Municipal and educational buildings have shaped the character of the area covered in this chapter. From early nineteenth-century origins on Calderwood (originally William) Street, civic purposes spread to Wellington Street and Thomas Street, and then in the 1870s as far south as Grand Depot Road (Ill. 238).

A pair of houses of the 1760s still stands on Thomas Street, facing General Gordon Square, but concerted development of the area did not begin until soon after 1800. First building in these years was to the south of Love Lane and military in nature, barracks for the Royal Military Artificers and an artillery park, or Grand Depot. Further north, streets were speculatively laid out as part of the Powis estate, and the town’s new Commissioners built a market on William Street. This was the seed for municipal provision in the area, but it was a failure and is remembered only in the name of Market Street. The streets were built up with houses, quickly at first, but tailing off after 1815 as peace reduced demand. Of the humble housing that filled the frontages up to about 1840, a remnant survives on Market Street. Wellington Street gradually became an important, if secondary, commercial street.

The municipal presence took root in a modest way in the 1840s, in the shape of a police court and a town hall, then a police station, on William Street. But civic expansion did not bloom until the 1890s, when there were public baths and a library, and the town hall, police station and court had all been succeeded by bigger buildings. In addition, the earliest parts of Woolwich Polytechnic had joined the cluster. This was an accretive rather than consciously planned ensemble, yet it constitutes one of the most concentrated civic complexes in London. The municipal precinct continued to expand, but stayed compact, until new council and government offices and a students’ hall of residence were built in the former Grand Depot area in the 1970s. A second redevelopment of that and more land began in 2007. Greenwich Council’s Woolwich Centre opened in 2011 and a supermarket with overhead residential blocks is being built at the time of writing.

The present chapter is arranged on broadly chronological lines. The later history of some sites is brought forward, the municipal precinct is separated from the Polytechnic, and more recent developments are grouped as commercial and public.

Early development

Throughout the eighteenth century the lands covered in this chapter were open fields in the manorial ownership of the Bowater family. By the 1740s they were bisected by Love Lane (Ill. 8), a track from Green’s End that led towards Bowater’s Farm, near what is now the north end of Frances Street. The origins of the path’s name may be innocent enough, but the place did, much later, acquire a reputation for ‘immoral proceedings’.

There were good-sized houses flanking the lane’s east end when land to its south as far as Cholic Lane (Woolwich New Road) was sold to the Board of Ordnance in 1773 in connection with the relocation of the Royal Artillery Barracks. It was not until 1803–6 that the Board built on the triangle south of Love Lane. Fields to the north were part of the much larger estate leased to the Powis brothers in 1799, and speculative development here followed beginnings established on and around Powis Street (Ill. 1). Thomas Street had been laid out by 1803 and William Street by 1807, taking their names from two of the brothers. Plots were leased for small-scale and purpose-built commercial buildings, an exception being a long frontage on the south side of William Street that was acquired for the new market. To either side Upper Market Street and Lower Market (later Polytechnic) Street followed by 1810. The Board of Ordnance formed Wellington Street in 1811–12 to improve road links to and from the Royal Arsenal. The Powis leasehold property covered in this chapter was part of the land purchased freehold by Robert Ogilby in 1812 (see page 81).

Thomas Street

This pair of houses, just north of Love Lane, was built in 1766–7 (Ills 239, 240). It has been serially enlarged and much altered since, and has an engagingly diverse history of occupation. The houses were substantial for eighteenth-century Woolwich, with big gardens, long to the rear and small to the front (Ill. 241). Situated on the town’s margin, they were away from other settlement and looked across open space (Green’s End) – as, since the 1960s, they do again.

Alienated from Bowater ownership when built or soon after, the houses were probably a private joint venture by
By 1767 English had died, leaving his widow in occupa-
tion. Burford gave way to Lt. Samuel Tovey, the recently
married son of a family of gunners. In 1768 the northern
house was taken and enlarged to the rear by or for Paul
Sandby, the eminent artist, who had just been appointed
Drawing Master at the Royal Military Academy in the
Warr (see page 144). He taught at Woolwich two days
a week, and paid the rates on this property until 1772
when he moved to Bayswater, thereafter using lodgings in
Charlton. Among Sandby’s many views of Woolwich there
is one of the 1790s from the front of this house (IL. 213).

Tovey moved on in 1780, when promoted Captain
and Chief Firemaster at the Royal Laboratory in the
Warren. He was succeeded by Capt. Richard Chapman, first clerk
to the Academy’s gentlemen cadets, to whom the first
enlargement to the rear of the southern house, probably
in the mid-1780s, is likely due. Occupants of the north-
er house in the 1780s included Capt. Thomas Sutton,
Assistant Firemaster at the Royal Laboratory, and the Rev.
William Green, the Academy’s master for classics, writing
and arithmetic. From 1788 Capt. James Murray Hadden
lived in the southern house. He was made one of the first
commanding officers of the Royal Horse Artillery in 1793
and moved on around 1804 when he became Surveyor-
General to the Board of Ordnance, giving the house up to
John Henderson, Paymaster at the Arsenal.

A shift in the nature of occupancy came around 1820
when William Powis, the landowning brewer, took
the northern house; his widow continued here after his death
in 1826. After 1815 more artillery officers had short ten-
nancies of the southern house, and there were also other
well-to-do widows and semi-detached southern bay houses
around 1839 for Maj. (later Gen.) Philip Sandilands
of the Royal Horse Artillery, a veteran of Waterloo. George
Bryant Campon, a watercolourist and instructor of draw-
ing at the Royal Military Academy from 1841, succeeded
Sandilands for the next decade.1

The surrounding area had been transformed and around 1854 the whole property was refurnished by William
Richardson of Charlton, Taverson’s surviving execu-
tor (the freeholder then passed to Richardson’s daughter,
Maria). It was probably at this time that the upper storey
was raised and the building given its present appearance. This
marked a shift to commercial and professional use – John
Hodgson, a military tailor and outfitter, took the southern
house, and Augustus Prater, a doctor, the other. The front
gardens were lost in the early 1860s for road widening. In
1870 William Harris Bulteel, another doctor, succeeded
Prater, and by 1882 the Kent Reliance Permanent Benefit
Building Society was using an inner part of the southern
property as offices alongside Hodgson. As Hodgson &
Morgan, the outfitting firm undertook alterations and fur-
ther enlargement to the rear, including a workshop wing
in 1905 through J. R. Sanford & Co., with further work
in 1919.2

The occupancy had continued, with new 75-year leases from 1893. John J. Messent, an undertaker, then
took the northern house. He inserted a shopfront, with
console brackets that survive, extended the outer shop bay
to the rear, possibly for a chapel of rest, and altered the
upper storeys for his own occupation. He also built a ten-
ment stable, workshop and office block behind a cobbled
yard that was given a metal-trussed roof on cast-iron col-
umns made by R. Ginman and Son, of Plumstead, to cover
cars and coaches, in effect a garage – outbuildings that
survive. Through Francis Chappell & Sons, a south-east
London firm and a subsidiary of Dignity Caring Funeral
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What had become the Kent Reliance Building Company
in 1893–1905 was first laid out as the Royal Artillery’s regimental
garden, enclosed in 1781. Short sections of stock-brick
boundary wall along Love Lane may still present some
fabric from this time, but here and along Woolwich New
Road there was rebuilding in 1863–4, when other devel-
opment began. It was then that the north-east section of
the garden nearest the town was given up to provide a site
for barracks for one of the first of six companies of
Royal Military Artillers. These had been created in 1792
for the fortification of dockyards, an initiative by Charles
Lennon, the 3rd Duke of Richmond, the Master-General of the
Ordnance, based on the model of a corps formed in Gibraltar
in 1770. The Royal Artillery was reconstituted in 1793,
with two companies of artillery comprised 110 men, mostly carpenters, masons,
bricklayers and labourers, marshalled under officers of
the Corps of Royal Engineers. In 1819 Woolwich was made
the headquarters of the Corps of Royal Military Artillers.3

The local detachment of artillers was given its own
barracks in 1863 in a project overseen by Capt. George
Hayter, CRE, with designs from the Board’s architect,
James Wyatt. These barracks, a plain three-storey house-like
dblc with flanking two-storey pavilions for officers,
were sited well away from those of the Royal Artillery,
all but in the bosom of the town, and closer to the major
building works of the Warr (Il. 213).4 Exceptionally,
the artisan soldiers were allowed to remain Woolwich men, not
subject to redeployment. However, after wartime expan-
sion and under reforms initiated by Lt. (later Gen. Sir)
Charles Pasley, RA, the artificers, regarded as too settled,
were in 1812 made mobile and renamed the Royal Sappers
and Miners. Two years later the main barracks block in
Woolwich was substantially enlarged to the rear. By the
1830s and 1840s Woolwich housed three companies (25
men) and a Royal Engineers’ library had been formed that only
in the southern house was there adequate head height for
more storage; a kitchen was situated under the larger inner
rooms. The late eighteenth-century rear additions gave
each house an L-plan and an additional big room on three
levels under a hipped roof. The larger block to the north,
of which is unknown, was held by John Taverson of New
Charlton.

