CHAPTER 4

Powis Street and Green's End Areas

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.'[1]

Powis Street is presented here with adjoining parts of the historic commercial town centre (Ill. 183): Hare Street,

179. Powis Street from the east in 2009. Pen and ink drawing by Peter Cormack

180. View from Green's End west to the parish church along what became Powis Street. Watercolour of 1783 by Paul Sandby

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 1765–6, and the older remnant of Green's End that together enclose General Gordon Square, a recently formed open space overlooked by two confidently 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 1992–3, the third railway station here since 1850, and the Docklands Light Railway additions of 2005–8.

Powis Street area

During the eighteenth century land behind Woolwich High Street and the Rope Yard was open (Ills 7, 8), probably largely orchards once belonging to the manor house on the High Street; to the east settlement petered out in a scatter of houses at Green's End (Ill. 215), two of which survive. The growth of Woolwich had been mainly westward, in the lee of the naval dockyard. Changes in the town's military presence and its priorities by the 1780s – expansion on the Warren, barracks on the common and an improved road link (Woolwich New Road) provided an impetus for an eastward shift in the town's centre of gravity.

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 incarnation 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,[2] 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 1853. Its origins were subject to speculative antiquarian punts in the nineteenth century – it was reported to have been built in 1290 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 so may, in fact, have been of relatively recent construction and an adjunct of the Dog Yard brewery (see page 72), perhaps above a well-head; a laundress lived here in 1841.[3]

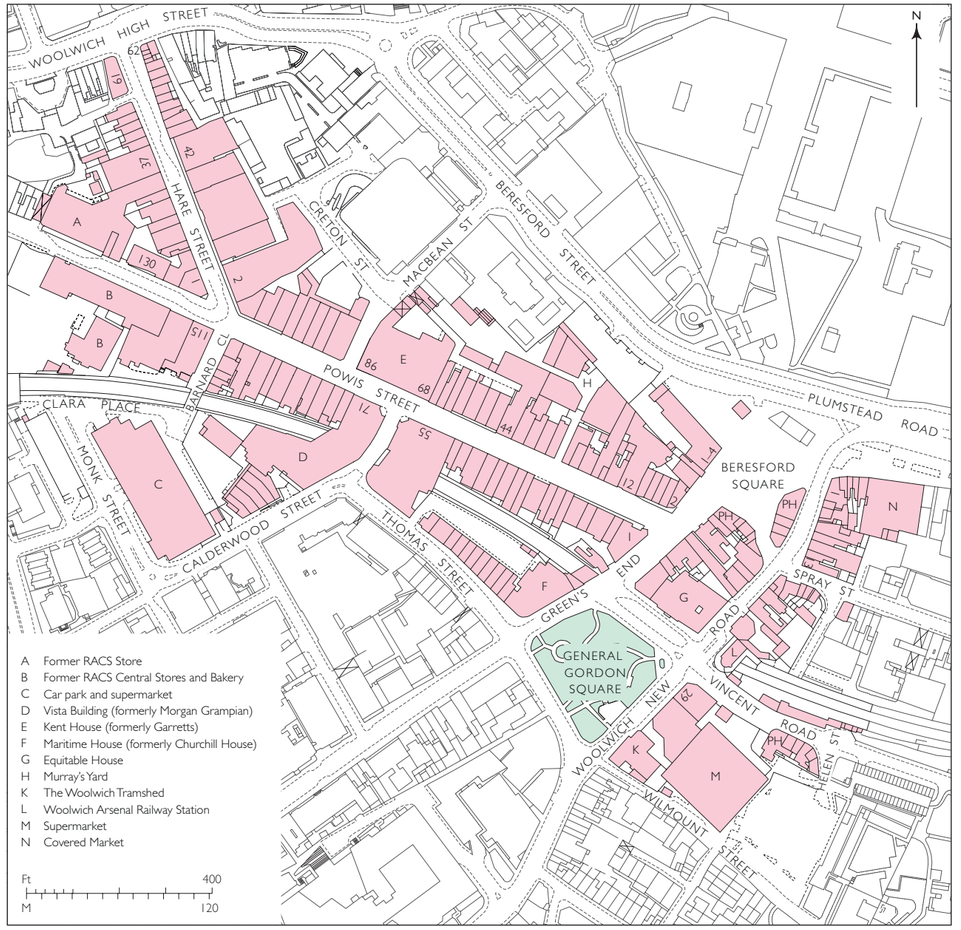
181. The Powis estate in 1821 (north point incorrect, see Ills 4/5 and 4/2)

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 1779 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 1798. By 1803 Thomas and Richard, both still Greenwich-based, had died, each, it seems, leaving a son called Richard. William continued to

182. Powis Street and Green's End areas, 1893



183. Powis Street and Green's End areas, 2005

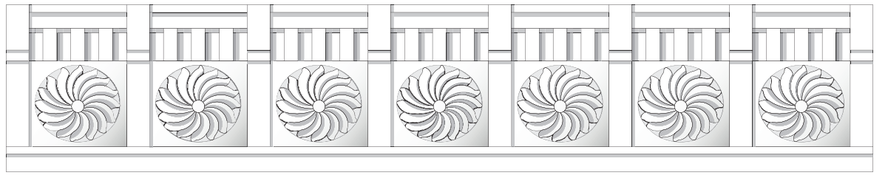
live in Woolwich until his death in 1806; he appears to have had an heir called William.[4]

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 1815, 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 (Ill. 181). Powis Street was fully built up with 158 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).[5]

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 (1796–1860), a coal merchant who had a wharf at Hog Lane and premises on William (Calderwood) Street. His father-in-law was George Hudson (1806–83), a builder (often as Hudson and Burgess), auctioneer and undertaker based on Brewer Street. Hudson was the agent of the Burrage 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 1860 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).[6] 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 1850 its 'chaste "Italian"' front

184. 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

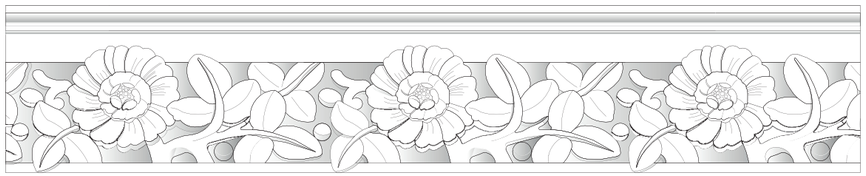


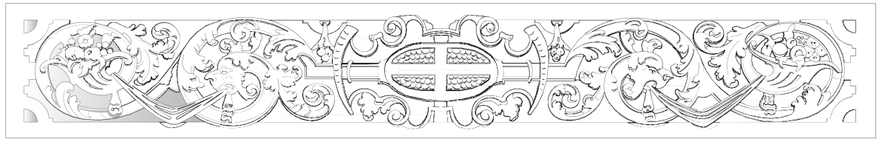
was deemed 'no mean ornament to the town' surpassing 'anything in a street notorious for its public buildings'.[7]

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.[8] In the 1870s Church reportedly became a 'co-owner' of the Powis estate, probably through mortgages. He was also surveyor to the Burrage and other estates, as well as to the Kent and Surrey Building Society, and he worked on government projects, in Woolwich and elsewhere. Starting in 1889, Church was responsible, frequently as the lessee, for overseeing and designing the rebuilding for commercial purposes of the greater part of Powis Street, Hare Street and Green's End, as well as for the first buildings of Woolwich Polytechnic, Woolwich Baths and Woolwich Public Library, from 1898 as the senior partner of the firm Church, Quick and Whincop.[9] As an elderly architect in Woolwich, Church was fecund, almost omnipresent. In his later years he had a predilection for loosely Flemish and heavily gabled elevations. His work can be characterized as conservative but eclectic, clumsy but lively.

Rebuilding work of the 1890s reflected local prosperity. Another precondition was the impending end of the Powis lease of 1799. The freeholds of lands that included the entire estate had been sold in 1812 (see page 8). Their buyer at public auction was Robert Ogilby, a wealthy linen merchant from Limavady in Ireland. He and his immediate successors lived in Ulster and had little to do with this part of Woolwich. That began to change as the lease-end date of 1898 approached. The freehold had passed to Ogilby's great-nephew, Maj. Robert Alexander Ogilby, who stimulated spending on property by granting reversionary leases of varying terms on condition of improvements through rebuilding. New leases from 1898 were generally for 60 years. In 1902 the estate was inherited by (Col.) Robert James Leslie Ogilby, who spent much of his time in London; he also founded the Army Museums Trust in 1954.[10]

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 1897, Henry Percival Monckton, intervened here and there, but once redevelopment had essentially finished around 1902, attentive management subsided. After the Second World War the estate was more closely policed by William Alfred Sibley, secretary to the Ogilby Estate, who worked with Corney E. Newman, surveyor, from 1930 into the 1960s. As leases were once again set to fall in, an ambitious ten-year rebuilding scheme was put forward in 1956 by Maj. W. H. P. Burnyeat, the estate's managing director and the son of Col. Ogilby's housekeeper. This favoured the expansion of multiples over small shops, and much was achieved in the years up to 1962, including the introduction of Christmas lights across Powis and Hare streets in 1957, just three years behind Regent Street (Ill. 189). After Col. Ogilby's death in 1964 the estate was sold off, its commercial properties to Chesterfield Properties Ltd. After further sales a large proportion of what was the commercial Ogilby estate came to be held by Powis Street Estates Ltd.[11]





Chronology of development

A stone inscribed 'Powis Street 1798' 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. It shows that the street had then been named and building work begun. Progress appears to have been steady, even rapid. By 1808 there were 125 rateable properties on the street, rising to 141 in 1810, leaving only small amounts of infilling for the next decade. Frontages were highly variable, measuring from 14ft (4.3m) 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 1800–1 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.[12]

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. 181). By 1803 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 Garter public houses by 1807, keeping these large hostelries 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).[13]

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 shipwrights (most at the west end), ropemakers, a parasol 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'.[14] 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 1812–13 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 smatter 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 in 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 swingeing defence cuts that hit Woolwich in 1869 knocked but did not foreclose on prosperity. In 1871 the street's population had dropped somewhat to about 920, 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

185. Ornamental plasterwork from façades of commercial buildings (not to same scale). Facing page: entablature and sill band, 50 and 58 Hare Street and 51–53 Powis Street, 1882. This page: panels, 27 Hare Street, 1898 (above); 83–85 Powis Street, 1899 (below)

1873. Commercial Woolwich was booming, a confident place with sufficient local employment to provide a concentration of young consumers with surplus income. In 1886 central Woolwich had thirty-nine drapers' and milliners' shops. Trams ran along much of Powis Street from the early 1880s until 1908, and 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 Cuff's erection of a large fancy draper's shop to overshadow neighbouring Kent House (by then Garretts). The latter responded quickly, rebuilding on an even larger scale to form a 'gigantic emporium'.[15]

Lease reversion in 1898 provided the opportunity for general redevelopment, necessary to retain trade, inspire confidence in quality and stay fashionable (Ill. 185). Powis Street was smart – on the High Street 'a cheaper class trade is done to suit the district.'[16] The chance was deemed worthy of investment, Cuffs and Garretts having set the lead. Powis Street was transformed in the last Victorian decade, virtually all rebuilt from Beresford Square to Hare Street, to a new scale at three and more storeys, and unified to some extent through the controlling hand of H. H. Church. His taste for ornamental gable fronts gave the western parts of the street a jagged but coherent profile, now lost (Ills 184, 231). The pubs were also enlarged, and the Woolwich Equitable Building Society built itself bigger offices. After all this the street still had about 830 residents in 1901, still of very mixed description, but now nearly all living upstairs as ground-floor shop use had become general – the big shops doubled as tenements, with substantial live-in dormitories for staff. Some new buildings had offices over the shops. One of these was the RACS Central Stores (Nos 125–153), begun in 1902 and on its way to becoming the street's biggest building, but at its commercially weaker end.

The peace that followed the Second Boer War meant a slump in Woolwich. Another wartime crest followed a decade later, and then a further slump in the early 1920s. Going against this pattern, the Second World War did not bring good times to Powis Street – rationing was universal. Through the first half of the twentieth century competition between the three biggest traders, Cuffs, Garretts and the RACS was stiff, forcing restrictions on credit purchases to ease gradually. Middle-class customers tended not to patronize RACS, and Garretts stayed more fashionable.[17]

Otherwise chain stores had gradually become prevalent. Some even had local roots. In 1860 George Mence Smith, an oil- and colour-man, opened one of the first of his chain of shops on the west side of Beresford Square near the Powis Street corner. He had several other local branches by the 1870s, on Hare Street by the 1880s and Powis Street by the early 1890s. John Upson began selling shoes in Woolwich market in 1863 and his first shop was in Plumstead. Among others that followed in the 1870s as premises for his London Boot Company was one on Powis 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 2008.[18]

In the early 1890s outside firms began to arrive on Powis Street – Joseph Hepworth & Son, clothiers, Liptons, the provisioning chain, and Singer, the sewing-machine makers. Rebuilding opened the door thereafter to J. Lyons & Co. (1896), David Greig (1899), Boots (1902), Marks & Spencer (around 1912), Montague Burton (1922) and, on Hare Street, the Maypole Dairy (1898), Home and Colonial Stores (1901), and Woolworths (1911). Discounters like Marks & Spencer and Woolworths did well at a time of hardship. Burtons, typically, added two more shops, one purpose-built on the Hare Street–High Street corner, and Woolworths and Marks & Spencer enlarged and rebuilt in the early 1930s. For some, Powis Street had become like Oxford Street, and there were frequent shopfront replacements – the only pre-war survival is at the Hare Street Burtons. But it would be misleading to record only newness and affluence.

> One abiding childhood memory of shopping in Woolwich [around 1930] is of small groups of three or four ex World War I soldiers. They were blind, disfigured or crippled and they played mouth organs, concertinas or whistles, slowly moving along the gutters of Powis Street, holding out their hats for whatever passers by could spare. They were ragged and be-medalled and ever present in Woolwich.[19]

Increased traffic was a consequence of increased commerce. For the most part the wide street coped, but it was narrower at its west end. Widening here was projected as part of a large road-building job-creation scheme promoted at the LCC by Herbert Morrison, soon after his arrival as a councillor in 1922. Woolwich Borough Council removed the bottleneck, first by clearing an area south of the High Street west to Parson's Hill in 1927, so creating an open space. Then in 1933–5 the west end of Powis Street itself was widened, with clearance on both sides; the whole street was repaved with wood blocks.[20] Despite the phased completion of the RACS Central Stores the west end of the street remained commercially weaker, even after the RACS boosted it further with the *moderne* horizontality of a new department store of 1938–40 on the other side of the road. At the other end of the commercial district newly formed General Gordon Place was graced with something comparably grand, but much more sober, Equitable House of 1934–5. This succeeded the Powis Street offices that the hugely successful Woolwich Equitable Building Society had outgrown.

