively redeveloped in 1939–40 for Powis Holdings Ltd, possibly a subsidiary of Prudential Assurance, as shops and offices. These followed the modernist lines of the slightly earlier development across the road, with similar Vitrolab and aluminium panels, and, facing Powis Street, stone-clad concrete frames with a pavement canopy (Ills i87, 213). The architects here were Ian Fraser and Associates, and the builders John Greenwood Ltd. First tenants included Mence Smith, continuing a housewares shop on Beresford Square, and Bata, for a shoe shop on Powis Street. The brick-faced unit at No. 10 was added in a second phase of 1951–2, for Town and Commercial Properties, with A. J. Hines and Co. as architects and CERAF Ltd as builders.66

No. 12. By 1865 Richard and William Powis had established the Shakespeare public house (Ills i87, 194, 231), its name presumably deriving from the adjacent theatre (see below). It was rebuilt in taller form in 1930–1 for G. H. Campbell. Church was in control and so probably the architect, with R. G. Battle of the Old Kent Road as builder.67 What was known thereafter as the Shakespeare Hotel was said to be ‘the finest and most elaborately fitted-up house in the town’.68 Its front survives with little alteration, fulfilling of the ground-floor arcade aisle. The premises were extended to the rear in 1964 to provide a top-lit billiard saloon, and from 1967 Watney Combe & Reid were responsible for further additions and alterations, including the building over of a nineteen-stall rear stable yard and west-side carriageway. Public-house use ceased around 1990, there are now flats above an amusement arcade. A bust of Shakespeare still looks down from the pediment, atop which sits a puckish imp.69

115–117 POWIS STREET (facing page)

116 (above). In the late 1870s, showing John Farling and Son’s premises of c. 1806–14 beyond No. 117, rebuilt in the 1860s for the Woolwich Mutual Benefit Building Society. On Eleanor Road, now Barnard Close (left), are Farling’s Albert Rooms of 1864

117. In the 1950s, showing Farling’s as rebuilt 1890–1913 and relaced 1933–5, RACF Central Stores beyond

118 (below). In 2009, showing the site as redeveloped 1964–5

119. Powis Street, east end of the north side, c. 1840, showing Commercial House (c. 1805 in its origins) as Birns and Son, also the Shakespeare public house (1939–40, above right) and (beyond) the former theatre of c. 1800. All demolished.

Nos 14–16. By 1861 this site accommodated a theatre that was leased to a Mr Osborne and run by William Beverley in 1860. With a 44ft (14m) three-bay frontage, this was evidently a simple hall (Ill. 194). The theatre did not last; in 1820 the building became a British and Foreign (Lancastrian) School. Around 1860 William Thomas Spiers, a confectioner and builder, reconverted it for shop use.70 The site was redeveloped in 1894, with three stores and twin shaped gables, and then again in 1926–9 as a shop and offices for Pearks Daires, with J. Seymour Harris and Partners, architects, and G. H. Farrar and Co., builders.71

Nos 18–28 were built in 1921 for and by J. Lyons & Co. in a late and restrained echo of Church’s Powis Street of a quarter century earlier.72

Nos 22–28. Despite continuities and a certain symmetry, the red-brick faced buildings that form this block were put up in three separate developments, given unity, as usual, by the hand of Church (Ills i84, 231). Nos 26–28 went up first in 1864–5 as a shop for Henry J. Smith, draper, with Edward Proctor as builder. No. 22 followed in 1896–7, for W. E. Ganney to provide premises for E. Gwinnell and Co., dentists, with James Chapman, builder. Then No. 24 was built in 1899, to enlarge Smith’s shop, with J. B. Sanford, builder. A shaped gable has been removed from No. 22, where there was a first-floor surgery behind a wide window. Elsewhere in the group there was upper-storey staff accommodation in spaces now converted to flats.73

Murray’s Yard takes its name from John Murray, a carman, who from 1884 ran livery stables behind Nos 22–25 as a jobmaster or carriage contractor. He gradually built up an array of sheds with stalls for more than sixty horses
and, to the east, a coach-house and workshop under a wide arched-corrugated roof. First Furlongs and then Woolwich Borough Council’s Electricity Department (see below) took over the yard. A single-storey block to the west was resashed to be a cooker-repair workshop in 1933, and a two-storey canteen block to its north was built in 1926.\(^\text{107}\)

Nos 32-42. Here there is another broadly coherent red-brick block of the 1890s, developed in three parcels and largely intact, though altered by the removal or remaking of shaped gables (Ills 170, 184, 223). No. 32 was built in 1894-6 for Salmon and Gluckstein, chain-store tobacco-retailers, whose name once graced the stucco band between the upper storeys (let as flats). H. Young of Herne Hill was the builder. The crow-step gable replaces one of more sinuous form. Nos 40-42, which also had a big gable, went up in 1894-5 for Edmund Carter, a draper. Church was the developer and, doubtless, the architect, with H. L. Holroyd of Deptford the builder. The upper storeys accommodated Carter’s staff. Nos 34-38 were built in 1899, also for Carter, this time with James Chapman, builder. Here small gables have gone, but even though the compositional balance has been marred, this remains a good example of Church’s idiosyncratic decorative detail. From about 1905 to 1909 the South Metropolitan Gas Company and then British Gas had showroom premises at Nos 34–38, with an elaborate mahogany staircase. The street’s longest continuing retailer is H. Samuel, at No. 40 since 1904, for many years after 1933 with a projecting clock.\(^\text{107}\)

Nos 44-48. Buildings of 1895-7 at Nos 44-46 were like those that survive to the east, another gabled group in Church’s Flemish manner, this one a symmetrical four-storey shop composition. In 1909 Woolwich Borough Council’s Electricity Undertaking took No. 44 from William Frost, a confectioner (see below). There had been an electricity showroom on Thomas Street since 1904, but an intensive campaign of electrification that included an assisted wiring scheme made new premises desirable. Over time the property at No. 44 grew inadequate and, with expansion to the rear in the early 1930s, plans to rebuild that involved compulsory purchase were developed. Electric House, built in 1935-6, was a bold, even lavish, attempt by the borough’s Electricity Department to use a dazzling shop to enlighten the homes of Woolwich. It was welcomed as ‘London’s wonder showroom’. The architect was H. W. Tee, Borough Engineer, working with Frederick Elliott, Borough Electrical Engineer, under whom the building work was carried out by direct labour, using stonework from Harland and Wolff. The cream-coloured faience classical façade stood out starkly amid the long march of Church’s Flemish red brick (Ill. 195). Its non-reflecting shop window, neon fascia lettering and bronze clock have gone, but bronze Crittall windows survive on the upper storeys. Inside, the ground- and first-floor showrooms had walnut paneling and various kinds of concealed lighting to form ‘a tasteful exhibition of lighting effects’. Accounts could be settled on the ground floor, to encourage people to view the appliances. The staircase was lined in Travertine marble, and on the top storey there was a lecture theatre with a platform for cooking demonstrations (Ill. 196). The building passed to the London Electricity Board, for which the upper storeys were converted to offices in 1966-7. It was then sold to JD Sports in the late 1990s. Of the interior fittings all but the staircase have gone, but bronze Crittall windows survive on the upper storeys. In later works overseen by Tee, a cov- ered link was made to the showroom building, and in 1957 much of the block was raised a storey for more offices, replacing most of a rusticated cornice. The Greenwich Development Agency took the depot in the early 1980s and adapted it as the Macbean Centre, for occupation by community and voluntary sector organizations, including Greenwich Mural Workshop. These latterly joined by Pentecostalist churches. Since 2010 the site has been scheduled for clearance.\(^\text{107}\)

Nos 49-52. Of two similar but slightly different modernist blocks of 1959-60 here, the eastern (Nos 50–52) was designed by Stone, Toms and Partners, architects, and the western (Nos 44-46) was an in-house scheme for Montague Barton Ltd, whose first Woolwich shop had opened at No. 60 in 1922 (Ill. 231). Thomas & Edge built both. A first application in 1947 had designs by Hector Hamilton Associates, which perhaps set a style that is unlike Burtons’ house style. Three rectilinear storeys pro- vided shops, showrooms and offices in reinforced-concrete frames with precast floor slabs. The fronts have ‘art-stone’ surrounds, mosaic panels and aluminium-frame windows. Burtons’ shop, their third and largest in Woolwich, with bespoke tailoring on the ground floor and ready-to-wear...
CHAPTER FOUR

POWIS STREET AND GREEN’S END AREAS

Nos 62–66. First buildings of 1841–8 at Nos 54–66 had been replaced in 1862–6 as a seven-shop development, another symmetrically composed gabled group by Church (Ill. 114). Nos 62 and 64, though refaced in the early 1960s, have not been wholly rebuilt since they were put up in 1846 by James Chapman, for W. J. Harris and Co., sewing-machine and paramotor manufacturers, and J. B. Sanford, for Sidney H. Cuff and Co., drapers (see below). No. 66 was rebuilt in 1930 for Williamson’s Ltd, refreshment contractors, by George Parker of Peckham. Here in the 1950s was an early Tesco branch.[77]