The Board of Ordnance’s property south of Love Lane
was first laid out as the Royal Artillery’s regimental

garden, enclosed in 1781. Short sections of stock-brick
boundary wall along Love Lane may still present some
fabric from this time, but here and along Woolwich New
Road there was rebuilding in 1863–4, when other devel-
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Wellington Street area, from the Ordnance Survey Ten Foot Plan of Woolwich, 1853 (contemporary colouring incomplete)
In post-Crimean War military reforms of 1861 the Royal Sappers and Miners were amalgamated with their officers into the Corps of Royal Engineers and moved from Woolwich to Chatham, to some local regret. Their barracks were converted for cadets of the Royal Military Academy, pending the enlargement of that institution, despite concerns that placing the young gentlemen in the centre of the town would bring ‘to their very door all the temptations which the vice of the vicious can get together.’ In the 1860s the barracks reverted to use by both Royal Engineers and the Royal Artillery.51

Much of the rest of the Royal Artillery’s regimental garden, west of the artificers’ barracks, had been given up in 1864 to be an artillery depot, for the storage of field guns, carriages and stores (ills 241, 273, 430). Five low ‘workshop’ sheds were built in 1863-6, again under Hayter, to drawings prepared by Lewis Wyatt. Up to 1215 (90m) long, these were timber-built, except the midsection, which was brick and cement-stuck with an administrative block at its south end. First known as the Grand Park of Artillery, the complex became simply the Grand Depot by the 1870s. Further west were two gaonniston houses and, beyond, a much reduced garden. Here Arif Bey, a Turkish protégé of Sultan Mahmoud II and an officer of the Grand Vizier, had been buried after his death in Woolwich in 1815, aged twenty, the churchyard being inappropriate for a Muslim.52

The magazines went, and in 1869 most of the garden was taken for the Royal Army Clothing Factory, an initiative by Sidney Herbert in response to difficulties with the contracted supply of uniforms during the Crimean War. David Murray was the architect of a complex that comprised a big four-storey front block for offices and stores, with an array of one- and two-storey workshops. It employed large numbers of women and girls, but in the early 1890s the work moved to Pinako, to the site of a Dolphin Square. The main Woolwich building stood until the 1910s.53

The Grand Depot was not adapted to use as stable accommodation in the 1870s and 1880s, with clearance and rebuilding in brick behind as the yard was left open for the parking of Royal Artillery. There was adaptation for overflow barracking of soldiers before the whole complex became surplus to requirements in the 1890s. In the early 1960s the site was sold to Woolwich Borough Council and much was cleared, including Arif Bey’s tomb. The former artificers’ barracks and the central workshops range were listed, but demolished in the early 1970s.54

Powis estate

The Powis Estate divided and leased off the west side of Thomas Street in twenty-three small plots in 1804-7. The estate was then sold up (ill. 182). The Powis brothers, brewers, retained the largest plot for a public house, the Earl of Chatham’s Arms, named after the Master-General of the Ordnance. The Earl of Chatham and his house (13 Thomas Street) was rebuilt in 1886 for Alfred David Capon by J. B. Sanborn & Co. as builders (ill. 274). Its architect was probably Henry Hudson Church, responsible for so much central Woolwich rebuilding at this time. The Earl of Chatham retains ornamental ground-floor floor decoration work by A. T. S. Carter Ltd of Bromley extending along both sides of a passage, as well as curved and etched glass and a gold-lettered plinth set back behind square-section cast iron columns.55

On William (Calderwood) Street house-building had started by 1807, at the east end. First corners included a large detached house on the south side of the street, on a lease of 1808 to John Hudson, father of George Hudson and grandfather of H H Church. This, much enlarged and altered, survives in part, embodied within the first Woolwich Polytechnic building (see below). Smaller houses went up to either side through the 1810s, and the Duke of Wellington public house was established on the eastern Lower Market Street corner by 1815. William Street’s last empty plots were not filled until the 1830s.56

Market House (demolished). The Act of 1807 that created Town Commissioners for Woolwich (see page 22) empowered the new body to purchase and rebuff the under-accommodated and under-regulated market on the north side of Woolwich High Street (see page 49). But this would have been costly. An amending Act a year later freed the Commissioners to build an entirely new market in a different place. A site with a 182ft (54m) frontage on the south side of William Street was taken from the Powis Estate on a lease that ran from December 1807, the freehold was acquired in 1810. The plot came to be flanked by roads named after the market, and variously lettered plinth set back behind square-section cast iron columns.57

In 1810-15 a modest eleven-house terrace was built on the north side of Wellington Street, west of Upper Market Street, but only another fourteen houses had been added by 1819. Many frontages on this and adjoining streets remained open until the 1818s, as the prosperity and population growth of Woolwich during wartime disipated amid Arsenal cutbacks. Development of remaining plots on the Powis estate extended slowly into the 1820s.58

Ordinance offices were anyway keen to prevent development on the south side of Wellington Street, to keep a cordon sanitaire for the Grand Depot. But when Richard Powis was set to offer building leases in 1818, the Board was unwilling to pay the asking price for what Powis had come to see as an eligible commercial frontage. The deepest plot to the east remained open in 1820, but still no deal could be struck. Piece-meal building ensued, and by 1835 Wellington Street was fully built up with two-storey houses stepping up the hill and shopfronts were beginning to be inserted. A few survive. Nos 11 of 1824-5, and Nos 17-19 are a pair of 1832-8 from the east end of what was called Victoria Terrace (ill. 242). Nos 21-23 were demolished in 2008. These simple Italianate stucco-fronted shop-houses were probably built by George Grieve, a bricklayer and builder, the first owner of Nos 19-21 and the first occupant of No. 21 Joseph David Binks, an auctioneer, cabinet maker and upholsterer, owned and occupied No. 11 and its long back range from the outset to about 1863, when Isaac Barnett, another cabinet maker, added a projecting shopfront designed by Church and Rickwood and now removed. By the 1880s the property had become Joseph Henry Roberts’s pianoforte, organ and music stores. Stephen Broughton, a hairdresser, first owned and occupied No. 17. His son, Thomas Alfred, continued here into the 1870s and this remained the smartest hairdresser’s in Woolwich into the twentieth century. In No. 19 a Royal Artillery sergeant was succeeded in the 1870s by Ludwig Sieffel, a German watch- and clock-maker. By 1886 Sieffel was sharing the premises with Emilien Fehrbenh, a German ‘photographer’, who had recorded the Great Exhibition using daguerrotypes. His profession was also represented further along the street by George Boyer Davies, William May and, thereafter, several others, military portraits were a specialty. By the 1880s Herman Adolphus Reinhold & Co. had No. 21 for the making of sewing machines (ill. 243). A large plot further up the south side of Wellington Street was part built on in 1839 for Henry Whiteley, a smith, and George Miller Whitey, a stationer and confectioner. They did not last and their building was enlarged across the whole frontage in 1845-6 to form a five-bay inn, the Director General (55 Wellington Street, ill. 244), built for Edward Lambert, a brewer of Greenwich South Street, by Jolly and Burgess, Woolwich builders, and first tenanted by John Ward. It too was demolished in 2007. The military title ‘Director-General’ was bestowed on more than one Board of Ordinance officer at different times, but it is probably most relevant that the Grand Depot that lay behind Wellington Street was, as the Field Train Department of the Royal Artillery, controlled by the Director-General of Artillery, who from 1843 to 1849 was Maj-Gen James Webster Smith, an elderly veteran of the Peninsula, Napoleonic Wars and Waterloo. The pub was altered and extended to the rear in 1863 for George Church, and, with a new rear cellar lease from 1878, there were further alterations in 1902 for Thomas Norfield & Sons, Deptford brewers. The ground-floor front, with embossed tiles, and the interior of this period survived until 2007 (ill. 245). The back room had been used for music-hall performances.59
The roads around the Commissioners’ market acquired their first few houses between 1810 and 1815, but as elsewhere near by they took time to fill out. Upper Market Street’s west side was open until about 1840, when some semi-detached pairs were built towards the south end. A terrace of nine houses followed in 1832–3, from which 24–28 Market Street still stand, a last reminder of the area’s early nineteenth-century domestic scale (Ill. 246). The developer may have been Benjamin Davies, who by 1851 lists twenty-nine people in the five houses still extant: No. 24 had nine, William Bush, an Arsenal blacksmith, his wife and four children, a lodger, Anna Bury, who was a ‘pauper char woman’, and Elizabeth Ormond, a young widow shoe binder with her four-year-old son; No. 25 had just two, Austin Tyer, another Arsenal smith, and his wife; No. 26 was divided into three for John Randell, a police constable and his family, Thomas Weeks, another Arsenal smith, and Ann Miles, a widow laundry-lodger; No. 27 had John Lamerton, a shipwright, his wife and two lodgers, Thomas Marshall, another shipwright, and Hetty Jeffrey, a widow; and No. 28 had two households, those of George Mocock, a gunsmithe, and of Edward Amos, a painters’ foreman, and their wives, respectively a milliner and a dressmaker, plus Ann Valentine, a nineteen-year-old servant.\(^2\)