In 1956 Cuffs was rebuilt, introducing modernism and relegating Garretts to less fashionable standing, and, with leases of the 1890s due to fall in, the Ogilby Estate put forward its scheme for the revival of its town-centre estate, aiming to make the east end of Powis Street the 'West End' of Woolwich.[21] The leases were insufficiently co-ordinated to permit the road widening and comprehensive treatment

of street blocks that Woolwich Borough Council urged. The possibility of pedestrianization was broached, but service access to shops was already tricky. Along with traffic, car parking had become a problem. There was much to discuss, and in 1957 the council deferred consideration of six development schemes in Powis Street and Hare Street pending resolution of wider problems – the diversion of through traffic associated with the ferry, for which traffic queued 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 Powis Street to a uniform pattern and continuous height.'[22] A decision to introduce parking meters on Powis Street was taken in February 1958 (London's first public parking meters came into use in Grosvenor Square in July 1958), 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, but the meters, the first in any suburban London area, did come into use in May 1961, on the same day that the Autostacker multi-storey car park opened.[23] Pedestrian arcades envisaged as covered walkways on Powis Street east of Hare Street never materialized (Ill. 186).

186. Powis Street pedestrianization scheme. Bird's-eye view from the east, 1964. *Unbuilt*

Several of the single-site schemes did go ahead through the Ogilby Estate. These retail developments of 1958–63 have a common character, introduced by Hector Hamilton Associates, architects, but to some extent dictated by Woolwich Borough Council. They are simple modernist blocks, with cantilevered canopies, glass curtain walls and stone-faced mullions, mostly built for newly arriving multiples. The enlargement of existing chain stores followed quickly and, contrastingly, perpetuated traditional house styles, as at Marks & Spencer and Woolworths.

The LCC's scheme of 1958 included a project for a large site behind the south side of Powis Street, between what had become Calderwood Street and Barnard Close extending across the railway. This was to incorporate an office tower, a shopping precinct – a nearly de rigueur feature of town-centre developments – and multi-storey car parking. The Labour Government's 'Brown Ban' of November 1964 halted large office developments in and around London, but Chesterfield Properties took the scheme forward. This firm, founded and chaired by Harold H. Wingate, had been instrumental in building one of the first office blocks in Woolwich, Churchill House on the corner of Green's End and Thomas Street, a nine-storey slab over a podium with shops. From the larger shopping-precinct project there emerged in the early 1970s the Morgan Grampian tower and associated development. Plans for more office towers elsewhere, including a big mixed-use 'civic centre' scheme for the General Gordon Square site extending across Woolwich New Road, failed to bear fruit and the vision of Woolwich becoming one of Greater London's 'new decentralized office zones' faded.[24]

Yet through the 1960s central Woolwich could be appreciated for what it had long been: 'Powis Street and Hare Street still attract the crowds and the traditional jaunt "down the town" is popular.'[25] Ian Nairn saw the place as a cornucopia, '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 Midland cities, and in the process lost its Midland drabness and taken on alertness and *savoir faire*.'[26] But the closure of the Arsenal in 1967 and of the former Siemens factory in 1968 knocked the stuffing out of the local economy, and decline set in. Commercial properties were hit from two sides, by the loss of local custom and by increases 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 Powis Street that McDonalds 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 1985. Beresford Square, now bypassed by the dual-carriageway Plumstead Road on its north side, was also pedestrianized, while demolitions south of General Gordon Place allowed a new public and green square to be formed in 1984.

By the early 1990s discount shops, Poundstretcher and Primark among the largest, characterized Powis Street and Hare Street. In an effort to lift things the pedestrian precinct was remodelled in the mid-1990s. The two big office blocks, Churchill House and what had been Morgan Grampian House, emptied and proved unlettable; Woolwich had become an undesirable location for offices. In a return to the area's formerly more residential

187. Powis Street from the east in 2011

character in the first years of the new century, both tall blocks were converted to flats, as Maritime House and the Vista Building. Around 2005 some new multiples began to arrive, Costa Coffee in 2005, Starbucks in 2008, seeming to herald a turn towards prosperity just before a credit squeeze froze ambitious improvement projects. Greenwich Council ploughed on with a relandscaping of General Gordon Square and Beresford Square, works that were completed just as commercial Woolwich suffered extensive damage in the London-wide looting of 8 August 2011.

Powis Street

South side

Nos 1–7 (with 12–17 Green's End). In 1799–1800 a Presbyterian or 'Scotch' Church was established on the south-east corner site (Nos 1–5), angled to face Green's End. Presbyterians are said to have had a continuous Woolwich presence since the Act of Uniformity of 1662. In the late eighteenth century links were made with the Church of Scotland, and the Rev. John Blythe led the move from Meeting House Lane to Powis Street. His successors shifted to a new building on the New Road in 1842 (see page 406).[27] Redevelopment at the Green's End corner around 1850 established William Reed's linen-draper's shop and the Powis Arms beerhouse. The developer was probably Lewis Davis (1805–68), a jeweller with a nearby shop (see below). Davis also owned a brewery and much land in Plumstead, had become an auctioneer and surveyor, and represented Woolwich on the Metropolitan Board of Works. Another rebuilding in 1897–9 (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 1890–1, 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.[28]

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 Easterns Ltd, home furnishers (Ill. 187). The upper-storey glass curtain walls were given artificial-stone faced mullions and blue-grey Vitroslab (vitreous enamel) spandrel panels; the set-back corner has classy diamond-pattern ornament. There are pavement canopies and showroom floors of precast concrete slabs were linked by a central 'floating' staircase. In 1987–8 the shop was converted to a bank with offices, to designs by the Oxford Architects Partnership.[29]

Nos 9–13. These three shops under two gables were designed by H. H. Church and built in 1899–1900 for Edmund John Dyer, a ham and beef grocer. No. 11 was

188. Powis Street from the east, *c.*1924, showing the south side: Nos 33–35 (former Freemasons' Hall), *c.*1803; Nos 37–49, 1898–1900; Nos 51–63, late 1860s. *Demolished (except Nos 51–53).* On north side, No. 36 (to far right), 1899.

sub-let to Boyd and Co., piano-makers. These were replaced in 1958–60 with a building designed to match and line through with the corner development, to provide a toy and nursery-goods shop for Sidney Ross and Co. The scheme, by Lander, Bedells 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.[30]

Nos 15–21 is a three-storey building of 1959–60, 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 (displaced from 20 Green's End), with offices above.[31]

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-storey 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. 25 was originally a dentist's surgery, for W. W. Briant, with his home above; Nos 23 and 27 had dwellings above shops for a milliner and the Public Benefit Boot Co.[32]

Nos 29–31 is on the site of Joseph Cohen's Powis House Academy, a commercial school here from the 1830s to the 1860s. 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 1–21, presumably with a view to continuity once Nos 23–27 followed.[33]

Nos 33–35. A Freemasons' Hall on this site, first leased in 1803, 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 1870, a temperance hall and billiard room. By 1880 there was an inserted floor. H. Pryce and Son, printers (established on Woolwich High Street in 1857), had a shop and printing rooms, and the RACS the upper room as a Co-operative Hall and occasional 'bijou theatre'. Pryces took the whole building around 1890. The present three-bay shop and showroom building here was built in 1925 for W. Hinds, jewellers, with Thomas & Edge as builders (Ill. 179). Its red-brick front carries a pediment, an echo of its larger predecessor.[34]

Nos 37–45. This block was redeveloped as a four-shop unit in 1898–9, 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 crow-step gables (Ill. 188).[35] Save for two pilaster-strip-fronted

party walls, the site was redeveloped in two almost matching phases, Nos 41–45 in 1956, and Nos 37–39 in 1958. The earlier development was a shoe-shop for W. Barratt and Co. of Northampton. Barratts' architects were Arthur Swift and Partners, their builders Lavender, McMillan 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 storeys were converted from offices to a dental surgery in 1959; No. 41 has been a branch of the Abbey National Building Society and its successors since 1970.[36]

Nos 47–49 became an empty site in August 2011 after arson during looting destroyed premises that had been built in 1899–1900 for John Harris and Co., who promptly let to Lynes Ltd, clothiers. J. B. Sanford & Co., Woolwich builders, probably worked to Church's designs. The symmetrical five-bay block had a gable over a central canted bay window, an unusual feature in the street. Upper-storey flats were converted to showrooms and offices in 1955 and 1972.[37]

Nos 51–53 was built in 1866–8 by William Harris, a local builder, and first occupied with two shops run by Hugh Hammond, a stationer, and Judah Hart, a hardwareman (Ills 188, 189). In a plain and loosely Italianate front there are twisted iron colonnette mullions on the first floor. The floral stucco band below the upper-storey windows (Ill. 185) 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).[38]

189. Marks & Spencer, 55–63 Powis Street, 1934–5, showing Dolcis to either side and Christmas decorations in 1959

Nos 55–69. The Marks & Spencer store in Woolwich has a complex building history. The first buildings on the site of Nos 55–63 were 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 1890s to Herbert Bray and Co., house furnishers, who then took and divided the upper parts as tenements in 1906. In 1907 Gaiety Arcades' 'automatic machines and shows bazaar' occupied the ground floor. This had become a 'penny bazaar' by 1912, perhaps for Marks and Spencer Ltd, originators of the term and purchasers of the premises in 1914. The arcades were replaced with a shopfront in 1921–2. Thereafter the company began a campaign to rebuild its shops as what they called 'super-stores', and in 1934 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 1934-5 through the firm's usual executant 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. 189). In 1936 this was extended westwards behind the corner block and back over the railway line, Merz and McLellan acting as engineers. The store was given a plainer brick front to Calderwood Street, which survives, and service access at 50–52 Thomas Street.[39]

The adjoining properties at Nos 65–67 and 69 were buildings of 1899, the former for John Upson, here since the 1870s to supply boots to the military, the latter for A. J. Wing, chemist, put up through Church who gave the corner a dome. In 1960–1 Marks & Spencer acquired Nos 65–67, which had been rebranded as a Dolcis shoe shop, and built a characteristically careful extension of their existing façade to maintain symmetry. Lewis and Hickey were the architects, again with Bovis, and the Empire Stone Co., contractor for the facing work. A further extension to the rear on Thomas Street, predominantly brick-faced, was added in 1964–5. This was a retrenchment from a more firmly modernist scheme of 1960 that would have taken the whole frontage up to Green's End. Finally, the premises on the Powis Street–Calderwood Street corner (No. 69) were acquired and rebuilt to match with a splay at the corner in work of 1966–7 by the same parties.[40]

The enlarged store of the 1960s carried lines normally only found in the West End, but decline in Woolwich has been such that Marks & Spencer now trade here with an outlet store for bargain shopping. It retains increasingly rare fascia lettering of the 1960s. Variations in the coffering of the ceilings within reflect the building's multi-phase expansion.

Nos 71–77 (with 25–30 Calderwood Street). A major component of post-war plans for the improvement of Woolwich town centre was a scheme to redevelop the entire block at Nos 71–113 returning along both Calderwood Street and Castile 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, so the history of the southern part of the site is brought in here.

A large house on the western corner of Powis Street and William Street (Calderwood Street) was adapted in the early 1840s to be a branch of the London and County Bank. This was rebuilt in an Italianate idiom in 1866, with Church and Rickwood as architects. Adjoining properties at Nos 73–77 were plainly rebuilt in 1898–9 under Church's supervision. By 1907 the local Labour Party had its Central Committee Rooms here.[41]

The north side of William Street was mostly houses of 1898–9, put up by Church, with a couple of survivors from the first development that had begun around 1807 (see pages 250 and 294). George Hudson's auction house of 1849, which faced Thomas Street, had been adapted by the 1880s to be the Woolwich Radical Club. The Ebenezer 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, rebuilding in 1893 with some flair. The hall became an auction room.[42]

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 pleasing feature when approached from Hare Street'.[43] The Ogilby Estate gained approval in 1962 for a scheme designed by Arthur Swift and Partners, then responsible for Riverside House, but sold up to Chesterfield Properties in 1965. Within a year Sir John Burnet, Tait and Partners, architects, had prepared plans that included a shopping precinct behind Powis Street. Progress was slow (see Nos 97–101), and in 1969 the developer sold off 79–113 Powis Street to focus on 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 1970–3, the office block first by George Wimpey, the shop by G. E. Wallis and Sons. Magazine publishers were 'captured' for the offices, which were named Morgan Grampian House (30 Calderwood Street) after them; public servants (health-authority staff) had two lower storeys. Littlewoods Mail Order Stores took the shop and finished off that part of the project.[44] The architecturally unified modernist development is robustly faced, blue-engineering brick set off against silver-grey rustic or mosaic granite; aluminium windows survive on the store. The much-altered triple block that formed the offices was always bulky (Ill. 247).

From 1957 there were plans for a car park on the adjoining Monk Street–Clara Place block. This was to have been provided by the Ogilby Estate, which did use the site for surface parking in the early 1960s. The west side of Monk Street was cleared in 1962 and Woolwich Borough Council built a two-level car park there in 1964–5, using prefabricated concrete slabs as in adjacent housing (see pages 317–18). The Ogilby Estate withdrew and plans for the larger site up to Calderwood Street merged with the parking aspect of the LCC's scheme. In 1969 Greenwich Council prepared plans, for which J. M. Moore was responsible, for a multi-storey building, and Sainsburys abandoned General Gordon Place (see below) in favour of this site. A supermarket was incorporated into the scheme, with Douglas, Marriott, Worby and Robinson as architects for Sainsburys. The Sainsburys supermarket and car park (25 Calderwood Street) were built in 1971–2 with Car Parking Ltd as contractors. The supermarket was Sainsburys' largest in London when it opened in 1973 and the six-storey structure had room for 636 cars. Its elevations were a syncopated variation of Armstrong and MacManus's unrealized designs of 1963 for General Gordon Place. The irregular concrete ribs were removed in 2008.[45]

Woolwich failed to establish itself as an office centre, but the Calderwood Street blocks remained publishing offices for a quarter-century, latterly, following mergers, as Miller Freeman House. Vacated in 1998, the property proved unlettable as offices, so a residential conversion designed by Barton Willmore for Deynacourt Ltd was approved in 2000. The freehold passed to Kerrington Developments, which saw the project through in 2002–6, with Barton Willmore and JL Construction. The blocks were raised two storeys under curved steel roofs, converted into 224 flats (marketed, with limited success, as for commuters), given blue balconies, and renamed the Vista Building, with the supplement of a short row of shops along Calderwood Street.[46]

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 cornice lost, the first-floor elevation is one of the few remnants of Powis Street prior to the transformations of the 1890s. To keep up with these and to provide two shops under four flats, Henderson had the building raised a storey in 1895, with J. B. Sanford & Co., then of Charlton, as builders. In 1901 there were fifteen people in the flats, fourteen in three families of Arsenal workers.[47]

Nos 83–85 were built in 1899 as a shop below offices ('Commercial Chambers'). This more florid building (Ill. 185) was produced by Church (a shaped gable has been removed), working with William Vogel Goad, a Camberwell Road builder, for G. Bishop and Alfred Bayly, lessees, who housed their London Equitable Finance and Discount Co. here alongside the Woolwich District Electric Light Co., the Home Counties House Property Co. and a solicitor. A tailor's shop was below. Later upstairs occupants included Eley and Allen, architects and estate agents.[48]

Nos 87–89 were built in 1897 through Church and Sanford for Edward and Herbert James Palmer, 'woollen

and Manchester warehousemen', clothiers and army contractors whose father had operated from this site since about 1862. However, Richard Naylor, an ironmonger and cycle agent, occupied the new building as a shop below a home for his family of five.[49]