Nos 68–86. Kent House is the major survivor from late-Victorian Powis Street. Its name derives from a predecessor of about 1830 and reflects local identity of the time. Joseph and Edward Grosbrook & Co., drapers, established Kent House at the centre of the present frontage, moving here from the east end of the street. They had sixteen staff living on site in 1851 and extended to adjoining premises by the early 1870s (Ill. 158). The Grosbrooks’ partner, F. A. Wallis, took over in 1872 and the shop was run as Wallis and Howes, with twenty-five staff housed here by the 1890s. Around 1879 Robert Surman Garrett took over, extended up to the Union (Macbean) Street corner, and formed a factory to the rear.[78]

Garrett rebuilt the shop in two phases. His huge emporium was designed to outdo its neighbour and rival, Cuffs (see below). The greater part was built by George Munday and Son in 1892–3, with the eastern six bays added in 1898–9 by Thomas & Edge. The architect was Church, adopting a more classical vein than was his wont. This may indicate the hand of Octavius Hamard, the Ogbourne Estate surveyor, who had designed Marshall and Stedmore’s ambitious drapery emporium of 1873–8 in Oxford Street, using a French-Renaissance style. A project such as this would not have gone ahead without the negotiation of a reversionary lease, thus requiring the involvement of Hamard.

Kent House now occupied a frontage of about 200ft (60m) and rose four storeys – a large shop for its time by any standard. The building is not immediately recognizable for what it was, as its ground storey has been divided and the first floor remade. But a glance up to the two-tone brick and liberally stuccoed upper storeys reveals architecture and a roofline to evoke what much of the rest of Victorian Powis Street looked like in 1892–3. Church was his architect, for William Frost, a wholesale confectioner, by George Parker of Peckham. Here in the 1950s was an early Tesco branch.[79]

In 1893, shortly before he rebuilt the main premises, Garrett had employed Church and H. L. Holloway to add some major changes, along Union Street with a stable and van yard for loading furniture deliveries. From this complex there survives a three-storey packing bay and a two-storey stable and workshop range that formerly returned to enclose the north side of the yard, it was part rebuilt in 1901.[80]

Garretts catered for the ‘carriageway’, here largely army officers’ wives, and sold ‘high-class’ furniture as well as all kinds of cloth merchandise on the ground and first floors. A basement displayed humble goods, and the second floor had workrooms where about fifty people made dresses, hats, etc. There was a large dining-hall, and small dormitory rooms for men and women (with one bathroom for each sex) housed thirty-six staff in 1911. In dormitories such as these beds and chests of drawers were often shared, though in some places single beds for men had been introduced.

The assistants are strongly opposed to the old style, as a choice of bed-fellows is widely permitted. ... Where it is permitted the assistants will decorate their room with little knick-knacks, texts or pictures giving a more homo-like appearance to the place. Where this is discouraged the only relief to the bare walls is a printed copy of the house rules.[81]

Living-in continued at Garretts through the 1930s, a housekeeper supervising the women, the shop manager the men.[82]

Garretts became a department store, arcaded shopfronts were formed in 1948 to designs by H. F. Monckton, and the yard was built over for more shop-floor space. Into the 1960s, when the Great Universal Store group was owners, Garretts was promoted as ‘south east London’s quality store’. The arcades were removed in favour of a wholly new flat shopfront in 1964, but there was no bigger rebuild and the shop became less fashionable than its rejuvenated neighbour. The local economy seized up and Garretts closed in 1972. Times Furnishing took on the premises, with a large part to the east given up for a branch of W. H. Smith. The back parts were rebuilt and raised, and the yard reopened with the entrance bay rebuilt. Within a few years the shop premises had been further subdivided. The upper storeys have been converted into independent flats.

Beyond Garretts’ yard on Macbean Street there are two minor late-Victorian survivals, a three-storey building of 1893 built for William Frost, a wholesale confectioner. Here access was and still is gained to the rear of 44 Powis Street, where Frost had a backhouse or factory at the back. Adjoining, 41 Macbean Street is the last of about twenty houses built in the street in 1868–1930 to replace early Victorian predecessors. This was one of five built in 1878 by and for Thomas Nash, who had the timber yard behind. Both these buildings became parts of the council’s Electricity Department depot in 1926.[83]

Nos 88–104. Garretts’ great rival was Cuffs Sidney H. Cuff, fancy draper, arrived at Nos 94–98 in 1883 as a single large three-storey draper’s emporium (Ill. 202). Church was his architect, again perhaps with Hamard in the background. James Chapman was the builder. Within a decade Cuffs had extended back to Creton Street and taken on a building at Nos 102–104 that had been put up in 1886 for William...
To Hare Street there was a unified composition of four shop units with eight tall arched window bays under four gables. Upson’s London Boot Co. took three of these as well as 192 Hare Street. No. 11 Hare Street was slightly later with a differently shaped gable, for Henry Thornton, an oil- and colour-man.

The corner shop became a branch of Burtons in 1920, which acquired the adjoining premises and through its own architects redesigned the entire corner site on a set-back building line in 1961–2. Hardy & Co., furnishers, took the shop behind Burtons, with fronts to both streets. Thomas & Edge were the builders, with steelwork from Vickers Armstrong (Shipbuilders) and precast floor beams from Girling’s Ferro Concrete Co. Under an artificial-stone-clad chambered corner was the entrance to this Burtons outlet, with ground-floor bespoke tailoring at ground level and ready-to-wear upstairs. In the 1990s this was the last of Burtons’ purpose-built Woolwich branches to close. The building stood empty until Woolwich Street Estates had the frames of this block and Nos. 120–130 refaced to plans by the Douglas Moat Practice for an outlet of T. K. Maxx, discount clothes retailers.

Nos. 120–130 (with 15–21 Hare Street). The Premier Electric Theatre was built on this Powis Street site in 1920–1 as one of a number of small early cinemas that sprang up in Woolwich. Its promoter was Charles Archibald Henderson, the architect Edwin Bary. It could accommodate 604 in its hall and gallery, with 549 seats and the rest standing. It came to be ‘filled for its damaged seats’22. Refurbished by Robert Crome in 1938, it was a casualty of an air raid of November 1940. Despite being declared safe to reopen after the war, the site was soon after cleared.23

It remained empty until 1958–60 when premises that were initially projected as four lettable shops in a set-back block were built as a part that extended to 15–21 Hare Street. This was unified for Davis’s Checkeredboard Homecare Supermarket, do-it-yourself and furnishings stores, the successors of Lewis and David Davis (see Green’s End). The architects were Hector Hamilton Associates. The concrete frames and Portland stone cladding of these buildings resemble others of the same type and date in the vicinity. Greenwich Council took over the Powis Street block in 1985–6, initially as a Housing Aid Centre. The Hare Street block, largely empty, had been converted to use as a restaurant in 1987.24

Nos. 132–134 were built in 1901 for Edwin James Robson, a draper, with Church as architect and S. J. Jerrard as builder.25 The building was later taken over by the RACS, used as a chemist’s and optician’s, and linked through to the store at Nos. 138–152.

No. 128 is a slender four-storey building of 1930–1, built for RACS funeral furnishers, established in 1932. A canted bay rises through all the upper storeys and bears the society’s wreathed motto, ‘Each for All, and All for Each.’26

To Hare Street was a unified composition of four shop units with eight tall arched window bays under four gables. Upson’s London Boot Co. took three of these as well as 192 Hare Street. No. 11 Hare Street was slightly later with a differently shaped gable, for Henry Thornton, an oil- and colour-man. The corner shop became a branch of Burtons in 1920, which acquired the adjoining premises and through its own architects redesigned the entire corner site on a set-build
them skilled workers for whom the receptiveness of the endeavour resided in its commitment to unadulterated produce and the refusal of credit. Two adjoining houses to the west had been acquired and made a draper’s shop, a tailor’s shop and a bakery, with an upper-storey free lending library and reading room, a boot-making workshop, and, to the rear, a bakehouse and a stable yard for ten horses. All of this had become the society’s ‘central stores’ on the formation of a Plumstead branch. As the venture grew and the trading mission was consolidated with education and employment, McLeod became a full-time Secretary and Manager. In 1884 the Society took four more houses, two to either side, and more back-land, previously George Smith’s rope ground and timber yard. It opened a butcher’s shop – a bold move, meat supply via the markets being tricky for co-operatives to manage. Further expansion to the west included the formation of a dairy for milk distribution. With 6,721 members by 1886, the RACS had become the largest co-operative society in London, and the twenty-first largest of more than 721 distribution. With Mr. McLeod, now the society’s architect, had plans for the new Central Stores. The occasion included a rousing address from the floor by Mr. McLeod, who was elected Secretary and Manager, and William Bethell, Assistant Manager and probably a cousin. Together they came up with a scheme for the entire Powis Street frontage, 23,000 ft² in all. It could not all be built at once, so the project was divided into four sections, two of which were to be built first, a central clock tower and the eastern ranges (Nos 125–143), leaving most of the old shops intact for the time being (Ill. 203). On 24 September 1902 two commemorative tablets of polished grey granite were put in place, and the RACS Works’ Department began to tackle the building work, under the direction of William Bray. Fittings were made in the society’s workshops, where Harry Jackson was in charge. Doulton and Company of Lambeth supplied terracotta, and Gillett and Johnson of Croydon made the clock. Completed, remarkably, at about seventy per cent of the estimated cost, the first parts of the Central Stores were ceremonially opened on 21 October 1903, a rainy Wednesday, with a crowd of some 5,000, RACS membership now stood at 21,798. The occasion included a rousing speech by the newly elected Labour MP Will Crooks, and a procession round Woolwich and Plumstead of the society’s 150 horses and 86 vehicles accompanied by military bands.