Outwardly uniform, plain but essentially unaltered, these four-room houses vary in their internal layouts. There are standard rear-staircase plans to Nos 24–26, with simply moulded passage arches, stick-baluster staircases and wash-house and privy outshots (Ill. 13). Nos 27–28 are similar, but with cross-wise stairs. First occupants included William North (at No. 25), possibly a straw-hat maker. Artisan families were predominant. The census of 1851 lists twenty-nine people in the five houses still
by this time occurred with the erection of public baths in 1893–4 to the south. This was particularly welcomed by Woolwich Polytechnic, which stood to the east and was enlarged up to 1895 with a science and art school opposite the baths. The baths, library and polytechnic buildings were all designed by H.H. Church, whose preference for ornate gables and Renaissance decoration gave the enclave a certain stylistic affinity.

The limitations of the old town hall made its replacement urgent after 1840 – administratively Woolwich was now a much larger area. The opportunity was grasped with alacrity, even extravagance, and the new town hall on Wellington Street of 1842–3 gave Woolwich Borough Council a stronger and civic focus further south. The contrast between the grandiose Edwardian Baroque offices and public hall and their modestly classical early-Victorian predecessor illustrates well the changing status of local government as it does the more self-conscious civic pride of a town that had become substantially more prosperous.

The public-building enclave was incrementally extended. First it crossed Market Street in 1840 in the shape of a new police station that permitted replacement of its predecessor with a magistrates’ court in 1842, both with elevations by John Dixon Butler that added more loosely classical architectural grandeur. There was further civic spread in the 1840s when a block of municipal offices went up across Wellington Street from the town hall and the council’s progressive commitment to public-health provision was cemented with the construction of a central health centre on Market Street. Here the emphasis was on the facilities within the building rather than on external architectural display. More office accommodation was built on Wellington Street in 1848–9, reflecting the growing needs of a council that was orchestrating an ambitious post-war housing programme.

The London Borough of Greenwich, a yet larger administrative unit, decided to centralize its administration in Woolwich. The Grand Depot Barracks site had become available, permitting further extension of the municipal precinct. The first phase of a big project for council offices, Peggy/Middleton House, was built in 1857–7. A plan to close Wellington Street in front of the town hall, to unify the greater municipal precinct, remained unrealized, but this unifying vision was somewhat revived when the mid-twentieth-century offices on Wellington Street and Peggy/Middleton House were replaced by the Woolwich Centre on Wellington Street, built in 2009–11.

Woolwich Old Town Hall

The town hall of 1842–4 at the corner of Calderwood Street and Polytechnic Street is the oldest surviving municipal building in Woolwich. Few other local-government buildings of the 1840s survive in London, the former vestry halls on Kennington High Street and Kennington Road, Lambeth, are perhaps the most comparable. Of this select group, the Woolwich building is the best-preserved and most evocative survivor. Though modest in appearance, the Old Town Hall is both the foundation stone of Woolwich’s distinctive complex of public buildings and a link between early municipal endeavour and modern local government. Yet it was, in fact, the second town hall built.

From their establishment in 1837 the Commissioners for the Improvement of the Town and Parish of Woolwich lacked purpose-built accommodation and made do with the vestry room of the parish church. Attempts to maintain the independence of Woolwich in the face of what was regarded as intrusive Poor Law and Metropolitan Police legislation rendered parish affairs more complex in the late 1830s. The Commissioners decided to sell some land to raise funds to build their own meeting room, an initiative the Vestry vigorously opposed, insisting that rooms in or adjoining the workhouse or the soup house (see page 114) were adequate. But something with greater dignity was felt to be necessary. The failed market site on William Street was both in hand and an appropriate location for a new edifice, central in a network of newly developed residential and commercial streets where several board members lived and worked. An advertisement sought designs for a single-room town hall and at the beginning of 1840 a submission from Thomas Kinton, a foreman of works in the Engineers’ Department at theArsenal, was adopted. This provided four rooms, so its acceptance prompted complaint from the architect John Douglas Hopkins, whose single-room design had been rejected. Kinton was posted to Canada in March and his design was erected under the supervision of Robert Jolly, a board member and builder-surveyor. This first town hall was a simple single-storey classical structure of two by four bays (Ill. 249). Between pilasters and a pediment, a frieze adorned with wreaths returned admits exposed brick between a rusticated lower storey. This compelled entrance via a longer flight of stairs, displaced sideways and curved (Ill. 250).

The building has a rendered or ‘compo’ façade. Its return admits exposed brick between a rusticated lower storey, pilasters and an entablature. There were once railings. An original scrolled-iron gas-lamp bracket survives, reset over the Calderwood Street entrance. The lower storey housed offices and an apartment, the upper the board room and the ‘large room’ or hall, a simply treated space. The Commissioners decided to sell some land to raise funds to build their own meeting room, an initiative the Vestry vigorously opposed, insisting that rooms in or adjoining the workhouse or the soup house (see page 114) were adequate. But something with greater dignity was felt to be necessary. The failed market site on William Street was both in hand and an appropriate location for a new edifice, central in a network of newly developed residential and commercial streets where several board members lived and worked. An advertisement sought designs for a single-room town hall and at the beginning of 1840 a submission from Thomas Kinton, a foreman of works in the Engineers’ Department at the Arsenal, was adopted. This provided four rooms, so its acceptance prompted complaint from the architect John Douglas Hopkins, whose single-room design had been rejected. Kinton was posted to Canada in March and his design was erected under the supervision of Robert Jolly, a board member and builder-surveyor. This first town hall was a simple single-storey classical structure of two by four bays (Ill. 249). Between pilasters and a pediment, a frieze adorned with wreaths returned admits exposed brick between a rusticated lower storey. This compelled entrance via a longer flight of stairs, displaced sideways and curved (Ill. 250).

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So Kinton’s design was more or less mirrored at the other end of the market block for the second building (Ils. 14, 250). George Hall Graham, another board member and builder-surveyor, prepared designs in early 1842 and the edifice was up by early 1842 with Robert Jolly again supervising. The builders were William and John Cann, of Jackson’s Lane, Woolwich Common. Other local builders, James Jolly, and George Greif and Son, also received payments. Furlongs and George Hudson completed the fitting out of the interior in 1843. Ampler accommodation was possible at this second attempt because the fall of the land permitted a substantial ‘basement’, in effect a whole lower storey. This compelled entrance via a longer flight of stairs, displaced sideways and curved (Ill. 249).

The building has a rendered or ‘compo’ façade. Its return admits exposed brick between a rusticated lower storey, pilasters and an entablature. There were once railings. An original scrolled-iron gas-lamp bracket survives, reset over the Calderwood Street entrance. The lower storey housed offices and an apartment, the upper the board room and the ‘large room’ or hall, a simply treated space. The Commissioners decided to sell some land to raise funds to build their own meeting room, an initiative the Vestry vigorously opposed, insisting that rooms in or adjoining the workhouse or the soup house (see page 114) were adequate. But something with greater dignity was felt to be necessary. The failed market site on William Street was both in hand and an appropriate location for a new edifice, central in a network of newly developed residential and commercial streets where several board members lived and worked. An advertisement sought designs for a single-room town hall and at the beginning of 1840 a submission from Thomas Kinton, a foreman of works in the Engineers’ Department at the Arsenal, was adopted. This provided four rooms, so its acceptance prompted complaint from the architect John Douglas Hopkins, whose single-room design had been rejected. Kinton was posted to Canada in March and his design was erected under the supervision of Robert Jolly, a board member and builder-surveyor. This first town hall was a simple single-storey classical structure of two by four bays (Ill. 249). Between pilasters and a pediment, a frieze adorned with wreaths returned admits exposed brick between a rusticated lower storey. This compelled entrance via a longer flight of stairs, displaced sideways and curved (Ill. 250).
variable usage through the twentieth century led inevitably to minor alterations, such as the networking of doors and windows on the Polytechnic Street elevation, yet the former hall and board room remain little changed. In recent years the building has generally only small actions. A two-storey brick-faced office extension went up beside the entrance bay in 1968, to designs by the Board’s surveyor John Barnett (ILL. 213) ‘Bringing out’ the entrance bay and rebuilding the stairs was also then proposed, but this was deferred until 1983 when the William Street elevation took on its present form.\(^{26}\)