Nos 91–95 are a remnant of a larger block that extended to No. 101 in a ten-bay, four-shop development of 1898–9, once articulated by three pedimented gables (Ill. 190). Probably overseen and designed by Church, Nos 91–97 were for John Upson of the London Boot Co., and Nos 99–101 for Hedley Vicars, a butcher named after a famously pious soldier. The builders were S. J. Jerrard and Sons of Lewisham, and Sanford. David Greig, the multiple grocers, were at Nos 91–93 from the outset into the 1970s. The upper storeys were in mixed use, with some flats, a surgery and refreshment rooms; from 1916 J. Lyons & Co. had Nos 97–99. It has latterly been an outlet for Burtons and Dorothy Perkins.[50]

Nos 97–101 are vestiges of the Chesterfield Properties shopping precinct scheme for which Sir John Burnet, Tait and Partners were architects. These unprepossessing units were built in 1967–8, in anticipation of other parts of the project, Nos 97–99 (for Dolcis, Upson's renamed firm) by Davis House, builders, and No. 101 by Trollope and Colls. The site of Nos 103–105 was to have had a ramped open way into the indoor precinct.[51]

Nos 103–105 appear to have been a relatively early rebuild of 1890–1, carried out for Joseph Hepworth & Son, clothiers, 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.[52]

Nos 107–109 were built in 1896–7 for Ebenezer 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 1901 and one of their 'booklovers' libraries' was established on the first floor. The expanding Woolwich Equitable Building Society took on these premises in 1910, and extended on to No. 107 in 1925.[53]

Nos 111–113. This corner block was built in 1896 as the headquarters of the Woolwich Equitable Building Society, which it remained until, outgrown, it was replaced in 1935 by Equitable House (see below). The Woolwich Equitable, one of the first building societies to be established on a permanent basis, was founded in 1847 on Powis Street. The formation of this institution, to finance home ownership through savings, was an important staging post in the history of mutualist enterprise in Woolwich, and a seed that grew to spread the name of Woolwich nationally. It was a departure from earlier and parallel temporary initiatives in Woolwich, and even the founding group's origins were in a temporary partnership of 1842, based at the west end of Powis Street in the Castle Inn (see page 79), where the proprietor, William Thunder, was the first chairman. The 'permanent' principle was introduced by a breakaway group of local businessmen in the home of Benjamin Wates, an ironmonger and engraver, at 145 Powis Street (Ill. 202). They launched the Woolwich Equitable Benefit Building and Investment Association, using a schoolroom at the back of the house that was run by Wates's sister, Jemima, as an office in the evenings. There were roots in Nonconformity – the Association's patron was Dr Carlile, the Congregationalist pastor at the nearby Salem Chapel (see page 78). In 1858 a house (No. 153) was obtained to be a proper office, then, in 1862, the Society moved to the site that is now No. 113, then newly made a corner property by the formation of Eleanor Road. It built two-storey premises that served as offices and a shop as well as the family home of Joseph Wates, nephew to Benjamin and Secretary from 1863.[54]

190. 71–113 Powis Street from the north-west, *c.*1905, showing (from right to left): Nos 111–113, the Woolwich Equitable Building Society's headquarters, 1896; Nos 107–109, 1896–7; Nos 103–105, 1890–1; Nos 91–101, 1898–9 (*part demolished*); Nos 87–89, 1897; Nos 83–85 (with tall gable), 1899; Nos 79–81, 1867, raised 1895

Great expansion of business ensued, the premises spread to No. 111 in 1876, and, as the lease renewal date of 1898 approached, the Society, chaired by Joseph Wates, tackled the question of its premises. In 1891 this task was charged to a committee of Wates, George James Champion and Robert Thomas Smith; Edwin Morris joined them in 1894 after a hiatus caused by the financial straits that followed the crash of the Liberator Permanent Building and Investment Society. A new lease was agreed with H. H. Church and Octavius Hansard, the Ogilby Estate surveyor, with a plan to add a storey to the existing building. Both Hansard and the Society's surveyor, John Oliver Cook (1852–1925), a former pupil of Church's, soon realized that this was not structurally feasible, so Hansard offered a longer lease in exchange for redevelopment. Cook presented plans for the new building in December 1895, and was obliged to confer with Church over revisions before gaining approval. However, in February 1896 Cook had to tell the Board that a clerical error (the transposition of two numbers in a calculation) meant that his approved estimate of £1,914 was a mistake, the true figure being £3,291. He offered to sacrifice a corner turret, but this was hardly enough. He was asked to leave the room and the Board asked Church either to start anew or to modify Cook's scheme to bring costs down. Church, preferring to work with Cook, replaced Portland stone with Beer freestone, more sparingly used, removed the turret and ornamental pediments, and made the basement smaller. But this only reduced the estimate to £2,800, and there was further disquiet when the lowest tender came in at £3,350. Even so, that was turned down in favour of another from the locally established Edward Proctor, and a contract of £3,648 was agreed. The new offices opened for business in January 1897 at a final cost, including furniture and fittings, of £4,107 14*s* 4*d* (Ill. 190).

The corner did get some emphasis, with an inscribed aedicular parapet panel, and there were also monogram and name panels on the Eleanor Road (Barnard Close) return, as well as lettered fascias. The building has since been painted and its parapet rebuilt, so these traces of identity, as well as the stone, have disappeared, as have the banking hall's mosaic floor and mahogany fittings. The Board Room was on the first floor, and above that there were lettable offices, Powis Street Chambers, with a separate entrance at No. 111. The four-bay range at 1 Barnard Close appears to have been part of the Society's development. Cook, whose own office had been here (1A Eleanor Road) since about 1890, was absent from the new building as he declined to pay the increased rent. But this was not a final parting of ways; Cook sat on the Society's Board from 1916 to 1925.[55]

Around the corner 1A–3A Barnard Close were first developed in the early 1860s as part of Eleanor Road.[56] Nos 2A and 3A are survivals from that time, and No. 1A was much altered if not wholly rebuilt in the 1890s.

Nos 115–123. One of the best early views of Powis Street shows this corner site in the late 1890s (Ill. 191). A broadly regular run of brick is broken by stone-faced premises at No. 117, probably built in the 1860s to house the Woolwich Mutual Benefit Building Society. Nos 119–123 were the premises of John Furlong and Son, 'auctioneers, estate agents, valuers, undertakers, removal contractors, upholsterers, steam-carpet beaters, etc'. John Furlong had taken a lease of No. 121 in 1806 and established himself there by 1812 as a cabinet maker. Facing Eleanor Road were Albert Rooms, which the firm used from 1862 for auctions. Edwin Furlong redeveloped the whole site in 1899–1903, probably involving H. H. Church in the design (Ills 192, 203). There was a three-storey showroom block to the fore, with new auction rooms and carpet-beating and other workshops round a yard. The furnishing showrooms were given a neoclassical facelift in 1933–5 to designs by J. A. Emes, and continued here until 1959, when the cost of rebuilding, which the lease required, became prohibitive.[57]

The Ogilby Estate let the site to the E. Alec Coleman Group for development, and a new building was erected in 1964–5 (Ill. 193). This was designed, in partnership with Victor Bloom and Partners, by the developer's favourite architects, the Owen Luder Partnership, working with the blowsy forcefulness characteristic of the firm's lead designer, Rodney Gordon. Shop units in Powis Street were becoming difficult to let and Nos 119–123 were not fitted out until 1968–9, when F. J. Wallis moved in with a self-service supermarket. Parts of their shopfront, made by Rudduck Contracts Department, of Benfleet, Essex, including a hand-laid 'random marble' or terrazzo lobby floor, remain in place.[58]

Nos 125–153 (RACS): see below
Nos 163–179: see pages 78–9

North side

Nos 2–10 (with 6–9 Beresford Square). The first building on Powis Street's north-east corner was 'Commercial House' (Ill. 194), leased to Joseph Grisbrook, a draper, in 1805, and occupied from 1839 by Thomas Pacey Birts, a jeweller and pawnbroker whose sons had, by the 1880s, a shop 'filled to repletion with watches, clocks, silver and electro plate, model engines, mathematical and surveying instruments, jewellery of a greatly varied description, spectacles, eye glasses' and so on.[59] Birts & Son also had premises across Green's End (where the west end of Equitable House now stands), in which they ran a furnishing and musical-instrument business. The Powis Street corner property with Nos 6–10 adjoining were rebuilt in 1894–7 as a three-storey block, to designs probably by H. H. Church (Ill. 184). Strong first-floor arcading gave unity, and Birts' corner sported an ornate clock tower on a semi-round turret. Within there were two levels of showrooms, offices and staff accommodation.[60]

Small brick houses, possibly always with shops, went up on the site of 6–9 Beresford Square in 1800–4 (Ill. 221). From 1860 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.[61]

The whole Powis Street–Beresford Square corner block was speculatively redeveloped in 1959–60 for Powis Holdings Ltd, possibly a subsidiary of Prudential Assurance, as five shop units. These followed the modernist lines of the slightly earlier development across the road, with similar Vitroslab and aluminium panels, and, facing Powis Street, stone-clad concrete frames with a pavement canopy (Ills 187, 231). 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 1971–2, for Town and Commercial Properties, with A. J. Hines and Co. as architects and CERAF Ltd as builders.[62]

No. 12. By 1807 Richard and William Powis had established the Shakespeare public house (Ills 187, 194, 231), its name presumably deriving from the adjacent theatre (see below). It was rebuilt in taller form in 1890–1 for G. H. Campbell. Church was in control and so probably the architect, with R. G. Battley of the Old Kent Road as builder.[63] What was known thereafter as the Shakespeare Hotel was said to be 'the finest and most elaborately fitted-up house in the town.'[64] Its front survives with little alteration, infilling of the ground-floor arcade aside. The premises were extended to the rear in 1899 to provide a top-lit billiard saloon, and from 1907 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.[65]

194. Powis Street, east end of the north side, *c.*1890, showing Commercial House (*c.*1805 in its origins) as Birts and Son, also the Shakespeare public house (sign above parapet) and (beyond) the former theatre of *c.*1800. *All demolished*

Nos 14–16. By 1801 this site accommodated a theatre that was leased to a Mr Osborne and run by William Beverley in 1810. With a 45ft (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 (Lancasterian) School. Around 1860 William Thomas Spiers, a confectioner and builder, reconverted it for shop use.[66] The site was redeveloped in 1895, with three storeys and twin shaped gables, and then again in 1958–60 as a shop and offices for Pearks Dairies, with J. Seymour Harris and Partners, architects, and G. B. Farrar and Co., builders.[67]

Nos 18–20 were built in 1923 for and by J. Lyons & Co. in a late and restrained echo of Church's Powis Street of a quarter century earlier.[68]

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 184, 231). Nos 26–28 went up first in 1894–5 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.[69]

Murray's Yard takes its name from John Murray, a carman, who from 1884 ran livery stables behind Nos 22–38 as a jobmaster or carriage contractor. He gradually built up an array of sheds with stalls for more than sixty horses

115–123 Powis Street (facing page)

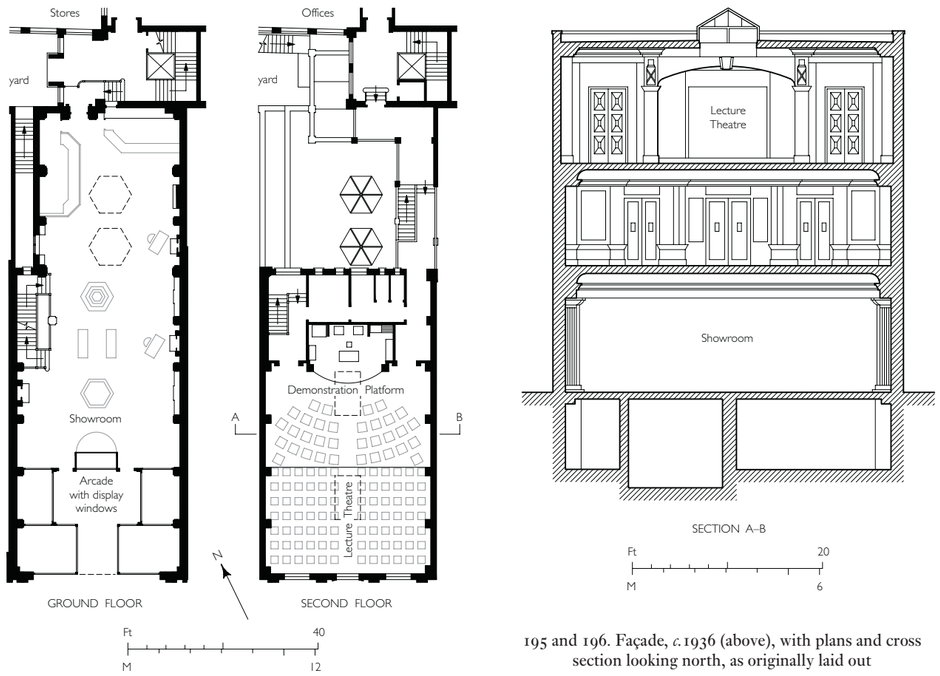
191 (*above*). In the late 1890s, showing John Furlong and Son's premises of *c.*1806–12 beyond No. 117, rebuilt in the 1860s for the Woolwich Mutual Benefit Building Society. On Eleanor Road, now Barnard Close (left), are Furlong's Albert Rooms of 1862

192. In the 1950s, showing Furlongs as rebuilt 1899–1903 and refaced 1933–5, RACS Central Stores beyond

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

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 reshaped to be a cooker-repair workshop in 1933, and a two-storey canteen block to its north was built in 1956.[70]

Nos 32–42. Here there is another broadly coherent red-brick group of the 1890s, developed in three parcels and largely intact, though altered by the removal or remaking of shaped gables (Ills 179, 184, 231). No. 32 was built in 1895–6 for Salmon and Gluckstein, chain-store tobacconists, 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. Holloway of Deptford the builder. The upper storeys accom-modated 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



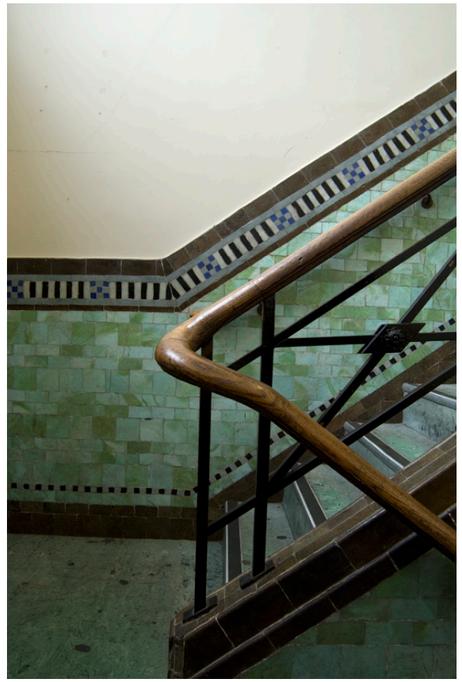
195 and 196. Façade, *c.*1936 (above), with plans and cross section looking north, as originally laid out

Electric House, 44–48 Powis Street, 1935–6, Woolwich Borough Council

1905 to 1994 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 1935 with a projecting clock.[71]

Nos 44–48. Buildings of 1895–7 at Nos 44–52 were like those that survive to the east, another gabled group in Church's Flemish manner, this one a symmetrical four-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'.[72] 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 steelwork 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 panelling 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 been removed or concealed.[73]

