

“A Part of Deptford”

Past & Present

The Parish of

Our Lady of the Assumption

1842–1992



Introduction

"The scraps that were left were picked up and filled twelve baskets"
(Luke 9, 17).

When Fr Martin Bennett brought out a history of the Parish of the Holy Ghost, Tooting, a few years ago he began it with the words above. Like him, I began this work thinking there was only five loaves and two fish to write about, now it seems as if there may be enough to satisfy five thousand men, to say nothing of women and children.

Fr Martin said something else too. He apologized for all the parishioners he might have neglected during the course of his research. That's my sentiment too. In my first year in this Parish I seem to have spent half my time running past the parishioners (marathon training) and the other half writing about them! I intend now to emulate Fr Jim by putting the notebook to one side, and visiting you in your homes.

A word of thanks. Thanks are due to all those mentioned in this short work, especially to those both named and unknown who were the sources for the different articles, and also the parishioners who agreed to share their lives and thoughts with their Parish and a wider public. I also thank those who have encouraged me in this enjoyable but tiring work, particularly the late Darrel Serpis who helped to start the ball rolling last November, John Kavanagh for his proof-reading skills.

Enjoy the scraps.

Fr John Kenny.
November 1992

Preface

Deptford is a place steeped in history and especially that of the Royal Navy. The Parish of the Assumption of Our Lady, Deptford, has an important place in that history. Since its foundation as a Mission one hundred and fifty years ago, the parish has served the Catholics who have worked in the shipyards and on the railways in that part of London. Many of them have come from Ireland and much of the story of Deptford is their story too. In more recent years the Parish has become a home to people from many places - each in their own way contributing to the continuing development of Deptford and the life of the Church in this Diocese. We owe much to the people of Deptford and to the priests who have served in the Parish down through the years.

Thanks are due to Father John Kenny for his work in producing this history, which provides valuable information and catches "the flavour" not only of the Parish community but also of this vibrant area of London.

**Michael Bowen
Archbishop of Southwark**

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The area covered by the Parish of the Assumption, Deptford.



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Deptford: Facts and Famous People

* On the Deptford riverside stood an ancient Royal Palace called the Moated House, or Stone House. King John is said to have built it, Edward II often visited it, Henry IV is thought to have stayed there whilst being cured of leprosy.

* Just by Drake's Steps, on the waterfront of the present Pepys Estate, Queen Elizabeth I knighted Francis Drake on board the 'Pelican' (later renamed 'The Golden Hind') after he had sailed around the world.

* Did the 'Skull and Cross Bones', the pirate's flag, originate in Deptford? Have a look at the skulls on the top of the gate-posts of St Nicholas' Church at Deptford Green. It is thought that they inspired Deptfordian ne'er-do-wells of times past. Funnily enough, the original 'cross-bones' were not symbols of death at all, but laurel leaves, symbols of eternal life.

* Petts Wood, Kent, is named after the Pett family of Deptford, master shipbuilders from the time of Queen Elizabeth I. In his will of 1577, William Pett mentions the woods he owned which built his ships; the will refers to Hawkeswoode and his oaks in the parish of Chislehurst.

* Britain's two most famous diarists were to be found in Deptford in the 17th century. Sir John Evelyn, a royalist who survived the English Civil War, lived at Sayes House on the site of the present Sayes Court Estate. Samuel Pepys, who lived in nearby Woolwich, often stayed with Evelyn whilst he was on daily Navy business in Deptford Yard. Pepys was the Secretary of the Admiralty.

* The heir to the Russian throne, the future Czar Peter the Great, came to Deptford in 1698 to work in Deptford Dockyard and to pick up the skills which helped him to found the Russian Navy. He stayed at Sayes House, but when John Evelyn heard of the hole that he and a wheelbarrow had left early one morning in his maze, his future greatness was far from the Englishman's thoughts.

* A ship-builder of a later date and a humbler status is also noteworthy. John Gast of Deptford (1772-1837), was a founding father of trade unionism; his 'Philanthropic Hercules' organisation was a radical forerunner of the Trades Union Congress.

* Deptford was at the very forefront of adult education in Britain in 1825 when the Mechanics Institution came into being at the Roman Eagle on Deptford Church Street. After a number of temporary locations the Deptford Mechanics and Literary Institution opened its Hall in 1852 on the station side of the Church of the Assumption. Its press reading room, library, and weekly lectures did much to educate local people. In time the Hall was purchased by Fr Felix Segesser who turned it into Deptford's first cinema in 1908 to raise funds for the Assumption Parish. The Mechanics Arms opposite is the Institute's only memorial.

* Goldsmith's College is named after the Goldsmith's Company who originally owned the site. Previously the building was the Royal Naval College, New Cross (1843-90). When the Naval College moved and became Eltham College, Goldsmith's became part of the polytechnic system in 1891, and part of London University in 1904, making its name also as a teacher training college.

* Ten years after London's first electric street lighting on Victoria embankment, London's first major electrical power station was opened in 1888 at Stowage in Deptford. The station was designed by Sebastian di Ferranti, a Liverpool-Italian. Its last remaining tower was demolished in 1992.

* In 1905 Alfred and Albert Stratton of Deptford were the first convicted murderers to be found guilty through the use of fingerprints. The victims, Mr and Mrs Farrow, sold candles, oil, paint and soap at 34 Deptford High Street.

* Rachel McMillan Hall in Creek Road recalls Margaret and Rachel McMillan. American-born, Margaret lived in Inverness, and worked in the industrial north of England and in London. She was an early campaigner for medical inspections and school clinics. With her sister Rachel she opened the first school clinic (1908) and the first open-air nursery school (1914). Margaret lived on the site of the College campus in Creek Road. The well-known Rachel McMillan Training College for nursery and infant teachers (1930-77) occupied the building which has recently been renamed the 'Rachel Macmillan Campus of the University of Greenwich'.

The History of the Parish

MEETING A CRYING NEED

Between the fall of Catholic Queen Mary in 1558, and the repeal of the Penal Laws in 1778 and 1791, British and Irish Catholics were allowed nowhere in law to practise their religion. As soon as Parliament at Westminster relaxed the Penal Laws a Catholic community began to be seen.

Why should there have been a large number of Catholics in this area? The main reason was the availability of work which drew people from near and far, as London does today. At that time many Catholics were to be found in the shipyard and at Greenwich Naval Hospital. Many served in the Navy, others served it by building its ships or tending to its sailors. Later on, railway and building work attracted still more, many from Ireland.

To begin with, Deptford's Catholics were served by priests from St George's Fields (modern-day Kennington), but later a parish was established at Greenwich which included Deptford. Eventually Deptford was made a separate 'Mission' by Bishop Griffiths of the London district. Fr William Marshall was the first pastor of the parish when it first opened on Whit Sunday (Pentecost) May 15th 1842; the first Baptism was of Ellen Kelleher on the same day. The first marriage was celebrated

between Morgan Flaherty and Mary McCarthy in 1850, and Bishop Thomas Grant inaugurated the Sacrament of Confirmation on the 3rd Sunday of Advent 1851. The Catholic Directory of the time describes the Parish in this way:

"Sundays, Mass at 8.30 & 10.30. Holydays at 9.00.

Sunday school and catechism for Juvenile instruction at 2.00pm".

The 'Mission' in Deptford had begun in a temporary chapel in Old King Street in 1843, a gift of Canon Richard North, the Rector of the Catholic Parish of Greenwich (now at Crooms Hill). On weekdays the temporary church was used as a school for 260 children. Plans were then made for a move to a permanent location.

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

A permanent church needed to be built, preferably on the High Street. Sadly, so poor were Deptford's original congregation that not one person could afford to give a subscription of one pound to the building fund of the new church. The need for the church could be seen from the fact that the Church had about 200 children and not an eighth part of the congregation could be fitted into it for Sunday Mass. Pennies were scraped together, and something was done.

The present church was built by Fr William Marshall at a cost of £2000. The first stone was laid on June 22nd 1844, with Canon North of Greenwich as the architect and patron. Just over a year later, "a month or so before August 1845" the church was in use, all but the chancel being completed. The building was originally a plain structure with lancet windows and an open roof, only a nave was built. Its style was 'early English' Geometrical Gothic, lacking a chancel. The materials used was stock brick with Portland stone dressings. This humble High Street Church which we still treasure was officially opened in 1846, the exact date is unknown.



"The Roman Catholic Chapel; The Mechanics Institution; and Railway Station, 1855"

The Parish Presbytery was built in 1855 by Fr Joseph North. It is described by Nathan Dews, the 19th century historian of Deptford, as "a fine commodious building with stone dressings. It is four storeys high with a castellated parapet and harmonises with the church".

An additional improvement to the parish at this time was a special statue of Our Lady which was placed in the church and solemnly blessed by the Bishop on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in the same year. The spiritual edification of the Parish was also aided by a Mission preached by the Jesuits in December 1858, a process developed by the 'fire and brimstone' of the Redemptorists 20 years later.

Meanwhile, back in the 1850s a campaign was set underway to enlarge the Church of the Assumption, but with little success. In his appeal for financial assistance on June 27th 1859, Fr Joseph North made clear that the funds could not be raised in Deptford alone:

"The greater proportion of parishioners (totalling 5 - 7,000) are labourers... it consists almost exclusively of poor Irish, many are too poor to contribute. There is no class of Mechanics or Tradesmen, nor any rich persons".

Fr North's appeal was blessed with success. Soon his building was enlarged by a chancel and a Lady Chapel designed and built by Canon North. It was opened on December 15th 1859 by Bishop Grant, who consecrated the High Altar four days later on December 19th. Over thirty years later, when debts were paid, the whole church was consecrated, on May 19th 1890 by Bishop John Butt.

THE BUILDING 100 YEARS AGO

At this time the interior was very richly decorated. Nathan Dews writes of its ornamented stencilled ceiling, the rich dado added to lower part of the walls. It was proposed to fill blank spaces either side of the arch with other murals, the Ascension of Our Lord on south side and the Assumption of Our Lady on the north, with the apostle looking out of a tomb from which lilies are growing (taken from description given by St John Damascene). The chancel arch was decorated with cherubs, grapes, and the passion flower, around which is Latin inscription from Genesis about this place as the house of the God. Also present at that time and absent now were four windows on the south side of the church with stained glass representing Saints Joseph, Peter, Paul and Patrick. Until recent times there were also two statues at either base of the chancel arch, portraying Our Lady and St Joseph.

The Church was redecorated in 1904, but the vision and the fund-raising ability of the North brothers was not to be equalled. Nevertheless, in May 1906 a fine hall adjoining the church, formerly the Mechanics Institute, was acquired by Fr Felix Segesser for the use of the Mission. Sadly 'St Mary's Hall' was lost to the parish when Fr Segesser left in 1916. His successor Canon James Mahoney did great work in raising funds to offset parish debts, particularly school debts, but little was left to spend on the building.

DECAY AND RENEWAL

Deterioration due to shortage of funds was joined in the 1940s by the fear of aerial bombing. In 1942 £500 worth of damage was done to the church windows, and £50

worth to the presbytery. This was light compared to neighbouring Catholic parish churches and schools at East Greenwich, Peckham, Bermondsey, Camberwell and the devastated Cathedral in Kennington. The worst losses were sustained at Dockhead, Bermondsey where the church was destroyed and three priests lost their lives, among their number Fr Stephen Spillane of Deptford. A reminder of war damage came in the form of a grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes built in 1958 in honour of Canon Mahoney from the stones of the blitzed Catholic Chapel in Brockley Cemetery. The chapel had been built by Stuart Knill and his family, 19th century benefactors to Deptford Parish. Sadly, vandalism has forced the removal of the statue of Our Lady.

After the war, Canon Joseph Douch and Fr Michael Frost did much to keep the community proud of their church in the 1940s and '50s, but the greatest improvements to the building since 1945 have occurred recently, under Fr Gerald Flood and Fr James McGillicuddy. In addition to securing the external structure of the Church and its presbytery by renovating the roofing and the pointing, Fr Gerry was responsible for the creation of the porch and a rearrangement of the benches to give a central aisle. Fr Jim was then free to concentrate on repainting the interior of the church, rearranging the sanctuary to bring forward the altar, and installing a new Reconciliation Room (confessional). Fr Jim has also been happy to oversee the planning, building, and developing use of the New Parish Hall built on the site of the old Mechanics Institute. Work began in 1989, the Hall was first used at the beginning of 1991.

THE BEAUTY OF GOD'S HOUSE A HIDDEN GEM

Tucked away, in from the High Street, the Church of the Assumption of Our Lady surprises visitors with its easy warmth and beautiful decoration. The first thing a visitor notices, however, is both sombre and thought-provoking, the enormous crucifix in the centre of the porch. The cross was given to the parish to commemorate a successful mission preached in 1871 by Fr Plunkett, a Redemptorist priest. It was moved to its present position when the porch was installed during the ministry of Fr Gerald Flood.

Even more noticeable is the painted stone screen at the other end of the Church, behind the High Altar. Such an object is known as a REREDOS. In 1878 this reredos was exhibited at the Paris Exhibition and awarded the Gold Medal. It was presented to the parish by Canon Richard North in 1884 and has been much admired ever since.

A WEALTH OF HIDDEN MEANING

At the centre of the reredos is a statue of Our Lady accompanied by four angels, two bearing scrolls and four others carrying symbolic shields. The scrolls read 'Tota pulchra es, amica mea' ('My beloved, you are all beautiful' from the Song of Songs), and 'Et maculam originalis nunquam f' it in te' ('And original sin [will] never be in you'). Two of the mystical symbols are associated with the descriptions of Mary, based on Old Testament poetry, found in the Litany of Loreto, the 'mystical rose', and the 'house of gold', and two carry the letters 'ThS' (the first three letters of the Greek word for Jesus).

These images refer us to the mystery of how it was that a vulnerable Jewish girl became the invincibly precious Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Above the statue of Our Lady are three more angels, Michael with his sword and two others, presumably Gabriel and Raphael. The top two corners of the reredos feature ancient images of the Saviour; on the left, the Lamb of God (bearing the cross of St George), and on the right, the Pelican which was said to pluck its own breast, giving blood to its young to save them from starvation.

Beneath the reredos stands the original stone altar. It is of particular interest as it features a powder blue triptych of images of Catholic teaching regarding the Blessed Virgin Mary. Carved in the stone at the base of the altar are pictures of the Nativity, the Annunciation, and the Assumption of Our Lady. Nearby, the carved archway leading to the sacristy was exhibited at the same time as the reredos and a medal was awarded to the architect for the design. It features the Descent of the Lord into Hell and cost the Parish £100.

Above the reredos is a wheel window of stained glass representing the Assumption. This window is illuminated at night by courtesy of British Rail floodlights behind the building. Higher still, above the chancel arch is a 19th century mural of the Crucifixion, bright colours on gold ground. On either side of the cross stand Mary and the apostle John. The tree in the background is a reminder of the Garden of Eden, now redeemed by the "tree" of Calvary.