The main room had come to be used as a county court in the 1840s. The board room, also used as a coroner’s court, was remade in 1876. This work, devised by Herbert O. Thomas, Barnett’s successor, comprised enlargement to the west under a raised roof with a central lantern, and, in wholly new fenestration, a canted bay window. The enlarged room, in which an austere classical marble chimneypiece survives, was fully tested in September 1878 (ILL. 214). A new division at Gallions Reach – the coroner requisitioned the rooms for the inquests into the sinking of this pleasure cruiser, which caused the loss of an estimated forty-two lives.\(^{27}\)

Demands for a new public hall persisted, but were diverted to private initiative with the construction of the New Road Assembly Rooms in 1880–1. Pressure on the town hall diminished, all the more after it was refused a license for music and dancing in 1890. The appointment of a Medical Officer of Health in the same year caused the ground-floor residence, then occupied by the Board’s surveyor, to be converted to offices. Further demand for space led to the construction of a two-storey south extension for the County Court on Lower Market Street in 1892, on what had been a walled garden for the residence. This addition, designed by H. H. Church, for the Board, and built by H. L. Holloway of Deptford, was rented to the Office of Works, perhaps as an adjunct to the nearby police court.\(^{28}\) It reflects the older building in its ground-floor rustication, but its stone and terracotta-dressed red brick, jalousy gable and decorative sills are typical of Church, and a foretaste of his nearby baths and library.

Local-government reorganization made the town hall inescapably inadequate for its purpose. In 1900 the board room underwent seven improvements with paint, curtains, mayor’s chair with canopy and the installation of some semblance of a public gallery\(^{29}\) to create a council chamber for a new Metropolitan Borough of Woolwich. The building remained the authority’s administrative centre until 1906 when it was superseded by the much larger town hall on Wellington Street. Thereafter the ground floor was returned to residential use, and in 1914 toilet facilities and a robing room were formed on the ground floor on the William Street side for the county court, which continued here until the 1960s (see page 78). In 1947 the entire ground floor was converted for a maternity and child welfare centre incorporating toddlers’ and ultra-violet light clinics, public health and welfare programmes for which Woolwich gained renown. Divided occupation and variable usage through the twentieth century led inevitably to the Public Library. An 8ft(2.4m)-tall tapering square chimney survives.\(^{20}\)

Church’s layout was the complicated consequences of having to build on an oval site – separation of men and women, and two classes, in both private and swimming baths. The building, by 1871 (ILL. 210), was notably large for its date. Changing cubicles stood under a spectators’ gallery that continued round all four sides behind a bowed and latticed iron front. Iron roof trusses supported a hipped roof with a lantern at its ridge. The second-class pool was only slightly smaller, but lacked a gallery until one was inserted in 1933–2 to carry filtration plant. The external additions of 1896 had metal-arched trusses with ornamental spandrels and lantern roofs.\(^{30}\)

The public baths were modernized several times, most extensively in 1939–40 under W. H. Gimson, the Borough Engineer. The exterior was significantly modified (ILL. 220, 217) when the building acquired a shell with a recessed, cam-}

**Former Woolwich Public Baths**

The public baths complex that spans the south side of Barbadoes was erected in 1894–5 for the Woolwich Local Board of Health to designs by the Board’s architect of choice, H. H. Church. The public baths of 1870 on Nelson Street, privately-run and small, had probably fallen out of use some time before their conversion to a furniture store in 1888, but it was only in 1889 that the Board of Health decided to provide a more substantial and up-to-date replacement. The Board selected a site behind its town hall for the baths in 1890 and acquired this with a recessed, cam-}

**Wellington Street Area**

Woolwich was slow to provide a free library for its population, though this was not for lack of effort on the part of the Board of Health. Two public libraries were opened in the early 1870s, located on the site of the Metropolitan Borough of Woolwich and the building has latterly served as an office and conference centre in 1983–4, with the second-class pool filled in to permit the formation of a community centre with raked seating. A decade later the building was sold to the University of Greenwich and, through plans by Trevor Dannatt and Partners, architects, converted to a students’ union with the second-class pool floored over to create a hall and discotheque with a bar. But other parts of the university soon departed from Woolwich and the building has latterly served as an administrative offices and a rehearsal facility for drama students. The eastern annexes were cleared of baths for use first as offices and latterly as rehearsal spaces. The second-class pool, once lined with tiling and skylit, has become a ‘black-out’ performance space. The newly formed Metropolitan Borough of Woolwich gained nowtwithstanding, still retains much original fabric.\(^{32}\)

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this time formed the firm of Church, Quick and Whincop. It was this last significant contribution to the municipal enclave.

The Nelson Street baths of 1850 had included a library, and there were several other private and military libraries and reading rooms in Victorian Woolwich. The first Public Libraries Acts of 1850 and 1855 could only be implemented with the explicit consent of local ratepayers. The possibility of a public library in Woolwich was not seriously entertained with the explicit consent of local ratepayers. The library originally had a newspaper room in front of a large top-lit hall with a lending-library counter and a grand Jacobean-style staircase (Ill. 234). The walls were light green, to contrast with the dark brown of the polished walnut woodwork, and there were domical lanterns. The counter has gone, but this interior is otherwise little changed. A magazine room lay beyond, and the remainder of the ground floor was taken up by offices for the librarian, whose living accommodation was on the first floor, to the front and with its own street entrance. The reference library was on the first floor at the back, at the top of the main staircase and under ornamental roof turrets.

In 1913–14, just before war brought jobs to Woolwich, the council replaced a stable east of the library’s rear block with a soup kitchen, with Edward Proctor, now of Plumstead, as its builder. This plain single-storey brick block was converted in 1979 to be an additional reading room. The newspaper room at the front had been opened out to be a part of the lending library in a general reorganization begun in 1947. The library closed in 2011 and the building was put to use for other council services.

Woolwich Town Hall

Woolwich Town Hall is the most distinguished non-military building in Woolwich (Ills 247, 255). A rich essay in the Edwardian Baroque, it was built in 1903 by Henry John Johnson & Sons of Redruth, Cornwall, under the direction of Alfred Brumwell Thomas, his own practice in 1868 – the Brumwell was adopted after he started his own practice in 1864 – was the son of Edward Thomas, surveyor to Rotherhithe Vestry. His reputation was made by winning the high-profile competition for Belfast City Hall in 1897, for which he was knighted in 1906 at the early age of thirty-eight. Thomas’s massive Belfast job and, from 1904, a third big town hall project at Stockport were running concurrently while the Woolwich building, the smallest of the three, was under construction. In spring 1902 Brumwell Thomas produced alternative schemes for Woolwich Town Hall; one, with front offices and a public hall parallel to the Grand Theatre and entrances to both from Wellington Street, was rejected in favour of the other, which placed the public hall behind with a separate entrance from Market Street, allowing the option of a phased development. Thomas’s matured designs went to tender in the late summer of 1902, the thirteen bidders being asked to submit estimates with and without the hall. J. E. Johnson & Son of Leicester won the contract in September, without the hall. Work started in February 1903. Afterwards the hall too received the go-ahead, which meant that it ran behind the municipal
Woolwich Town Hall, long section through entrance hall and detail of an electrolier (not to same scale), 2011, with plans in 1906 (facing page).
system through the construction period. Because of this greater expenditure, Thomas undertook reductions in the design in the manner of a latter-day medieval architect in the 20th century, but perhaps not in the same way that the Middle Ages reduced the scale of labour control of the church for three years from November 1902. The first step, the presentation of London County Council, that provided the process, therefore involved the church organization of the Royal Artillery Barracks, was the Committee's responsibility, and the Board of Works was dis- owned despite the role of Ealing and Shaping. On the whole, the job went well. The delay was not caused by persistent late deliveries of Portland stone, but by the continuous pressure, to some extent, to delay the work. Despite the time consuming work of the London County Council, Thomas still expressed the view that the new hall had been completed, and that he had worked diligently, two had occurred late, but had "been allowed to be late." Despite the ongoing work of F. W. Pomeroy's "Queen Victoria statue in the area hall," for which a number of voluntary organizations and churches had prepared a collection for its "formal completion," the council continued the work of the council hall until after Thomas had expressed the view that the new hall had been completed, and that he had worked diligently, two had occurred late, but had "been allowed to be late." Despite the ongoing work of F. W. Pomeroy's "Queen Victoria statue in the area hall," for which a number of voluntary organizations and churches had prepared a collection for its "formal completion," the council continued the work of the council hall until after Thomas had expressed the view that the new hall had been completed, and that he had worked diligently, two had occurred late, but had "been allowed to be late." Despite the ongoing work of F. W. Pomeroy's "Queen Victoria statue in the area hall," for which a number of voluntary organizations and churches had prepared a collection for its "formal completion," the council continued the work of the council hall until after Thomas had expressed the view that the new hall had been completed, and that he had worked diligently, two had occurred late, but had "been allowed to be late." Despite the ongoing work of F. W. Pomeroy's "Queen Victoria statue in the area hall," for which a number of voluntary organizations and churches had prepared a collection for its "formal completion," the council continued the work of the council hall until after Thomas had expressed the view that the new hall had been completed, and that he had worked diligently, two had occurred late, but had "been allowed to be late." Despite the ongoing work of F. W. Pomeroy's "Queen Victoria statue in the area hall," for which a number of voluntary organizations and churches had prepared a collection for its "formal completion," the council continued the work of the council hall until after Thomas had expressed the view that the new hall had been completed, and that he had worked diligently, two had occurred late, but had "been allowed to be late." Despite the ongoing work of F. W. Pomeroy's "Queen Victoria statue in the area hall," for which a number of voluntary organizations and churches had prepared a collection for its "formal completion," the council continued the work of the council hall until after Thomas had expressed the view that the new hall had been completed, and that he had worked diligently, two had occurred late, but had "been allowed to be late." Despite the ongoing work of F. W. Pomeroy's "Queen Victoria statue in the area hall," for which a number of voluntary organizations and churches had prepared a collection for its "formal completion," the council continued the work of the council hall until after Thomas had expressed the view that the new hall had been completed, and that he had worked diligently, two had occurred late, but had "been allowed to be late." Despite the ongoing work of F. W. Pomeroy's "Queen Victoria statue in the area hall," for which a number of voluntary organizations and churches had prepared a collection for its "formal completion," the council continued the work of the council hall until after Thomas had expressed the view that the new hall had been completed, and that he had worked diligently, two had occurred late, but had "been allowed to be late." Despite the ongoing work of F. W. Pomeroy's "Queen Victoria statue in the area hall," for which a number of voluntary organizations and churches had prepared a collection for its "formal completion," the council continued the work of the council hall until after Thomas had expressed the view that the new hall had been completed, and that he had worked diligently, two had occurred late, but had "been allowed to be late."
Special mention must be made of the stained glass distributed throughout the public and ceremonial spaces of the building (Ill. 266). Devised in late 19th century, this was designed by Geoffrey Webb and probably marks his début as an independent artist. Webb worked with Thomas and the local antiquarian W. T. Vincent, who was largely responsible for the iconographic scheme. The subjects are derived from the historical and royal associations of the locality, its eminent men and notable events. So manifold heraldry adorns the lunettes of the entrance hall, Elizabeth I and Henry VIII grace the council chamber, while Richard Lovelace, Henry Maudslay and Gen. Gordon look down on the public hall. These last three were suggested by the building committee. A working men’s note was to have been struck in the central committee room, where the building committee asked for a scene showing either the interior of the Arsenal shell foundry or, more contentiously, the emigration to Canada of those discharged from Woolwich Dockyard in 1869. Webb and Vincent managed to divert these ideas into the comparatively anodyne scene of Edward III receiving the captive King John II of France at Eltham Palace.46