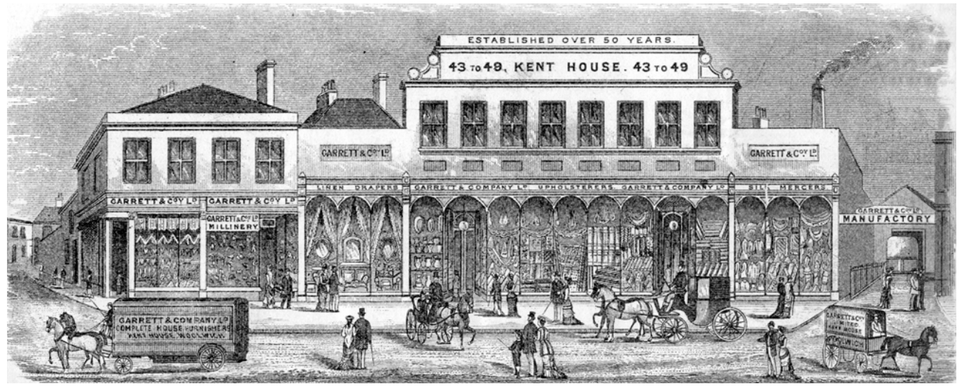
In 1930 the council's Electricity Department substantially extended its rear premises onto what had been Thomas Nash's timber yard. This extended area from Macbean Street to Murray's Yard was for many years a large electricity works depot. On its south side a three-storey block of stores and offices was built in 1931 to plans by John Sutcliffe, Borough Engineer. This has its frame expressed externally on what looks a utilitarian building. Inside, on the upper office floors, there is a surprisingly high-quality finish, with imposing classical door architraves and prettily patterned dado tiling on an open-well staircase (Ill. 197). In later works overseen by Tee, a covered link was made to the showroom building, and in 1937 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



197. Woolwich Borough Council Electricity Department offices (now the Macbean Centre), 1931, staircase detail, 2007

and adapted it as the Macbean Centre, for occupation by community and voluntary sector organizations, including Greenwich Mural Workshop. These were latterly joined by Pentecostalist churches. Since 2010 the site has been scheduled for clearance.[74]

Nos 50–60. 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 54–60) was an in-house scheme for Montague Burton Ltd, whose first Woolwich shop had opened at No. 60 in 1922 (Ill. 231). Thomas & Edge built both. A first application in 1957 had designs by Hector Hamilton Associates, which perhaps set a style that is unlike Burtons' house style. Three rectilinear storeys provided 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



200. 88–110 Powis Street, *c.*1910, showing (left to right): Nos 106–110, late 1890s; Nos 100–104, 1889 and earlier; Cuffs at Nos 88–98, 1891–3. *All demolished*. Kent House (Garretts) beyond

Kent House (Garretts), 68–86 Powis Street

198 (*above*). Shop of *c.*1830 with additions in an engraving of 1880

199 (*left*). As rebuilt in 1892–3 and 1898–9. Engraving of 1898

on the first, was finished internally with walnut panelling and a salt-and-pepper fabric effect.[75]

Nos 54–58 underwent a conversion of some historic note in 1974. The first UK branch of McDonalds, which was also the firm's 3,000th establishment 'system-wise', opened here. Above the restaurant there were training facilities, in anticipation of the spread of McDonalds across London. Robert Rhea oversaw the project, and Paul Preston, who emigrated from the US for the fast-food company, was the first manager. He later recalled that 'a thousand executives travelled from America for the Brit-busting opening', an event at which celebrity boxer Henry Cooper was besieged by young admirers. 'No one bought food. One man had a cup of tea six times, and people asked what French fries were.' Woolwich had been chosen because 'demographically, the town paralleled the country. We decided that if we could crack Woolwich, we could crack Britain.'[76]

Nos 62–66. First buildings of 1804–8 at Nos 54–66 had been replaced in 1892–6 as a seven-shop development, another symmetrically composed gabled group by Church (Ill. 184). Nos 62 and 64, though refronted in the early 1960s, have not been wholly rebuilt since they were put up in 1896 by James Chapman, for W. J. Harris and Co., sewing-machine and perambulator manufacturers, and J. B. Sanford, for Sidney H. Cuff and Co., drapers (see below). No. 66 was rebuilt in 1930 for Williamsons Ltd, refreshment contractors, by George Parker of Peckham. Here in the 1960s 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 Grisbrook & 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 1841 and extended to adjoining premises by the early 1850s (Ill. 198). The Grisbrooks' partner, F. A. Wallis, took over in 1862 and the shop was run as Wallis and Howes, with twenty-five staff housed here by the 1870s. 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 Hansard, the Ogilby Estate surveyor, who had designed Marshall and Snelgrove's ambitious drapery emporium of 1875–8 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 Hansard.

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 thoroughly 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 Powis Street looked like in 1900. This was the street's largest draper's emporium, with a twenty-one-bay front and the Invicta horse of Kent atop its central frontispiece. The shopfronts were originally fully glazed, indicating steel-frame construction (Ills 186, 199, 200, 231).[79]

In 1891, shortly before he rebuilt the main premises, Garrett had employed Church and H. L. Holloway to add service buildings 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 'carriage trade', 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 humbler 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 1901. 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 bedfellow is seldom permitted . . . Where it is permitted the assistants will decorate their room with little knick-knacks, texts or pictures giving a more home-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 1928 to designs by H. P. Monckton, and the yard was built over for more shop-floor space. Into the 1960s, when the Great Universal Store group were 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.[83] 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 1899 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 bakehouse or factory at the back. Adjoining, 41 Macbean Street is the last of about twenty houses built in the street in 1898–1900 to replace early Victorian predecessors. This was one of five built in 1898 by and for Thomas Nash, who had the timber yard behind. Both these buildings became parts of the council's Electricity Department depot in 1930.[84]

Nos 88–104. Garretts' great rival was Cuffs. Sidney H. Cuff, fancy draper, arrived at Nos 94–98 in 1884 and rebuilt Nos 88–98 in 1891–3 as a single large three-storey draper's emporium (Ill. 200). Church was his architect, again perhaps with Hansard 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 1889 for William

Vasey for the sale of baby linen.[85] Cuffs steadily prospered and rebuilt Nos 102–104 in 1939, with Courtney Pope and Co. as architects; then, after a difficult post-war hiatus, it redeveloped across the rest of the site to No. 88 in 1955–6, with Lewis Solomon, Son and Joseph, architects, and Thomas & Edge, builders (Ill. 186). This was the first big post-war modernist scheme seen through in Powis Street, and Cuffs now claimed an edge over Garretts, having 'brought the West End to Woolwich'. Cuffs outlasted Garretts, but only just, as closure came around 1975.[86]

The site was again redeveloped in 1984–5 as a group of five shops, a speculation for Prudential Assurance. The architects of this fortress-like block were John Clark Associates. The yellow-brown brick facing panels were precast by Trent Concrete Structures.[87]

Nos 106–112 was the site of buildings of the late 1890s (Ill. 200) that housed a branch of Upson's London Boot Co. (Nos 106–108), in which Church was at his most intricate; Hedley Vicars, butcher (No. 110); and, on the corner (No. 112), the Star and Garter public house founded by Richard and William Powis around 1807 and here up to the 1950s.[88] These were replaced by a speculative block of shops and offices, built in 1959–61 to designs by Newman Levinson and Partners. Unusually, it incorporates Ancaster stone facing panels, set against a Portland stone ground and curving round a corner. The offices have been made flats.[89]

Nos 114–118 with 1–13 Hare Street. The triangular corner plot on the west side of Hare Street was redeveloped in 1899–1900 for Liptons, the Glasgow grocery multiple which had run a shop on this site (No. 114 and 1–5 Hare Street) for some years – the firm expanded greatly after becoming a limited company in 1898. Their substantial building had upper-storey tenement flats that had been made offices by 1914 (Ill. 201). Adjoining, 116–118 Powis Street and 7–15 Hare Street had all been rebuilt in 1898–9.

201. Hare Street's west side, with the west end of Powis Street's north side, *c.*1957. Corner block (originally Liptons) and adjacent gable-fronted buildings all 1898–1900. *Demolished*

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 116 Powis Street. No. 11 Hare Street was slightly later with a differently shaped gable, for Henry Thornton, an oil- and colour-man.[90]

The corner shop became a branch of Burtons in 1929, which acquired the adjoining premises and through its own architects redeveloped the entire corner site on a set-back building line in 1961–2. Hardy and 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 chamfered 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 2012 when Powis 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.[91]

Nos 120–130 (with 15–21 Hare Street). The Premier Electric Theatre was built on this Powis Street site in 1910–11 as one of a number of small early cinemas that sprung up in Woolwich. Its promoter was Charles Archibold Henderson, the architect Ewen Barr. It could accommodate 662 in its hall and gallery, with 549 seats and the rest standing. It came to be 'famed for its damaged seats'.[92] Refronted by Robert Cromie 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.[93]

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 pair that extended to 15–21 Hare Street. This was unified for Davis's Checkerboard 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, latterly empty, had been converted to use as a restaurant in 1967.[94]

Nos 132–134 were built in 1901 for Edwin James Robson, a draper, with Church as architect and S. J. Jerrard as builder.[95] 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. 136 is a slender four-storey building of 1930–1, built for RACS funeral furnishers, established in 1923. A canted bay rises through all the upper storeys and bears the society's wreathed motto, 'Each for All, and All for Each'.[96]

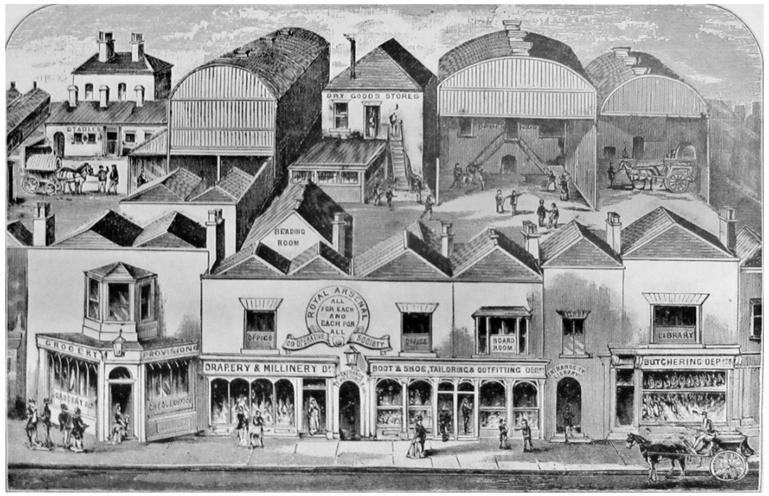
Nos 138–152 (RACS): see below
Nos 154–172: see page 78

Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society Stores

Two large landmarks of co-operative commerce dominate the west end of Powis Street – the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society's Central Stores of 1902–26, to the south, and the same society's department store of 1938–40, opposite. These are the most powerfully evocative monuments of a major force in the history of Woolwich, where co-operation was deeply rooted, and from which branches spread wide. Charles Booth believed there was 'nothing at all like it within the boundaries of London.'[97]

By 1860 Woolwich had more than a century's experience of co-operative trading (see pages 413–14), the area's large, skilled and settled workforce accounting for this exceptional history. But the earliest ventures had lapsed, and extant organizations, the Woolwich Baking Society and the Woolwich Co-operative Provident Society, were based in western parts of the parish, near the dockyard. The publication in 1858 of George J. Holyoake's *History of the Rochdale Pioneers* stimulated the formation of new co-operative retail societies across England. In this new context in 1868 William Rose and Alexander McLeod, both engineering workers at the Arsenal, launched what began as the Royal Arsenal Supply Association through the medium of a branch meeting of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. Rose was born in 1843 in Woolwich, on Warwick Street, and raised a Baptist. After working in the steam dockyard and in Silvertown he wound up at the Arsenal where, on reading Tom Paine, he became an agnostic and helped to set up a retirement fund to help to open opportunities for younger workers. McLeod, born in 1832, was a Scot who had found work as a turner at the Arsenal in 1860. The new organization's first base was Rose's house at 11 Eleanor Road, where a room was given over to be a store (as co-operative shops were always called). But in 1869 Rose was laid off, a victim of the defence cuts that brought so much insecurity to Woolwich (the Provident Society was another casualty), and he emigrated to Canada. McLeod took two rooms at 29 Parry Place, off Plumstead Road opposite the Arsenal, just outside Woolwich parish, and lived with his wife over the store. He became Secretary, and oversaw adoption of the Rochdale model, with profit-sharing through dividends (the divi), and of the name that was to stick, the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society Limited.

In 1873 the RACS had 232 members and had outgrown McLeod's small store. It moved to Powis Street, to a house approximately on the site of the west end of the later Central Stores. Typically for a co-operative, this was away from the main shopping district, but, coincidentally, it was next but one to the house in which the Woolwich Equitable Building Society had begun a generation earlier (Ill. 202). To start with, this store was only open four evenings a week and on Saturday afternoons, but this improved in July 1873 when the first employee was taken on. By 1879 there were 1,597 members, two-thirds of



202. Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society (RACS) stores, 145–150 (old consecutive numbering) Powis Street. Engraving of 1884. *Demolished*

them skilled workers for whom the respectability 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 1889, the RACS had become the largest co-operative society in London, and the twenty-first largest of more than 1,500 in the country. But its patchwork central premises were held on short leases. Negotiations with R. A. Ogilby in 1885–8 settled the promise of a new lease of 80 years from the reversion date of 1898, provided substantial sums were spent on improvements. In 1893 another house was converted for a confectionery department with tea rooms – otherwise 'somewhat scarce in Woolwich'.[98]

The first substantial building project was new stables, erected in 1890–1 as a large three-storey rear range with fireproof floors and fifty-two stalls. Such extensive stabling was typical of major co-operative sites. This was a depot for a growing number of branches as well as a place from which home deliveries of milk were made. A large bakery followed in 1892 on newly taken back land as the site was extended eastwards to Tappy's Place (giving the RACS the whole frontage that was, in the street's then new numbering, Nos 133–155). The architect for these projects was J. O. Cook, the builders the Co-operative Building Society of Brixton – the RACS lacked its own works' department until 1896. The bakery, hailed as one the finest facilities of its kind in the UK, opened on 17 February 1893 when members of the society were asked to celebrate a step towards the emancipation of workers through a peaceful revolution.[99]

The bakery is a three-storey block (Ill. 51), outwardly of stock brick, with a fireproof interior of concrete floors on composite iron or steel beams and cast-iron columns that divide the floors as a nave with aisles. On the lower storey there were eight ovens in each aisle. The top floor was for flour storage. More ovens were added on the first floor; the building was extended to the north in 1905, and the country's first travelling oven was installed in 1912. The bakery was refenestrated in 1961–3 in a conversion for RACS office use by A. L. Foreman, architect; all its chimneys were then removed.[100]

A comparably massive three-storey grocery warehouse was built at the south-west corner of the RACS site in 1902–6 to designs by Frank Bethell. This and the stables were cleared around 1990.[101]

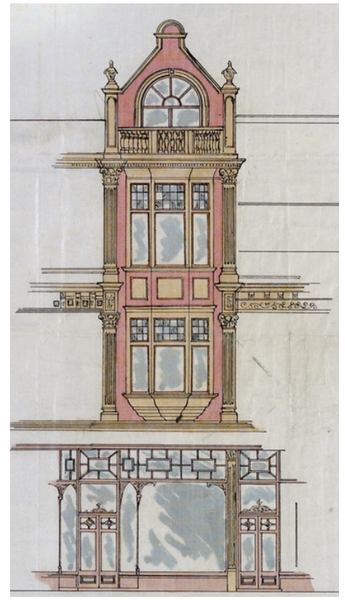
Former RACS Central Stores (125–153 Powis Street)

The rebuilding of the RACS central stores that had been agreed in the 1880s was delayed, first by a run on capital provoked by building-society failures in the early 1890s, then by litigation and finally by problems with the acquisition from Furlongs of additional property to the east (Nos 125–131), requiring the renegotiation of the Ogilby leases in 1901. The RACS was sharing in the prosperity that the Boer War brought to Woolwich, and it was in 1900 that the Society had begun to build hundreds of 'affordable' houses on the Bostall estate in Plumstead. Frank Bethell, the Society's architect, had plans for the new Central Stores well in hand by 1898 when it was already settled that a statue of McLeod, still Secretary and Manager, would be placed in a niche over the main entrance; McLeod died in May 1902, so never saw the building.