From 1904 the RACS began to spread its shops across south London, in part to ‘counteract the severe depression in the immediate neighbourhood’ – Amid great expansion, the third section of the Central Stores, the block west of the tower, was built in 1910–12, delays being due to the difficulties of matching the earlier terracotta, which, in the event, was well done. War and subsequent inflation caused further deferral of the last stage. But by 1945 the RACS, with fifty-seven branches and more than 180,000 members, was one of Britain’s foremost co-operative societies and flush with money. The final western section was added in 1945–6 under the supervision of S. W. Ackroyd, now the society’s architect. The Central Stores would look, as Ian Nairn discerned, more at home in the Midlands.

The building’s symmetrical regularity, architectural coherence and state of preservation would make it noteworthy anywhere (Ills 192, 205), not that this was radical or progressive architecture. Your co-operative, as a rule, is averse to anything which smacks of the alien. In a long range, the centre section has a palazzo-front treatment that loosely echoes that of Kent House. However, the central copper-domed clock tower that rises 105 ft (32 m) is a significantly grander touch, and there are also the lower outer sections. The store is further set apart by their moulded terracotta, profuse decoration in a free Italian-Renaissance style that includes two tiers of Composite pilasters, those to the centre and ends with grotesque masks, and much foliate enrichment (Ill. 204). The RACS was pioneering among co-operatives in its use of terracotta, a defining feature of a house style that Bethell had tried out in branch stores, with a central tower at Belvedere (near Erith) in 1899. The terracotta is set against Brocket red bricks, and the result-tant loud visual effect differs strongly from that produced by the contemporary elevations of Harrods, with which misleading comparison has been made. Indeed, in January 1901 a RACS delegation visited Harrods, for no purpose other than the comparison of stable facilities. It found its own to be superior. Above the main entrance McLeod’s over-life-size statue stands in a pedimented architrave. It was carved by the up-and-coming sculptor Alfred Drury, working from life. Above is the society’s wreathed motto. The entrance hall, where the original floor also featured the motto, has its own to be superior.

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There was further westward extension in 1937 in the shape of temporary timber sheds for a radio and garden shop, while the Society rebuilt on the other side of Powis Street. Plans for shopfront renewal and other improvements at the Central Stores were prepared at the same time, to follow on from the facing development, but probably not carried through until after the war. The whole shopfront was again replanned in 1964–6 when A. L. Foreman, the Society’s architect, installed a flat modernist expanse topped by a ‘warrentic’ plastic fascia, said to be an imitation of Venetian marble. The Central Stores were vacated soon after the RACS lost its independence in 1983 (see below). The building was listed in 1989 and subsequently used by Greenwich Council as offices. In 2011–12 Powis Street Estates converted it and the old bakery to designs of the Douglas McLeod Practice, with Anglo Holt Construction as contractors, to form a Travelodge budget hotel of 120 bedrooms, with shop units to the street.\

**Former RACS Department Store (138–152 Powis Street)**

The RACS continued to grow progressively through the 1920s and 1930s, membership rising to 38,000 in 1939. From about 1910 it gradually expanded a lofted third premises (mostly of 1916–9) on the north side of Powis Street, opposite the Central Stores, eventually displacing John Ash, a motor-body builder who had a showroom at No. 140 with a factory behind, George Plume, a carriage contractor, occupied much of the rest of the site. Plans for redevelopment with a large new department store were prepared by S. W. Ackroyd in 1935 and approved in 1936, when A. L. Foreman, then his chief assistant, produced drawings. The Society was conscious that the facilities of its Central Stores, a series of shop units, were ‘already out of date’ and suffering from comparison with rival establishments. There was a demand for goods to be brought together under one roof, and in planning to meet this through a big emporium with an arcaded shopfront, the RACS was following what had become standard for co-operatives elsewhere. Negotiations with the Ogilvy Estate regarding a new lease were not resolved until late 1937. The building contract was given to the RACS Works’ Department in January 1938, even though a tender from the Co-operative Wholesale Society’s Building Department was lower, and the project was delayed despite growing awareness that war was approaching. The Leeds Fireday Company supplied the facade, Power’s and Deane, Ransome’s Ltd of Cabin Town the stonework, and Kleine Co. the fire-resistant floors and staircases. The department store opened in stages in 1939 and 1940, but could not be brought into full use until after the war.\

The department store presents a nice architectural contrast with its predecessor across the road, though the gap between completion of the latter and design of the former was just a decade (ills 207, 208). Faience tiles had become standard for co-operatives in the 1920s and the jump to a streamlined approach also echoes what others were doing, as in the Bradford society’s central premises of 1935–6. The manner of the main block’s alternating bands of window and wall may reflect the influence of Joseph Emberton’s Simpsons on Piccadilly, also of 1935–6. The cantilevered steel-frame construction, which permitted an open ground-floor arcade and full-width first-floor display window, was noted in contemporary write-ups as an up-to-date method deriving from Erich Mendelsohn’s pioneering Schocken stores of the late 1920s in Stuttgart and Chemnitz. The continuous cantilevered canopy or marquise was a Continental feature, absent from London before a change in building regulations in 1930 – it gained wide currency on Powis Street in the late 1930s. This emphasizes horizontality, while the twin end towers anchor the cream-faience-tile-clad elevation. The ground-floor arcade had plate-glass display islands, replaced in 1956–7 to gain internal floor space. Still in place are upper-storey metal-frame windows. A curvilinear return sinks into the west tower, which stands over a vehicle entrance for service access to the rear and to permeate a through route to Dog Yard and Mortgramit Square. This tower was finished more crudely than was intended, presumably because of the outbreak of war. The larger and more elegant east tower, made more prominent in design revisions of 1937, houses a water tank above the store’s main premises, with a glass roof and a single-pitch curved roof, while the pavilion was clad in thin brick. The west facade, vertically lit to show off the wrought-iron railings that are patterned to form the letters ‘co op’, a neat Art Deco conceit (ills 207, 211). Within the store the vestibule and staircase walls are lined with Travertine marble. At the outset the ground floor was an ‘economy’ department, for the sale of a wide range of cheap small goods. The large open shop floors,
Ground-floor plan (earlier fabric hatched) and front elevation as intended (the west tower was never clad), with detail of 'co-op' staircase railings.

In 2007, counter and shelving fitted in 1964.


HARE STREET

Hare Street takes its name from the eighteenth-century proprietors of the brewery that stood to the west, behind the High Street in Dog Yard (see page 72). John Hare (or Haye) was here by the 1730s.216 To start with Hare Street was just a court or cul-de-sac off the High Street, inserted between. Hare Street gained greater importance as a through route in 1889. It came into use in favour of Hare Street by the 1870s.217

The older and narrower north end was a boulchine. Following representations made in 1877, the Woolwich Local Board of Health persuaded the Board of Works to pay half the cost of widening on the east side, work carried out in 1882.218 This led to the building of what largely survives as Nos 64 Hare Street, and there was some further rebuilding opposite in the later 1880s, with H. H. Church as architect.219 Hare Street gained greater importance as a thorough route in 1889, when the Woolwich Triangle and extending to Hare Street and Woolwich High Street (Ill. 51). Plans by Chapman Taylor Architects included a hotel and a multi-storey car park. Made public in 2007, these were dropped thereafter as credit vanished.220

The Ogilby Estate and LCC renewal projects of the late 1930s involved a substantial development scheme encompassing both RACS stores was devised through Wilson Borden Developments in 2004–5 ‘to enhance Woolwich town centre’s underperforming retail offer.’221 This covered a larger site, dubbed the Woolwich Triangle and extending to Hare Street and Woolwich High Street (Ill. 51). Plans by Chapman Taylor Architects included a hotel and a multi-storey car park. Made public in 2007, these were dropped afterwards as credit vanished.222