The town hall has been comparatively little altered over the years and is maintained in a good state. Enclosing development gave little opportunity for enlargement but in 1949-50 a small extension was built on Polytechnic Street. Designed by the Borough Engineer, John Sutcliffe, to provide a refreshment area for the public hall, and subsequently much modernized, this addition was known as the Town Hall Annex.47

Woolwich Magistrates’ Court and Police Station

The origins of the court and police station where Coldwell Street meets Market Street have been partly described in the account of the Old Town Hall because the first building on the east side of this junction, facing William Street, was built as a town hall in early 18th century only to be sold to the Metropolitan Police Commissioners and opened as a police court that October (see pages 254–5, Ill. 248). The background to this transmutation was enlargement of the Metropolitan Police District. The Woolwich Town Commissioners had in 1830 and 1838 sought to include Woolwich in any such extension. The Metropolitan Police Act of 1839 met this desire, and the police division that covered Deptford and Greenwich was enlarged to include Woolwich. Typically at odds with the Town Commissioners, the parish Vestry opposed the demise of its constables and watchmen.48

Through the Metropolitan Police Court Act of 1839 a number of the London area’s local magistrates’ courts were reconstituted as police courts. In consequence, John Weeks, the Receiver to the Metropolitan Police, acquired the newly built town hall on William Street for use as a small police court, and the petty sessions for Woolwich, previously held at the Castle Inn on Parson’s Hill, were transferred into it. The main hall was divided into two chambers and the lesser space behind the entrance became a magistrates’ room, later also divided (Ills 241, 245). The premises further incorporated a house to the rear that had been built as part of the market the Town Commissioners had failed to establish (see page 250).

Way had also and as was usual taken over the parish watchhouse to serve as a police station. Charles Reeves was appointed the first Surveyor to the Metropolitan Police in 1842 and thereafter the provision of purpose-built police stations was pushed forward. At an early stage of this programme, in 1845–6, the Woolwich court was supplemented in its east by a police station, to provide offices, probably including a charge room, below living accommodation (Ill. 264). An early building of its kind (see also ch. 2), this station, designed by Reeves, followed its William Street predecessors in its simple four-square classicism. A cell block beside a rear yard was enlarged in 1856. A rear range that incorporated a library in the 1870s was later a section house.49

The number of cases heard by London’s magistrates more than doubled through the second half of the nineteenth century, putting pressure on such cramped facilities as that at Woolwich. After a period under the Commissioners of Works and Public Buildings, responsibility for police courts returned to the Metropolitan Police in 1867. A London-wide programme of renewal ensued after a House of Commons Committee report of 1900 recommended secondary courtrooms and all-round better provision.50

The rebuilding of the Woolwich complex was mooted in 1902 and a year later the Metropolitan Police acquired a six-house site on the west side of Market Street from the Ogilby Estate, opening the way to ampler accommodation for both the station and court. A new police station was built first in 1900–10 on the Market Street plot (Ills 246, 251). It was designed by the Police Architect and Surveyor, John Dixon Butler, who for more than a decade prior to this had turned out a number of comparable red-brick and Portland stone buildings. John Groser and Son of Edgington were the builders. This is a strong example of Butler’s work and a subtly elegant expression of authority. The front range, of sixteen bays and two storeys with basements and attics, has attractive area railings and a blue police lamp on a shaped stone plinth. Within the main north entrance were offices, including one for a criminal-investigation department, and a charge room. Also incorporated were a ground-floor mess room, a basement parade room, and, on the steel-framed first floor, a recreation room with a billiard table, and a library. Upper-storey wood-panelled dormitory boxes (most 4ft by 6ft 2ins by 7ins) accommodated twenty-five policemen, and there was one set of married quarters as well as an inspector’s apartment to the south with its own street entrance. A custody wing, discreetly attached on the north side of a rear yard, had six cells for men, five for women (most 6ft 1ins by 5ft 11ins by 2fm by 2m), all lit by high-level small-pane iron windows. Across the yard was a garage for an ambulance. The interior was modernized in the late twentieth century, less so in the custody wing, which is thus an unusual survival.51

The opening of the police station made clearance on the other side of the road possible, plans in 1912 intended a connecting tunnel. The erection of a new court building followed in 1912–13 (Ill. 265). Also designed by Butler, this is again of red brick, with rubbed-brick quoin and Portland stone dressings. A cornice continues as the projecting sides of a pediment in an otherwise recessed and channelled-stone entrance bay. The symmetrical and dignified classical façade combines a respectful nod to the police station opposite with elements from Butler’s earlier police courts, notably at Tower Bridge, a grander building, which also provided a model layout. The Woolwich court is relatively small, though in all respects – space, light, air, hygiene – better appointed than its predecessor. In the public entrance foyer the initials ‘MP’ feature in

264 and 265. Woolwich Magistrates’ Court, Market Street, 1911–12. Photographed 1999

266. Woolwich Police Station, William (Calderswood) Street, 1845–6. Photographed 1948. Demolished

267. Woolwich Town Hall, committee room stained glass, 1904–6, depicting Phineas Pett and Samuel Pepys, 2011 (above), and committee rooms from the south, 1906 (below)
Woolwich Central Health Centre