Bethell worked in consultation with James Hall, General Manager, and William Bethell, Assistant Manager and probably a cousin. Together they came up with a scheme for the entire Powis Street frontage, 270ft (82m) 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 125–141), 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 21,788. 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 130 horses and 86 vehicles accompanied by military bands.[102]

From 1904 the RACS began to spread its shops across south London, in part to 'counteract the severe depression in the immediate neighbourhood'.[103] Amid great expansion, the third section of the Central Stores, the block west of the turret, 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 1924 the RACS, with fifty-seven branches and more than 100,000 members, was one of Britain's foremost co-operative societies and flush with money. The final western section was added in 1925–6 under the supervision of S. W. Ackroyd, now the society's architect.[104]

The Central Stores would look, as Ian Nairn discerned, more at home in the Midlands.[105] Yet the building's symmetrical regularity, architectural coherence and state of

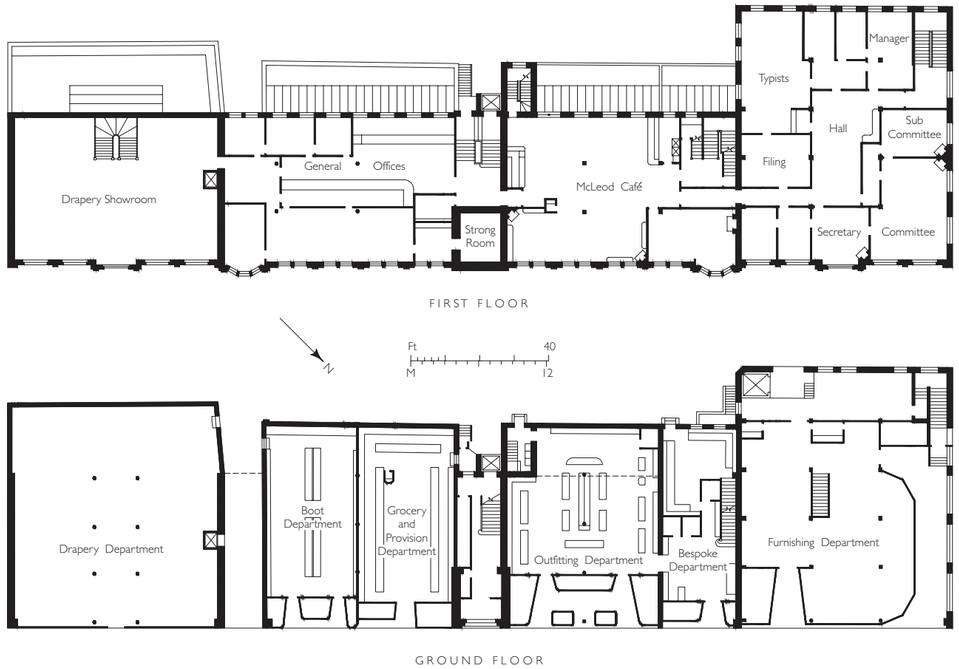


204. RACS Central Stores, drawing for oriel bay, Frank Bethell, architect, 1902

203. RACS Central Stores as rebuilt in 1902–3 at 125–141 Powis Street, earlier RACS buildings beyond. Photographed in 1907

preservation would make it noteworthy anywhere (Ills 192, 205) – not that this was radical or progressive architecture: 'Your co-operator, as a rule, is averse to anything which smacks of the alien.'[106] In a long range, the centre section has a palace-front treatment that loosely echoes that of Kent House. However, the central copper-domed clock tower that rises 106ft (32m) is a significantly grander touch, and there are also the lower outer sections. The stores are 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 Ibstock red bricks, and the resultant loud visual effect differs strongly from that produced by the contemporary elevations of Harrods, with which misleading comparison has been made. Indeed, in January 1903 a RACS delegation visited Harrods, for no purpose other than the comparison of stable facilities. It found its own to be superior.[107]

Above the main entrance McLeod's over life-size statue stands in a pedimented aedicule. 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 the foundation stones and a war memorial to fallen RACS employees, unveiled in August 1920. On a fireproof first



205 and 206. RACS Central Stores, 125–153 Powis Street, 1902–26. In 2007 (above) with plans as in 1926 (below)

floor of steel and concrete the first build of 1902–3 incorporated cast-iron columns and Hayward's fire doors. The upper floor was timber. The later sections to the west appear to be wholly steel-framed, with boxed stanchions. There were plate-glass shop windows, perhaps never as ornate as Bethell intended and soon remade. The east section housed three separate shops for groceries, boots and draperies – the last to the east had an upper showroom, where matchboard lining survived in 2011 (Ill. 206). The building was unlike other co-operative society central stores in that the upper storeys were not otherwise public spaces for members, but used to house staff in offices; there were strong rooms in the tower. The first extension to the west was originally a furniture shop below first-floor committee rooms, respectively converted to an outfitting shop and the McLeod Café in 1926–7, when the previous uses transferred to the deeper west extension. For these more spacious and more richly panelled committee rooms there is access from the west end, via a tiled staircase. Throughout, the top storey was for workrooms and offices. The basement housed stockrooms, except to the west where it was part of the furniture shop. The centre sections have flat roofs, originally covered with patent vulcanite and intended as roof gardens.[108]

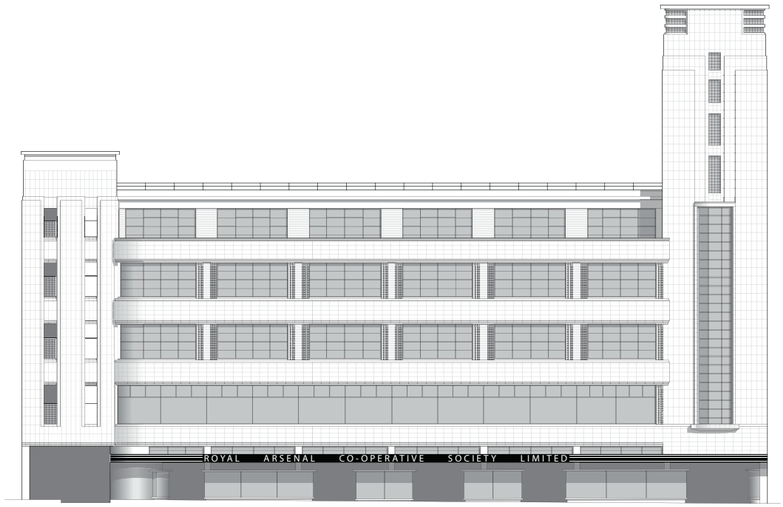
There was further westward extension in 1937 in the shape of temporary timber sheds for a radio and garden shop, while the Society rebuilt on the other side of Powis Street. Plans for shopfront renewal and other improvements at the Central Stores were prepared at the same time, to follow on from the facing development, but probably not carried through until after the war. The whole shopfront was again replaced in 1965–6 when A. L. Foreman, the Society's architect, installed a flat modernist expanse topped by a 'warerite' plastic fascia, said to be an imitation of Venetian marble. The Central Stores were vacated soon after the RACS lost its independence in 1985 (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 by the Douglas Moat Practice, with Anglo Holt Construction as contractors, to form a Travelodge budget hotel of 120 bedrooms, with shop units to the street.[109]

Former RACS Department Store (138–152 Powis Street)

The RACS continued to grow prodigiously through the 1920s and 1930s, membership rising to 382,000 in 1939. From about 1920 it gradually expanded a foothold in premises (mostly of 1898–9) 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 cartage 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, initialled drawings. The Society was conscious that the facilities of its Central Stores, a series of shop units, were 'altogether out of date' and suffered by 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 Ogilby 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 went ahead despite growing awareness that war was approaching. The Leeds Fireclay Company supplied the faience, Power's and Deane, Ransome's Ltd of Cubitt Town the steelwork, 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.[110]

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.[111] 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 1950s. 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 1963–4 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 perpetuate 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 open-well staircase, 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,



207. Ground-floor plan (earlier fabric hatched) and front elevation as intended (the west tower was never clad), with detail of 'co op' staircase railings

208. In 2007

209. Counter and shelving fitted in 1964

210. Third-floor restaurant, 1963

211. Staircase, 1984

RACS Department Store, 138–152 Powis Street, 1938–40

with columns on a 20ft (6m) grid, once lined with Austrian oak, were also always connected by an escalator at the back, as was becoming usual in large stores in the 1930s. They were refitted in 1964–6 (Ill. 209). At the back, stairs down to the basement shop floor have railings detailed like those in the tower. There was a restaurant on the third floor, on high, typically, to keep food smells out of sales areas. This was stylishly finished with recessed lighting and white Indian mahogany lining (Ill. 210). The kitchens also served a dining-room annexe for senior staff that had a roof terrace to the west and a thoroughly Tudor decorative scheme, probably chosen by the managers. This could not be finished with oak panelling as was intended, so in 1940 richly moulded 'Dekarte' plaster panelling and ceiling beams were substituted.[112]

Subsequent amalgamations took RACS membership past 500,000 in the 1970s, making it the UK's second largest co-operative society. But co-operative stores suffered in competition with supermarket chains that operated nationally and the RACS found itself unable to stem trading losses. The logic of economies of scale forced the Society to merge into the Co-operative Wholesale Society in 1985. Like the central stores, the department store closed, but the upper storeys of the later building were used as the CWS's regional offices until 1999, latterly including an archive and small short-lived museum organized by Ron Roffey, the Regional Administrator. There has been occasional use for filming, as for *The Greatest Store in the World* (1999) and *Children of Men* (2006), and the otherwise empty building has suffered from vandalism.[113]

A substantial development scheme encompassing both RACS stores was devised through Wilson Bowden Developments in 2004–5 'to enhance Woolwich town centre's underperforming retail offer'.[114] 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 thereafter as credit vanished.[115]

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 Hayre) was here by the 1730s.[116] To start with Hare Street was just a court or cul-de-sac off the High Street, inserted in the mid-1760s between Dog Yard and Cock Yard, where it replaced Woolwich Hall, the old manor house (see page 5). Richard Hare and Robert Salmon, who had the brewery as partners, undertook this development through an agreement of 1766 with Edward Bowater. At least one of the 60-year leases that ensued was backdated to 1764. Hare and Salmon saw to the building of opposed brick rows, ten houses in all, with 15ft (4.6m) frontages and central-chimneystack double-pile plans; six more houses faced the High Street. In 1781 Christopher Wrenn, a Woolwich baker, took the head lease. These houses appear not to have stood much beyond their lease ends, when there were shops here.[117]

The southern and greater part of Hare Street was laid out and built up with more than forty houses in 1804–9 as part of the wider development of the Powis estate (Ill. 181). First named Richard Street, after one of the Powis brothers, it branched obliquely from Powis Street to join the High Street via narrower Hare Street. Many of its two- and three-storey houses probably always had shops.[118] There were several butchers, six in the 1840s, four of whom had slaughterhouses, and two fishmongers. But there was no sewer. Alongside slops from other inhabitants, 'blood and offal from the slaughterhouses flowed down the street.'[119] On the east side Myrtle Place had sixteen small houses, some back-to-back with Union Buildings, most behind front gardens, with wash-houses and communal privies across the alley. West of the Hare Street end what had become the Lion Brewery was rebuilt in 1849 (see page 72), and, around the same time and clustered together, the Prince Albert and White Hart public houses were established, with the Swan beerhouse opposite. On the street as a whole most buildings appear to have had shops by this time, selling a range of ordinary commodities, about half of them food. The name Richard Street seems to have faded from use in favour of Hare Street by the 1870s.[120]

The older and narrower north end was a bottleneck. Following representations made in 1877, the Woolwich Local Board of Health persuaded the Metropolitan Board of Works to pay half the cost of widening on the east side, work carried out in 1882.[121] This led to the building of what largely survives as 50–62 Hare Street, and there was some further rebuilding opposite in the later 1880s, with H. H. Church as architect.[122] Hare Street gained greater importance as a through route in 1889 on the opening of the Free Ferry immediately to the north. With the reversion of the Powis leases due in 1898, southern properties were nearly all rebuilt, the east side in 1894–9, the west side, set back to a new building line, in 1898–1900 (Ills 45, 201). Church probably had oversight of the architectural design, but an absence of coherence suggests the presence too of other hands. Council plans for an equivalent widening of the north end of the street on the west side were put forward in 1923 and seen through in 1928–9; new buildings at Nos 41–61 followed.[123]

The Ogilby Estate and LCC renewal projects of the late 1950s had a major impact on Hare Street. The triangular Powis Street corner on the west side was redeveloped in 1959–62 (see above), and on the east side buildings of 1960–5 went up to either side and set back from an enlarged Woolworths.

Hare Street thus falls into five historic development blocks, three on the west side, of 1959–62, 1898–1900 and 1928–30, from south to north; and two on the east side, of 1960–5 to the south (in which the original Woolworths of 1930 is embedded) and 1882 to the north, with a remnant from 1898–9 between.