West side

No. 23–43 are a vestige of a group of shops (Nos 17–23) of 1878–1900, conceived, probably by Church, as a symmetrical composition with paired outer gables. This part and No. 21 (now gone) were built for James and George Mitchell, butchers, by Thomas & Edge. No. 17–19 (also replaced) were built for John Sackett, an ironmonger. Behind the Mitchells’ tile-lined shop there was a yard with a bullock pound and slaughterhouse; staff were accommodated on the upper storeys.223 The Mitchells were the descendants of Henry Cornish, who had a big frontage here facing Hare Street.344 By the 1890s, the designer with ‘blood and offal from the slaughterhouses flowed down the street.’224

West side

No. 21 was built in 1898 for the Maypole Dairy Company, George Jackson’s rapidly spreading Birmingham-based multiple. The builders were Thomas & Edge, and, for all its affinities with Church’s style, it may have been designed in-house (III. 183).225

No. 29–31 were put up in 1879 for John Upson and built by Thomas & Edge, probably to designs by Church. Below the distinctive first-floor Venetian windows there was another replacement of the colonnaded shopfront. First occupancy, by 1901, was as a branch of another big multiple, Home and Colonial Stores, with upper-storey flats, one occupied by a Dental Institute. The shop was later taken by the RACS and adapted in 1937–9 as a grocer, with upper-storey offices. These joined at the back to the new department store at 138–142 Powis Street, with a top-floor pavement and a conference room in the link. The grocery had already been revamped to be self-service when a refurbishment in 1965 brought Woolwich its first delicatessen. There was another refurbishment in 1965 to try to keep up with competition from Fine Fare Fine Fare at Nos 36–41.226

No. 33–37. Through the Victorian period Thomas Parkes and Son, chemists, had part of this site as ‘Parkes Medical Hall’ (Ill. 212). Redevelopment in 1894 was for Gardiner and Company’s Scotch House, another chain, with Turtle and Appleton of Battersea as builders; once again this may not be Church’s design. The diagonal stone-framed‘houses’ and outfitters’ shop had a plate-glass and polished-granite shopfront, thighs and rampant lions in first-floor railings,227 and ‘THE SCOTCH HOUSE Ltd’ prominently lettered between the upper storeys under a big central gable with a heraldic cartouche flanked by balustraded parapets. Of this panoply only the railings survive. Inside there were two shop floors with a central lantern and circular light well. To a later eye the shop was redolent of Victorian comfort with mahogany furniture and dark brown furnishings.’228

No. 41–45. The White Hart public house, rebuilt in 1884, and other shops were replaced after road widening with a neo-Gothic speculative row of four shops and flats built in 1930 for the Greater London Estates Development Co., (alternatively D. T. Morris and Sons or Morris Estates), with West and Brooks Ltd of Woolford as builders; Nos 45 retains a deep shopfront of about 1970, when photographic equipment was sold here.229

No. 47. The Prince Albert public house, or Rose’s wine house, goes back to the 1840s when it was a beer shop associated with the adjacent brewery. In 1888 it came into the hands of E. J. Rose and Co., who rebuilt it in 1898, after road widening, with H. P. Monckton, the Ogilby Estate surveyor, as architect, and Thomas & Edge, builders (Ill. 213). With its facade lower storey and small copper dome
it has been altered little since. A two-storey bottle store to the rear was built in 1930 by West and Brooks Ltd.\(^{14}\)

Nos 52–6 (with 139 Woolwich High Street). This attractive corner building was built in 1929 as Montague Burton's first purpose-built shop in Woolwich, after the clearance of a large outfitter's (Thompson and Jackson) road widening. Architecture was an important part of Burton's pitch, and Harry Wilson, the firm's in-house architect, deployed here a version of one of several lively curtain-wall stone-mullion types, using faience in a neo-Egyptian mode (Ill. 213). Former Burtons, Woolwich High Street, 1949. Photographed 2009.

**East side**

Through the late nineteenth century the premises of Henry and Robert B. Dale, linen-drapers, were at Nos 6–12, on either side of the entrance to Myrtle Place, in stuccoed two-storey buildings. Nos 6–10 were replaced for Dale in 1893–4, as were Nos 2–4 in 1894, all unified as a plain three-storey terrace. This took its lines from a slightly earlier rebuild at Nos 12–16 (see below), the whole probably designed by Church.\(^{15}\)

Nos 2–4. The south block was rebuilt in 1961–3 for British Home Stores, with G. W. Clarke as architect and stonework from Farmer and Son. This store extends right back to Creton Street where it displaced a terrace of eight houses that had been built in 1900 as a–c, Union Buildings. Above its canopy it is like its earlier Powis Street neighbour (Nos 106–112) in departing from the curtain-wall stone-mullion type otherwise favoured locally at the time.\(^{16}\)

Nos 12–16 was rebuilt in 1894–5 for George H. Levey and Co., outfitters, who also had workrooms buildings along Myrtle Place, across which alley they soon spread to succeed Dale in the draper's shop at Nos 6–10. This firm survived (the surname revised to Lavey around 1900) to put forward a redevelopment scheme in 1952, designed by Ian Frazer and Associates, architects, projecting an aloof-clad building that crossed the alley. Boots the Chemists took over the site and followed the scheme through in 1964–5, using the same architects with Tersons Ltd, engineers. Boots remain in occupation.\(^{17}\)

Nos 18–28. This large building was a Woolworths. As at Marks & Spencer on Powis Street, apparent unity disguises a history of growth. In 1911, two years after he opened his first English branch in Liverpool (the first London branch was in Brixton in 1910), F. W. Woolworth took a shop at Nos 26–28, heretofore H. J. Webb's provisions. Redevelopment and extension were projected by 1924, but it was not until 1930 that the shop was rebuilt and enlarged to No. 24. Designed and built in-house under B. C. Donaldson, architect, the façade is an example of the firm's neo-Georgian style of the time, more usually employed for smaller-scale shops (Ill. 214). Generous stone dressings present a giant order against a red-brick ground. This was a late design change. The open-plan interior was formed with a steel frame and concrete floors on a widely spaced grid. Rebuilding and enlargement to the south was proposed in 1958, but delayed because Woolwich Borough Council wanted any new building set back to line through with adjoining developments. That was avoided in 1964–5 when W. A. Spinks, Woolworths’ in-house architect, simply extended the existing building, with the ground floor opened up as an arcade. The work was again by the firm’s own construction department, which took the shop from seven to thirteen bays and to Nos 18–22 (replacing buildings of 1863–6), typically and carefully keeping the earlier idiom to make the front appear as one, which necessitated remaking the original south bay. The arcade is of Balmoral red-granite piers. The back elevation to Myrtle Alley, from which the shop used to be accessible, was entirely rebuilt in a modernist style, but with the southern end in brick, to differentiate a service bay. Internally the extension had a precast concrete frame made by Truscon Ltd and the shop included a first-floor café. Around 1950 this store became an early English branch of Primark, the Irish budget-clothing retailer.\(^{18}\)

Nos 30–34. Through the later decades of the nineteenth century George William Warren and Son ran Woolwich's leading watch- and clockmaking shop and a district post office from this site, with workshops around a yard at the back. Their façade proclaimed ‘By appointment to the War Office from this site, with workshops around a yard at the back’. Their fascia proclaimed ‘By appointment to the War Department and to the Viceroy of Egypt’.\(^{19}\) Robert James Warren's building was replaced in 1967, but a butcher's shop at No. 30, another outlet run by Hedley Vicars from 1869, kept its earlier form (Ill. 214).\(^{20}\)

The site was redeveloped as two shop units in 1967–9 for Prudential Assurance (through Town and Commercial Properties), using a curtain-wall scheme of 1961 that incorporates a stone surround and brick piers. The architect was S. M. Haines, working with the British Reinforced Concrete Engineering Company. There was a first-floor restaurant.\(^{21}\)

Nos 36–42 were rebuilt in 1876 for George Robinson and Sons and in 1879–80 for Isaac Septimus Taylor and Co., both drapers.\(^{22}\) These firms merged around 1930 and formed what was an antediluvian department store, even in the 1930s. An aged ‘shop walker’, dressed in a frock coat, was in charge of proceedings and he kept an eye on everyone and everything. It was a very dark interior, with seats for the customers. There was a lovely smell of new linen and curtain material – good quality lines – and a wonderful overhead ‘railway’ for the cash. To operate this, high up in what looked like a pulpit sat one of the ancient helpers and received at intervals little reels which came to her on wires strung across the room. These contained a bill and the customer’s money and in due course were returned by the same route with the change.\(^{23}\)

Robinson and Taylor changed their business to furniture in 1956 and rebuilt the premises in 1960–1. They picked up a speculative scheme of 1958, prepared for C. and A.
DANIELS LTD by LANDEY, BEDELLS and CROMPTON, architects, and employed LAN FRASER and ASSOCIATES, architects, and THOMAS & EDGE, builders. THE ALUMINIUM-FRAMED GLASS CURTAIN-WALL UPPER STOREYS were used as offices for the Woolwich Equitable Building Society, which was out-growing Equitable House. The shop was converted to a Fine Fare Supermarket in 1963–4, and the offices to use by the Inland Revenue in 1966, National Health Service occupancy followed.178

Nos 44–46 were built in 1808–9 for Upton’s London Boot Co. by Turle and Appleton in a manner that suggests the hand of Church, this having been the northern edge of the Ogilby estate. No. 46 was sub-let for the sale of wines and spirits. Here, in wartime in 1918, queues of women waited with Woolwich New Road to the right. Watercolour of c. 1790 by Paul Sandby.