Opposite the Town Hall on Market Street is what was built to be and continues as a central health centre for Woolwich (Ill. 264). This clinic was a project handled entirely within Woolwich Borough Council. It was planned in 1937 when Dr John Macmillan was the council’s Medical Officer of Health, designed by the Borough Engineer, H. W. Ter, and built by the council’s Direct Labour Organization in 1938–9. Lord Horder, an eminent physician, opened the centre. Its two storeys are modestly faced in plum-coloured brick, with sandstone dressings concentrated around an amply fenestrated entrance bay topped by the bow-shaped pediment. The internal structure is of reinforced concrete with hollow-tiled floors. In style, the clinic belongs with the majority of such buildings erected in the 1930s, incorporating just a few modern touches rather than adopting the radical modernism of the Peckham or Finsbury health centres. But Woolwich was no less devoted to pioneering public-health provision. The borough had a proudly progressive record. It had established a municipal milk depot in 1906, an infant welfare centre at the town hall run along with help from what became the British Hospital for Mothers and Babies (see pages 199 and 201), and London’s first combined maternity and child-welfare clinic as well as a solarium or sunlight treatment room for children suffering from rickets or tuberculosis. This was top-lit with cubicles for orthopaedic treatment, massage, electro-therapy and chiropody. A central courtyard had an ornamental pond. A further office block, at Nelson House, 52 Wellington Street, adjacent to the Market Street health centre, was built for Greenwich Council’s Social Services Department in 1935 to designs by Walter F. Parker and Associates, architects (Ill. 247). Of four brick-faced storeys with a slate-hung mansard roof, it is otherwise nondescript.69

Woolwich Polytechnic

(Island Business Centre)

Most of the buildings on the island block bounded by Calderwood Street, Tomass Street, Polytechnic Street and Wellington Street have their origins as parts of Woolwich Polytechnic. This educational establishment opened in 1891 as the Woolwich Polytechnic Young Men’s Christian Institute. The polytechnic, an initiative that mixed education and philanthropy, was only the second institution of its kind in London. Emphasis was as much on physical and spiritual as on educational improvement, but this began to change when the polytechnic came under the auspices of the London County Council in 1904. Between 1907 and 1909 the institution was gradually and massively enlarged (Ill. 265). Amid this growth, two of the bounding streets were renamed – Lower Market Street as Polytechnic Street in 1935 and William Street as Calderwood Street in 1938, in honour of a local industrialist, councillor and chairman of the Polytechnic governing body, William Calderwood. Woolwich Polytechnic provided wide-ranging practical instruction for local children and adults, but it had a strong bias towards training in engineering and science,
a reflection of the area’s industrial needs, strengths and traditions, not least those of the Royal Arsenal and Royal Military Academy. This was typical of the localized character of London’s technical education system in the early twentieth century.

Establishment

Woolwich Polytechnic had its origins in the technical education movement, a cause taken up in the 1860s that aimed both to create a better-trained workforce and to increase educational opportunities for the poorer classes. Woolwich was fertile ground for such intentions, with a large population of skilled workers and limited opportunities for further education. The prime mover was Francis George (Frank) Didden, a fitter at the Royal Arsenal and a former student at Quintin Hogg’s Youths’ Christian Institute, the forerunner of the pioneering and influential Regent Street Polytechnic that Hogg opened in 1882.

Didden, who had worked for the Young Men’s Christian Association, aimed to follow this example and, in doing so, harness his religious mission to scientific education and self-improvement. Hogg, a well-connected tea and sugar merchant and a philanthropist, gave support, though not money. Together they mobilized a group of promoters and approached the War Office with a view to acquiring a site for a polytechnic institution in Woolwich. In 1886 Hogg identified the minimum requirements as ‘a gymnasium, a few class rooms, a reading room and a coffee bar, beside some small hall where meetings could be held’. Disappointments followed. An ambitious scheme of 1888, designed by W. Gilbee Scott for a site at the corner of the New Road and Mill Lane, failed to gain War Office support. In 1889 the Charity Commissioners, then in the process of establishing the CityParochialFoundation to direct charitable monies into technical education, declined to provide funding for such a large project. The fledgling polytechnic had to settle in 1890 for a handful of houses on the Powis estate. It took possession of a frontage on William Street that included a good-sized house, built for John Hudson around 1808 (see above), with a substantial rear garden, and another frontage at 17–18 Lower Market Street. Hudson’s house had passed to his grandson, Henry Hudson Church, by 1860 when it was substantially extended to the rear. It was Church’s home until 1882 when it was sub-let to Samuel Barnes, a Powis Street cabinet maker, who, having met Didden, sold up in March 1890, as, it seems, did Church. Using what funds had been raised, the site was largely redeveloped in 1891, as has been noted, in part, by the loss of a tower used as a dressing-room range was added in 1892 (Ill. 268). This is a large and lofty brick-walled shed, lit by clerestory windows and from the apex of its ornate and open wooden-trussed roof. There was a shallow stage at the east end. A dressing-room range was added in 1914–17 and the gymnasium was converted to use as a lecture theatre in 1989, to designs by Trevor Dannatt and Partners.

The Polytechnic also started out with a single-storey gymnasium-cum-hall, freestanding to the south and completed in 1892 (Ill. 268). This is a large and lofty brick-walled shed, lit by clerestory windows and from the apex of its ornate and open wooden-trussed roof. There was a shallow stage at the east end. A dressing-room range was added in 1914–17 and the gymnasium was converted to use as a lecture theatre in 1989, to designs by Trevor Dannatt and Partners.

The enlargement of Woolwich Polytechnic began in 1893, when laboratories, designed by Church, replaced a
house on William Street that adjoined to the west.²⁷ By this time the City Parochial Foundation was providing some funding and, when additional workshops were proposed, a grant was offered by the LCC’s Technical Education Board, formed in 1893 to advance and co-ordinate applied higher education in London. Despite this progress, the financing of the Polytechnic was inadequate. It was forced to cease in July 1894. Temporary control passed to the Technical Education Board until a new governing body, chaired by Hogg, was established and a sounder financial arrangement set in place. Henceforth funding came from the LCC, the City Parochial Foundation, Woolwich Local Board of Health (subsequently Woolwich Borough Council) and the War Office. With this reorganization in 1895 there came a subtle shift in emphasis, from the social side to educational provision, prompting local fears that the Polytechnic would turn into ‘a mere Science School’.²⁸

Polytechnic Street block and engineering workshops

From 1893 plans for a significant expansion of the Polytechnic concentration on the provision of engineering workshops in the former garden and an art and science school on the site of the premises to open the first secondary school in Woolwich in 1898. The ageing Church began work on the project and the first phase of the Lower Market Street building was erected by James Chapman, of Islington, in 1897–8 (ill. 286). There were no students up until 1901 when H. P. Monckton, surveyor to the Ogilvie Estate, was appointed architect, seemingly with a view to a smoother working relationship with the landowners – a ‘misguided hope’.²⁹ The LCC had made funding secure, but progress was complicated by the death of Maj. R. A. Ogilby in 1901. Monckton oversaw extensions in 1902 that included a detached lecture-room block to the south. The original workshops were greatly enlarged to the west in 1914–16, as part of a larger programme of works designed by T. Phillips Figgis and Alan Edward Munby (see below; ill. 286). The resulting arrangement, now linked to the gymnasium and the art and science school, had the rambling and utilitarian character of an industrial complex (ill. 273). There was further enlargement in 1924–5 when a light machine shop was added to the east.³⁰

Entrance block

The second main phase of the Polytechnic’s enlargement was developed in 1912 under a new principal, A. F. Hogg. Figgins and Munby were chosen from a shortlist of three architects’ firms because of their relevant experience. Munby, who had a scientific background, was a specialist in laboratory design and, with Figgins, they had completed the Radium Institute near Manchester. First ambitions were for a replacement of the William Street range extending eastwards. The LCC refused to fund this, so the scheme was reduced to a new block at the corner of Thomas Street and William Street, large enough to anticipate future growth, remodeling of the existing premises and enlargement of the engineering workshops. Progress was delayed while the Polytechnic pursued acquisition of the freehold of the site, achieved in 1914 with a loan from the City Parochial Fund. Thomas & Edge built the corner block in 1915–16 and it was ceremonially opened in June 1917 when the whole scheme had been seen through. All this was carried out during difficult wartime conditions when labour was scarce. It was sanctioned because the Polytechnic was contributing to munitions production and the training of military staff.³¹

The three-storey corner block was conceived as the main entrance to the Polytechnic, and treated with a sophisticated metropolitan architectural grandeur that earlier blocks lacked (ill. 277). The Baroque exterior, faced in Portland stone and enriched by carved decoration, has a diagonally set projecting entrance bay at the corner, a giant order of Ionc pilasters and large window-to-wall ratios, presumably made possible by steel framing. A tall parapet screens a flat roof that was used as a playground by the day-school girls. On the Thomas Street side a ramped incline behind the geometric area railings allowed bicycles to be brought into the basement. Inside, the building’s centrepiece is a full-height circular hall or ‘rotunda’, lit by a domical lantern and floored with a mosaic incorporating the entwined initials ‘WP’ (ills 268, 271). Offices for the institution’s senior administrators were placed off this space on the ground floor. Above were a library and facilities for the school of domestic science, converted to classrooms for the girls’ technical school in 1921.³²

Additions of the 1920s

In 1928 the Polytechnic presented the LCC with another proposal for the rebuilding of the original block, this time to go with further extension along Thomas Street. Once again, extension gained approval, but not rebuilding. The office of Figgins and Munby, where both partners were then approaching the end of their careers, designed the new block and Thomas & Edge built it in 1931. Externally it was treated as a continuation of the entrance block in a simpler form, with polychromatic brick largely replacing stone (ill. 270). Electrical engineering laboratories occupied the ground floor, drawing offices and classrooms for the girls’ trade school filled the upper storeys, and the roof-top playground was enlarged.³³

A new principal, Edward Mallett, initiated a more ambitious scheme for major expansion of the Polytechnic in Wellington Street Area

1931, but once again the LCC blocked, fearing a phased approach. The main completed elements, all designed by James H. Anderson, an insider who from 1934 combined the role of Architect to the Polytechnic and Head of its Building Department, were: first, a hall to the north-west, on the site of the former bank, which was converted into a dance studio by the Duke of Wellington public house and the 1833 extension; second, enlargement of the Thomas Street range; and, third, an off-street block south of the engineering workshops. After this, war curtailed the programme.