WINDOWS AND OTHER AIDS TO PRAYER

The eastern end of the church, opposite the reredos, features a triple lancet window above the organ gallery. The central window portraying the Madonna and Child is dedicated "in memory of Very Reverend John Milville Glenie, Canon of the Diocese of Southwark and former Rector of this church. Died at Weybridge 23rd June 1878 aged 72..." (sic). On the left of this stands a window portraying St Michael the Archangel in priestly robes, and dedicated to the members of the Parish who gave up their lives for 'King and country' in the First World War (1914-18). The third large window features St Martin of Tours, as a bishop in the upper part of the work, and below as a soldier on horseback meeting the lame beggar to whom he gave his cloak. It is dedicated to Martin Montague Edwards, 'native of Tasmania, died June 21st 1889, aged 32'. To the right of this triple lancet window are portrayed in glass a series of images from the litany of Our Lady: Tower of David, Spiritual Vessel, Adorable Vessel, Ark of the Covenant, Morning Star, House of Gold, Vessel of Devotion, and Seat of Wisdom. The organ nearby is in need of extensive repair, dating as it does from the time of Fr Joseph North.

In the main body of the church there is still more to be seen. On the southern wall are three statues of the Sacred Heart, St Patrick, and Michael the Archangel and the Dragon. It is here also that the series of fourteen Stations of the Cross begin. These painted wooden plaques portray the final journey of Jesus to his death, beginning with his condemnation by Pontius Pilate and ending with his body being placed in the tomb. During the season of Lent prayers are said at each Station to remind us that Jesus died for all mankind, to save us from sin and death.

At the south-eastern corner of the church stands a side-chapel which might easily be taken to be a Lady Chapel, especially as it has a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes and St Bernadette. Closer inspection, however, reveals it to have been in honour of the

Sacred Heart. Above an altar featuring a carving of the Heart of Jesus, one can see three stained glass windows featuring the Lord in the centre, St Gertrude on his left, and St Margaret Mary on his right. The two female saints, above whom are the words 'Dilexi vos' ('I chose you') are included because of their part in popularizing prayers of gratitude to God for the love shown us by the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The principal means by which a person becomes a Christian is the Sacrament of Baptism. The Parish baptismal Font is to be found at the foot of the sanctuary area. As Baptism requires immersion not only in water but also in the Gospel there are four stone carvings on the side of the font commemorating the evangelists Matthew (a winged man), Mark (a winged lion), Luke (a winged ox), and John (an eagle). The fact that Faith is our haven in the ups and downs of life has always been close to the heart of this riverside Parish. The anchor motifs on the sacristy door and a roof that resembles an upturned ship underline our hope that the Barque (boat) of Peter, the Church, is our 'shelter from the storm'.

Deptford in the Mists of History

Historians believe that nearly two thousand years ago the Romans of Londinium, on the north of the Thames, had a settlement at St George's Fields close to the site of St George's Cathedral, the present centre of our Catholic diocese of Southwark. From this point ran a series of forts stretching from Lambeth in the west to Deptford Bridge in the East, the forts forming a line of defence against the Britons of Kent.

Remains which confirm Deptford's Roman past were found in the 18th and 19th century at New Cross, amongst them pieces of pavement found 30 feet below the southern end of Deptford High Street. Also, a number of small vessels found in the last century in a garden near to the main road at New Cross. The Dover to London route, known as Watling Street, was the lifeline for Roman control, hence the 'ribbon development' along it.

You might wonder why the road was not closer to the river. The answer lies in the ancient name for Deptford found in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and William the Conqueror's Domesday Book, namely 'Meretun' or 'Meretone', meaning 'the town in the marshes', marshes dangerous to travellers. It was here in 871 that King Aethelred and his brother Alfred (soon to be King) fought off a Danish attack on Deptford Creek. The Danes were frequent raiders in these parts. In 1011 they kidnapped Archbishop Alphege of Canterbury and carried him away to nearby Greenwich where he was martyred, in the following year, on the site of the church which now bears his name.

In Saxon and Norman times there was little clear distinction made between Greenwich and Deptford. Deptford was even referred to as 'West Greenwich'. Consequently Deptford was claimed by both Surrey and Kent as late as 1696. Even to this very day Greenwich Borough extends west of Deptford Creek, and Greenwich electoral constituency includes part of the Pepys Estate. What it is to be popular...

Be this as it may, the name Deptford - meaning the 'deep ford' across the River Ravensbourne - replaced 'Meretun' after the Norman Conquest of 1066. As buildings were raised by the banks of the river the area to the north east was referred to as

'Deptford-le-Stronde', Deptford Strand. The most imposing building of eight hundred years ago was surely the castle, or Stone House, of Gilbert de Maminot, the Bishop of Lisieux. Its ruins could be seen eight centuries later near the mast-dock of Deptford Yard.

The castle and its surrounding lands, the 'Manor of West Greenwich', changed hands as times passed. At one time it was promised to the monks of Bermondsey Monastery who received revenue from Deptford Mill, later it was owned by the Knights Templar famed for their part in the Crusades. After the Crusades the de Say family established a lasting hold on the property, giving its manor house at Bromfield the name "Say's Court", the famous home of John Evelyn. On this site stands the Sayes Court Estate of today.

From the end of the 14th century records exist which show that a manor separate from West Greenwich stood locally, that of Deptford-le-Strond, Deptford Strand. It came to be held by the Duke of York, the Crown, and Lord Darcy, who was beheaded by Henry VIII. From that time the manor was handed over to a series of private owners who inhabited an area buzzing with ship-building activity overseen by Trinity House. In more recent times the name 'Deptford Strand' has been revived in a new development east of the Pepys Estate. Previously criss-crossed with railway lines leading down to the wharves serving docks to the east and the Victualling Yard to the west, the area is now silent save for babies and cassette-players. Commerce has had its day.

JOHN EVELYN, SAYES COURT, AND THE POOR OF DEPTFORD

The most famous of the owners of Sayes Court was undoubtedly Sir John Evelyn, in the 17th century. Its most famous tenant was Peter, the future Czar of Russia, in 1698. Whilst John Evelyn beautified the area with a wonderful garden, the future Peter the Great showed no interest in gardening. In the period he spent in Deptford Dockyard learning the maritime arts the house he rented suffered a neglect from which it never recovered. The Evelyn family never returned, but leased it to a number of tenants.

One such tenant, Lord Sussex, is mentioned by Sir Walter Scott in his novel "Kenilworth", but towards the end of its life the mansion-house became a work-house (1759-1848), an emigration depot (1852), the estate gardener's house, and finally the 'Evelyn Almshouses, Sayes Court', the residence of 21 elderly tenants and residents of the Evelyn estates who were in need of the support offered by St Nicholas' Parish.

This support continues in a different form today. A sum of money left in John Evelyn's will to be invested for the relief of the poor of St Nicholas' parish area is still distributed. In 1991, as in other years, 86 pensioners, including Catholics and other non-Anglicans, received weekly payments of 'Evelyn Money', holiday funds, and 'Christmas boxes'. Administrators also oversee payments made to support single parents, playschemes, and other areas of need. The Evelyn presence in Deptford is still with us.

CHURCHES OF DEPTFORD: ST NICHOLAS'

Local tradition maintains that Christians worshipped at a church on the site of St Nicholas' Church in the 11th century at the time of the martyrdom of St Alphege, and

that they took refuge from the Danes in St Nicholas' church tower. In the 12th century the Countess Juliana de Vere granted the church to the Norbertine Order, the White Canons (or Premonstratensians). For a brief time it then became the property of the Knights Templar, but in 1183 the Bishop of Rochester sanctioned its bequest to the White Canons of the Abbey and Convent of Begham (Bayham).

Great change was in the air in the 16th century with the closure of smaller monasteries such as Begham by Cardinal Thomas Wolsey. The church first became the property of Wolsey's College at Oxford University, then it was taken over by the Crown, which leased it out to private tenants who would take on a prominent role in the life and upkeep of what was by then an Anglican parish.

From the first, the patron of St Nicholas' Church was well-chosen; St Nicholas is the patron saint of sailors. The parish emulated its patron by having a brazier lit on the top of its church tower to guide ships around this bend of the winding River Thames. This was not, however, the only guidance to sailors provided by this church. St Nicholas' was for many years 'the Westminster Abbey of the Royal Navy', the local church to the Deptford Royal Dockyard which was the birthplace of the British Navy.

In fact, St Nicholas' was well known to all the notable admirals and 'adventurers' of the Elizabethan era, and long after. Not surprisingly, therefore, Lord Howard of Effingham (commander against the Spanish Armada), Admiral John Benbow (who died in Jamaica after a battle with the French), the would-be explorer Captain Edward Fenton, and many others of their calling are buried at St Nicholas'. The most famous of them are also remembered by local placenames.

Likewise, two notable naval craftsmen are also buried here, Peter Petts (of the Petts Wood family) and Jonas Shish. Jonas Shish was an illiterate who became the finest ship-building craftsman of his day. His origins were not unlike those of Grinling Gibbons, the unknown wood-carver of Deptford discovered by John Evelyn and feted by the artistic society of his day. Grinling Gibbons' dexterity can be appreciated by any visitor to St Nicholas' as his "Valley of the Dry Bones" (based on the biblical passage) is still to be seen there.

Two notable literary connections with St Nicholas' also exist. Christopher Marlowe, a playwright and poet who lived at the same time as William Shakespeare, and is thought by some to have written some of Shakespeare's plays, is buried here. Marlowe was killed in 1593 in mysterious circumstances on the 'Golden Hind', moored nearby. The other literary link is more tenuous. Captain George Shelvocke was marooned on the island of Juan Fernandez in the South Seas in 1720 for six months. His account of the adventure ("A Voyage Round the World by the Way of the Great South Sea") is thought to have inspired Daniel Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe" and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner". Shelvocke was buried at St Nicholas' in 1742.

ST PAUL'S PARISH

With the growth in population of Deptford throughout the 17th century, and the shift of focus away from the riverside and towards the main London road, St Nicholas' status as the Anglican Parish came to an end. In 1710 Parliament split Deptford parish in two by authorising the construction of fifty new churches in and near London, one of which was to be St Paul's of Deptford.

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Two notable literary connections with St Nicholas' also exist. Christopher Marlowe, a playwright and poet who lived at the same time as William Shakespeare, and is thought by some to have written some of Shakespeare's plays, is buried here. Marlowe was killed in 1593 in mysterious circumstances on the 'Golden Hind', moored nearby. The other literary link is more tenuous. Captain George Shelvocke was marooned on the island of Juan Fernandez in the South Seas in 1720 for six months. His account of the adventure ("A Voyage Round the World by the Way of the Great South Sea") is thought to have inspired Daniel Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe" and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner". Shelvocke was buried at St Nicholas' in 1742.

ST PAUL'S PARISH

With the growth in population of Deptford throughout the 17th century, and the shift of focus away from the riverside and towards the main London road, St Nicholas' status as the Anglican Parish came to an end. In 1710 Parliament split Deptford parish in two by authorising the construction of fifty new churches in and near London, one of which was to be St Paul's of Deptford.

The influence of Sir Christopher Wren's preference for Italian Baroque architecture is seen in the design of many of these government-funded churches. One example of this would be the beautiful portico of St Paul's based on Santa Maria della Pace (Our Lady of Peace) in Rome. St Paul's, designed by Wren's pupil Nicholas Hawksmoor, was opened in 1730. Since then its splendour has earned it the title: the pearl of Deptford. From 1969 to 1992 the pearl was administered by a diamond, Canon David Diamond. Canon Diamond's open and cheerful nature, coupled with a love for High Anglo-Catholic ceremonial, did much to leave a fond memory in the minds of all those who knew him, particularly the young.

LIST OF PRIESTS OF DEPTFORD BEFORE THE REFORMATION

| | Priest | Bishop |
|------|-------------------------|---------------|
| 1321 | Roger de Fairstead | Hamo of Hythe |
| 1339 | Guido de Ewar | Hamo |
| 1348 | John Willard | Hamo |
| 1355 | Robert Bokking | Hamo |
| 1358 | Simonde Tonebregge | Sheppey |
| 1358 | Thomas Drapier | Sheppey |
| 1360 | Thomas de la Chan | Sheppey |
| | Adam Calmar | |
| 1361 | Palricius de Exetre | Sheppey |
| 1363 | Robert Snypstone | Whittlesey |
| 1889 | John Leute | Courtenay |
| 1391 | Stephen Cartwrighte | Bottlesham |
| 1391 | John Offewell | Bottlesham |
| 1392 | John Malefors | Bottlesham |
| 1395 | Thomas Wyche | Bottlesham |
| 1422 | Thomas Wellys | Langdon |
| 1423 | Richard Wyche | Langdon |
| 1437 | John Gryce | Langdon |
| 1438 | Thomas Nunton | Wellys |
| 1444 | William Rees | Lowe |
| 1445 | Brother John Hawkestone | Lowe |
| 1454 | Thomas Hylton | Lowe |
| 1462 | John May | Lowe |
| 1500 | Richard Power | Lowe |
| 1500 | John Allan or Allen | Newcourt |
| 1500 | Hugh Saunders | Fitsjames |
| 1503 | Richard Goldesboro | Fitsjames |
| 1516 | John Turner | Fisher |
| 1523 | George Brinley | Fisher |
| 1532 | Christopher Nelson | Fisher |

The list begins with the priests serving under Bishop Hamo of Hythe, and concludes with those serving under Bishop John Fisher of Rochester. In 1535 Bishop John Fisher was executed by order of King Henry VIII because he would not recognize Henry as

head of the Catholic Church in England. John Fisher was declared a Saint in 1935, he shares June 22nd as his feast day with St Thomas More, his friend and fellow martyr. After Bishop John Fisher came Bishop Nicholas Ridley of the Church of England. Like St John Fisher, Bishop Ridley also suffered martyrdom, in 1554 he died for his Anglican beliefs under the Catholic Queen Mary. John Angell, who served under Bishop Griffith from 1554-1560, was the last priest to lead St Nicholas' as part of the Roman Communion.

St Nicholas' parish, including St Luke's on Evelyn Street, is currently led by the Reverend Graham Corneck, an enthusiastic member of the Deptford Clergy Fraternal. Though the community is small in numbers it extends a wide welcome to the locality and far beyond, particularly on December 6th, the feast of St Nicholas.

Brockley and New Cross, Ancient and Modern

BROCKLEY: MONKS AND MANSIONS

On the southern side of the parish, south of Lewisham Way, lies a part of Brockley which is a part of the Parish of the Assumption. 'Manor Road gives a clue to the area's history.