**East of Powis Street**

Green’s End

An ancient road called Cholic Lane wound its way down-hill from Woolwich Common to meet the Plumstead Road. At its foot it bifurcated, with a branch pointing north-westwards towards an entrance to the Warren, near the Royal Brass Foundry, and the end of Warren Lane. This place, with a few buildings near the east end of the naval ropeway on an island of waste ground that had been called the Quillett in the sixteenth century (hence Cholic), was known as Green’s End (Ills 9, 215).179 The New Cross Turnpike Trust transformed Cholic Lane in 1796–9, replacing its north end on a new line farther east (Woolwich New Road). This left a drog by, where the name Green’s End has hung on, corresponding to the current south-west and north-west sides of General Gordon Square, and continuing along what became the north-west or High Pavement side of Beresford Square.

Nos 60–62. The other part of the redevelopment of 1884, long known as Gabriel’s corner, was originally two properties, both built by Lonergan Bros of Plumstead. Walter Newell, a baker-confectioner, had No. 60, and Isaac Gabriel, a tailor and outfitter, the much larger corner property at No. 62, with plate-glass and north-lit cutting rooms over his shop. The chamfered corner has a pedimented clock, and there was once an attic with a high French-pavilion roof (Ills 44, 56). The enriched cornice includes tiled panels, but a crude rebuilding in brick of the once largely glass first floor has marred the building.

Land east of this road was part of the Barrage estate. The area remained a backwater until after 1800 when development of the Powis estate and clearance of the island block stimulated change. Remarkably, a pair of houses from the early 1780s does survive, but Green’s End is otherwise all but obliterated between two later open spaces, Beresford Square and General Gordon Square. Its remaining buildings are here grouped under those heads.

**Beresford Square area**

Beresford Square is an irregular open space, not a laid-out square but the result of sequential clearance where roads converged in front of the main entrance to the Royal Arsenal. It is still set off to the north by the former arms factory’s Beresford Gate (see pages 162–3), through the rerouting of Plumstead Road detached that building from the rest of the Arsenal.

The ‘paltry buildings’180 that the Board of Ordnance cleared in 1812–13 were encroachments on Crown wasteland, about a dozen houses on a triangular island with the Ordnance Arms public house at its north-west corner, and some more along the east side of Green’s End. Their removal improved the approach to the Arsenal, giving it a spacious triangular ‘exterior esplanade’.181 The Ordnance Arms re-established itself along the New Road to the east, only to find itself again on an island after 1851 when there was further clearance, the Board then removing four cottages between this pub and what became the Elephant and Castle public house (Ill. 217), to make the open ground more square and to facilitate ‘military communications’.182 Beresford Gate, of 1828–9, stands across the square’s north side. Some properties on the west side were on the Powis estate. Those to the south and east formed the north-west corner of the Barrage Estate’s holdings. The square, which the Board early on gave back to the parish, also adopted Viscount Beresford’s name in 1837, by then
Beresford Street had been formed on the former ropeyard to the north-west. As a large open space in front of the entrance to the Arsenal, ‘the square’ became an important part of the public realm in Woolwich, a gathering place and, at first infrequently, a market (III 216). Existing hostleries were supplemented and by 1850 a ring of pubs greeted the hordes of men who emerged daily from the Arsenal. Woolwich Market had moved twice since receiving its charter in 1618, but the second move, to Market Street in 1806, did not take (see page 256). Traders drifted back to Market Hill and to the new open space of Beresford Square where there were no market stalls. The Local Board of Health and the police attempted to clear the square and to lure trade back to Market Hill, but by 1866 costermongers and hawkers had become so well established in the square that their removal damaged other local trade. Even so, evictions continued until in 1879 a Board committee accepted that regulation made more sense than resistance. The Board bought out the Maryon Wilson family’s interest in the market charter in 1887 and designated Beresford Square as the official site of Woolwich Market. Regulations were imposed and a toll collector appointed. When a procession of some 10,000 people paraded into or out of the Arsenal (Ills 184, 218), there was a drinking trough for horses, one of two still in place, the other is dated 1841.

The market was ‘very lively and ordinary’, thought Italo Svevo in 1903. ‘Almost anything was sold ‘except furniture and poultry’, and it was said that the establishment of the market caused women to intercept their men at the gate to prevent profligate spending. Among the goods, floorcloths were proffered: ‘For $6 you can turn that wilderness you call your ‘ome into a smilin’ garden.’ It was reported that, ‘among all the chaffing and windy warfare which goes on in the market great cheerfulness is the predominant feature’.

On the sides of the square much rebuilding occurred around the time the market was established. The south side was built up for the first time in 1835-6, and the eastern island block, hitherto part open, was also filled in an ambitious development of 1889-90. As in response, Beresford Gate was raised in 1881, and, with Povis Estate leases falling in, the west side was redeveloped through the 1890s. In 1893 consideration was given to lighting the square with electricity, but this came to naught.

The market side, Beresford Square continued to be the centre of Woolwich life, with its largest public houses. It was an important meeting or rallying point, hugely popular at times of movement into or out of the Arsenal (Ills 184, 218). Here, famously, Will Crooks spoke to great crowds, as in April 1907 when a procession of some 3,000 set off for Westminster to demand a stop to job cuts at the Arsenal. Crooks’s memorial service was held here in 1921, when it was written that the essence of Woolwich in Beresford Square. It is Woolwich symbolized. At half an hour past noon the Arsenal gates open upon it, and it becomes the property of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. In the evening it belongs to aimless wanderers and to the nervous old soldier and his lad. On Saturday nights it is a joyous county-town market-place, filled with cheapjack,
West side

Buildings on the west side of Beresford Square stand behind a neatly re-established version of what was once called the 'High Pavement'. Levels here were altered in the 1790s, to regularize the junction to the north, and, following the clearances of 1812–13, space was given up to a low incline (ills 215, 221). Trees were planted in 1867–9, but the enclosure was obliterated for the formation of the market just twenty years later.  113

By the 1720s there was a large building here at the bottom of Green's End (on the site of Nos 3–5), with a yard and outbuildings alongside the east end of the roadway. This was probably the Salvation Inn. Barker's map of 1748–9 shows substantial formal grounds (Ill 8), perhaps a tea garden or minor pleasure garden. A playhouse that existed in Woolwich in 1721 may have been here. The inn appears to have been rebuilt around 1756 as a six-bay block, perhaps soon divided, to the north of which there was an entrance to Salvation Alley, a narrow court of fifteen to twenty timber cottages that replaced the yard and garden. In one of these Henry Maudslay, the great mechanical engineer, was born in 1771 — his father worked in the Warren.  114 After closure of the ropery in 1833 the Salvation moved into new premises next door, closer to the Arsenal's new gate (ills 216, 221). The inn of 1756 had come to house the Royal Lancet beerhouse and a grocer, William Topley. In 1803–4 the proprietor of the Salvation, F. Bishop, replaced both buildings, for a larger pub (Ill 183) and, in place of the earlier one, three houses with shops, built by J. J. Chessum and Sons of Haggerston.

The entrance to Salvation Alley shifted north in the 1820s, and a few more cottages were added. Much of the alley's housing was replaced in 1823–4, with four larger houses on the south side. But there was a fatal collapse of two older houses in 1896, and in 1898 another was noted as housing three generations (a married couple, their daughter and her two children) in one small room.  115 The Booth survey notes some cartoonish stairwaying up to a visitation to Salvation Alley in 1906 'very poor and rough, Irish, some costers, some thieves, fat laudomme women, barrows'.  116 The far end was displaced by the Drill Hall that was built behind Beresford Square in 1889-90 (see page 82) and demolished around 1910. Its site has latterly been used as a pound for market traders.