The half-relieved pressure on the gymnastics Anderson pre-emptively offered to design this, his first building for the Polytechnic, in 1934, but concern over the possible impact of relocation of the Arsenal delayed its construction, by Dove Brothers, until 1933–6. The austere and rather characterless building is a street-fronted block made in brick and Bath stone, the latter mainly restricted to the entrance façade on Calderwood Street. The ample lit hall, originally divided into a dance studio and a studio hall for dancing. With a gallery, it had seating for 850.

There was a basement refectory, and an upper storey provided space for the choir and music department.

Enlargement along Thomas Street followed. Thomas & Edge built another three-storey block in 1937, omitting even the modest ornament of its northern neighbour, the facilities of which were extended with more laboratories, classrooms and roof-top playground. There was also a basement, with workshops for the building department.

The final completed phase of Mallett’s scheme was a workshop and Deansgate building that replaced and doubled the length of the engineering block of 1902, facing the south entrance to the street, from which there had been a gated passage since 1897. Most of the existing buildings were thus linked by external walkways and including Ron Herron, F. Kander, B. R. Reynolds, T. P. Holmes and Robert Skilling worked up the scheme. The first phase, the Wellington Street and Polytechnic Street block, was built in 1941–3, and the Thomas Street building followed in 1941–4 (Ill. 247, 248). The contractor was Thomas & Edge. Another part of the wider scheme was modernization of the Polytechnic’s pre-existing buildings, undertaken through Newby F. Eversen, of Excester and Searles, architects. The brief for the enlargement was complex. In 1943 the Metropolitan Water Board had fought for and gained permission to build new offices on the corner of Wellington Street and Polytechnic Street, so that these had to be accommodated, as did nine commercial units for the Ogilvy Estate. This compromised the ground floors in both streets, so in 1952 all the ground floor had been a library in 1951–4, with access formed at first-floor level.

Post-war expansion

Despite the new block’s misfortune, the Polytechnic escaped serious wartime damage. Once classes resumed and student numbers increased, there was, with little rebuilding, a modest increase in the size of the Polytechnic’s campus. The need to provide new accommodation for the London and Science, Anthony Crosland, made what became known as his ‘Polytechnic speech’, describing the Labour Government’s plans for a transformation of the nation’s higher-education system. For Woolwich Polytechnic, the impact of these and subsequent reforms meant expansion beyond the island site and, eventually, its abandonment.

In 1963 Woolwich Polytechnic merged with Hammersmith College of Art and Building to become Thames Polytechnic. Further mergers followed until the Woolwich complex had become one of seven sites, all renamed the University of Greenwich in 1993. In a rationalization of its dispersed premises the University decided to vacate the Woolwich campus in 2001. The site was sold in 2003 to Powis Street Estates Ltd through whom its buildings became the Island Business Centre, and for mixed commercial and educational use.

Another redevelopment since the 1880s

Commercial buildings around Wellington Street

Through much of the twentieth century houses and shops remained a major presence on and between William Street and Wellington Street (Ill. 275). The Powis leasoth estate reverted to the Ogilvy Estate in 1968. There was some lease-end rebuilding in the late 1880s in the shape of terraced houses on William Street and Thomas Street. Much more piecemeal redevelopment followed, particularly in 1897–1900 through Maj. R. A. Ogilvy. H. H. Ogilvy, who had been the Powis Estate’s surveyor, was heavily involved. William Street and Thomas Street were comprehensively rebuilt and a number of larger three-storey commercial premises were built on the north side of Wellington Street and the west side of Thomas Street, where at 1895 the YMCA built a clubhouse.

Here there was still a concentration of photographers (see page 253), six in 1896, with several printers in an otherwise broad mix of shops. Wellington Street’s south side was not much altered at this time. An exception was a pair (Nos 41–43) of 1902 that survived up to 2007 (Ill. 244). Here was George Newton’s printing works where the Kentish Independent newspaper was produced.

2–14 Wellington Street. An example of this element of the rebuilding phase was a large corner bank where Wellington Street meets Thomas Street (4–2 Wellington Street and 13 Thomas Street), a replacement in 1885–2 of earlier premises in which the Lloyds Bank of England was housed.

The site was sold in 2003 to Powis Street Estates Ltd through whom its buildings became the Island Business Centre, and for mixed commercial and educational use.

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Wellington Street area

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Other redevelopment since the 1880s

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Based on the content provided, the document appears to be discussing the history and development of buildings in the Wellington Street area of London. It covers various architectural projects, renovations, and the impact of economic changes on the area from the early 1900s to the 1990s. The document highlights key periods of development, such as the post-war expansion and the post-war rebuilding, and discusses the role of architects and developers in shaping the landscape of the area.
outwardly red brick with Bath stone dressings. There were triple turrets and the façade bore theatrical busts; an columns did not impede views (Ill. 275). Crewe’s decora-
tion was in a ‘First Empire’ style, with gold mouldings and ruby plush upholstery and hangings.65

In 1908 the establishment became the Woolwich Hippodrome, for London Theatres of Varieties Ltd. Frank Matcham made alterations for music-hall use, in other words variety shows twice nightly. There was a bioscope room by 1914 and the place was a full-time cinema by 1923 when an organ was installed.66

The Hippodrome was taken over by Associated British Cinemas in 1935 and demolished in 1936 for replace-
ment with a purpose-built cinema. This was designed for ABC by W. R. Glen, and the lower parts of a sparsely
detailed brick-clad building were up when war stopped work. Controls on building materials prevented resump-
tion of the project until 1945, when it was seen through and opened as the Regal Cinema (III. 247), with a revised interior scheme by ABC’s architect, C. J. Foster, and a capacity of 1,528, of which 124 were in the circle. The cinema closed in 1952 and after a period of disuse was altered internally to form a nightclub – ‘NYC’. This was closed down in 2008 as it had become ‘a magnet for the generation of crime, violence and disorder’.67 A locally based project to reopen the venue as the Woolwich Grand Theatre was launched in 2011.68

There was other redevelopment in the locality in the 1940s as the Ogilby Estate had granted 60-year leases in
1908–13. The upper storeys were in the circle. The

CHAPTER FIVE

WELLINGTON STREET AREA

273. Wellington Street area from the south-east, c. 1923

274. a–f 14 Wellington Street and 15–17 Thomas Street, with the former London and Provincial Bank of 1852–4 in the foreground. Photographed 2007

initially housed the Woolwich Chamber of Commerce, and later came to be used as council offices. The lower storey became a DIY store and, then, in 2000, the Great Harry, a public house. This was plundered and gutted by arson during looting on 8 August 2011. The boarded-up façade was rapidly covered with graffiti and described as a ‘wall of hope’, within days it had been painted over with council messages reaffirming regeneration.69

Contemporary development included 15 Wellington Street, a three-storey brick- and marble-faced Midland
Bank of 1958–9 with an attractively asymmetrical four-
bay façade, designed by Laurence Gotch of the prolific
bank architects, Gotch, Saunders and Surridge.70 There was also 25–27 Wellington Street, rebuilt on a similar scale in the late 1950s and demolished in 2007.71

Public buildings south of Love Lane

Post Office, Thomas Street (demolished). Post-office provision in Woolwich was not centralized until 1873 when, after two years of representations from the Wool-
wich Local Board of Health, a Central General Post Office was established on Green’s End, facing the end of Povis Street (see page 226). This was soon supplemented with a long narrow sorting office to its rear, but it proved inade-
quate to the postal service’s enormous growth and in 1887 the Board of Health urged the provision of a better central post office for Woolwich. After desultory progress local pressure increased and in 1894 Henry Cecil Rakes, Post-
master General, saw to the acquisition from the War Office of a plot north-east of the Royal Engineers’ barracks that had remained garden ground. Here, facing Thomas Street on the south side of Love Lane, a large Central Post Office was built in 1892–4 and George John Lockwood, Post-
master, moved in from Green’s End, where sorting contin-
ued. Within the Office of Works the plans may have been prepared by Edward George Rivers, who had been respon-
sible for GPO work in Woolwich in the early 1880s. The building was a three-storey, four-bay, red-brick, Queen Anne block with rubbed-brick and terracotta side detailing to a pilastered and pedimented front (Ill. 276). A richly
ornamented gable bore a moulded-brick ‘VR’ monogram on its prominent south return elevation.72