Brockley, like Deptford and Hatcham, was once a manorial estate. It was granted to Michael de Turnham by Henry II for a yearly rent of 3 pence, and later it was sold to Countess Juliana, wife of Wakelin de Manimot, so that she could found a monastery for the White Canons, now known as Norbertines. This order still flourishes, its most famous member in recent times being the famous 'Bacon Priest', Fr Werenfried van Straaten, who has worked tirelessly since 1945 to alleviate the material and spiritual needs of the 'Church in Need' in Eastern Europe. Sadly, however, Brockley Monastery was only occupied for about 20 years; the monks moved close to Tunbridge Wells in 1200. The land at 'Brokele' as it was then known, continued to be held by their Order until the Dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry VIII in 1526. The Royal Crown eventually sold the land and it came to be owned by Sir John Cutter, and the Drake family (later Tyrwhitt) of Shardeloes in Buckinghamshire. In recent times it was part of the grounds of St Peter's Anglican Church, Wickham Road (part of the Deptford Inter-church Fraternal), now it is the home to the housing development in Beverley Court.

The period shortly after 1850 saw great change in Brockley. The meadows of this sleepy backwater quickly gave way to streets of Victorian dwelling houses, residences of minor grandeur standing in sharp contrast to the workers' terraces on the other side of Lewisham Way. The social difference between the two areas could be seen not only in the amount of space available to those who lived in the broad avenues of Brockley, as compared to the more cramped conditions nearby, but also in the use of Deptford folk as servants to the gentry of Brockley. The further you were up the hill from the river, the further you were up the social scale.

These days social differences are not so clearly marked, perhaps. The period after the First World War was a death-blow to the 'Upstairs, Downstairs' way of life of servants and masters. Nowadays the large houses of Brockley have mostly been

divided into smaller units. Residents from a world of different backgrounds now enjoy the tree-lined avenues of the former manor of the White Canons.

OLD NEW CROSS - THE MANOR OF HATCHAM

The Domesday Book was compiled by the Norman invaders after their successful invasion of England following the Battle of Hastings. Amongst the list of their new possessions was the Manor of West Greenwich, a part of modern Deptford, and the Manor of Hatcham, modern New Cross. At that time Hatcham, its woods, six acres of meadow, and various farmsteads, were valued at forty shillings, a bargain by any standard.

A century later the Manor was first held by the Hatcham family, by Gilbert de Haachesam, as it was then spelt, but it fell quickly in and out of other hands, including those of the Prior of Bermondsey and the Abbot of Begham who also had interests in old Deptford. Eventually in 1371 things became more stable when Edward III granted the manor to the Prioress and Convent at Dartford, a position which continued until 1531 when the larger monasteries were dissolved by order of Henry VIII. The Crown then held control of the Manor until Philip and Mary passed it on to the first of a number of wealthy landowners.

As time went by the Manor was broken up and eventually it ceased to be thought of as a single unit but the cultivation of rhubarb, strawberry, celery, asparagus and onions from its market gardens provided employment and prosperity for both rich and poor. Suburban commerce and London connections attracted many from the middle and upper classes, as evidenced by the number of large houses and small schools, many of them supported by the Haberdashers' Guild.

The prime London connection at this time was of course the London to Dover road, the upkeep of which was financed by the tolls taken at toll-gates along the way. One such toll-gate stood at the top of what is now Clifton Rise, the New Cross toll-gate close to New Cross House. The spot became a familiar 'service station' and point of reference for travellers, soon people spoke of 'New Cross' rather than Hatcham.

The opening of New Cross Gate railway station in 1839 and New Cross in 1850 played their part in developing transport links to Kent and Surrey, later trams played a similar local role. New Cross became less rural and more the area we know today, densely populated, socially and racially mixed. Whilst 'Hatcham' tends now to evoke earlier days and ways, 'New Cross' has a busy, modern ring.

Terraced sidestreets and estates such as Milton Court are the visitors first impression of New Cross, the homes of many of the parishioners of the Church of the Assumption, and also of the Anglican parishes of All Saints', St James', and St Michael's. Many other Christian churches have also sprung up in Hatcham's fertile soil, particularly those of the black-led Baptist and Pentecostal tradition. The Rev Owen Beament of All Saints combines his devotion with frequent pilgrimages to nearby Cold Blow Lane, home to the Millwall Football Club.

St Joseph's School

HISTORICAL NOTES

From 1842 the new Catholic Chapel in Old King Street, Deptford was used on weekdays as a Catholic school for 200 children. After the Church moved to its present site the school retained the premises. By 1859 there were 250 children in the school, and an appeal was made for money so that it could be extended to take 500. Canon Joseph North called for assistance for the needy:

"Utmost accommodation at present is for 300 children closely packed - the number who ought to attend is 1000".

His desire was to raise £2,500, but...

"...if we rely on local resources (weekly collections of £2 per week) a whole generation must pass away before this object can be attained. But this the Charity of the Faithful will not allow. The hearts of many, we feel sure, will be moved to help us by our All-merciful Father, who knows the wants of His children and to whom their cry of distress has gone up".

The fruit of such optimism, the fruit of faith and hard work, was to be seen in 1866 when the foundation stone for a large new school was laid, the school named St Joseph's which has lasted to this very day.

THE OPENING DAY OF NEW SCHOOL

On October 27th 1867 Infants', Boys', and Girls' Schools were opened as separate parts of a single new school. St Joseph's was opened and blessed on its present site by Thomas Grant, the Bishop of Southwark. The first Headmaster was John William Carr, who remained as head until 1871. Mrs Lambert was the Head of the Girls' School. Attendance was good in the first days; there were regular trips to the Royal Navy Victualling Yard for meals for the children, and sometimes for entertainments. Events such as the launch of a ship in the Dockyard in the following November, however, reduced attendance, as did summertime 'hopping', hop-picking in Kent for the beer-brewing industry.

In 1871 Mr John Torrance became Head of the Boys' School, retaining the position until 1906. His wife Elizabeth also taught there, for over thirty years. The 1880s saw further irregular attendance, so much so that at Christmas the managers gave a Christmas Tree Entertainment with a prize for each child; attendance rose rapidly to 258! In addition to daytime usage a night school was opened in 1882.

EARLY DAYS

In 1891 a new entrance was made to the school from the High Street. School attendance became free of charge, previously those who were able had to support the school with fees. In 1895, the Girls' School Log Book features a list of school supplies by the Headmistress Ruth Lawrence:

"6 dozen slates, 2 Gills Grammars, 1 box of coloured chalk, 1 school music

teacher, 1 lb of red wool, 1 gross of rulers, 2 doz black lead pencils, 1 gross of nibs, 1 gross of holders."

Read between the lines of these three excerpts from the 1898 Girls' School Log Book and imagine what life was like:

"Attendance only fair. One child died yesterday of typhoid fever. She attended school the early part of last week. Several cases of typhoid, diphtheria and measles reported - children in those houses are consequently away from school."

"Many of the children have gone hop-picking with their parents...notes sent to parents of absentees. Several children have left the school this term as they are 14 years of age."

"School closes today for the Christmas holidays. Each child had an orange and a picture given to her by Fr Sheen as a little present for Christmas. Managers all visited the school on Wednesday and begged the children to come regularly after the holidays."

The turn of the century brought Cooking and Laundry classes for girls in nearby Hughes Fields and other centres. Several of the poorest children had tickets for coal, grocery and bread given to them for their parents. In 1902 the average number of pupils in the Boys' School was 216, attendance was worst on Monday mornings and Friday afternoons - just like today! An entry for 1903 mentions soup tickets given to the poorest children on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Other entries mix the grim and the gay:

"Several children away with infectious diseases - one died this week with Scarlet Fever"

"Children to go tomorrow for their annual treat to Epsom Downs. A very good attendance during the week. The Rev Fr Hogan examined the children in the songs they have to sing at Crystal Palace."

STRUGGLING ON

After the death of Mr Torrance's wife in 1904, the Boys' School became understaffed, reducing the master's effectiveness in administering the school. In the following year Fr Hugh Kelly helped matters by opening a soup kitchen to provide dinner for the poorest children. In 1905, whilst he was waiting for the school to be rebuilt before he retired, Canon Michael Fannan wrote to his Bishop that he was confident that it could be paid for so long as the resident priests took an interest in the people and visited them in their homes. In 1906 Bishop Peter Amigo visited the school and gave words of encouragement:

"He spoke to the children of the importance of coming regularly and early to school and promised all those who got red marks for six weeks a picture."

St Joseph's at this time had near daily visits from the clergy and other Managers (governors), and regular tests on Religious Instruction. Church Feasts Days were permitted by the Local Authority to be school holidays too.

In 1907 the whole school closed for thoroughgoing reconstruction. Temporary premises were occupied in Sayes Court, by courtesy of Mr Evelyn, the owner and direct descendant of the famous diarist John Evelyn. Mr Arthur O'Neill had succeeded Mr Torrance as Head of the refurbished Boys' School the previous year. In the following year Miss Agnes O'Kelly became head of the Girls' School and Mrs J. Lunie took over at the Infants' School. The school benefitted at this time from the free breakfasts given

to children in need in the Methodist Wesleyan Hall on the High Street on Wednesday mornings. In 1911, on the death of Miss Lunie after 39 years service to the school, Miss E. Wilkinson was appointed as Infants' Head. Other news?

"A day's school holiday is granted on account of the Boys School winning the Football Cup for two years in succession".



Happy St Joseph's pupils – Where are they now?

IN WAR AND PEACE

In 1918 Mr P. Smith was appointed as school keeper after the departure of the Belgian women refugees who acted as schoolkeepers during the First World War. His tenancy lasted until the rumble of the second conflict two decades later. In the interim Mr Quigley had succeeded Mr O'Neill as Boys Head (1919), and Miss Wilkinson became Head of the Infants School. In 1932 there were 816 children in school, all Catholic. Numbers were much reduced when Bishop Amigo came visiting during wartime four years later:

"Catholic education has suffered through shutting the schools; glad you have 260 in school here... saw some Deptford children (evacuees) in Tunbridge Wells in Oct '41 (50), others (20) are in Paignton".

And so to the post-war period, when memories are not confined to the archives but are alive and well. In 1946 Mr D. Cotter replaced Mr Quigley as Boys' Head, and Mrs Meredith was appointed as Infants' Head. This was the era of the long-serving Miss Margaret Herlihy who served at St Joseph's from 1931, taught in New Zealand and Australia, and returned during the war to continue where she left off, ending her career at the School as Infants' Head in 1963.

The *Trinity Light* parish newsletter of January 1958 gives a full list of school staff. Many will recall Miss O'Connor and Miss Moffatt (both of whom had spent over 40 years in St Joseph's), Miss Teresa Brown, Miss Mahoney, Miss Kathleen Windsor (Deputy Head), Miss Regnier, and Miss Owen in the Junior School (7-11 years old). Assisting Miss Herlihy in the Infants School were Mrs Lambert Williams (who had

given 38 years service to the school since 1920), Mrs Heaphy and Mrs Evans. The newsletter is full of praise for these staff and for the 11 years loyal service of the school caretaker, Mr James Fairess. Where are they now? Miss Herlihy is still resident in the locality and sends her regards to all past pupils.

TOGETHER - THEN AND NOW

Miss Herlihy's era came to an end when her retirement in 1963 was marked by the 'accession' of Miss Windsor. Meanwhile, in 1961 Mr Cotter had been replaced by Mr John Murphy; in the following year French began to be taught to the Upper Classes. To mark the end of Mr Murphy's time as head, a grand St Joseph's School Reunion was called by Fr Flood in 1978. Amongst those present were the following:

*Mr Bob Mellish MP, formerly Government Chief Whip, Minister of Housing, and ex-resident of Giffin Street.

*Scotland Yard CID commander Terry O'Connell, who remembered being one of those who pumped the organ in church so that he could sneak outside and eat sweets.

*Three sisters surnamed Douglas who returned from Canada after arranging their holiday around the reunion.

*Fr William Westlake, who said his First Mass in Deptford in 1943 and had his post-ordination party afterwards in the school hall.

*Margaret Sugden, 80, who said that five generations of her family were baptised in this parish.

*And also, Miss Margaret (Peg) Herlihy, pupil 1906-1913, and later teacher and headmistress.

Mr Roy Pattison succeeded Mr Murphy as Head until he himself handed over that position to Mrs Dale Morrison in 1987. 1992 saw the appointment of Mr Andy Coffey of this parish as School Caretaker, succeeding the long-serving Mr John Coyle in that role.

The present clergy, Fr Jim and Fr John, continue the tradition of closeness between priests and pupils with regular religious services and day-to-day contacts with pupils and staff. The school enhances their lives as it does the lives of its pupils, parents, school governors, and the whole parish. How many rough Deptford diamonds have learnt to sparkle under St Joseph's watchful gaze?

Parish Ministry

Each baptised person has the privilege and responsibility of sharing in the continuing work of *being* the body of Christ *alive* in the world. This ministry is for the good of the world, the good of the church, and the good of ourselves as individuals. Over the last 150 years the priests, sisters, and lay people of the Parish have all played their part.

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PRIESTS OF THE PARISH

From the 17th century, Deptford was a portion of the Greenwich Catholic congregation included in the London District, and governed by a Vicar Apostolic, as the Penal Laws made it illegal for English Catholics to have their own Bishops. In time, however, those laws were lessened by the Catholic Relief Acts of 1778 and 1791.

Deptford, Greenwich and Woolwich were particularly rich in Catholics because of the large number of Irish people in the armed services, at work in the shipyards, and resident in or employed by the Greenwich Hospital. What began as a Mission served from St George's Fields, Kennington (the ancestor of St George's Cathedral, begun after the anti-Catholic Gordon Riots of 1780), turned eventually into a resident Mission at Greenwich.