Beyond the entrance to Salvation Alley was Richard Ross's 'library', built around 1818. Ross was a book-seller, printer, engraver, stationer, registrar and rate-collector. His shop was replaced in 1923 by a cinema erected for the Woolwich Arsenal Cinematographe Co., formed by two retired officers, Cdr. Cowyngham A. Demison, RN, and Col. William Leslie Davidson, RA. Their architect was J. M. Allen of Eley and Allen. Completed with 669 places, this was known at different times as the Premier Cinema, Royal Arsenal Cinema and Century Cinema (Ill. 184). It replaced most of the north side of Salvation Alley, and was further extended to the rear in 1943–4 with a bay that incorporated parts of more demolished houses.  117 The cinema, which closed in 1961, the last four houses in Salvation Alley, condemned as slums in 1963, the Salvation itself and 3–4 Beresford Square were all cleared for the block that currently occupies the site. This (Nos 1–4) was a speculation designed by Newman Levaison and Partners in 1964, but not built until 1970–72, to provide a supermarket and two smaller shop units with storage and offices above. Horizontal 'Granites' rendered bands alternate with red-brick vertical panels.  118

CHAPTER FOUR

POWIS STREET AND GREEN'S END AREAS

South side

When John Betjeman visited Woolwich in 1961 he admired 18–20 Green's End on the south side of Beresford Square, then already rare remnants of the eighteenth-century town of Woolwich (ills 217, 222). This pair of houses was probably built in the early 1780s on Burragre Estate land just south of the irregular waste-ground row that was cleared in 1831 for the square. That row was owned by Robert Exercit, a long-established Woolwich bricklayer, who was otherwise building hereabouts in the early 1780s. He may well have built this pair.  119 Of brown brick, probably locally made, these houses were built with two-room central-chimneystack plans, a layout once widespread in Woolwich, with side windows to light the staircases (Ill. 13); the chimneystack at No. 18 has long been removed. The steeply pitched roof, with a hipped gambrel and tile covering, further emphasizes the vernacular character of the building. Yet these were among the district's better houses, with six rooms each and raised ground floors (originally without shops). Inside, No. 18 retains its original twin-novel staircase, plain-panelled partitions and cupped pegs, beam-edged because always open to view. The first occupant of this house appears to have been a Capt. Erskine. A Capt. Parish had the other house in 1793. He was followed by Lt. William Robe, who resided, or at least paid rates, here from the late 1790s up to his death in 1814. Robe was a Royal Artillery proof master in the Warren from 1782 whose son (later Sir William Robe) attained eminence in the Royal Artillery. Among his wartime achievements, the younger Robe was architect of the Anglican cathedral in Quebec.  120

The northern house (No. 18) was converted to the Elephant and Castle public house in 1848 in work by Hudson and Burgess for Joseph Bingham. This may have included the stucco on the north and west elevations made prominent by Sir John Soane in 1817. There were at least five other pubs across London carrying this name, which derive from the crest of the Cutlers' Company. No. 19 gained its forward shop extension in 1884, Church and Rickwood being responsible. A new leaseholder, Alfred Lawrence, enlarged the pub in 1886–9 with a mostly timber single-storey building over the front garden, designed by Church. This was replaced in plain brick in the 1920s by Edward Eley and Rickwood, architects, acting for Courage, who had taken the pub over from the Plumstead brewers, Charles Beasley Ltd. The site was then enlarged to take in the next-door premises, to Beresford Square.  121

South of No. 19, the site of 20–24 Green's End was redeveloped in 2006–9 for the Docklands Light Railway (DLR). The buildings that were replaced included a small but stylish bank at No. 20. A large house on this site was occupied in the late eighteenth century by Thomas Powis, Master of the Cutlers' Company. His daughter, the Hon. Mrs. Elizabeth Powis (his second wife) and her two children (Ills 182, 217). The London and Middlesex Banking Company took it and in 1897 built over its front garden. All was replaced in

1091 as neo-Baroque premises for the Capital and Counties Bank, with F. Haberson as architect, and Thomas & Edge as builder; these later became a branch of Lloyds Bank. Administering, a mid-nineteenth-century house, No. 21, was converted to use as a post office in 1873 and subsequently gained a long back sorting office. Beyond, flats over four shops (Nos 22–24 of 1902–3) had a boldly polychromatic front, designed by Church for D. K. Somers. The frontage at 20–24 Beresford Square was not built up until the 1880s. Its irregular plots had been the backs of Green's End properties, with a urinal in a wall distant behind the Elephant and Castle (Ill. 217). It may have been a sign of Beresford Square's growth as a place of commerce that No. 22 was built in 1884 by W. Martin, a surveyor, a newagent, stationer, discount bookseller and tobacconist, who was probably related to Alfred Lawrence at the Elephant and Castle (Ill. 219). Church was the architect and John Walker of Limehouse the builder.  122 To either side, two single-storied shops (Nos 21–11) and the shallow shop premises at Nos 13 and 14 were also built in 1885–6 for the Lawrences, part at least by Loneyer Bros of Plumstead.  123 The main building at No. 12 has been disfigured, but it once had patterned brickwork and pilasters like those that survive on Nos 13 and 14, and a more decorative gable. Adjoining is a small group of buildings numbered in Woolwich New Road. The main building at No. 12 was built in 1836 as Edward Dinnor's dining-rooms by H. Brown of Stoke Newington. Its twin at No. 13 appears to have been added in 1839 for William Rose by W. Sharpnill of Buckhurst Hill. These premises were unified in 1933. A slightly lower two-bay building (No. 2) originally housed coffee rooms, and was probably built around 1892 for George Webb. Comparably modest buildings of the late
nineteenth century and 1940s at 4–5 Woolwich New Road were cleared for the Docklands Light Railway.

East side

Nos 15–18 Beresford Square is an imposing block of 1894–96 – a turretted in the ramping-up of scale that marked the ensuing decade in commercial Woolwich. The Ordnance Arms public house, always dependent on the proximity of the Arsenal, had moved to the north end of this site around 1812 (Ill. 217). In a yard to the south a stable and coach-house block were built in 1847. It may have been the regularization of the market in 1850 that prompted a later proprietor of the public house, Peter Edmund Brown, to rebuild. He did so ambitiously, over the whole of his island site, to provide a bigger hospitality and three shops, each with fronts to both Beresford Square and Woolwich New Road in a continuous wrap-round three-storey façade (Ills 182, 184, 219, 222). The builder was James Chapman, then of South Hackney, for whom this seems to have led to much other work in Woolwich. It is a notably coherent development, more restrained and Italianate than most of late-Victorian Woolwich, perhaps because not the work of the otherwise ubiquitous Church. The Ordnance Arms at No. 18 (latterly O’Connors) took advantage of its irregular plot with several entrances, opening out the bars through the use of structural iron columns. Granite pilasters were retained when the ground floor was refaced with brown-stone tiling around 1914. There was a 42½-ft(13-m)-long first-floor club-room. An ogee dome marks the corner, balanced by a turret at the opposite end of the block over what began as Charles Henry Court’s Beresford Dining Rooms at No. 16. In the 1950s, it changed hands and was occupied by J. F. Endean and Son, leather merchants. The censuses of 1891 picked up an estimated thirty-three residents in all the block’s upper-storey spaces.

Plumstead Road to Vincent Road

This section deals with the area bounded by Plumstead Road, Woolwich New Road, Vincent Road and the par- tish boundary. In 1954–56 the New Cross Twentieth Trust formed the straight section of Woolwich New Road that runs north-eastwards from the junction with Thomas Street and Wilmount Street to Plumstead Road. This new route across Nathaniel Pattison’s Burrage estate, which straddles the road, built.

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223. Covered market, 5 Plumstead Road, 1936, for Woolwich Borough Council. Photographed in 2007

POLS STREET AND GREEN’S END AREAS

224. Royal Mortar Tavern and 6 Plumstead Road, 1954. Photographed in 1935. Unoccupied

225. Former Royal Mortar Hotel, 1–3 Plumstead New Road, 1890. Photographed in 2009

Nos 3 and 5. He let the former and from 1905 it played an important role in the early success of what was to become the Woolwich Labour Party. Here was the Pioneer Printing Office, from which William Barefoot, then Secretary of the Woolwich Labour Representation Association and later an eminent mayor of Woolwich, published the Woolwich Pioneer. A partial reconstruction in 1931 created two halls, that to the rear the Pioneer Hall. The Pioneer Bookshop carried on here until 1938, and more recently the Transport & General Workers’ Union used the premises. Court kept Nos 5 & 6 dining rooms. Pantalene Manze, who had previously spread the family business from Bermondsey to Deptford, took these on in 1943. The establishment was run as a branch of Manze’s eels-pie-and-mash empire until 1954, thereafter leased by Kenney’s and then sold to be ‘The Pie Shop’, in which an unreconstructed eating-horse interior, with tiled walls, marble-topped tables and high-backed wooden benches survived until 2010 (Ill. 225). Nos 7–11 were built for J. & E. Pearson, ironmongers, by Thomas & Edge. Pearson’s occupied Nos 7–9 with glas-fronted upper-storey ‘wrefrooms’ and a long rear showroom. Eliza Bridger, a furniture dealer, had No. 13...
CHAPTER FOUR POWIS STREET AND GREEN’S END AREAS

built by J. B. Sanford & Co., her warehouse facing Spray Street has been rebuilt. Across the road the corner shop and house at Nos 12–14 Spray Street with the adjoining houses at Nos 14–18 (in Plumstead) were built in 1905 by Edward Kemp, a Plumstead builder who had a big furniture depository across the parish boundary. Spray’s Buildings (later Street) had been laid out by 1800 and built up in a speculative development, one presumably initiated by William Spray, a plasterer who held Board of Ordnance contracts around Woolwich and who may have been a descendant of Matthew Spray, builder and possibly named after Helen Pattison. In the adjacent southerly area known as Bull’s Fields the Bull Tavern had stood since about 1830. Destroyed by fire in 1842, it was rebuilt for Alexander Blest. Doubtless benefiting from trade generated by the railway, he rebuilt again in 1860–1 to form the larger public house that rounds the corner at 14 Vincent Road. James Harrison was probably his architect. Ample grounds to the south had been laid out as a bowling green, part of which endured as a garden into the twentieth century. The four shop-houses adjoining to the east, at 15–18 Vincent Road (formerly Melville Terrace), were built for Blest in 1861 to designs by W. Barrett, architect, with diapered polychromatic brickwork, stabilising adjoining has been converted as 2 and 2x Helen Street.