West side
Nos 1–21: see 114–130 Powis Street

Nos 23–25 are a vestige of a group of shops (Nos 17–25) of 1898–1900, 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; Nos 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. The Mitchells were the descendants of Henry Cornish, who had a big frontage here from 1805, with a larger slaughterhouse behind two-storey buildings. In 1923–4 butchering gave way to Barclays Bank (No. 23) and David Greig, multiple grocers (No. 25).[124]

No. 27 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 (Ill. 185).[125]

Nos 29–31 were put up in 1899 for John Upson and built by Thomas & Edge, probably to designs by Church. Below the distinctive first-floor Venetian windows there was an imposing columned 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 grocery, with upper-storey offices. These joined at the back to the new department store at 138–152 Powis Street, with a top-floor panelled conference room in the link. The grocery had already been revamped to be self-service when a refit in 1961 brought Woolwich its first delicatessen. There was another refurbishment in 1965, to try to keep up with competition from Fine Fare at Nos 36–42.[126]

Nos 33–37. Through the Victorian period Thomas Parkes and Son, chemists, had part of this site as 'Parkes Medical Hall' (Ill. 212). Redevelopment in 1899 was for Gardiner and Company's Scotch House Ltd, another chain, with Turtle and Appleton of Battersea as builders; once again this may not be Church's design. The large steel-framed clothiers' and outfitters' shop had a plate-glass and polished-granite shopfront, thistles and rampant lions in first-floor railings, 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 show floors with a central lantern and circular light well. To a later eye the shop was

212. Parkes Medical Hall, Hare Street (site of No. 37), *c.*1890. *Demolished*

'redolent of Victorian comfort with mahogany furniture and dark brown furnishings'.[127]

Nos 41–45. The White Hart public house, rebuilt in 1884, and other shops were replaced after road widening with a neo-Georgian 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 Woodford as builders. No. 45 retains a deep shopfront of about 1970, when photographic equipment was sold here.[128]

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 in 1928, after road widening, with H. P. Monckton, the Ogilby Estate surveyor, as architect, and Thomas & Edge, builders (Ill. 213). With its faience lower storey and small copper dome

213. Former Burtons, 51–61 Hare Street and 119A Woolwich High Street, 1929. Photographed 2009

it has been altered little since. A two-storey bottle store to the rear was built in 1930 by West and Brooks Ltd.[129]

Nos 51–61 (with 119A 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) for road widening. Architecture was an important part of Burtons' pitch, and Harry Wilson, the firm's in-house architect, deployed here a version of one of several lively types, using faience in a neo-Egyptian mode (Ill. 213). The builders were W. H. Gaze and Sons of Kingston. Remarkably, most of the original shopfront survives (behind shuttering), with Burtons' usual black-granite surrounds, slender wooden mullions, and even some curved corner glass. The upper storey was probably a billiard hall, to attract working-class male customers. The shop was converted to a restaurant in the 1980s, with a bright yellow fascia. The upper storey has become a club.[130]

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 1895–6, as were Nos 2–4 in 1899, 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.[131]

Nos 2–10. The south block was rebuilt in 1961–3 for British Home Stores, with G. W. Clarke as architect and steelwork 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 2–16 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.[132]

Nos 12–16 was rebuilt in 1894–5 for George H. Leavey and Co., outfitters, who also had workroom 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 1950) to put forward a redevelopment scheme in 1962, designed by Ian Fraser and Associates, architects, projecting an alloy-clad

214. Woolworths, 24–28 Hare Street, 1930

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.[133]

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 1962–3 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 1895–6), 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 cafeteria. Around 1990 this store became an early English branch of Primark, the Irish budget-clothing retailer.[134]

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 fascia proclaimed 'By appointment to the War Department and to the Viceroy of Egypt'.[135] Robert James Warren's building was replaced in 1897, but a butcher's shop at No. 30, another outlet run by Hedley Vicars from 1896, kept its earlier form (Ill. 214).[136]

The site was redeveloped as two shop units in 1963–5 for Prudential Assurance (through Town and Commercial Properties), using a curtain-wall scheme of 1961 that incorporates a stone surround and brick panels. The architect was S. M. Haines, working with the British Reinforced Concrete Engineering Company. There was a first-floor restaurant.[137]

Nos 36–42 were rebuilt in 1896 for George Robinson and Sons and in 1898–9 for Isaac Septimus Taylor and Co., both drapers.[138] These firms merged around 1930 and formed what was

> an antediluvian department store, even in the 30's. 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.[139]

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.

215. View from Green's End, looking north-east across the site that is now General Gordon Square, with Woolwich New Road to the right. Watercolour of *c.*1790 by Paul Sandby

Daniels Ltd by Lander, Bedells and Crompton, architects, and employed Ian 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 outgrowing Equitable House. The shop was converted to a Fine Fare supermarket in 1963–4, and the offices to use by the Inland Revenue in 1968; National Health Service occupancy followed.[140]

Nos 44–46 were built in 1898–9 for Upson's London Boot Co. by Turtle 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 for bottles of spirits. There were 'such scrambles' for the limited supply 'that until the women tore off the wrappers from the bottles, they did not know whether they had paid 10/6 for gin, whiskey, or rum'.[141]

Nos 50–58. This row of five shop-houses was built in 1882 following the first widening of Hare Street, and so forms part of the earliest surviving large group of buildings on either Powis Street or Hare Street. The builder was William Harris of Green's End, who was perhaps also the developer, as he owned all but No. 50, which pertained to William James Munday, a flour or corn factor. Rich stucco-relief bands, architraves and a cornice once unified the fronts (Ill. 185). The bands survive at Nos 50 and 58, the cornice only at No. 58. The intervening properties were refronted in plain brick in the 1960s and 1970s. A walk-in jeweller's shopfront at No. 50 had to be remade after looting in 2011. There are conventional rear-staircase plans.[142]

Nos 60–62. The other part of the redevelopment of 1882, 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 45, 56). The enriched cornice includes tiled panels, but a crude rebuilding in brick of the once largely glass first floor has marred the building.[143]

East of Powis Street

Green's End

An ancient road called Cholic Lane wound its way downhill 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 ropeyard 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 8, 215).[144] The New Cross Turnpike Trust transformed Cholic Lane in 1765–6, replacing its north end on a new line further east (Woolwich New Road). This left a dogleg, 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.

216. Beresford Square from the east in a lithograph of *c.*1835, showing (left to right) the Salutation public house, 1833–4, Holy Trinity, Beresford Street, 1833–4, and Beresford Gate, 1828–9

217. Beresford Square area, from the Ordnance Survey *Ten Feet Plan of Woolwich*, 1853 (contemporary colouring incomplete)

Land east of this road was part of the Burrage 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), though the rerouting of Plumstead Road detached that building from the rest of the Arsenal.

The 'paltry buildings'[145] 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'.[146] The Ordnance Arms re-established itself along the New Road to the east, only to find itself again on an island after 1831 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'.[147] 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 Burrage 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

218. Beresford Square from the south-west in 1915

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 informally, a market (Ill. 216). Existing hostelries 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 1808, did not take (see page 250). Traders drifted back to Market Hill and to the new open space of Beresford Square where there were no market tolls. 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 in a climate of anxiety and indignation up to an 'opening' in September 1888 – upheavals throughout east London earlier that year associated with crackdowns on market traders had led to the formation of the London United Costermongers' Protection League. The 'Market Place' was laid out by H. O. Thomas, the Board's surveyor, with marked-out pitches for a total of 136 stalls – thirty-eight on the west side, and fifty-three more to the east, across tram lines that had been laid down in 1880. There were also twenty-five small pitches lining the passage to the New Road, and twenty further stalls along that road's west side. In the middle of the square a circular and brightly ornamental urinal was joined in 1890 by an iron toll house. A drinking fountain was provided, and near the gate there was a drinking trough for horses, one of two still *in situ*; the other is dated 1904.[148]

The market was 'very lively and ordinary', thought Italo Svevo in 1903.[149] 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*s* you can turn that 'owlin wilderness you calls your 'ome into a smilin' garden.' It was reported that, 'among all the chaffing and wordy warfare which goes on in this market great cheerfulness is the predominant feature'.[150]

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 1885–6, and the eastern island block, hitherto part open, was also filled in an ambitious development of 1889–90. As if in response, Beresford Gate was raised in 1891, and, with Powis 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.[151]

The market aside, Beresford Square continued to be the centre of Woolwich life, with its largest public houses. It was an important meeting or rallying point, hugely populated 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 8,000 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

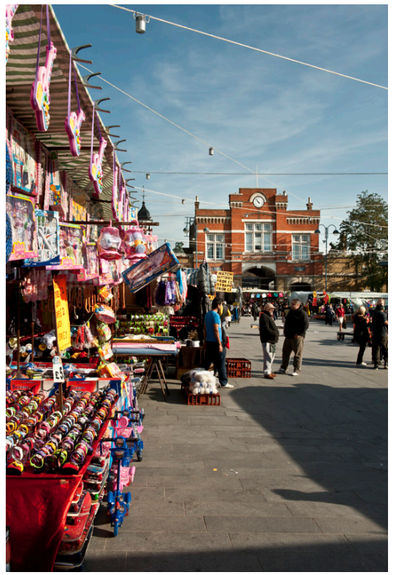
> the essence of Woolwich is Beresford Square. It is Woolwich Bovrilized. At half an hour past noon the Arsenal gates open upon it, and it becomes the property of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. In the evening it belongs to aimless sauntering soldiers and their ladies. On Saturday nights it is a joyous county-town market-place, filled with cheapjacks, where the Cockney and the Kentish tongues are vigorously exchanged. On Sunday nights it is an arena where all the creeds of the world wrestle for supremacy: Salvation Army, Agnostic, Free Church, Socialist, Brotherhood, Ethicalist, Calvinist, Comtist, Hegelian, Bolshevist – there they gather and dispute…and evermore are moved on by the over-worked police. At all other times it is just Beresford Square, Woolwich, where you may buy the best of all fried potatoes.[152]

Woolwich Council rebuilt the urinal as underground lavatories in 1912–13 and put up two adjacent permanent open shelters in 1923. The market, often crowded, was enmeshed in the nerve centre of transport in Woolwich, with trams and other traffic running through the square. With a view to making the market less hazardous, extension to the east with a covered market was mooted in 1901, but this was not then pursued and it was 1936 before the council's covered market on Plumstead Road opened. Even after that the square kept its compact vitality, with a presence unlike that of linear street markets more typical of London. There were guess-your-weight merchants and escapologists, with Salvation Army brass-band accompaniment and naphtha-flare lighting in the winter.[153]

There were plans for reorganizing the square in the LCC's town-centre scheme of 1958, refined by Woolwich Borough Council in the early 1960s. Traffic congestion and safety were still concerns, so a through road and demolitions were considered to make the market 'an island sited in a sea of traffic' with a clock tower and subways 'to ensure safe and swift access'.[154] The square continued to serve as a meeting point for protests against factory closures, but to little avail, and the closure of the Arsenal changed planning perspectives. The Greater London Council approved plans for widening Plumstead Road that assumed the demolition of Beresford Gate (see page 163), and a plan to ban traffic from the square was put forward in 1972. When the road was routed through the Arsenal in 1984–6 (Ill. 156), Beresford Square was pedestrianized, but otherwise left unchanged, with the former gate stranded.[155]

Dynasties of stall-keepers with interwoven family lineages dating back to 1888 died away and there was a steady decline in the popularity of the market and the wider shopping district. Greenwich Council relandscaped the square in the early 1990s, with new public conveniences in an above-ground block to the north-west, where Holy Trinity Church had stood (see pages 79–80). At the New Road entrance a two-sided metal portal was erected, with images and inscriptions reflecting the market's history. A steel sculpture at the north-east corner, the *Woolwich Ship* by Tom Grimsey, was added in 1999 with help from the Woolwich Development Agency, then removed in 2010. The number of pitches has declined, but Beresford Square's market, still daily and still council-run, continues to sell a great range of goods. It is also still lively and ordinary (Ills 219, 220, 231). The square was landscaped yet again in 2010–11 (see below).

219. Beresford Square from the north-west in 2009



220. Beresford Square from the south-west in 2011

221. High Pavement and the west side of Beresford Square, *c.*1868, showing the Salutation public house of 1760 (centre) and its successor of 1833–4 (right). *All demolished*

West side

Buildings on the west side of Beresford Square stand behind a newly 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 large railed-in forecourt with two flights of steps up a shallow incline (Ills 217, 221). Trees were planted in 1867–9, but the enclosure was obliterated for the formation of the market just twenty years later.[156]

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 ropeyard. This was probably the Salutation 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 1760 as a six-bay block, perhaps soon divided, to the north of which there was an entrance to Salutation 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.[157] After closure of the ropeyard in 1833 the Salutation moved into new premises next door, closer to the Arsenal's new gate (Ills 216, 217, 221). The inn of 1760 had come to house the Royal Lancer beerhouse and a grocer, William Topley. In 1892–3 the proprietor of the Salutation, F. Bishop, replaced both buildings, for a larger pub (Ill. 184) and, in place of the earlier one, three houses with shops, built by J. J. Chessum and Sons of Haggerston. From this group, No. 5 survives. There had been plans to build a Grand Theatre here in 1889. Frank Matcham prepared a lavish Moorish scheme for H. J. Borley, who then held the Theatre Royal on Beresford Street.[158]

The entrance to Salutation Alley shifted north in the 1830s, and a few more cottages were added. Much of the alley's housing was replaced in 1872–4, with four larger houses on the south side. But there was a fatal collapse of two older houses in 1876, and in 1889 another was noted as housing three generations (a married couple, their daughter and her two children) in one small room.[159] The Booth survey notes provide some cartoonish stereotyping from a visit to Salutation Alley in 1900: 'very poor and rough, Irish, some costers, some thieves, fat loathsome women, barrows'.[160] The far end was displaced by the Drill Hall that was built behind Beresford Street in 1889–90 (see page 82) and demolished around 1970. Its site has latterly been used as a pound for market traders.

Beyond the entrance to Salutation Alley was Richard Rixon's 'library', built around 1836. Rixon was a bookseller, printer, engraver, stationer, registrar and rate-collector. His shop was replaced in 1913 by a cinema erected for the Woolwich Arsenal Cinematograph Co., formed by two retired officers, Cdr. Conyngham A. Denison, RN, and Col. William Leslie Davidson, RA. Their architect was R. 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 Salutation Alley, and was further extended to the rear in 1925–6 with a hall that incorporated parts of more displaced houses.[161]

The cinema, which closed in 1961, the last four houses in Salutation Alley, condemned as slums in 1955, the Salutation 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 Levinson and Partners in 1964, but not built until 1969–70, to provide a supermarket and two smaller shop units with storage and offices above. Horizontal 'Granitex' rendered bands alternate with red-brick vertical panels.[162]

South side

When John Betjeman visited Woolwich in 1965 he admired **18–19 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 Burrage Estate land just south of the irregular waste-ground row that was cleared in 1831 for the square. That row was owned by Robert Everitt, a long-established Woolwich bricklayer, who was otherwise building hereabouts in the early 1780s. He may well have built this pair.[163] 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. 19 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-newel staircase, plain-panelled partitions and cupboard doors, and other simply moulded joinery, along with pegged ceiling beams, bead-edged because always open to view. The first occupant of this house appears to have been a Capt. Erskin. A Capt. Parish had the other house in 1795. 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.[164]

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 the clearance of 1831. There were then at least five other pubs across London carrying this name, which derives from the crest of the Cutlers' Company. No. 19 gained its forward shop extension in 1864, Church and Rickwood being responsible. A new leaseholder, Alfred Lawrance, enlarged the pub in 1885–6 with a mostly timber single-storey building over the front garden, designed by Church. This was replaced in plain brick in the late 1950s, with Eley and Rickcord, 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, 10 Beresford Square.[165]

South of No. 19, the site of 20–24A Green's End was redeveloped in 2005–9 for the Docklands Light Railway (see below). 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 Powrie, the Board of Ordnance's Clerk of Works (Ills 182, 217). The London and Middlesex Banking Company took it and in 1863 built over its front garden. All was replaced in 1905 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. Adjoining, 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 22–24A) of 1902–3 had a boldly polychromatic front, designed by Church for D. K. Somers.[166]

222. Elephant and Castle public house (No. 18) and 19 Green's End in 1957. Houses of the early 1780s with front gardens built over in 1885–6 and 1864 respectively. Also showing 17 Beresford Square (left) and part of 20 Green's End (right)

The frontage at **10–14 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 recess behind the Elephant and Castle (Ill. 217). It was perhaps a sign of Beresford Square's growth as a place of commerce that No. 12 was built in 1885 for George Lawrance, a newsagent, stationer, discount bookseller and tobacconist, who was probably related to Alfred Lawrance at the Elephant and Castle (Ill. 219). Church was the architect and John Walker of Limehouse the builder.[167] To either side, two single-storey shops (Nos 10–11) and the shallow shop premises at Nos 13 and 14 were also built in 1885–6 for the Lawrances, part at least by Lonergan Bros of Plumstead.[168] 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. Nearest the square, No. 2B was built in 1896 as Edward Dinmore's dining-rooms by H. Brown of Stoke Newington. Its twin at No. 2A appears to have been added in 1903 for William Rose by W. Sharpin of Buckhurst Hill. These premises were unified in 1935. 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 1950s at 4–8 Woolwich New Road were cleared for the Docklands Light Railway.[169]