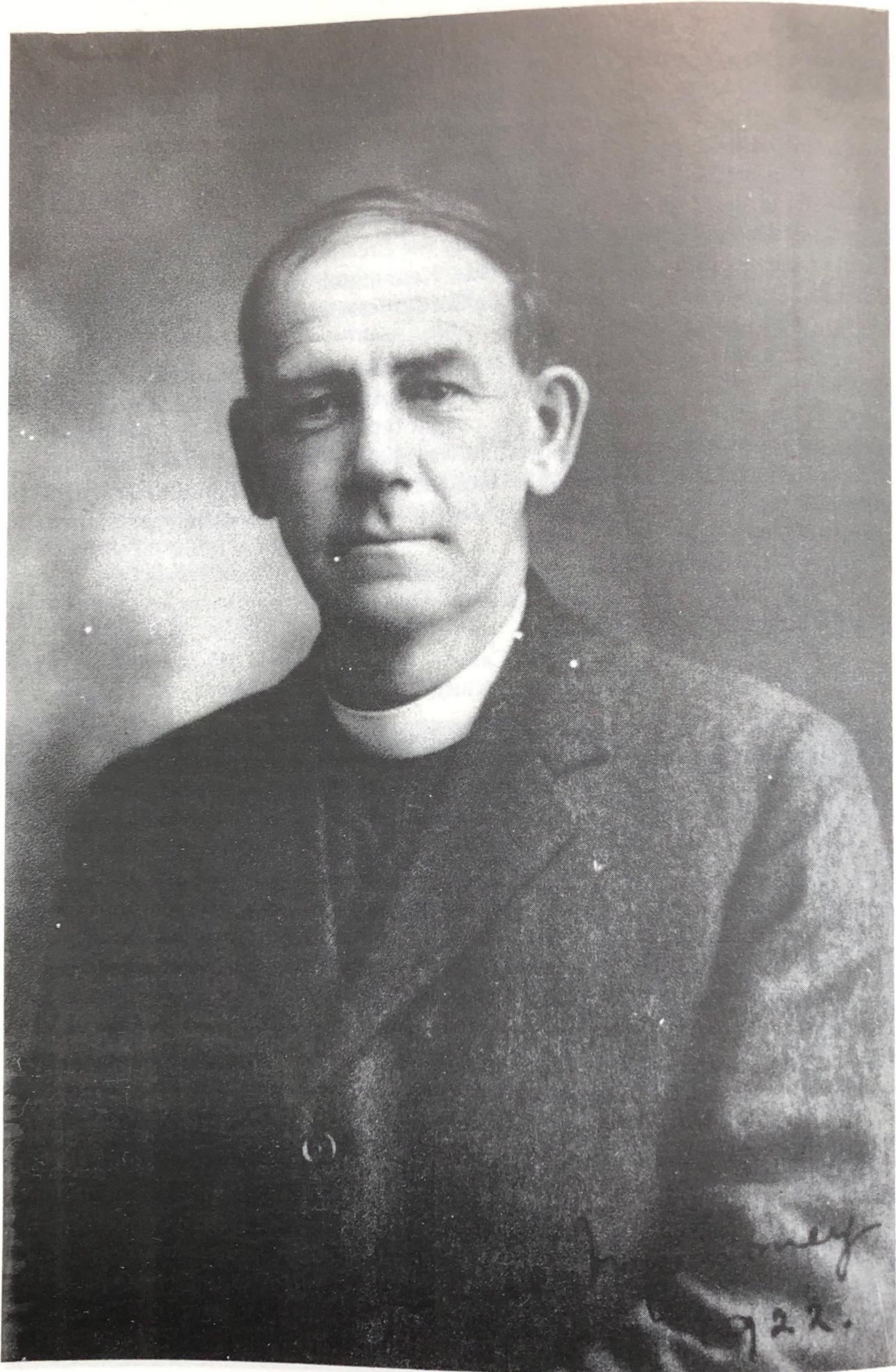
The 'Greenwich District', as it was known, stretched far into Kent and also over the water to sick calls in Shadwell and Wapping. It was attending to one such call that the first Missioner, Fr Stephen Green, caught typhus and died at the comparatively early age of 43 years. Similar dedication was shown by lay people; Fr Bernard Kelly writes of the Irish field labourers of West Kent whom, he was told, walked from places as far away as Orpington to attend Sunday Mass at Greenwich and Deptford, a round trip of twenty miles.

The Greenwich Missioners were as follows:

| | |
|-----------|----------------------------|
| 1795-1815 | Fr Stephen Green |
| 1815-1823 | Fr Stewart |
| 1823-1827 | Fr Edward McCabe |
| 1827-1860 | Canon Richard North |



Father Pat Scott's (Chaplain to the Homeless) farewell party and presentation, October 20th 1984



Father James Mahoney, Parish Priest and Local Councillor

Canon Richard North, a Doctor of Divinity, was a generous benefactor to Deptford, providing the temporary church and a schoolhouse in Old King Street, which could accommodate about 200 children. Canon North was also the Patron of the present church in the High Street, he died in 1860 aged 60.

Though Deptford began as a part of Greenwich Parish, it was made a separate mission on Whit Sunday, May 15th, 1842. The list of its permanent clergy since then now follows.

PARISH PRIESTS

Fr William Marshall -1842-1850

Fr William Marshall. Went on to work in Ipswich and died in Aberdeen in 1872.

Fr Joseph North - 1850-60

Fr Joseph North (brother of Richard North above). On 30th September 1856 he was made the first Rector of the Church of the Assumption. After serving here he went to Crooms Hill, Greenwich, made vacant by the death of his brother. He was made a Canon in 1852, and died in 1885 aged 77.

Fr J. Norris - 1860-62

Fr Norris worked here for two years before resigning and returning to Buckland, Dover. 18 years later he died there, but was buried at Brockley.

Fr John Glenie - 1862-71

Fr John Glenie. An Oxford graduate, he was received into the Church in 1845, the year of Cardinal Newman's conversion to Catholicism. He was ordained in 1851 and came to Deptford after work in education. Made a Canon in 1876, he died in 1878 aged 72.

Fr Michael Fannan - 1871-05

Fr Michael Fannan was first an assistant, then succeeded Fr Glenie as rector. He was known as a traditional Irish parish priest 'of the blackthorn type, but much beloved by all classes, Protestant and Catholic for his geniality' (wrote Fr Bernard Kelly). He died two years after leaving Deptford, having spent forty years of his half century of priesthood in this parish, and aged 74.

Fr Felix Segesser - 1905-16

Fr Felix Segesser was educated and ordained at Ushaw College, near Durham. As an assistant priest to Monsignor Bourne (later Cardinal Bourne), he helped to organize the infant St John's Seminary, Wonersh. Later in Bermondsey, he founded the Catholic Boys' Brigade. He reduced the school mortgage greatly by use of a grant from his mother to finance Deptford's first cinema, the Electric Theatre in the old Mechanics Institute Hall. When he left Deptford for Hastings the Hall was lost to the parish. He was made a Canon, and died in 1930 aged 67.

Fr James Mahoney - 1916-38

Fr James Mahoney was trained at the English College in Rome, and went on to serve as an assistant in Woolwich and Dartford. As Parish Priest in Deptford he faced a huge school debt which was repaid after some years. He represented Deptford on the Borough Council for many years and was elected to the London County Council with 'probably the largest number of votes polled by any candidate in the history of the elections for the County of London', and served as a member of the Education Committee. His work for the poor of Deptford was well-known. He was made a Canon in 1933 and died in 1938 at the age of 65.



Father Gerald Flood and Father Don Quinlivan

Fr Joseph Douch - 1938-50

Fr Joseph Douch did much to continue his predecessor's good work and to build up the financial, social and spiritual prospects of the parish, particularly as a 'kind confessor'. His final years here were marked by failing eyesight. A Canon of the diocese, he died in 1957 at 76 years.

Fr Thomas Cambourne - 1950-53

After 7 years as an assistant priest in the 1920s, Fr Thomas Cambourne returned to act as administrator during Canon Douch's blindness. He died in 1961 aged 71.

Fr Michael Frost - 1953-63

Fr Michael Frost is the best remembered of recent Deptford clergy. He is remembered for his geniality to all, his kindness to the poor, his Christmas parties for the elderly, and especially for his part in founding the Deptford Street Traders Association so that the street traders could continue to keep their stalls in the High Street. Fr Frost ended his days in Chatham but Fr Trant-McCarthy, his ex-assistant, remembers that 5000 people attended his funeral here in Deptford. Mourners stopped the hearse on its way to the Church and carried his coffin on their shoulders from Deptford Bridge to the High Street.

Fr Jack (John) Grogan - 1963-75

Fr Jack Grogan, a Dubliner, remembers Deptford with fondness. During his time here there were great changes in housing and population. Fr Jack is pleased to have been able to buy the property on the site of the present Parish Hall, thereby removing a wall which obstructed the windows at that side of the church.

Fr Gerald Flood - 1975-88

Fr Gerald Flood sees his time in Deptford as being marked by a growing unity between the local Christian churches. This growth was built on a commitment to weekly joint prayer at each other's churches. The fruits of prayer have been a luncheon club for the single homeless, meeting in St Paul's Crypt, and a Christian housing co-operative in Breakspears Road. Fr Gerry is pleased to see that both the weekly prayer and the initiatives it produced are still flourishing. His time in Deptford also saw the installation of a porch at the back of the church (complete with 'cry chapel'), the church benches were moved to give a central and side aisle, and the large crucifix was moved from a corner to its present central position in the porch.

Fr James McGillicuddy - 1988-

Fr Jim McGillicuddy has already made quite an impact on the parish: the Altar has been brought forward, a Reconciliation Room has improved conditions for confessions, communion under both kinds is universal, the Church has been painted, the Aisle and Sanctuary have been carpeted, a Parish Hall has been built and put into use, and a Parish Council now meets four times a year. A keen home visitor, Dublin-born Fr Jim describes himself as 'a footslogger'.

ASSISTANT PRIESTS

| | | | |
|---|-----------|----------------------|---------|
| Fr Eugene Connaty | 1845 | Fr Edmund Carroll | 1880-83 |
| Fr Gregory Stasciewicz | 1846 | Fr J. O'Meara | 1882-83 |
| Fr William Morley | 1855 | Fr Thomas Ryan | 1882-92 |
| Fr Michael O'Halloran | 1856-60 | Fr Alfred Meager | 1884-86 |
| Fr John Horan | 1860-61 | Fr William Kilmartin | 1886-93 |
| Fr Charles Huggett | 1861-62 | Fr James Egan | 1892 |
| Fr Bernard Doran | 1862 | Fr Paul Lynch | 1892-93 |
| Fr Edward Cahill | 1862-64 | Fr James Sprankling | 1893-95 |
| Fr Ferdinand Whyte | 1862 | Fr Charles Stapley | 1894-97 |
| Fr James Purdon | 1864-65 | Fr John Sheen | 1895-04 |
| Fr Michael Fannan (then Rector) | 1865-71 | Fr Edmund Sheppard | 1897-05 |
| Fr Charles Tunstall | 1866 | Fr T. Cronin | 1904-05 |
| Fr John O'Leary | 1867 | Fr Bernard Kelly | 1904 |
| Fr F. Oloysio OSFC | 1868 | Fr Daniel Holland | 1904-05 |
| Fr Dominico OSFC | 1870 | Fr G. Coote | 1905-06 |
| Fr James Bellord (later Bishop of Gibraltar) | 1871-1872 | Fr Hugh Kelly | 1905-07 |
| Fr William Stone | 1873-77 | Fr Augustus Firderer | 1906-11 |
| Fr Francis Roe | 1876-77 | Fr William Wonnacott | 1907-14 |
| Fr W. Alexander | 1877-82 | Fr Reginald Riffs | 1908-11 |
| Fr F. Pearce | 1877-79 | Fr Philip Hemans | 1911-16 |
| | | Fr William Purcell | 1911-12 |
| | | Fr Henry Dwyer | 1912-16 |

| | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|---|---------|
| Fr Costante Biancotti | 1911-12 | Fr Albert Coleburt | 1940-42 |
| Fr William Pritchard | 1916-20 | Fr Kenneth Palmer | 1941-42 |
| Fr Stephen O'Beirne | 1916-22 | Fr Enda Farrell (Elphin) | 1942-46 |
| Fr Thomas Lawton | 1920-27 | Fr John Moore | 1944-46 |
| Fr Peter O'Neill | 1922-27 | Fr Edward Gilligan | 1946-49 |
| Fr John Monaghan | 1925 | Fr John Gleeson | 1946-50 |
| Fr Thomas Cambourne | 1925-30, 1950 | Fr John Mulholland | 1949-50 |
| Fr Louis (Ludovicus) Byrne | 1927-29 | Fr Colm Spillane | 1950-53 |
| Fr Terence Scanlan | 1929-35 | Fr Patrick Brady | 1950-53 |
| Fr John Slocombe | 1930-34 | Fr Desmond Trant-McCarthy | 1953-68 |
| Fr Francis Ryan | 1931-32 | Fr Donal Quinlivan | 1957-89 |
| Fr John Beck | 1932 | Fr Dennis De Jong-(Rhodesia) | 1960-62 |
| Fr William Sewell | 1932 | Fr Andrew Minisini-(Trieste) | |
| Fr Joseph Frawley | 1932 | Fr Christopher Ring | 1969-70 |
| Fr John Brady (Menevia) | 1934-36 | Fr Patrick Coffey SJ | 1970-75 |
| Fr Hugh Hunt | 1934-38 | Fr Christopher Larkman | 1976-79 |
| Fr Patrick Kehoe | 1935-36 | Fr Celestine Obi | 1978 |
| Fr John Kelly | 1937-38 | Fr Patrick Turner CSSp | 1979 |
| Fr Michael Carey | 1937-38 | Fr Richard Plunkett | 1980-86 |
| Fr Patrick Carroll | 1938-39 | Fr Patrick Scott CSSr | 1980-84 |
| Fr Thomas Lane | 1938 | Fr Peter Edwards | 1986 |
| Fr Thomas Hanrahan | 1938-42 | Fr Chris Chapman | 1986-91 |
| Fr Daniel O'Kane | 1939-42 | Fr John Kenny | 1991- |
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| | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|---|---------|
| Fr Costante Biancotti | 1911-12 | Fr Albert Coleburt | 1940-42 |
| Fr William Pritchard | 1916-20 | Fr Kenneth Palmer | 1941-42 |
| Fr Stephen O'Beirne | 1916-22 | Fr Enda Farrell (Elphin) | 1942-46 |
| Fr Thomas Lawton | 1920-27 | Fr John Moore | 1944-46 |
| Fr Peter O'Neill | 1922-27 | Fr Edward Gilligan | 1946-49 |
| Fr John Monaghan | 1925 | Fr John Gleeson | 1946-50 |
| Fr Thomas Cambourne | 1925-30, 1950 | Fr John Mulholland | 1949-50 |
| Fr Louis (Ludovicus) Byrne | 1927-29 | Fr Colm Spillane | 1950-53 |
| Fr Terence Scanlan | 1929-35 | Fr Patrick Brady | 1950-53 |
| Fr John Slocombe | 1930-34 | Fr Desmond Trant-McCarthy | 1953-68 |
| Fr Francis Ryan | 1931-32 | Fr Donal Quinlivan | 1957-89 |
| Fr John Beck | 1932 | Fr Dennis De Jong-(Rhodesia) | 1960-62 |
| Fr William Sewell | 1932 | Fr Andrew Minisini-(Trieste) | |
| Fr Joseph Frawley | 1932 | Fr Christopher Ring | 1969-70 |
| Fr John Brady (Menevia) | 1934-36 | Fr Patrick Coffey SJ | 1970-75 |
| Fr Hugh Hunt | 1934-38 | Fr Christopher Larkman | 1976-79 |
| Fr Patrick Kehoe | 1935-36 | Fr Celestine Obi | 1978 |
| Fr John Kelly | 1937-38 | Fr Patrick Turner CSSp | 1979 |
| Fr Michael Carey | 1937-38 | Fr Richard Plunkett | 1980-86 |
| Fr Patrick Carroll | 1938-39 | Fr Patrick Scott CSSr | 1980-84 |
| Fr Thomas Lane | 1938 | Fr Peter Edwards | 1986 |
| Fr Thomas Hanrahan | 1938-42 | Fr Chris Chapman | 1986-91 |
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varied life as a priest, Monsignor Daly is now working in a parish in South Croydon. Fr William Westlake, Fr Daly's neighbour on Edward St, celebrated his first mass here in 1943, having his reception in the St Joseph's hall, his former school. Canon Westlake is now working in Tadworth, Surrey.