Woolwich Arsenal Station

In the early 1840s the South Eastern Railway Company was working up plans for a railway line through Woolwich close to that eventually built (see pages 19–21). A substantial run of buildings on the New Road opposite Cross Street had been cleared by 1843 (III. 10), but that may simply have been because late eighteenth-century Burragre Estate leases had fallen in. Plans for stations on the North Kent line only settled on this location in 1846, preferring it principally because it would serve the Arsenal. The line opened in July 1849, running in an open cutting with a bridge carrying the New Road. The first Arsenal Station (later Royal Arsenal Station, then Woolwich Arsenal Station), which opened four months later, was not on the New Road, but at the east edge of the parish, opposite the Bull public house on the north side of Cross Street East. The station was designed for the railway company to ground plans by its engineer, Peter William Barlow, with elevations by its architect, Samuel Bazeley. Built by John Kelk in 1849, it was a small building with a five-bay single-storey front (Ills 182, 228), lower-level rail-side parts survive in altered form. A bridge crossed the line to the down platform.

In 1880 the station was extended to the east, and an additional scatter of small buildings spread along Cross Street. A new booking office was built in 1906–7, facing the New Road, set back behind a canopy and carriage forecourt, and above the lines, to which access became easier via iron staircases that remain in use (Ills 184, 219, 231). Buildings west of the first station were replaced with a single-storey brick range that survives as 3 Vincent Road, largely converted for commercial occupation and lately extended eastwards for the Docklands Light Railway interchange. The Edwardian station was replaced in 1992–3 with a high-tech pavilion, commissioned by Network South-East and designed by British Rail’s Architecture and Design Group, led by Nick Derbyshire and Alastair Lansley, who had converted Liverpool Street Station to acclaim (Ill. 227). The Woolwich building, in turn, provided inspiration for Ashford International Station on the Channel Tunnel rail link. Rounded at its prominent south end, it has a thin wing-like canopy roof, supported on reconstituted Portland stone and steel columns on Cornish granite bases and floors. A steel and glass beacon that rises above the booking hall, perhaps an allusion to Charles Holden’s Underground stations, was hailed in the Architectural Review as ‘a lighthouse of urbanity’. Railings suggest use as a belvedere and there are stairs, but these are seemingly never used, nor the beacon ever lit. An empty spectacle, the station has also not worn well, its clean engineering compromised by tawdriness. On the south (up) platform a terracotta relief mural, Workers of Woolwich, of 1993 by Martin Williams, depicts work in the Arsenal. This
was funded by British Rail’s Community Unit with the University of Greenwich and Greenwich Council.

The commercial buildings north of this station were cleared in 2005 to make way for the Docklands Light Railway (DLR), which had grown steadily since its first lines from Tower Hill to the Isle of Dogs and Stratford opened in 1987. It was extended eastwards from Poplar to Beckton in 1994, from which line a branch to Canning Town to King George V followed in 2003. Plans for an extension of this line to Woolwich via a new-tunnelled river crossing were already then well advanced, applications having been submitted in 2002 as a next step after the successful completion of the DLR’s Isle of Dogs to Greenwich tunnel in the late 1990s. They followed earlier DLR extensions in adopting a Private Finance Initiative framework (WARE (Woolwich Arsenal Rail Enterprises), a joint venture company formed by AMEC and the Royal Bank of Scotland that was contracted to design, build, finance and maintain the extension for thirty years. Work started in 2005 and the twin 1.8km-long tunnels were made in fifteen months in 2006–7 using a 450 (450) long boring machine.

The DLR’s rapid formation of two wholly new Thames crossings within a decade has been comparatively little remarked. The Woolwich tunnel runs under the Arsenal and loops back to approach Woolwich New Road from the east, an intervention or emergency shaft, completed in 2006, rises near the river in the Arsenal. The line opened in 2009, 160 years after the first and only other rail route to Woolwich. Links to that railway, including a fothbridge, have created a new interchange. The DLR’s building on Woolwich New Road has three levels in and below a common一等奖, which it aimed to create a new interchange. The DLR’s building on Woolwich New Road has three levels in and below a single-storey flat-roofed block with a canopied front that includes a coffee shop. A second DLR station building on the other side of the New Road has a similar cantilevered west front facing Green’s End, to provide access directly from and to Beresford Square and Powis Street. Inside this the walls avoid the use of carvings but bear a double-height ceramic mural of 2008 by Michael Craig-Martin. Called Street Life, it it is an evocation of a variety of consumer objects, meaning to show that ‘there’s a heroic of the ordinary.’ Transport for London joined with Oakame Properties to plan to develop space above the station, and in 2010 Allies and Morrison Architects submitted designs for a sixteen-storey residential tower and a seven-storey hotel.

**Chapter Four**

**Powis Street and Green’s End Areas**

The project was revisited in 1996 as the possibility of council development on former military sites, notably the Grand Depot Barracks, seemed to open the way for a more commercial scheme. Then the fortunes of Woolwich turned for the worse and the terms of the supermarket deal could not be agreed – Sainsbury’s was still set to take development of the site forward in 1996, but soon thereafter opted for a move to Monk Street. After a public inquiry confirmed compulsory-purchase orders in 1973, Greenwich Council revisited its plans for the two blocks in partnership with Inway Property Holdings. A scheme of 1970 for a shopping mall under offices and flats, with a larger store under a multi-storey car park across Woolwich New Road, was countered by a grassroots ‘Regeneration Scheme’ from ‘Save Woolwich Now’ that proposed the retention of existing buildings. Demolition had in fact begun around 1976 on the north-east side, and clearance was finally seen through to the south-west side in the early 1980s. The Fortune of Woolwich hung on to the last, having served as a student squat and then been adapted to use as a mosque. The development project was finally abandoned in 1983 when negotiations with the main supermarket tenants collapsed. The
block had become a contentious and embarrassing town-
centre wasteland, so, in a stopgap solution that was seen
as temporary in the hope that development opportunities
would arise, it was landscaped as a park. Trees were planted
around the perimeter, curvilinear paths, a playground and
mosaic panels were laid, and a round fountain was formed to
create what was at first known as Peake's Place Garden.
The formal opening of the 'town square' in August 1942
was attended by Simon Groom and the dog Goldie from the
BBC’s Blue Peter programme."

Twenty years later the playground had been abandoned
and the garden looked dog-eared, but what was now gen-
erally known as General Gordon Square was a public open
space the temporary nature of which had been forgot-
ten. In 2008 Greenwich Council set in motion plans for
recasting the square. A ‘Big Screen’ public television was
mounted to the north-east, the margins were reduced for
wider pathways on the Woolwich New Road and Thomas
Street sides, and the Green’s End and General Gordon
Place sides were pedestrianized in 2009-10. General
Gordon Square and Beresford Square were together
relandscaped for the council in 2010-11 with the aid of
funding from the Homes and Communities Agency,
Transport for London and developers through quid-pro-
quo planning permissions. After a competition the design
commission for this project went to Quatstantial Porter,
landscape architects, working with Arup, Space Syntax and
the Fountain Workshop. Volker Highways was the main
contractor. Beresford Square was repaved and adapted
to allow the market to continue alongside the staging of
events under canopy lighting – the designers made meta-
phoric reference to a ballroom. General Gordon Square
was kept largely green, garden being the metaphor theme,
with stone-lined terraces facing the north-east screen (BIs
231, 232). The two squares were, for the first time, overtly
linked along Green’s End."