East side

Nos 15–18 Beresford Square is an imposing block of 1889–90 – a trendsetter 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 1888 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 hostelry 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 brownish tiling around 1954. There was a 40ft(12m)-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. 15, soon converted to a grocer's shop. No. 16 was a tailor's then a bootmaker's, and No. 17, having begun as picture framer's and bookseller's shops, was by 1904 occupied by J. F. Endean and Son, leather merchants. The census of 1891 picked up just thirty-three residents in all the block's upper-storey spaces.[170]

Plumstead Road to Vincent Road

This section deals with the area bounded by Plumstead Road, Woolwich New Road, Vincent Road and the parish boundary. In 1765–6 the New Cross Turnpike 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 cut out the Green's End dogleg, was the north end of much more extensive road improvements along and beyond Cholic Lane (see page 396). In the 1780s 'many small houses' were built along the east side of the new road, which continued to be known as part of Cholic Lane until around 1808. Woolwich's new Town Commissioners then took responsibility for the upkeep of what was thenceforth called the New Road, though it

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

was already more than forty years old. From 1937 it was Woolwich New Road.[171]

The **market hall** at **5 Plumstead Road** straddles the Woolwich–Plumstead parish boundary, as did the first building on this site, a chapel of about 1770 built for followers of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. This had a three-bay front, with a central recessed arch rising through a pediment, and a galleried interior. The congregation moved to the Salem Chapel in 1799 (see page 78), and the Board of Ordnance took the building for worship by the Royal Artillery, but only until the Regiment's chapel at the barracks was completed in 1808. It was adapted in 1809 to be the Royal Arsenal Chapel, also known as the Ordnance Chapel, and largely reserved for Ordnance employees and their families (Ill. 217). There was a painted-glass window of 1817–18 by Richard Hand. The chapel was again converted around 1900 to be the Arsenal's lecture hall and library.[172]

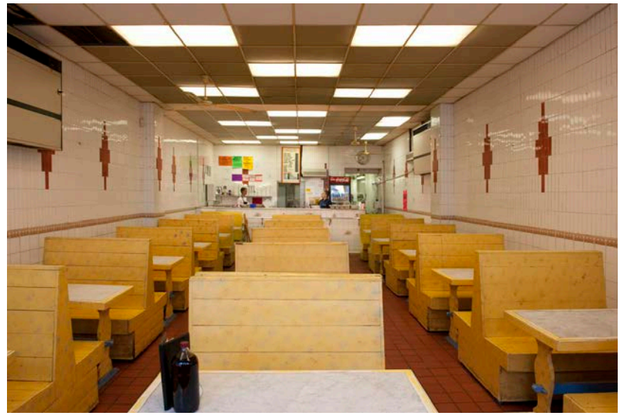
Woolwich Borough Council then acquired the former chapel and demolished it for the widening of Plumstead Road in the late 1920s. In 1932 a larger site, extending further east, was cleared for use as an open-air market, to relieve congestion and accommodate overspill from Beresford Square. Three years later the council decided to cover this new market and a scheme from the Horseley Bridge and Engineering Company of Tipton, obtained through the Borough Engineer, H. W. Tee, was built in 1936. This provided a steel-framed building with a patent 'Lamella' tied-arch roof of 95ft (29m) span to permit a stanchion-free floor (Ill. 223).[173] The roofing system, using standardized, short, shaped members known as lamellae – in this case pressed steel bars bolted into a diamond pattern – was of German origin, deriving from a timber construction technique patented by Friedrich R. B. Zollinger in 1921; the Horseley company had held the UK licence for the steel patent since 1930.[174] The Plumstead Road public market 'never really caught on',[175] but desultory use continues in 2012, with the site scheduled for redevelopment. The broad pavement north of the market was

224. Royal Mortar Tavern and 2 Plumstead Road, 1842. Photographed *c.*1855. *Demolished*

relandscaped in 2008 to designs by Witherford Watson Mann, architects.[176]
West of the Royal Arsenal Chapel a villa of the 1770s (Ill. 224) was replaced in 1885–6 by 3, 3A and 3B Plumstead Road, three houses with shops built by and for Alexander Martin, a plumber and zinc worker who took the largest property at 3B for himself. Three of four shaped gables have been remade, an alteration probably from the late 1930s.[177]
At the corner of Plumstead Road and Woolwich New Road, where a milestone marked 'IX Miles from London', there was another public house, first built as the Mortar soon after construction of the New Road. Used for the Royal Artillery officers' mess before their barracks mess room was built in 1783, it came to be called the Royal Mortar Tavern. It was rebuilt in 1842 with a curved corner and, to the east, a house with a baker's shop that survives, little altered, as 2 Plumstead Road (Ill. 224). A low range facing the New Road was replaced in 1890–1 with the **Royal Mortar Hotel** (Ill. 225), probably a competitive response to the Ordnance Arms development across the road. Church was the architect, Edward Proctor the builder. Behind the oddly polychromatic façade there were twelve bedrooms above first-floor banqueting and billiard rooms and ground-floor dining- and smoking-rooms. These spaces soon came to accommodate the Woolwich Conservative Club; there are now shops under offices.[178] The tavern on the corner was demolished in 1984 and replaced in 1989 by a block with a glass-fronted shop, latterly a hairdresser's salon, below two cantilevered storeys of red-brick clad offices. This was designed by Clive Button, Searles and Associates, architects, for the Arnan Development Co.[179]
The adjacent New Road frontage housed Union Row, a Georgian terrace with front gardens. This was replaced in 1902–3 with shops and business premises (Nos 3–13), some with rear workshops onto Scott's Passage. Charles Henry Court, who had dining-rooms across the road, built

225. Former Royal Mortar Hotel, 1–1B Woolwich New Road, 1890–1. Photographed 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 1930 created two halls, that to the rear the Pioneer Hall. The Pioneer Bookshop carried on here until 1978, and more recently the Transport & General Workers' Union used the premises. Court kept No. 5 as dining-rooms. Pantaleone Manze, who had previously spread the family business from Bermondsey to Deptford, took these on in 1923. The establishment was run as a branch of Manze's eels-pie-and-mash empire until 1974, thereafter leased as Kenroy's and then sold to be 'The Pie Shop', in which an unreconstructed eating-house interior, with tiled walls, marble-topped tables and high-backed wooden benches survived until 2010 (Ill. 226). Nos 7–11 were built for J. & C. E. Pearson, ironmongers, by Thomas & Edge. Pearsons occupied Nos 7–9 with glass-fronted upper-storey 'ware-rooms' and a long rear showroom. Eliza Bridger, a furniture dealer, had No. 13



226. The Pie Shop, 5 Woolwich New Road in 2009

built by J. B. Sanford & Co.; her warehouse facing Spray Street has been rebuilt.[180] Across the road the corner shop and house at Nos 12–12A Spray Street with the adjoining houses at Nos 14–18 (in Plumstead) were built in 1903 by Edward Kemp, a Plumstead builder who had a big furniture depository across the parish boundary.[181]

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 of the parish church. Adjacent backlands extending to the south that had been part of a sandpit owned by the Pattison family (see page 393) were irregularly built up in the early nineteenth century with numerous small houses, including Taylor's Buildings, due to William Taylor (Ill. 182).[182]

Frontages to the south had also been built up by the early nineteenth century. A small late-Georgian pair at 2–4 Spray Street was replaced in the 1950s, and 15–17 Woolwich New Road were of 1846–7, with a baker's shop. Part of the south side of Spray Street was redeveloped with three-storey houses and shops in 1867–8, and a row on the west side of Taylor's Buildings followed in 1885–6. On the New Road Nos 19–21 was a two-storey pair of 1907, probably designed by Church, and Nos 23–25, a taller block of 1892, incorporated the Burrage Estate's offices. At No. 27 a big three-storey public house (the Royal Oak) was rebuilt in 1901, with Church again the likely architect. Fragments of this pub, which had been renamed the Pullman, linger on a former construction worksite between parts of Woolwich Arsenal Station. There is another vacant site on the Spray Street corner.[183]

Vincent Road, so named in 1939 in honour of the local antiquarian William Thomas Vincent, was formed as Cross Street East around 1849 when the railway arrived. It continued round to Helen Street, already present by the 1830s and possibly named after Helen Pattison. In the adjacent southerly area known as Bull 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.[184] 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; stabling adjoining has been converted as 2 and 2A Helen Street.[185]

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 (Ill. 10), but that may simply have been because late eighteenth-century Burrage 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 Beazley. Built by John Kelk in 1849, it was a small building with a five-bay

227. Woolwich Arsenal Station, 1992–3. Photographed 2011

228. Woolwich Arsenal Station, Cross Street East (later Vincent Road), 1849–50. Photographed *c.*1900. *Demolished*

single-storey front (Ills 182, 228); lower-level rail-side parts survive in altered form. A bridge crossed the line to the down platform.[186]

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, 230, 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.[187]

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.[188] 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 from Canning Town to King George V followed in 2005. 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 through 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 92m(302ft)-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 2008, 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 footbridge, have created 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 canopied west front facing Green's End, to provide access directly from and to Beresford Square and Powis Street. Inside this the walls around the stairs and escalators bear a double-height ceramic mural of 2008 by Michael Craig-Martin. Called *Street Life*, it depicts in vivid colours a variety of consumer objects, meaning to show that 'there's a heroic of the ordinary'.[189] Transport for London joined with Oakmayne 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.[190]

General Gordon Square area

This public garden is a recent amenity, on a site that was full of buildings until the early 1980s. The transformation was tortuous.

The site was part of the Pattison's Burrage estate and a field at Green's End in the eighteenth century when there were just a few cottages along Cholic Lane's north-west side. In 1765–6 the New Road squared the land off, and in 1788–9 a Wesleyan chapel was built on the site that now holds the east end of Equitable House, on land previously used as a brickfield (Ill. 215). The Methodists moved to William Street and the chapel was adapted for Roman Catholic worship in 1817; the Catholics in turn moved further up the New Road to St Peter's Church in 1843. The 'square' field on the other side of what had become Cross Street was gradually built up and filled by the 1840s with houses, shops and four public houses (the Duchess of Wellington, the Duke of York, the Fortune of War and the Bricklayers' Arms) (Ills 182, 241). By 1810 a passage continued the line of Love Lane through the middle with a court known as Peak (later Peake's) Place. The South Eastern Railway ploughed its cutting through to the north-east in 1847–9. On either side, with Cross Street reshaped, houses were built in 1850–2, those on the north-east side were built for Thomas Pacey Birts and comprised a warehouse, a short row called Russell Place and, on the chapel site, the Woolwich Steam Flour Mill, rebuilt after a fire in 1861–2. Birts & Son remade this frontage in 1893 with the Green's End corner as an enlarged furniture and musical-instrument 'warehouse'. The New Road side of the 'square' was redeveloped in 1900–8, with the Fortune of War at the far corner rebuilt in 1906 (Ill. 184).[191]

The Cross Street railway cutting came to be known as the 'smokehole' and a nuisance. Fed up with the soot, a tailor, Thomas Brown, who had premises in Russell Place adjoining Birts' store, launched a campaign in 1899 to get the cutting covered. He envisaged a widened roadway as Gordon Square, a piazza with a statue of Gen. Charles George Gordon (1833–85), the imperial warrior of China and Sudan, who had been born in a house on Woolwich Common. Brown displayed models of the place as it was and as he wished it to be in his shop window and assembled a petition of some 20,000 signatures (Ill. 229). Woolwich Council favoured the idea, but the railway company was uncooperative, on the grounds of expense and because covering in would have displaced volumes of smoke into Woolwich Arsenal Station. Plans for electrification of the North Kent line in the early 1920s changed the picture, and the railway company covered in the 'smokehole' at the council's expense in 1927–8 through Rice & Son of Stockwell, contractors. The council wanted to name the resulting wood-block paved esplanade Central Parade or Woolwich Broadway, but the popular favourite of General Gordon Square was backed by another petition signed by more than 10,000 people. The council thought the site too close to Beresford Square, then generally known as 'the square', so the LCC suggested Gordon Broadway. This too met objections, and the name was finally set as General Gordon Place (Ill. 230). A few years later the north-east side was redeveloped as Equitable House and the roadway came to be used as a bus stand.[192]

At the request of Woolwich Borough Council the County of London Development Plan was revised in 1950 with the whole island block south-west of General Gordon Place rezoned for major public buildings. By 1957 compulsory purchases were under way with a view to building a large library. Two years later two developers

229. Thomas Brown's scheme for Gordon Square, 1901. From the north-west, showing a railway station that never existed

230. General Gordon Place, *c.*1928. From the north-west, showing Thomas Brown holding 'Gordon Square' placard

approached the council with schemes for a joint project to site shops and offices around and above the library. These developers melted away, but the idea that shops and offices could be incorporated lingered and the RACS expressed interest. There were also thoughts about including a hostel for Woolwich Polytechnic, before in 1960 the Borough Engineer, Robert L. Gee, prepared a scheme for flats over the library, which he revised to include a central formal garden with fountains or other water features. Later that year Sainsburys sought a part of the site for a supermarket. Adjustments accommodated this, and in 1962 the RACS was squeezed out. At this point the development site was extended across Woolwich New Road. After a competition Edward Armstrong and Frederick MacManus were retained as consultant architects, working alongside Gee to present a worked-up scheme in 1963. This bridged Woolwich New Road and incorporated a thirteen-storey tower. There was opposition from owners and occupiers and the LCC's approval was withheld, but the compulsory-purchase orders continued and clearance of the north-east side of the square was set to begin in 1965 when the location was viewed as 'the civic centre of the new borough'.[193]

The project was revised in 1966 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 – Sainsburys was still set to take development of the site forward in 1969, but soon thereafter opted for a move to Monk Street. After a public inquiry confirmed compulsory-purchase orders in 1973, Greenwich Council revised its plans for the two blocks in partnership with Imry Property Holdings. A scheme of 1980 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 1970 on the north-east side, and clearance was grimly seen through to the south-west side in the early 1980s. The Fortune of War 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

231. General Gordon Square and environs from the south, 2011. Showing Maritime House, 2–86 Powis Street and Equitable House

232. General Gordon Square and Equitable House from the south-west in 2011

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 1984 was attended by Simon Groom and the dog Goldie from the BBC's *Blue Peter* programme.[194]

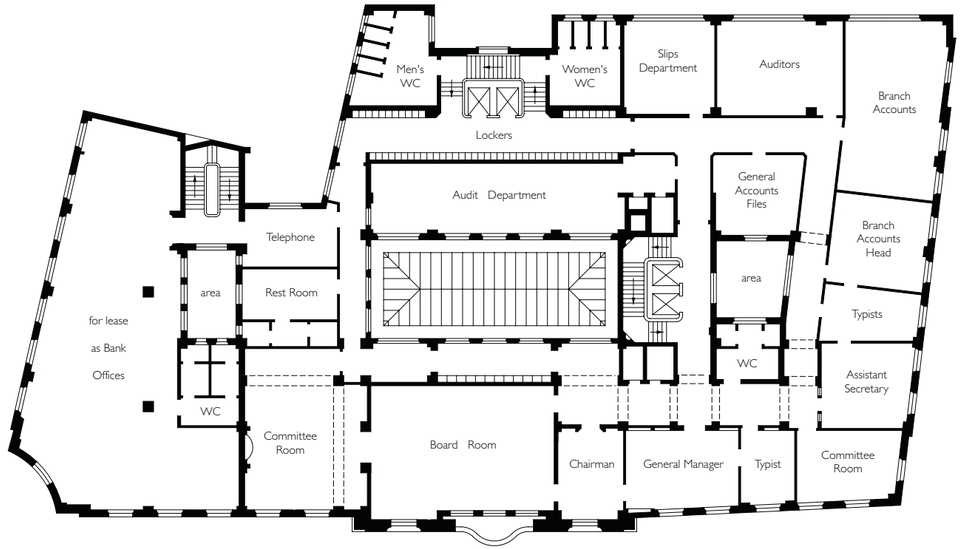
Twenty years later the playground had been abandoned and the garden looked dog-eared, but what was now generally known as General Gordon Square was a public open space the temporary nature of which had been forgotten. In 2008 Greenwich Council set in motion plans for recasting the square. A 'Big Screen' 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 Gustafson 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 catenary lighting – the designers made metaphoric 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 (Ills 231, 232). The two squares were, for the first time, overtly linked along Green's End.[195]

Equitable House

Built in 1934–5, Equitable House was the headquarters of the Woolwich Equitable Building Society. It is a substantial and dignified classical building, stolid but enlivened by Art Deco touches and standing apart from the lightly diverse retail architecture of Powis Street. A strong anchor at the east end of the Woolwich commercial centre, it is a counterpart to the buildings of the RACS at the other end.