Fr Anthony Doyle's family used to live in Clifton Rise in the 1960s when he attended St Joseph's School. Fr Tony later joined the Divine Word Missionaries and has served since ordination in Ecuador, Bolivia, Venezuela, Colombia and Mexico. He is currently living in Cricklewood, working as an interpreter and national fundraiser but longing to leave for Chile.

Fr James Westcott was ordained here by Bishop Charles Henderson in 1982. He celebrated ordination with a reception in his old school hall, and went on to work in Woolwich parish and a number of other posts, latterly in North London.

Also associated with this parish is Fr Michael Uzuegbunam of Nnobi, Nigeria. Ordained in 1974, Fr Michael worked in various capacities in his homeland until 1979 when he stopped off in London for a medical check up before going on to Rome for further studies. Sadly, a cancerous tumour was found to be developing and despite medical intervention Fr Michael went to his Lord in April 1980, leaving his friends in Deptford sad at the loss of a new-found friend and brother.

RELIGIOUS SISTERS IN OUR PARISH

THE ALPHA ROAD SISTERS'

The first congregation of sisters to be associated with the parish were the Oblates of St Benedict. They were known as 'the Servants of the Poor' because of their work, or 'the Alpha Road Sisters' because of their address. 1 Alpha Road was the centre from which the Sisters went out into the streets to work with the sick, the poor, and the dying of Deptford and New Cross. They also lent a hand with Religious Instruction, particularly of women, and helped run the sacristy of our church. The convent in Alpha Road was founded in March 1908 by Reverend Mother Odile, the prioress. She arrived in England from France with Sr Marie-Isidore. St Michael's Convent, as it was known, celebrated its opening with a Mass on May 8th 1908; Sr Marie-Odile stayed until 1922 when she was succeeded as prioress by Sr Marie-Isidore, who held that post until 1934. Other sisters were as follows:

- * Sr Marie-Attalie ('Sr Mary'), 1910-40, worked among the poor for over 30 years; she was buried at Brockley.
- * Sr Marie-Carmele, 1912-53, parish sacristan.
- * Sr Francois-Regis, 1919-25, parish seamstress.
- * Sr Marie-Colette, 1922-45, sacristan and Reverend Mother.
- * Sr Marie-Paula ('Sr Paul'), 1929-53, famed for her assistance after air-raids.
- * Sr Marie-Aimee and Sr Marie-Anastasie both served here briefly, working in a nursing capacity.
- * Mother Anthony, Sr Dominic and Sr Joanna (1953-60) were amongst the last sisters to work here.

At the time of the bishop's visitation in 1932 there were 8 sisters resident. Their work was to visit the sick, instruct women in the faith, assist the poor, and look after the sacristy. There was Mass in their convent on Saturdays in summer and every day in winter. By 1942 the number of sisters was reduced to 5. In 1958 the sisters and the parish celebrated 50 years of association with a Solemn High Mass. Fr Westlake (an ex-

parish altar server), and Canon Scanlan (preaching) also attended. Not long after this, however, the work of the sisters in the parish came to an end when they were recalled to France.

In January 1960 Mr John Day, in his maiden speech to the council on becoming a councillor, took the opportunity to pay tribute to the work of the sisters, the Servants of the Poor. He spoke of their unstinting work over a half-century of wars, unemployment, strikes, slumps, and all that those things brought in their wake. Nobody, whatever their race or creed, was refused a kindly smile, reassurance, and comfort. He insisted that this was no general statement, he spoke from personal knowledge of their help.

Which sisters? Mr Day spoke of Sr Collette, Sr Paula, Mother Anthony, and Sr Joanna who brought sunshine to Deptford on the gloomiest of days. His speech ended with a reminiscence of their final farewell to Deptford. The final 4 sisters were on their way to Victoria when their car was stopped on Deptford High Street. The crowd grew and the road became completely impassable. The sisters had to get out and speak to all those who wanted to wish them well. Only then were they allowed to depart. With all this in mind, Mr Day concluded

"It is with pride, and in the knowledge that I voice the feelings of the people of Deptford, that I beg to move (this motion of gratitude to the sisters)".



The last farewell to the Alpha Road Sisters in 1960 at Victoria Station

THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY

The Daughters of Charity have two founders, St Vincent de Paul and St Louise de Marillac, two French Catholics inspired by a burning desire to assist the poor. The sisters arrived in Deptford on December 21st 1977 and were soon involved in the

foundation of a parish branch of the Union of Catholic Mothers and the re-founding of the Society of St Vincent de Paul. Later, they were also at the forefront of an inter-church effort to do something for men resident at the Carrington House hostel (founded in 1903 and closed down just recently). This initiative began at Shaftesbury House in Hales Street, and has evolved into a twice-weekly lunch-club meeting in the Crypt of St Paul's Church, Deptford High Street. Similarly, the sisters were in at the beginning of the Thursday morning inter-church Morning Prayer (7-8am) which continues today, meeting weekly with the various parishes taking turns to play host.

The Daughters of Charity who have lived in the Community House at 438 New Cross Road over these last 15 years have involved themselves in a variety of works and ministries. Sr Francis Harris, for instance, is well-remembered for her teaching at St Joseph's School, her home visiting, and her assistance in the field of church worship. 1992 sees 4 sisters in the Community House: Sr Angela Burns and Sr Finbarr Kelly (Parish Sisters), Sr Kathleen Kennedy (teaching at St Joseph's School), and Sr Liz Ferrie (Chaplain to the Hearing-Impaired of Southwark Diocese).

The sisters who have given their service to this parish are as follows:

Sisters Appoline Smallwood (1977), Joseph Powell (1977-84), Frances Harris (1977-1990), Anna McBride (1977-79), Cecilia Brennan (1977-79), Veronica Beeching (1979-82), Colleen McCabe (1978-80), Veronica Pater (1982-88), Rita Ghent (1984-85), Mary Colgan (1984-86), Teresa Turner (1984-86), Angela Burns (1986-), Rosalie Hough (1987-90), Dorothy Vavosour (1988-89), Marie Raw (1990-91), Finbarr Kelly (1990-), Kathleen Kennedy (1991-), and Liz Ferrie (1991-).

THE MINISTRY OF LAY PEOPLE

The part which lay people have played in the spreading of the Good News can only be glimpsed. Historical records say little about the building of families, the passing on of the faith, the struggle to be faithful and generous, just and honest at work and at home. All information about Parish activities and worship has to be seen in the context of that unwritten witness.

PARISH ACTIVITIES

Amongst the first lay organizations mentioned in the Parish archives is the Deptford Girl's Club which met 1896-1903 under Canon Fannan. Dolls, tea-parties, needlework, 1st Communion pictures, 'magic lantern' entertainments... all this and more! Also, money was given to girls-in-need for lodging, fares and clothes. Neither were boys forgotten, in 1903 a Boy's Brigade was founded. For an investment of 6d a medal and ribbon could be had, a certificate of membership cost a further shilling. Fr Hugh Kelly and Fr Felix Segesser also encouraged a Saint Sebastian's football club with 70 members.

The first major Parish organization was the Guild of the Blessed Sacrament. It had its first meeting in January 1908 in St Mary's Hall (the Parish Hall) in the High Street. This Guild for men died out in the early 1920s but was revived in 1926 with 43 members. Its purpose was to do pastoral work in the parish, encourage the reception of Holy Communion, and watch and pray before the Blessed Sacrament. The Guild was

the strongest active Parish group throughout 1940s, 1950s and beyond. Since then it has once more faded away. In response to the success of the Guild for men a women's section was opened especially for the mothers and older women of the parish. Strong in the 1930s and 1940s, its help was much appreciated at socials. Its work was complemented by the Catholic Needlework Guild (c.1927) which donated clothes to the needy.

TOGETHER FOR OTHERS

The Women's Guild has been succeeded by the Union of Catholic Mothers (UCM) formed in July 1977 by Fr Gerry Flood. It plays an essential part in the social, charitable, and fundraising activities of the Parish. There are at present 17 full members from all over the world, and the door is open for many more to join! Amongst their number the mothers include Ministers of the Eucharist and a Parish Catechist. Amongst the events which 'the mums' have been proud to organize have been the receptions to celebrate the ordination of Fr Jim Westcott, the jubilees of Fr Flood, Fr Desmond Trant-McCarthy and Fr Don Quinlivan (and Fr Don's funeral), and the induction of Fr Jim McGillicuddy.

Perhaps the UCM is best known these days for organizing the Christmas Bazaar, regular Jumble Sales and Parish Dances, as part of a sustained onslaught on the Parish Debt. Members are happy to visit sick parishioners in hospital, to assist at the men's club at St Paul's Crypt, to give comfort to the bereaved, and to have Mass said for those in any particular need. They also play a quiet but essential role in the care for the church, cleaning it diligently every week.

Christianity is nothing if not outgoing love, charity to others. The Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) has been active in the parish for over a half-century, bringing spiritual and material need to those in need. The 1940 Parish Yearbook gives details of the year's work: weekly meetings at the presbytery, 35 families given help with food at Christmas, children helped to go away for a holiday to recover from illness, 299 visits, 64 families helped, nearly £48 raised through parish collections for the poor. In the 1990s a small group still meets weekly, their work is supplemented by that of a number of other parishioners who pay regular visits to the housebound and lonely.

TO STRENGTHEN LIVING FAITH

Similar work to that of the SVP was done by the Legion of Mary, particularly during the 1950s. The main difference between the two was and is that the Legion exists specifically to build up the spiritual strength of all those with whom it comes into contact, particularly Catholics who are falling away from practice of their Faith. The junior branch of the Legion was the Children of Mary. The minute book of this organization 1946-61, records many lively debates, social events, outdoor processions, and much care and decoration of the church and its statues. The Legion itself died out some time ago but the 'Children' were active under the recent guidance of Sr Francis Harris.

This inexhaustive account of some of the activities of the last 150 years concludes by coming full circle to the youth activities of today. One particular organization active today is the Young Christian Workers. The YCW first started to

meet on September 12th 1977 at the first residence of the Daughters of Charity in Harefield Road, Brockley, Sr Cecilia being the guiding force. Martha Raynham (formerly Murphy) remembers being one of those first 6 members, and also the chaplaincy work given by Sr Joseph Powell, Sr Colleen McCabe, Fr Richard Plunkett and Fr Charles Walker. The YCW exists to help young school-leavers to face up to the challenge of living their working life side by side with each other and Christ the Carpenter. Meeting weekly, they share their ordinary experiences and concerns, plan events, attend get-togethers with members from all round the country, and grow in the skills of Christian leadership. Currently the group comprises Reg and Michael Friddle, Rachel and Teresa Smith, Danny and Caroline Perriman, and long-term member Alison Barnard. They are also happy to welcome visitors or new members. The YCW also supports another initiative of the Sisters, the Sunday Club for 8-16 year olds founded by Sr Frances Harris. Meeting fortnightly in St Joseph's School Hall, this Club aims to provide a happy atmosphere where young parishioners can have fun and grow as Christians.

LITURGY AND THE LAY VOCATION

One of the most ancient ledgers in the Parish archives is that of the Altar Society in the period 1915-68. The first entries record that at every meeting the members would donate 3d, 6d, or - very occasionally - a shilling. This money would go towards the weekly cost of buying flowers, candles and suchlike, and keeping the altar linen in good condition. In recent times, though donations are still given for these good purposes, the Society no longer exists.

What does exist, however, is a very strong corps of Eucharistic Ministers who give service at the Altar in a different way. These 25 parishioners who represent all the different ages and ethnic origins of this Parish, serve by assisting with the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass, and by taking the Blessed Sacrament to the sick and housebound. They are individually commissioned to do so by the Bishops after a period of training, and undertake to attend a day of recollection before the annual renewal of their licence.

Similarly, the Ministry of the Word of God is served by a growing number of readers of all ages from almost all of the national backgrounds found in our parish. The training and continued education for Ministers of the Eucharist is leading gradually for a parallel effort for Ministers of the Word.

Young people also have an active part in the Liturgy as altar-servers of the Guild of St Stephen, choir members of the Guild of St Cecilia, and instrumentalists. The gifted adults who lent their talents to parish music in the 1980s have now dispersed and a dozen enthusiastic and brave 8-16 year olds, aided by a few adults, now lead us in song.

The faith of the young is a spur to adults in other ways too, not least the monthly Children's Liturgy of the Word started in 1992, and the Catechists' Course which begins even as this booklet is being printed. Both developments aim to assist lay people to share their most valuable possession, their Faith in the Good News of Jesus Christ and his Church.

The People of Deptford: Many People From Many Places

THE RISE AND FALL OF LOCAL POPULATION

Anglo-Saxon 'Meretun' and Norman 'West Greenwich' gave way in time to the fishing village of Deptford. This village grew into a town once ship-building took to the Creek and Deptford Strand. By 1623 John Evelyn could write:

"By the increase of the buildings may be seen that the town is in 80 years become near as big as Bristol".

Further growth was inevitable. With the Industrial Revolution the circle of sleepy suburbs around the City of London soon became part of a swirling web. Deptford, as a ship-building and naval supply centre, had not exactly been sleepy, but with the coming of the 19th century its census figures gave a picture of increasingly rapid growth:

| | 1801 | 1821 | 1841 | 1861 | 1881 | 1901 |
|------------------------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Deptford | 11,000 | 14,000 | 19,000 | 38,000 | 77,000 | 110,000 |
| All London boroughs | 959,000 | 1,378,000 | 1,947,000 | 2,808,000 | 3,844,000 | 4,425,000 |

One single major reason for this increase in London's population was particular in the growth of the Catholic Church: the Irish factor.

WHY SO MANY IRISH IN LONDON?

After Britain and Ireland had been linked together in 1801 by the Act of Union, it became widespread for many Irish people to seek a better life in Britain and beyond. This was advantageous to Britain both in times of war when the Irish fought under a British flag and in times of peace when they provided a significant part of the labour necessary to fuel the expansion of the Industrial Revolution. One notable contribution was in the field of railway expansion in the 1840s when Britain suddenly became criss-crossed with railway lines and the term 'navvy' (navigator/track layer) became synonymous with 'Irishman'.

In 1842 the population of Ireland was reckoned to be approximately 8 million persons, as compared to Britain's 12 million. By the end of the decade the Great Potato Famine had halved the Irish population. Literally millions died and millions emigrated to save their lives. Liverpool and London, amongst other British cities, were inundated with refugees. Cecil Woodham-Smith's classic study of the period describes a thousand Irish paupers a week arriving in London in 1847. Over the river in Stepney Stepney and Poplar, a riverside parish with fine houses, became a densely populated

Has London ever since faced such an influx of starving refugees? Perhaps not, but it has continued to accept a stream of Irish people fleeing like the Scots from the Highland Clearances, escaping from economic conditions which held out no possibilities of growth or hope. The Famine of Underdevelopment continues to this day, with the consequent movement of people.