Pensions legislation in 1911 caused many post offices to expand. The Woolwich Branch Post Office was substan-
tially enlarged onto the quadrant of ground to its south-
east in 1914–16, despite wartime difficulties with labour and materials. Albert Robert Myers was the architect for the Office of Works, Edward Proctor & Sons the builders. The single-storey additions comprised a long front range, for a larger public hall and oak-built counter, faced in red brick with Portland stone dressings and including two
CHAPTER FIVE
Wellington Street Area

The War Office decided to give up the Grand Depot Barracks in 1960 and Woolwich Borough Council stepped in quickly with a bid to redevelop the land. First intentions, worked up by W. H. Cinnamon, Borough Engineer, were for housing, including a students' hostel for Woolwich Polytechnic, and multi-storey car parking. Transfer of the property began in 1961 when the L.C.C. imposed revisions on Cinnamon's scheme, in part to accommodate the Home Office, which wanted a site for a police hostel. This was soon abandoned, but the Ministry of Works had come forward proposing a four-storey building to house new government staff from various departments then scattered around Woolwich. In 1961 the council appointed Armstrong and MacManus, already retained for the site that eventually became General Gordon Square (see page 235), as consultant architects for the whole Grand Depot Barracks site project in pursuit of the ideal of comprehensiveness. But local-government reforms overshadowed the proposals and it was the 1970s before any buildings were completed (lls 406, 436).

Thomas Spencer Hall of Residence (demolished). The first of these was the students' hostel on a north-west part of the site. Post-war shifts in the Polytechnic's purpose and character made this new departure necessary. From the 1940s full-time students were increasingly numerous and drawn from outside the local area. Further, the university's full-time students were increasingly numerous and from the south-west, photographed by John Gay c. 1972. Demolished.

The hostel was designed for General Gordon Council in 1966–7 by what had become Frederick MacManus and Partners; the job architect was Edward Jones, who worked with Christopher Cross and Brendan Woods under the partner-in-charge Brian Smith. There were further delays with the securing of central-government financial support and building followed in 1967–71. The hostel was opened by its namesake, Sir Thomas Spencer, a former student and building followed in 1965–71. Designed in the late 1960s in the Ministry of Public Building and Works, this plain seven-storey block was built through the then recently formed Property Services Agency in 1973–5. Its manner was similar to, if less streamlined than, that of Thomas Spencer Hall. Crown Building was demolished in 2011.

Peggy Middleton House, Grand Depot Road (demolished). Between these two buildings the largest part of the former Grand Depot site was ultimately taken by Greenwich Council itself to house its own officers. This change of plan arose from convergent pressures. At the time of local-government reorganization in 1976 Woolwich Borough Council was leasing large amounts of speculatively built office space, in particular at Churchill House. It was painful for Woolwich to concede its municipal identity to Greenwich in the merger. This was a concomitant factor in a determination to concentrate the bulk of the combined complement of municipal staff in Woolwich. At the same time, more military land was destined to become available for public housing, and the scheme for public buildings on the General Gordon Square site had run into problems (see pages 235, 240 and 372). A scheme promulgated in 1966 proposed a substantial block of council offices on the Grand Depot site, as a central part of much more ambitious town-centre renewal ideas. But these had to be scaled back and there was no significant progress with the offices until 1975, when the sale of Greenwich Town Hall made the ‘central administrative complex’ feasible.

Councillor John Cartwright, the Council Leader, spearheaded the advance, and designs were prepared by the Borough Architect, J. M. Moore. His scheme provided two levels of car parking as a podium for the brick-faced office, projected as a large Y-plan and four-storey western block joined by an entrance range to a larger eastern block, a five-storey hexagonal ring (ll 278). This use of interlinking hexagonal geometry, brick and raised pedestrian circulation echoed Sunderland Civic Centre (ll 148-71, Sir Basil Spence, Bonnington and Collins). Building work began with George Wimpey and Co. as contractors, but inflation and other economic pressures meant that the larger eastern part of the scheme had to be abandoned in 1974. The car-park podium, Y-shaped block and entrance range were complete by 1977, with the concrete footings for the second phase constructed and left visible. The complex was named Peggy Middleton House, after an eminent Greenwich Labour politician who died in 1974. It had a low-key banded exterior, hard red-brick alternates with continuous strips of aluminium-framed windows. The podium was faced in cast-concrete panels and sat in a landscape of access roads, flights of steps and brick-ender raised flowerbeds. A flexibly planned interior made no show – the Town Hall on Wellington Street continued to provide the authority's civic and ceremonial spaces. Peggy Middleton House was demolished in 2010-11.

Uphill and to the south-west, where the military clothing factory of 1876 had stood, Civic House, as Grand Depot Road, was built in 1960–2, after the abandonment of a scheme to redevelop Grand Depot Road, to be the local headquarters of the National Union of Public Employees. It was designed by the Carpenter Farrer Partnership, architects, with Walter Lawrence and Son as builders. In 2012 the four-storey red-brick block was in use, but programmed for demolition.

Love Lane regeneration
Failure to see through the ‘central administrative complex’ project in 1975 meant that Greenwich Council continued to operate from a number of scattered buildings. A new attempt to deal with this was planned from 2010 and launched in 2012 as part of a wider scheme that gained leverage through the council's surrenders and purchases of land to open the way to linked commercial...
and speculative developments of the whole area south of Love Lane, along with a major frontage on the south side of Wellington Street, almost eleven acres in all. Collado Collins Architects were the council’s masterplanners, and consents were granted in 2007 for what was both hailed and criticized as a massive attempt to regenerate Woolwich town centre.

Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington Street. The first part of this project was a new office block for council staff, to replace and improve on Peggy Middleton House. This was built in 2009–11 on the site of 29–55 Wellington Street, most of which had already been devoted to council offices. Design was handled by HLM Architects, working with Buro Happold, structural engineers, and Wates Construction. Rubble from the demolished buildings was recycled on site as a hard-core piling mattress. The six-storey, steel-framed structure has its lower levels glazed, to suggest open government, and there is through access (Ill. 279). Brick-clad intermediate storeys project to Wellington Street on pilotis, with a western ‘pod’ stone-clad. The rest of the Wellington Street façade is set back with reflective glass in deference to the Town Hall, to create a ‘civic space’ between the two buildings. The upper storeys have an outer glass skin within which air can circulate while energy is conserved; there are shallow-arched concrete ceilings and solar panels on the roof. The building has office accommodation for around 3,000 council staff, a basement library, a business centre, public-service counters on the ground floor, and a high-level viewing gallery set askew in a podium box, saving the main block from too monolithic an appearance, and a further nod to the Town Hall.

The masterplan earmarked the remainder of the Love Lane site for residential and retail purposes, and also included a new police station. The central and driving feature on the site of Peggy Middleton House was a large ‘flagship superstore’ for Tesco, which worked with St James’s Investments and through Spenhill as its developers. A ‘piazza’ with smaller shops was proposed to link this store to General Gordon Square, with Love Lane retained as a road, complemented by crossing pedestrian routes to provide ‘permeability’. At the north-east corner, on the site of the Post Office, a mainly residential tower block was proposed and, in the face of concerns, quickly scaled down from thirty to twenty-five storeys. The project as a whole incorporates wind turbines and bore holes for heat recovery. Around 1,000 new homes are planned, some 300 of them designated ‘affordable’ and most allotted to the south-west part of the site.

Sheppard Robson, architects, prepared a first scheme for the superstore part of the development. The Commission on Architecture and the Built Environment criticized this in 2008 as being ‘aggressive’. After revisions and approvals work on the first phase of what was labelled Woolwich Central was carried through in 2011–12 with Willmott Dixon as the main contractors and Whitelaw Turkington as landscape architects. Above the store, large blocks of housing, marketed as a ‘skyline apartment complex’ and clad in zinc and Trespa panels, rise to seventeen storeys for 259 apartments, of which seventy are to be ‘affordable’. These blocks push forward close to Grand Depot Road and there are narrow perimeter access ways. Anglesea Lane to the east, Royal Engineers’ Row to the west. The scheme, flats above a supermarket, said to be the largest Tesco development in Europe, was dubbed a ‘Tesco Town’ and seen as likely to be a prototype. There were also concerns about the impact the development would have on existing Woolwich shops.

The tower on General Gordon Square and blocks to the west are to follow at the time of writing. The approach to the Tesco store via the plot earmarked for the tower was in 2012 set to be temporarily landscaped as Ordnance Square.