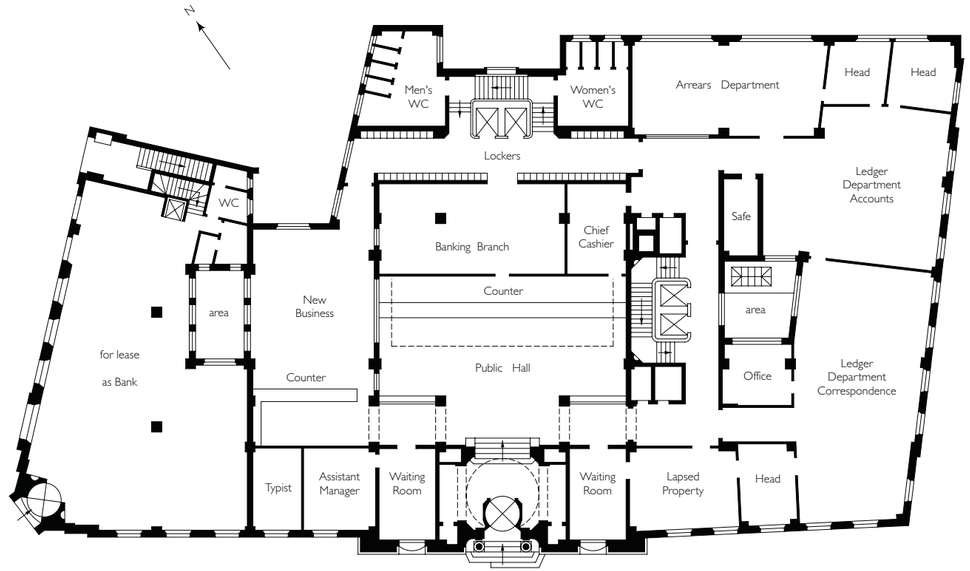
The Woolwich Equitable Building Society rapidly outgrew its premises of 1896 at 111–113 Powis Street (see above) and rode a wave of expansion through the inter-war period. The opening of branch offices began in 1923, the number rising from eight in 1929, when the Woolwich Equitable was the country's fifth largest building society, to twenty-six in 1934, despite hard times. With a portfolio of about 40,000 mortgages, the Woolwich Equitable met the 1930s building boom aspiring to ever greater operations. Its headquarters had extended to 107–109 Powis Street by 1925 and property at Green's End was taken for overflow staff when the 'smokehole' was being covered in 1927. With an eye to a new building there, the freehold of Russell Place was acquired a year later. In 1931 leases fell in and were surrendered, and the society formed a 'Green's End' committee, chaired by Walter M. Epps, a board member and an architect. Epps was asked to oversee a competition for the design of new headquarters, but there was some dithering about alternatives. A temptation to move to the West End was resisted in 1932, with a firm decision to stay in Woolwich and to build at Green's End. The competition idea was revived, but it is unclear what if any alternative schemes were submitted before January 1933 when Lionel Upperton Grace, an architect who had designed most of the society's branch offices, was given the job with his partner, W. G. Farmer. It was always intended that the upper or Green's End corner of the new building would be let to a bank and an agreement to that end was quickly reached with the Westminster Bank. Epps managed the building project with Thomas Chandler, the society's general manager since 1914. The front elevation differs from Grace's approved design in numerous small ways, betraying studied tinkering that had the effect of giving the Baroque centre an Art Deco flavour and less verticality. Grace underwent a major operation in 1934, and it may be that Epps had a late role in revising his designs. The contractors were Thomas & Edge, and the foundation stone was laid on 8 February 1934. The building was formally opened in May 1935 with three Conservative cabinet ministers, including the Postmaster-General, Sir Kingsley Wood, MP for West Woolwich, present to extol the virtues of the building-society movement and private home ownership. The society's directors at the time included many prominent Woolwich men, among them Fred Hoar (chairman), Ambrose Fenn, Herbert Furlong, George Leavey and Col. Edward Eley.[196]

Equitable House is a steel-framed building with a frontage of about 180ft (55m) to General Gordon Place (Ills 231, 232). Its three public elevations are faced with Portland stone. A stubby and oddly oriental central tower is roofed in copper, with Westmorland slates on flanking sloped parapets that disguise a flat roof. The central entrance has bronze doors to a domed vestibule leading to a double-height public banking hall (Ill. 233, 234). Hopton Wood stone 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 a management suite of panelled rooms across the front, oak-lined except the General Manager's room which has Australian walnut – throughout the building only British Empire materials were used (Ill. 235). Samuel Elliott and Sons of Reading made the panelling and the bronze doors. When the building opened, much was made of its up-to-the-minute labour-saving devices. A message-tube system and centralized vacuum-cleaning were pneumatic, and the telephone operator could make numbers on forty-six clocks light up to signal to any of twelve senior officials. The basement had not only strong rooms, but also a garage for staff parking.[197]



Ft 60
M 20

SECOND FLOOR PLAN



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

233 *(opposite page)*. Plans in 1935

234 *(above left)*. Public banking hall, 1935

235. Façade detail, staircase and clock in Chairman's Office, 2008

EQUITABLE HOUSE, 1934–5 for the Woolwich Equitable Building Society

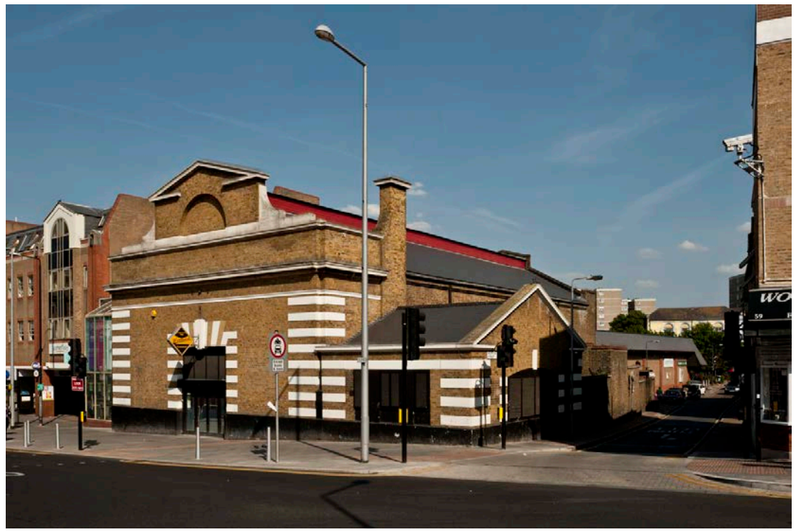
236. Duke of Connaught Coffee Tavern and Public Hall. As projected in 1880 by William Rickwood, architect

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 brand 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.[198]

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 (Ill. 241). The Duke of Connaught Coffee Tavern and Royal Assembly Rooms replaced the north or corner end of this row on a grander scale in 1880–1. Victoria and Albert's third son, Prince Arthur, the Duke of Connaught and Strathearn, had been educated at the Royal Military Academy, commissioned a lieutenant in the Royal Artillery in the late 1860s and twice more posted in Woolwich, living at 1 Bowater Crescent from 1877. He laid the foundation stone for these portentously ornate, cloth-hall-like premises (Ills 229, 230, 236), the product of an ambitious local temperance-movement initiative by the Woolwich and Plumstead Coffee Taverns Co. Ltd, led by John Robert Jolly and Frederick Johnson, a Powis Street builder. The architect was William Rickwood, then residing in Plumstead. A fireproof structure, with wrought-iron internal framing and concrete-arch floors, the building had a temperance tavern under first-floor refreshment rooms and an upper balconied hall that seated 483 beneath a lofty vaulted ceiling. This hall came to be used as a cinema, experimentally in 1898 and steadily soon thereafter. The tavern was converted into five shop units in 1906, when the first floor became offices. Other uses came and went, that included a basement jazz club of some celebrity. In the 1960s the building was called the Temperance Billiard Hall, and there was a ballroom over a restaurant and shops.[199]

This building and Albert Terrace, as well as nineteenth-century houses to the rear as far as Helen Street, which continued through to Wilmount Street along the parish boundary, were cleared around 1980. The whole block, including the tramways sub-station site to the south, had been earmarked in 1962 for the extension of the council's scheme for a development of what has become General Gordon Square (see above). Compulsory purchases ensued and, despite many complications, including short-lived schemes to reroute Woolwich New Road to the east and to provide public open space on the north side of Wilmount Street, Greenwich Council upheld the basic approach and formed a development partnership for a revised scheme in 1979–80, only to see it abandoned in 1983. Once General Gordon Square had been designated as open space, the council issued a new development brief for shops and offices on the land east of Woolwich New Road in 1985, stipulating retention of the Tramshed. A scheme from Centros Properties (developer) and Balfour Beatty Building (contractors), with Ardin & Brookes & Partners, architects, now came forward in 1986. The council, keen both to see an end to the saga and to take steps to revive Woolwich as a shopping centre, approved the project with little amendment other than a small reduction in height. The complex was completed in 1990. It comprises a large bank on the Vincent Road corner with smaller shop units along the New Road, without the pavement canopies originally offered, but stepping back for a covered pedestrian precinct, all under offices. Within, a mural of 1990, *Food Production*, 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, then by other supermarket chains. Beyond its blank walls and hipped Eternit-slate pseudo-domestic roofs there is an open car park. Public conveniences 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 aspirations, they were pursued to a bulky and lifeless end.[200]



237. Woolwich Tramshed, 1909–10 for the London County Council as an electricity sub-station. In 2010

Woolwich Tramshed. The building known as the Tramshed was built in 1909–10 for the London County Council's tramways, not as a shed for trams, but as an electricity sub-station. Municipalization and electrification of the capital's previously horse-drawn and privately run tramways was a major LCC project in the first decade of the twentieth century. A huge new central generating station beside the Thames in Greenwich powered the council's electric tramways, and sub-stations went up across the capital to house transformers to step the 6,600 volts transmitted from the generating station down to 550 volts for operating the trams. The nature of the machinery meant that the sub-stations had to be large well-ventilated sheds. Given the need to place them near public transport nodes they tended to be on prominent sites, so needed a decorous appearance. In 1901 John Hall Rider was appointed the LCC's first electrical engineer and in 1902 a new section was set up in the council's Architect's Department to deal with tramway buildings. E. Vincent Harris, a young architect newly arrived at the council, was given responsibility for the dressing up of the sub-stations. He adopted a Mannerist classical idiom (as for buildings that survive in Camden, Islington and Shoreditch) to achieve a monumentality that disguises bulk and expresses civic pride in the new transport system. Harris resigned from the LCC in early 1909 and W. G. Shipwright was promoted to fill the vacancy.[201]

The Woolwich sub-station was a late product of the electrification campaign. In Woolwich privately owned horse-drawn tramways had extended westwards from Beresford Square since 1880, but it was 1905 before the LCC acquired these. A new electrified tram line from Woolwich to Eltham via the New Road had been planned

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 electric system would disrupt instruments at Greenwich Observatory. It was only once construction of another new line, from Beresford Square to Abbey Wood (along Plumstead Road), came into view in 1906 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 Randall as builders (Ill. 237). Its machine room was fitted out with a ten-ton overhead crane above several (probably six) 500-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.[202]

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 original 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 freehold was acquired from London Transport in 1971.[203] As development plans stalled, the building was let in 1973 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 1974. A local consortium came to the rescue and refitted premises reopened in 1975, with Max Wall as the first-night draw. Programmes diversified and the Tramshed became a popular music venue and comedy club, but always on a short tenancy pending redevelopment.[204]

Demolition was set to go ahead in 1980, but a campaign, joined by musicians as diverse as Joe Stead and Splodgenessabounds, saved the building. When the Woolwich Theatre Ltd went into liquidation in 1985 the premises were taken over by Greenwich Council. They subsequently gained a wider reputation as a venue for budding comedians, hosting performances by Julian Clary and Harry Enfield, among others. A further renovation, completed in 1990, included the addition of the glass-walled entrance foyer to the north, part of Centros Properties' adjacent development.[205]

North-west side

A small group of early buildings faces the north-west corner of General Gordon Square, straddling the railway line as **10, 10A and 11 Green's End**. Eighteenth-century buildings here were cleared for the making of the railway in 1847–9. The three-storey house and shop at No. 11, now stripped of its mouldings and painted white, was built, with its back wing, in 1850 for Henry Parkes, a chemist and druggist who also ran a post office here and who was perhaps related to Thomas Parkes of Hare Street. Parkes' builder-surveyor was Henry William Rowlstone. 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 1850 for a Mr Johnson by W. T. Spiers. A single-storey lock-up shop between (No. 10A) was erected in 1927, directly above the railway when the 'smokehole' was covered.[206]

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 David Davis, outfitters and jewellers, upholsterers and furnishers, established in 1800 and at Green's End since the 1830s and at Nos 1–9 with the corner 'Clock House' from 1850 to 1960. 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.[207]

Maritime House. Redevelopment of this whole corner site, to the LCC's set-back building lines, was in view by 1958. A project from Marks & 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 Chesterfield Properties, were Stone, Toms and Partners, with Bylander, Waddell and Partners as engineers, and George Wimpey and Co. as contractors. First sketches of 1959 projected a Miesian glass-walled block on a podium, the slab cantilevered to Thomas Street. This is broadly what was built in 1962–4, but the purity of the glazing was watered down by mullions of artificial stone and spandrels of precast concrete. Originally the block was to be called Chestergate House, but it was renamed Churchill House after Sir Winston's death in 1965. 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.[208]

After the University of Greenwich (as the polytechnic became) 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 Comer 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. 231).[209] Underneath, the firm of Birts & Son, established in 1839 and long a major presence in Woolwich, continues modestly as jewellers and pawnbrokers in the shop unit at 32 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.[210]