COPING WITH OVER-POPULATION

In this century the tide has turned somewhat. The increase in population continued until the period between the World Wars. At that time government policy belatedly concentrated itself on clearing overcrowded urban areas and developing suburbs and new towns. An example of this was the settlement of 40,000 people on the new London County Council estates at Downham and Bellingham in the 1920's. As a result of this move to greener pastures Deptford's population fell by 6,000 and Bermondsey's by 8,000. With the bombing of the 1939-45 numbers continued to fall. Post-war housing policy reinforced the trend, the city diminished and the suburbs increased.

| | 1921 | 1931 | 1951 |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Deptford | 113,000 | 107,000 | 76,000 |
| All London boroughs | 4,483,000 | 4,399,000 | 3,348,000 |

The improvement in the quality of life as over-population declined is shown by the rise in life expectancy. A girl born in 1900 could expect to live 50 years, by 1922 that figure had risen to 60 years. By 1938 66 years was the norm, and by 1958 the figure was 74 years. Seven years later, in 1965, the Deptford population stood at 68,000, just over half the 1921 figure.

A DIFFERENT DEPTFORD: TRENDS SINCE 1945

The population of Deptford in 1992 is quite different to what it was before 1945. Why is this so?

* Government policy both before and after 1945 was to reduce an over-crowded area. This meant that many local people left Deptford for Downham, Bellingham, Lee and elsewhere. This change signalled the beginning of an increasingly mobile population, ready to move house with a frequency undreamed of by previous generations.

* Much pre-war housing was war-damaged or otherwise demolished, giving way to the building of estates, particularly the Milton Court Estate and the Evelyn Estate. Later still, the enormous Pepys Estate replaced both housing on Grove Street and empty acres of the old shipyards and cattle markets by the river. Deptford became undeniably the most dense expanse of council-owned property in Lewisham Borough, giving a chance for decent housing to those who had few other possibilities.

* Hard economic conditions at home and job opportunities in Britain lead to increased immigration from Ireland to London in the 1940s, the 1950s, and 1980s. In the

same way, many English Catholics and those of Irish background from other parts of Britain have made the same search for work. This trend has done much to build up the Church in England's South-East.

* Immigration from the West Indies was encouraged, filling vacancies in public services such as transport and health. With better transport and a generally expanding economy Britain also became home to others seeking out the centre of the Empire, that became the Commonwealth. Emigrants from the Indian sub-continent and other parts of Asia were particularly notable. This generation of emigrants is now firmly established, adding its own particular flavours - in all senses - to our local life.

* Later still have come many Africans, particularly West Africans, amongst whom Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone are best represented. Ugandans, Kenyans, Zambians, and many others have come from East Africa. Sometimes the Africans come as refugees from a continent experiencing perhaps the most tumultuous 50 years of its long history, but more often they come in search of the educational qualifications which will enable themselves and their children to a better life in England, Africa, or elsewhere.

CATHOLICS AND THE NATIONAL PICTURE

In January 1992 *The Universe* Catholic newspaper reported that the sociologist Dr Michael Hornsby-Smith had given figures for the extent to which the Catholic Church in England and Wales is a church of immigrants:

* First generation immigrants make up one twenty-fifth of the total population (about 4%)

* One quarter of all Catholics (25%) were first generation immigrants, a half of that number (12.5%) coming from Ireland.

These figures show that you are six times more likely to meet a first generation immigrant in a Catholic Church than in an ordinary public place. You have only to open your eyes in Church to see that Catholic means 'universal', 'worldwide'.

LCC Boroughs (Inner London) – Population in Thousands

| | 1801 | 1821 | 1841 | 1861 | 1881 | 1901 | 1921 | 1931 | 1951 |
|--------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Deptford | 11 | 14 | 19 | 38 | 77 | 110 | 113 | 107 | 76 |
| All boroughs | 959 | 1378 | 1947 | 2808 | 3844 | 4425 | 4483 | 4399 | 3348 |

GLC Boroughs (created 1965) – Population in Thousands

Figures in brackets indicate % decrease in pop. from 1951

| | 1951 | 1961 | 1971 | 1976 |
|---------------|------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Lewisham | 303 | 291 (-4) | 268 (-14) | 241 (-20) |
| Total for GLC | 8193 | 7994 (-2) | 7453 (-9) | 7030 (-14) |

In 1981 the population of Lewisham was 231,234. By 1990 it was further reduced to 226,200. Whilst the unemployment rate stood at 13.9% in July 1991 for the borough as a whole, the Deptford statistic has often been closer to 30%. In 1992 the number out of full-time employment on the Pepys Estate stood at 57%.

News from the Pews

Regina Amugen - A Working Mum from Nigeria

Since coming to England in 1964 Regina has had five secretarial jobs, spending the last 7 years as a legal secretary for a City solicitor's firm. She has two sons, Martin and Christopher, and a daughter called Edna.

Regina is a Catholic largely because she attended a Catholic school back home in what is now called Delta State. She is from the city of Sapele but went to school many miles away in the smaller town of Abraka. Though her parents were not Christians they supported both her adoption of Christianity and the material needs of the Catholic Church.

Life as a Catholic was quite different in Abraka than it had been in Sapele. In Sapele there were many priests but in outlying Abraka a priest could only come once a month. In his absence a Head Catechist lead the community in all the prayers of the Mass apart from those restricted to the priest, everyone came to church whether the priest was there or not.

In both Abraka and Sapele, however, Easter and Christmas were very special times. After the Liturgy the people would celebrate an open-air party together with much dancing and eating - *everyone* would come. At Harvest time there was a similar sense of festivity. Though they were poor the people would bring the best of their produce to a grand sale and raffle, the proceeds went towards the upkeep of the Parish church.

Regina remembers a different attitude to religion in those days. People would walk 10 miles to go to church because they really believed in giving the day to God. She remembers learning all about the Commandments and the Faith of the Church in Catechism lessons, and still considers that formation valuable as it gave her a good set of rules to live by. Regina believes that young people need to be given a good foundation in Faith, it's up to them what they do with it.

What would Regina change about our Parish? What does she like especially about this Parish? She thinks it's a shame that parishioners don't know each other. We need to talk more and extend the 'way of the welcome' that we have learnt from the Church of England and other Christians. People need to feel accepted, "one of us". The thing that Regina most likes is that the Liturgy makes her feel like she is really taking part, "the priests don't rush things. I could get to like another Parish but it would be difficult".

One last wish? "That more people knew that Africa is not a country but a continent. There are many different 'Africa's'".

George Campbell - Jamaican Bagpiper

George Campbell first came to know the English through his wartime service in the Army Catering Corps. It was some years later, however, when he settled in London in 1951, coming first to Kennington, then Brockley, then Greenwich, Gillingham and back to Deptford. George was not alone, he married Winifred, a neighbour from home, and together they brought up a family of four boys and two girls, all born in England.

Where did George's interest in the pipes begin? Perhaps it came from his Scottish grandfather. Be that as it may, it was back in the 1950's that George was learning his scales from pipemaster Billy Moriarty. With practice he made perfect,

being rewarded by being able to take part in a stirring rendition of "Scotland the Brave" and a gentle exposition of "Believe Me if all those Endearing Young Charms" with the Tower Hill Irish Pipe Band under the formidable Mick Fogarty.

At that time Deptford had a Pipe and Fife Band run by Pipe Major George Willlis, and bands were also to be found at nearby Clerkenwell, Dockhead, Melior Street (near Guys Hospital), and Stepney amongst others. The pipes were a major asset of the open-air Blessed Sacrament Processions held locally in the 1950s and 1960s, and also of the Highland Gatherings George used to attend in Epsom and West London. Sights long gone, but still remembered.

Tom Davis - Keeping up the Old Traditions

Tom Davis is one of the best-known of our parishioners. Inside the church he is known as the man who organizes the collection and the offertory procession, outside the church he is the fellow with the pony and cart.

Tom has lived in this parish all his life, ever since the days when dozens of 'totters' patrolled the streets collecting the rags, bones and assorted household implements which, for an agreed sum or none, would be taken away to be recycled - this in the days when 'green' was just a colour. At that time a good living could be had from the collection and sale of bottles, jars, tin cans, clothes and paper. Such commodities cannot now be sold, however, and Tom's job has become "a pastime to keep me out of trouble".

Over the years Tom has not been alone, Lulu, Jessie and Trigger have been his constant companions. Lulu was a jennet, Jessie and Trigger ponies. Not so long ago stables for them were easy to find on Mechanics Pathway and Murray's passage off Douglas Way, and they could be shoed by the farriers in the arches behind our church. Nowadays though, Deptford's no place for a horse. Just as well Tom still has his Sunday job...

Maria Enright - Irish Memories, Deptford Opportunities

Maria is from Kilkenny in Ireland and her husband Pat is from nearby Kerry. Their son Gavin is at primary school, and daughters Kerry and Zarina are at secondary school and college. Maria has worked as a secretary, and Pat is a lorry driver and cabbie.

Having been in Deptford for 11 years and London for twice as long, Maria feels completely at home next door to the Pepys Estate. Despite knowing that many people look down on Pepys she thinks it as much better than many other areas, particularly because of its waterfront walks and its under-rated open spaces. Her family also values the fishing, karate, and swimming facilities which are conveniently close at hand. All the same, Maria wishes there was more for young people to do, particularly in the evenings on the estate when trouble brews from boredom.

It's a different lifestyle here, no doubt, but Maria finds that there's actually more space, more privacy, in London. "People are there for you, but they're not on top of you, neighbours do keep an eye out for one another, but in a quiet way". Maria is pleased that the style of building nowadays is 'more human' than before. All that's missing are a few shopkeepers from home to provide the taste of Ireland she likes sometimes to savour.

Luigi Fazzani and the High Street Cafe

Luigi Fazzani's family came from Roggio, near Lucca in Italy, but his life has been

centred around the High Street Cafe in Deptford High Street opened by his father in October 1933. Mr Fazzani Senior and family had settled in Deptford after spells in Shoreditch and Bermondsey, all the children went to St Joseph's School. The cafe stayed open throughout the 2nd World War, and was a local landmark until its closure 58 years later in December 1991. Over the years, all the Fazzani family had tended to it and its clientele, but Luigi, his wife Polda and sister Josie, were the final staff complement.

Luigi still remembers the old prices:

* A cup of tea for a penny (old money!) in 1933.

* Steak and chips for a shilling (5p) up to 1939.

* Apple tart and custard for five pence (2p) up to 1971.

Prices change and times change, but some things stay the same. Peek in the window as you pass, you may well see the latest generation of Fazzanis playing 'Shop' in the High Street Cafe.

Henne and the Friddles

Henne Friddle is from Calcutta, India. She worked as a nurse until she married Reg, an ex-sailor and engineering worker from Bombay. Henne and Reg have three children, Reggie, Michael and Louisa, Louisa having been born in England and the boys in India. Henne now works as surgery receptionist (ex-parish cook!) and Reg is employed by Ford at Croydon.

Henne first thought about coming to England as early as the 1950's, but had no particular reason to do so. Things changed after her marriage in 1970. Six years later she came to England because she and Reg wanted to give as good a future as possible to their 3 and 4 year old sons. Although Henne misses her home and its climate she values greatly the educational and social opportunities that England offers her family.

When they first came to England the family stayed with relations in Sydenham, but soon they settled down in and around Deptford and New Cross. As an Anglo-Indian Henne has always felt at home in England. She has warm memories of the sunny day when she arrived in England in the summer of 1976, but the sun didn't always shine. Despite the many ways in which an immigrant's enthusiasm can be dampened Henne is still happy to be here. "You have to give and take if you want to get on, you have to mix," that's her advice.

Maureen Harris - Memories of Old Grove Street

Maureen came into the world as the eleventh child of her family, though four children died before she was born. She was brought up in Grove Street in the 1930's near the Princess of Wales pub. Her father was a hammerer, or blacksmith's mate, in the steam navigation industry based on the nearby river, and her mother worked throughout her life as a solderer at Scott's. Both despite and because of her large family, Mrs Catherine Stevens did this work at a time when we are told that women 'stayed at home'. In that time of high unemployment her work was a necessity to help her family survive. Maureen is grateful that she enjoyed a lengthy retirement, living to the age of 95 years.

The High Street of the old days is still alive in Maureen's mind: the peas and beans sold loose from the sack at Murray's the corn-chandler's; Johnson's family bakers that served so many generations of Deptfordians; and the railway station where she set off as an evacuee with her brother Billy and so many others during the

Second World War, first to St Leonard's in Sussex, then to Long Buckby in Northamptonshire. Above all she will never forget her mother's High Street shopping trips after 10pm on Saturday nights. Whilst Dad stayed at home to make sure the 7 children had their weekly bath Mum went out to search for a bargain for Sunday, returning more than once with a leg of lamb for a half-crown (12p) and a breast of lamb thrown in free!

Justina Ishiodu: Keeping the Flame Alive

Justina, 'Tina' to her friends, is from the town of Aba in Imo State, also in Nigeria. Mother to Ike and Chioma, she can't help but see a completely different lifestyle for the Catholic Nigerian at home and in London. In Nigeria priests are much more honoured and respected. Catechists help with teaching, and strict church wardens help with the administration of the Liturgy. This means that the priests can take on a less pressurized, more easygoing, counselling role.

So much for the clergy, what about the lay people? Tina finds that it is very easy to become slack in one's religious observance in England, life is so very different and there's so little time. It's a very difficult task to gather together in church the scattered sheep of West Africa now settled in large numbers in London, but it's worthwhile. Perhaps the answer lies in more African Masses, Bible Study classes, and Fellowships such as that which has met in Deptford Parish every Friday evening for three years.

It's not easy to encourage the Faith of your children, or your fellow Africans far from home and its ways, but Tina will keep on trying, sustained by occasional sorties to other Catholic churches in the area. She looks forward to a Parish Mission for Deptford one day soon.

John Kavanagh - Growing up on the Pepys Estate

John has been living on the Pepys Estate since he was a young boy at the end of the 1960s. Experience has taught him to see both the good and bad side of this famous part of Deptford. The good side first...

John remembers the estate as a great place to grow up. It was like a summer camp, with 10-15 friends always around to play football, British bulldog, 40-40, or other games. Living on Pepys has given John the opportunity to come in contact with all sorts of people, people who share one particular quality, they're unpretentious. They don't claim to be something they're not. What you see is what you get.

What about the other side of life? It can't be denied that there is often friction over noise, refuse, and suchlike. A lack of neighbourly consideration is all the more irritating when people are living very close together, many with social problems of one kind or another. John thinks that the big estates like Pepys and Milton Court were a terrible mistake. It would have been better to build terraces like those in the Friendly Street/ Brookmill Road area. Likewise, people with social problems should be spread out, not concentrated together.