Equitable House
Built in 1934-5, Equitable House was the headquarters of
the Woolwich Equitable Building Society. It is a substan-
tial and dignified classical building, stolid but enlivened
by Art Deco touches and standing apart from the lightly
decorated and diverse retail architecture of Powis Street.
Art Deco touches are particularly evident in the public
banking hall, which is a large, domed, oak-lined space
with dark Derbyshire-fossil trim lines both spaces,
and a large ceiling lantern with an intricately patterned
brass frame lights the hall. On the second floor there is
an oak-lined panelled room across the front, and a large
ceiling lantern with an intricately patterned brass frame
lights the hall. On the second floor there is
a management suite of panelled rooms across the front,
and a large ceiling lantern with an intricately patterned
brass frame lights the hall. On the second floor there is
a management suite of panelled rooms across the front,
and a large ceiling lantern with an intricately patterned
brass frame lights the hall. On the second floor there is
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a management suite of panelled rooms across the front,
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The banking hall was refurbished at least three times, most recently in the early 1970s and the early 1990s. After the council's redevelopment of the site to the south collapsed, the society moved its headquarters to Bexleyheath in 1989, leaving Equitable House as a branch and administration centre. The building society was demutualized in 1997 and purchased by Barclays Bank in 2000. The high-street branch was suppressed in 2006–7 and Equitable House was among branches to close. Sundridge Investments took on and adapted the building in 2010–11, new occupants being Maritime Greenwich College, for international students, a health centre and, with sad irony, a betting shop.18

South-east side

The Woolwich New Road frontage between Vincent Road and the Tramshed was redeveloped in 1842–4 as Albert Terrace, two-storey houses whose front gardens soon came to be covered with shops.(III.241). The Duke of Connaught Coffee Tavern and Public Hall, as projected in 1870 by William Rickwood, architect, was designed for the Greenwich Mural Workshop by Stephen Lobb and Carol Kenna. To the rear a large low supermarket shed was occupied first by Gateway, Workshop by Stephen Lobb and Carol Kenna. To the rear a large low supermarket shed was occupied first by Gateway, then by other supermarket chains. Beyond its blank walls and hipped Eternit-slate pseudo-domestic roofs there is an open car park. Public convenience were also built on Vincent Road. The two-tone brick-faced elevations of the front range were intended to reflect the classicism of the neighbouring Tramshed and Equitable House, with gables to echo the former's pediment. If these were sincere aspira-
tions, they were pursued to a bullying and lifeless end.19

Woolwich Tramshed. The building known as the Tramshed was built in 1909–10 for the London County Council as an electricity sub-station. In 2010...
in 1901 and approved in the LCC’s Tramways and Improvements Act of 1902. But the work was delayed because the Admiralty was concerned that the elec-
tric system would disrupt instruments at Greenwich Observatory. It was only once construction of another new line, from Hampstead Square to Abbey Wood (along Plumstead Road), came into view in 1909 that a Woolwich sub-
station was thought likely to be needed. The New Road site (Nos 51–57) was acquired, but in 1907 it was
realized that the Abbey Wood tramline could, after all, be made without the sub-station. Construction of the line to
Eltham was not put in hand until 1909 when, in January, the LCC’s Highways Committee instructed the council’s
architect to see to the preparation of working drawings for the sub-station, henceforth treated as a matter of
urgency. It was completed in early 1910, with Kirk and Randell as builders (Ill. 219). Its machine room was fitted
out with a ten-ton overhead crane above several (prob-
a-ly six) 100-kilowatt motor generators, some supplied by
Dick, Kerr & Co., others transferred from a sub-station at
Elephant and Castle. Some of the switchgear, supplied by
Spagnoletti & Co., was mounted in a side gallery. The
tramway to Eltham opened in July 1910.\textsuperscript{1*}

The designs for this sub-station may have been one of
Harris’s last jobs for the LCC; they are, with their simple
planes and exaggerated quoins and voussoirs, very much in
the style he established for the building type. The origi-
nal scheme was altered slightly to set the main shed’s front
back to be flush with the lower workshop, which adjoins
to the south, slightly diminishing the impact of the neatly
proportioned pedimented elevation.

London’s last tram ran from Woolwich to New Cross
in 1952. Woolwich Borough Council was set to redevelop
the empty Woolwich sub-station from 1962 and the free-
hold was acquired from London Transport in 1971.\textsuperscript{2}\textsuperscript{1*}
As development plans stalled, the building was let in 1975
for a short-term conversion to use as a theatre, named
the Tramshed, for ‘music hall and family entertainment’. This was carried out under the umbrella of the Greenwich
Theatre in a project led by Ewan Hooper with Morton
Wright as architect. The switchgear gallery was retained.

Debts quickly mounted and the theatre had to close in
1979. A local consortium came to the rescue and refit-
ted premises reopened in 1977, with Max Wall as the first-
night draw. Programmes diversified and the Tramshed
became a popular music venue and comedy club, but
night draw. Programmes diversified and the Tramshed
premises reopened in 1974. A local consortium came to the rescue and refitted
1974
Wright as architect. The switchgear gallery was retained.

The theatre in a project led by Ewan Hooper with Morton
Wright as architect. The switchgear gallery was retained.

The switchgear gallery was retained.

The switchgear gallery was retained.

The switchgear gallery was retained.

The switchgear gallery was retained.

North-west side

A small group of early buildings faces the north-west
corner of General Gordon Square, straddling the railway
line at No. 10, and the Green’s End. Eighteenth-century
buildings here were cleared for the making of the rail-
way in 1843-4. The three-storey house and shop at No. 11,
now stripped of its mouldings and painted white,
was built, with its back wing, in 1810 for Henry Parkes, a
chemist and druggist who also ran a post office here and
who was perhaps related to Thomas Parkes of Park Street.

Parkes’s builder-surveyor was Henry William Howatton.
Through the first half of the twentieth century this shop
was a branch of Home and Colonial Stores. The smaller
three-bay two-storey stucco-fronted building at No. 10,
also always a shop, may have been built in 1829 for a Mr
Johnson by W. T. Spiers. A single-storey lock-up shop
between (No. 11) was erected in 1927, directly above the
railway when the ‘amokshole’ was covered.\textsuperscript{3}\textsuperscript{1*}

First development of the Green’s End frontage further
west and its return to Thomas Street came in the first
decade of the nineteenth century when the land was part
of the Powis estate (Ill. 181). Two-storey buildings soon
included shops, more on Green’s End than on Thomas
Street, including that of Lewis and Davis, outfitters
and jewellers, upholsterers and furnishers, established
in 1850 and at Green’s End since the 1830s and at Nos
1–9 with the corner ‘Clock House’ from 1850 to 1910.
Lease-end rebuilding came in the late 1890s, for shops on
Green’s End and round to 34 Thomas Street, with a row
of ten small houses at 36–54 Thomas Street.\textsuperscript{4}\textsuperscript{1*}

Maritime House. Redevelopment of this whole corner
site, to the LCC’s set-back building lines, was in view by
1998. A project from Maria & Spencer was rejected before
agreement was reached on a scheme that was seen as an
‘impressive pivot’ for the future of Woolwich, a ‘prestige’
office block over shops. This was thought the most
ambitious commercial development in central Woolwich
since Equitable House. The architects for the Woolwich
Investment Company, a syndicate probably led by Chest-
field Properties, were Stone, Toms and Partners, with
Bylander, Waddell and Partners as engineers, and George
Wimpey and Co. as contractors. First sketches of 1999
projected a Mumian glass-walled block on a podium, the
slab cantilevered to Thomas Street. This is broadly what
was built in 1996-2, but the purity of the glazing was
watered down by millions of artificial stone and span-
ders of precast concrete. Originally the block was to be
called Chestergate House, but it was renamed Churchill
House after Sir Winston’s death in 1959. The principal first
occupants were not commercial. Rather, Woolwich (soon
to be Greenwich) Borough Council took the seven storeys
of the slab, while in the two-storey brick range facing Thomas
Street Woolwich Polytechnic formed classrooms above the
shops. Churchill House was adapted for occupation by
what had become Thames Polytechnic in 1978, Greenwich
Council having decamped to Peggy Middleton House.\textsuperscript{5}\textsuperscript{1*}

P W O I S  S T R E E T A N D G R E E N ’ S  E N D  A R E A S

After the University of Greenwich (as the polytechnic
developed) moved away from Woolwich, a scheme by Nigel
Upchurch Associates for the conversion of Churchill
House to flats was agreed in 2000, hard on the heels of
the Calderwood Street offices-to-flats agreement (see page 203).
However, a different project of the same kind, by Design
West for the Corner Homes Group was approved in 2002
and completed in 2005. The building was renamed Maritime
House, wholly refaced with balconies, green-tinted glass,
UPVC and metal panelling and framing, given extra storeys
on both the slab (‘penthouse’) and the Thomas Street range
of the podium, and converted into ninety-three flats (Ill.
312).\textsuperscript{6}\textsuperscript{1*} Underneath, the firm of Birts & Son, established
in 1839 and a major presence in Woolwich, continues
modestly as jewellers and pawnbrokers in the shop unit at 34
Thomas Street. Near by at No. 26 the Co-operative Group
has funeral-care premises, and beyond at the corner there
has been a Wimpy Bar since 1971.\textsuperscript{7}\textsuperscript{1*}