Have things changed at all lately? On the positive side an increased police presence has reduced violence and the use of drugs, and security doors have kept much graffiti and many trouble-makers at bay. Nevertheless, John also observes that government policy over the last ten years has lead to greater isolation for the needy.

John was an office worker for many years after leaving St Joseph's Academy, Blackheath, he has recently qualified for post-graduate work after attaining a degree in Civil Engineering. Whether he stays in the area with his mother or moves elsewhere John will always remember Pepys as a place where he learnt to despise prejudice and

treat people as people. His upbringing has taught him to see life in human terms rather than cash, "it's just a shame that a few active and malicious people spoil things; there are so many good people about - I just wish they would wear badges!"

Marge and Alf Sperinck - Exiles From Burma and Nunhead

Marge and Alf are both from Rangoon, Burma. They left their country twice, in 1942 at the time of the Japanese invasion, and in 1961 when many Anglo-Burmese people felt that the new Burma's break with English language and culture left them little choice but to depart. The Sperincks also felt uneasy about restrictions on Christianity then coming into force. Their unease was well-founded, the human rights record in Myanmar (as Burma is now officially known) is one of the worst in the world.

When Alf and Marje arrived in England they stayed first with relatives in Chiswick and Lewisham, and then settled down with their three daughters in Nunhead, Peckham. There they stayed until quite recently when they moved to Deptford and took up a regular commitment to both our sacristy and our liturgy whilst keeping up links of friendship with Nunhead.

What are their reflections on their time in London? It took time for them to feel accepted and at ease, there were few coloured people in their locality at that time, and even fewer Burmese. The weather was cold too, but their church life helped them to feel welcome. The Sperincks are optimistic about attitudes to race nowadays: If you prove yourself, few people will maintain a prejudice, they say, people will get used to you and learn that you are reliable. Colour is less of a problem, they feel, because these days there are so many different people around.

Mary Sullivan - Electing and Entertaining in Times Past

Mary was born into a local family, living most of her life in Albury Street until she moved to Pitman House, Tanner's Hill, in 1967.

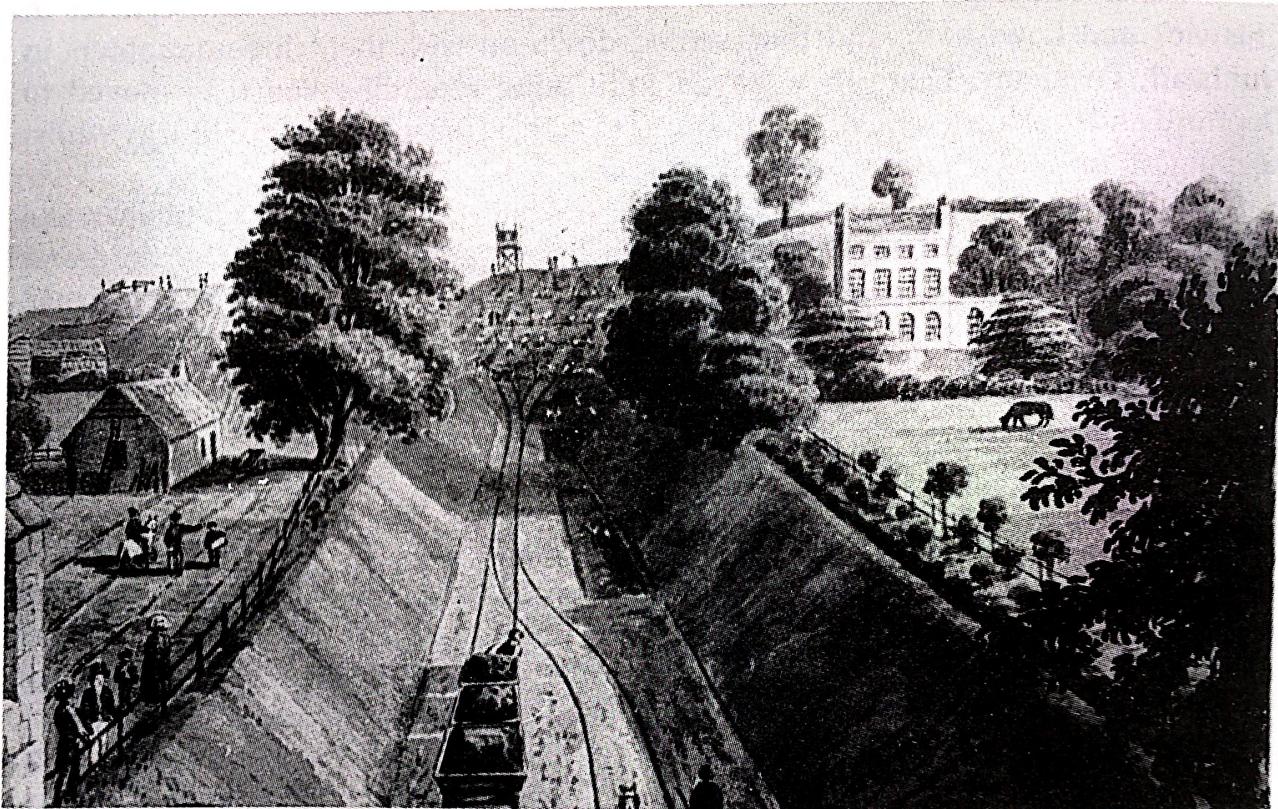
When Mary looks to 'old Deptford' she particularly remembers the time of Fr James Mahoney between the World Wars when our parish was at the very forefront of local life. With others, she once followed a pipe band around the streets of the area chanting "Vote, vote, vote for Fr Mahoney" as part of his successful campaign to be elected a local councillor. His supporters came from outside the Catholic community as well as from within it, as did the support for Fr Michael Frost's successful efforts to preserve Deptford market by helping to found the Deptford Street Traders Association in the 1950s.

Old Deptford was a good place for entertainment. As a keen film-goer, Mary went to the Electric Palace on the corner of Hyde Street, the New Cross Kinema at the top of Clifton Rise (1925-60), and the Palladium Picture Palace (later the Odeon) on Deptford Broadway. She also liked dancing at the Alliance Hall in Albury Street, the (original) Albany on Creek Road, and at the Lady Florence Institute (later Champs Nightclub) on Deptford Broadway. Also, there was the New Cross Empire Variety Theatre on the corner of Watson Street opposite the Post Office. From 1899 to 1954 Vaudeville artists such as George Formby and the young Max Bygraves (this was some time ago) entertained the public here upon payment of 2d (1p) for a gallery seat. Mary's father knew the ticket-collector so his family were let in for 6d. The theatre was demolished in 1958.

Times were hard, however, and a night out was a real treat. Survival was the name of the game, a 'game' in which a poor people helped each other rather than

winning at the other's expense. In those days the kindness of the immigrant Henne, the High Street shopkeeper from Germany, was well appreciated by all but those who persecuted him during wartime. Likewise, the butcher that served Mary's mother 'under the counter' on Sunday mornings is another part of her grateful past. His 'oven buster' beef ribs for 1/6d fed a family of four on Sunday and Monday. His food and his attitude made Mary what she is today.

Deptford - London's Oldest Railway Station



A water colour drawing (1839) of the old Croydon Canal being turned into the original London to Brighton railway line. The view is from "the bridge at New Cross"

JOURNEYS FOR THE FEARLESS IN THE 1830S

Did you know that the journey from Spa Road, Bermondsey to Deptford High Street was the beginning of the history of commuting in London? Did you know that Deptford is London's oldest existing railway station? Read on...

The earliest London Railway route was the London and Greenwich line licensed by law on May 17th 1833. The Liverpool to Manchester route had pioneered passenger rail travel in the north of England, now London to Greenwich did the same in the south, breaking ground in 1836 for perhaps the most concentrated rail traffic of any city in the world, and making Deptford the oldest surviving station in London. Interestingly, the original simple and temporary station was replaced by the new station building and sheds in March 1842, just two months before the beginning of the Parish of the Assumption.

George Landmann and George Walter were the engineer and first secretary of the financing company, the driving force behind a project which cost £993,330 in 1832. The result of this expense was a practically level route of nearly four miles on a viaduct of 60 million bricks in 878 arches. On June 9th 1835 the first recorded trial journey on the route took place. The engine *Royal William* ran a mile in four minutes in the presence of noblemen, directors and shareholders near Blue Anchor Road (the present Southwark Park Road). A magazine of the day, the *John Bull*, made these cutting comments about this dangerous new creation:

"Loss of life on that favourite toy from Liverpool to Manchester has always been terrific. Mr Huskisson was the first martyr; and the last splendid exhibition took place on Thursday upon the new tomfoolery to Greenwich, when 'by some accident' one of the carriages in which a party of noodles ventured themselves was thrown off the rail, but although it ran a vast number of yards no serious accident occurred. How lucky! Nobody killed the first day!"

DANGER OF DEATH - OR WORK FOR LIFE?

The architect who had proposed the viaduct congratulated the shareholders on the derailment as it showed how safe accidents were. Sir Thomas Hardy, the 67 year old hero of the Battle of Trafalgar, was not impressed. He regarded it as a needless risk to run, and until the day he died could not be persuaded to enter a railway carriage. For the opposition, when a director of the line gave evidence to Parliament in 1841 about the safety of the line he was able to mention 170,000 journeys conveying 6,800,000 people without the loss of life or limb.

The railway has been a continual source of employment possibilities for Deptford: the laying of the line (the work of 'navigators' or 'navvies') substantially relieved unemployment along its course, the bodywork for the railway carriages was carried out at Deptford works, and the two mile branch line to Deptford Wharf opened in 1849 provided a vital link between rail and river. Today the railway arches provide work for motor-mechanics, just as they did for the horse-shoeing farriers of earlier times. One can still see the inclined raised plane over the arches directly behind the Assumption Church. It was originally built to give access to the platform to horse-drawn carriages which were to be loaded on to flat carriages and swept off to distant beauty spots. That plan never came to fruition but the plane was later used in the repair of railway engines and carriages.

FROM PARTIES TO THE PARK

On February 8th 1836 London passenger traffic was begun with an hourly service over the two miles between Deptford High Street and Spa Road Bermondsey. On December 14th 1836 the London Bridge to Deptford section was opened by the Lord Mayor of London. The ceremony resembled the opening of the Liverpool to Manchester line, but this time there were no deaths. The Lord Mayor left on the first train to Deptford, followed by four other trains crowded with other guests. Church bells rang, onlookers crowded the rooftops all the way, Scots Guards and Coldstream bands attended at

the two stations, and a third band travelled on one of the trains. The bands played on as the trains returned to London for parties to celebrate an historic day.

Not all was music to the ears, however. The extension of the line to the temporary station at Greenwich opened on December 24th 1838 had to be relaid on wood and made watertight with asphalt as there were not only complaints of noise from stone sleepers, but also of leakage through the brick arches. Strange as it may seem, the railway company originally intended the arches to be inhabited. Their gas-fuelled cooking and lighting were decades ahead of their time, the only problems were leaking water and... trains ('the wrong kind of trains'?).

A lifting bridge over Deptford Creek was a revolutionary feature of the Deptford to Greenwich stage, an original design which lasted over a century in more or less its original condition. The present bridge is the third of its type, continuing to allow tall ships access to the upper Creek. The bridge helped the route to Greenwich and its park to enjoy a tremendous trade, to make the journey was a show-on-wheels, a novelty. Directors encouraged this with bands playing the trains in and out of the stations. Business declined as the novelty faded but the London and Greenwich Railway preserved its identity until amalgamation with Southern Region in 1923. Those same original brick arches are still in use today.

The opening dates of local railway stations are as follows:

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Deptford | - February 8th 1836 |
| Spa Road, Bermondsey | - February 8th 1836 (closed soon after) |
| Greenwich | - December 24th 1838 |
| New Cross Gate | - June 5th 1839 (opened as 'New Cross') |
| Deptford Wharf | - 1849 (goods only) |
| Lewisham | - July 30th 1849 |
| New Cross | - 1850 |
| Brockley | - 1871 |
| St John's | - June 1st 1873 |

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In the Century Before Our Parish

- What Might Have Been

Imagine if the attempt to found our parish had been put down by the police and local people as being 'against the law'. This is exactly what happened to local Catholics in the century before our parish was founded. Read on...

VICAR BATE OF ST PAUL'S

In 1990 Mr Michael Egan of Kidbrooke published a letter dated September 15th 1753 from the Vicar of St Paul's Church, Deptford to the Earl of Hardwicke, the Lord Chancellor of the time. This letter, sent also to the Archbishop of Canterbury by Mr James Bate, concerned itself with a Catholic place of worship, a 'Popish chapell', lately built in his parish.

As it had been against the law for 200 years to challenge the authority of the Anglican Church by practising the Catholic faith, this was quite a shock to the Vicar of St Paul's. St Paul's Church was established 22 years earlier in 1731, Mr Bate was its second Vicar. His letter relates what happened one Sunday morning in late August 1753 when he took it upon himself to investigate a Mass which was being celebrated in a recently-built chapel just off what is now Deptford Broadway. The historian who recently discovered his letters calculates, using old maps of the area, that the site of the 'Popish chapell' in question was near to the present 'Crown' public house, at 495 New Cross Road.

CHAOS IN CHAPEL

In order to ensure his entry into the new chapel, Mr Bate sent two of his sidesmen well versed in Catholic ritual to pretend to be bona fide Catholics. Upon his arrival the hostile crowd which had gathered outside gave a loud cry and began to scale the walls of the courtyard around the chapel. The Mass which was in progress was interrupted and the priest, probably Fr Anthony Barnwell, was informed that the mob could be no longer kept in order. Fr Barnwell took off his vestments and angrily confronted the Vicar and his co-religionists at the entrance to the "chapel."

During the exchange which followed, the priest gave the vicar his name. He was a chaplain for the Spanish Ambassador, the Irish exile-cum-soldier named General Wall living in Chelsea, and said that the chapel was built for the Ambassador's convenience, 'should he chance to come this way'. The Vicar objected that the congregation were not subjects of Spain but of England, and pointed out that all places of worship are open to all under English law. He asked the priest to continue with his service, but this he refused to do. After a further exchange Mr Bate left and the congregation and the mob dispersed.

WHO WERE THE CATHOLICS?

Who were the congregation? Mr Bate states that he saw 25 or 30 people in the chapel,

that almost all of them had Irish accents, and that most were said to come from Greenwich. The exceptions were a young man from London, a farmer from Erith, and an apple-woman from St Nicholas's parish, Deptford. Mr Bate was at pains to play down the possibility that any of his own parishioners were present. Late in the account he writes that when he investigated into the number of Roman Catholics in his parish five years before he could only find 'one family and a half'. His description of the Catholics from Greenwich is more complete: a half dozen well-dressed young women, about 14 old pensioners from Greenwich Hospital, and three or four others who looked like traders.

Were there other Catholics from Deptford who might have encouraged this attempt at founding a parish? In 1743 the Justices of the Peace of Blackheath summoned about 30 individuals to take an oath to the King and deny belief in transubstantiation, the teaching that at Mass the bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Some of these men lived in the parishes of St Paul and St Nicholas, Deptford. Also, the 1767 'Return of Papists' list gives a figure of 4 Catholics in St Paul's parish and 144 in the nearby parish of St Nicholas, apparently largely connected with the Naval Dockyard. It's interesting to note that a further objection by the Vicar to the presence of the chapel was that it might pose a security risk to the Naval Dockyard. The Vicar put similar fears to his parish in 1745 when he wrote that "the Nation is invaded by a desperate Band of hungry Popish vagabonds and Cut-throats". Whom he had in mind is unclear.

One other indication exists of the presence of large numbers of Catholics in Deptford at this time. The Archbishop of Canterbury, writing to the Chancellor of the Exchequer about the affair on October 1st 1753, commented that

"It is not long since I was informed that in that part of the Borough, which extends on the Riverside towards Deptford, almost every Alehouse is an occasional Mass House, this I suppose is exaggerated. Sir William Richardson is my Author, who lives there."

ANTI-CATHOLIC RIOTS

The argument over whether there should be a Catholic Chapel in Deptford was aired against the background of anti-Catholic Penal Laws. Donald Rumbelow relates that nearly thirty years later, when Parliament voted to relax those laws, riots incited by Lord George Gordon put pressure on the government to keep Catholics as second-class citizens. In June 1780 mobs attacked the Catholic Sardinian and Bavarian embassies, a colony of Irish weavers at Moorfields, and a Mass house (temporary church) in Ropemaker Alley. For the next two days chapels, Mass houses and Catholic homes were ransacked, with little intervention from the police force of the day. In the days that followed the mob burnt down the houses of two judges and broke into seven prisons to release the prisoners. It was only after three overnight attacks on the Royal Exchange, during which the Foot Guards had to come to the aid of the beaten Horse Guards, that the Mansion House and Bank of England were saved from the fury of the mob. At the end of the riots nearly 2000 prisoners were captured, order was maintained at the point of a bayonet, the need for a strong and impartial police force was clear as never before, and the Catholic population had known terror as never before.

LAST HOPE LOST

But what of Deptford's 'Popish chapell'? After seeing the Spanish Ambassador Mr Bate went to Greenwich to consult with the Justice of the Peace about the suppression of the chapel, and was assured that a special session of the Bench would consider the case as a matter of urgency. The Vicar was also later advised to approach a gentleman such as the Chancellor of the Exchequer to take the matter further. A further development happened later on Monday when Fr Barnwell and Fr Shaw, his senior colleague, called on the Vicar to ask whether he was still determined to suppress the chapel. On receiving the answer yes, Fr Shaw invited him to visit the Spanish Ambassador, General Wall,



The end of a working day at the Victualling Yard many years ago. The gateway remains but the workers have gone to the Master of the Vineyard.

in Chelsea and discuss the matter further.

Mr Bate took up the invitation the next day, though insisting that he would not change his mind. General Wall began the interview by insisting on his right to have a chapel anywhere he pleased. Mr Bate's reply was threefold: that to act in such a way would be a ridiculous breach of privilege; there could be 5 or 6 Catholic chapels to one Protestant church; to found a chapel without being a local resident would give offence to the host country, particularly considering the proximity of the security-sensitive Naval Dockyard nearby. At this the Ambassador gave way, assuring Mr Bate that he had no intention of giving such offence or of breaching Christian charity.

With the Ambassador's words of regret, the effort to found a chapel at Deptford was doomed. Mr Bate leaves us its only epitaph:

"A few days after, the building was taken down, and the materials all carried away; so that not the least footsteps of it are now to be seen".

They Sailed From Deptford: Our Seagoing Past

Deptford Shipyard came into being when Henry VIII, the founder of the Royal Navy, realised that Deptford was a convenient location for establishing a dockyard and naval storehouse. Before this time Deptford had been no more than a common fishing village of no great importance surrounded by marshes and open country in the county of Kent.

The original royal dock was called the King's Yard, it covered some 30 acres when it was founded in 1512. There were two wet docks, three slips for Navy vessels, workshops for craftsmen in wood and iron, two mast ponds, mast houses, timber sheds, officers' quarters, and machinery for spinning hemp.

By the mid-18th century another wet dock had been added, a basin and mast pond, several ranges of storehouses, an anchor smith's shop with 20 forges, mast houses, various workshops and lofts, and houses for the Yard's officers (the Terrace). The Terrace and Foreshore (rum store) were built by prisoners of war housed in the 'prison-hulk' lying just off the Dockyard. Prisoners of war from France, Spain and Holland were executed nearby during the time that prisoners were held here.

Deptford was the leading dockyard in Europe, making use as it did of nearby Woolwich's deep-water docks, the depth necessary for work on warships. Some of the finest ships in British Naval history were built in Deptford during the days when ships were made of wood (see the list of ships). Once iron took wood's place Deptford's glory came to an end. The last ship to be launched here was the 'Druid', on March 13th 1869. On March 31st the Admiralty closed the Dockyard.

THE VICTUALLING YARD: SUCCESSOR TO THE SHIPYARD

The second major employer in Deptford history was the Admiralty Victualling Yard, the supplier of food and essential supplies to the British Navy.

The Yard came to be situated in Deptford in the reign of Charles II and under the supervision of Samuel Pepys, the first Secretary to the Navy. In 1742 when the Admiralty's Tower Hill site became inadequate eleven acres of Deptford land was purchased from Sir John Evelyn, who owned most of the riverside land known as Deptford Strand, and who had previously leased the site to the East India Company in 1726. After suffering from three serious fires, new storehouses were built in 1780, by which time the area also included much of the original King's Yard. The heart of the site was a series of red brick warehouses called the 'Red House'.

In 1858 the visit of Queen Victoria marked a change in the name of the Yard, it now became the 'Royal Victoria Yard' and Grove Lane became Victoria Road. Two other such Victualling Yards existed at Gosport and Plymouth, but Deptford was the largest of all three, employing 2,000 people. Deptford boasted a fine collection of 18th and 19th century buildings of which the Terrace and Colonnade alone now remain.

No less appreciated were the millions of hard tack biscuits cooked in the Yard's bakery ('Red House Biscuits'), the millions of cattle from Ireland, the chocolate mill which made Navy cocoa, and the Georgian enclave of buildings which housed the vast stores of sugar, rum (below the Foreshore, one vat alone contained 32,000 gallons), tobacco, clothing, and medical supplies. In 1860, the area enclosed by the Yard's walls

measured 35 acres and contained goods worth half a million pounds. By the end of the century the labour force had dropped to four hundred and 101 years later, in 1961, the Victualling Yard was closed down, making way for the Pepys Estate.

THE FOREIGN CATTLE MARKET

The warehouses of Convoys, a newsprint importer, now occupy the eastern and most ancient part of what was the Royal Dockyard, between the river and Dacca Street. Previous to this the site was occupied by the Deptford Foreign Cattle Market. What were its origins?

In 1831 the official plan of the shipyard buildings included the following: "the seasoning office, the brewhouse, the customs and excise office, storehouses, wheelwrights' shop, bakehouse, coal shed, sawmill, rivet maker's shop, iron hoops store, coopers' shops, boiler, pickle boiler house, flesh and salt store, hog pens, hog slaughter house, hog hanging houses, ox pound, ox slaughter house, ox offal house, store for tongues and suet, store for slops."

It is not surprising that a meat market arose from this base. From 1871 to 1913 a Foreign Cattle Market functioned on this site, cattle pens taking the place of ship-building slips. This centre of imports, many from Ireland, included over eighty abattoirs, women who worked there were known as 'gut girls'. For four decades the Market was successful, but when it lost money it went the same way as the shipyards before it. Mounting unemployment, interspersed with short-lived 'booms', has stalked Deptford to this day.

HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR MARITIME PAST

1551 - The first two ships recorded as having been built at Deptford Yard were the 'Primrose' and the 'Marie Willoughby', launched on July 4th.

1576 - Sir Martin Frobisher sailed from Deptford accompanied by Captain John Fenton and the 'Gabriel' and the 'Michael', heading north to the Arctic in search of north-easterly route to China.

1580 - Francis Drake returned from a three year long journey round the world on board the 'Pelican' with treasure amounting to £800,000. Queen Elizabeth immediately commanded that his vessel should be kept in Deptford Dock as a memorial of this epic journey. Four months later the Queen attended a banquet aboard the ship at Deptford and crowned the event by knighting Sir Francis. The 'Golden Hind,' as it was renamed, then became a London landmark, its cabin being refitted as a saloon for the comfort of the numerous visitors eager to see the first English ship to sail around the world. In recent times the location of the ship at 'Drake's Steps' on the Pepys Estate has been archeologically confirmed and commemorated.

1589-1625 - Several fleets were equipped at Deptford to go and confront Spanish vessels transporting goods and precious metals between Spain and its colonies in the New World of the Americas. One such expedition in 1596 consisted of 17 first class men-of-war and 153 smaller vessels which were said to have taken twenty million ducats worth of goods and materials from the Spanish.

1595 - 'The Repulse' (700 tons) was built to carry the Admiral's flag in Lord Essex's

campaign against Cadiz in Spain. In the same year '*The Scourge of Malice*' (900 tons) was launched by Queen Elizabeth.

1609 - '*Red Lion*' was launched in the presence of King James I and his son.

1610 - '*The Trades Increase*' and the '*Peppercorn*' were launched for the East India merchants by King James I. In exchange for suggesting the names the King was given a feast on board '*The Trades Increase*'.

1619 - Samuel Pepys mentions in his diary the visit of the King, the Prince, and the Lord Admiral to the Deptford timber-yard where two ships were being built. The King named them '*Constant Reformation*' (750 tons, 40 guns) and '*Happy Entrance*' (850 tons).

1633 - '*Henrietta Maria*', launched in the presence of the King and Queen, and '*Old James*'

1634 - '*James*', built by Deptford's Peter Pett, launched in the presence of the King

1652 - '*Diamond*' and '*Ruby*', carrying 48 cannon each, were launched in the presence of Cromwell and his company

1652 - Launch of '*Drake*' and '*Naseby*'. The '*Naseby*' was later renamed the '*Royal Charles*', being the ship which was sent to Holland to carry Charles II back to England when the monarchy was restored. After campaigning against the Dutch, this ship was captured along with the '*London*', the '*Royal Oak*', the '*James*' and several other ships.

1668 - 'Launch of *Charles*', '*Cambridge*' and '*St George*'. The '*Charles*' carried 110 cannon, and "was built by old Shish, a plaine honest carpenter, master buider of this dock, but one who can give very little account of his art by discourse, and is hardly capable of reading, yet of great ability in his calling. The family have been ship carpenters in this yard above 100 years" (Evelyn's Diary). The '*Cambridge*' (70 guns) was also built by Shish.

1679 - 'Launch of *Alcide*', '*Duchess*' (90 guns, 1418 tons), '*Elizabeth*' (70 guns, 1114 tons), and '*Sterling Castle*' (70 guns, 1087 tons, lost in a storm on Goodwin Sands in 1703 when only 70 out of a crew of 276 men were saved)

1703 - 'Deptford and the surrounding area suffered terrible losses in November 1703, the roofs of houses being damaged, nearly all the chimneys being blown down, and all but four vehicles between Deptford and London Bridge were destroyed. The destruction throughout the country was so great that a general fast was ordered to be kept.

1729 - Launch of '*Namur*', engaged in the Naval blockade of Brest in 1759 and in service later off Cadiz), and '*Torrington*', commissioned by the Turkey Company for trade with that area,

1732 - '*Deptford*' (60 guns, equipped with many gadgets to keep dry her gunpowder)

1739 - '*Boyne*' and '*Prince Frederick*'; war with Spain and a fearfully damaging storm caused great activity in the Yard.

1742 - '*Baltimore*', '*Dreadnought*', '*Monmouth*' and '*Revenge*' (used in blockading Brest); 30 sailing ships waited in the Yard in August to embark troops for Flanders, press gangs were active in forcing people to man them.

1744 - Launch of '*Colchester*', '*Defiance*', '*Jamaica*', '*Nonsuch*', '*Spanish Launches*' (built to counter a similar class of Spanish ships), '*Tryal*', '*Tryall*', '*Winchester*' and '*Yarmouth*'

1755 - Unlisted as a Deptford ship but worthy of mention is the '*Royal George*'. This 100 gun ship features in a famous painting by Deptford man John Clevely the Elder. Its size, however, would appear to have prevented it from making the glorious visit to Deptford which Clevely portrays.

1776 - Launch of '*Culloden*' (1659 tons, 600 men, engaged with the '*Alexander*' at the Battle of the Nile), and '*Galatea*' (429 tons); in this same year Captain James Cook sailed

from Deptford on board the 'Resolution' in a round-the-world voyage of discovery in the Pacific Ocean.

1782 - 'Resistance' (a frigate, 44 guns, commissioned by Captain King, who sailed around the world with Captain Cook)

1791 - Captain George Vancouver, who had served under Cook in the Pacific, used Deptford Yard to fit out an expedition to survey the North-West coast of the American continent. This expedition led to a vast area of present-day Canada, Vancouver Island and British Columbia, becoming British colonies.

1797 - Launch of 'Neptune' 98 guns, the flagship of Lord Nelson in the Mediterranean in 1797

1800-10 - Launch of 'Fame', 'Blake', 'Bombay', 'Colossus' (despite her 74 guns this ship suffered the most dead and wounded of the British ships at the Battle of Trafalgar), 'Courageux' (74 guns, 4 frigates, 3 sloops)

1833-34 - In 1833 the yard was closed, and in the following year it was used for breaking up old men-of-war.

1845 - 'Spitfire' (3 guns, 432 tons) and 'Terrible' (a paddle steamer, 21 guns, 1850 tons, 800 h.p., saw active service in the Black Sea in the Crimean War)

1846 - 'Launch of Hound', 'Sidon' (a paddle frigate), and 'Odin' (paddle frigate, 1310 tons)

1847 - Launch of 'Emigrant' and 'Termagant' (served at the bombardment of Bomarsund and later in the West Indies and North America)

1869 - 'Druid' (10 guns, screw corvette), this was the last vessel launched from Deptford Yard.

On March 31st Deptford Yard as a shipyard came to an end. The 'wooden walls of Olde England' gave way to iron-built ships which were more conveniently made elsewhere. 21 acres of its area became the Foreign Cattle Market which was opened for use on December 28th 1871.

THE SHIPS OF DEPTFORD

1551 - 'Primrose' and the 'Marie Willoughby', launched on July 4th.

1595 - 'The Repulse' (700 tons); 'The Scourge of Malice' (900 tons)

1609 - 'Red Lion'

1617 - 'Rainbow'

1610 - 'The Trades Increase' and the 'Peppercorn'

1619 - 'Constant Reformation' (750 tons, 40 guns) and 'Happy Entrance' (850 tons).

1620 - 'Victory'

1622 - 'St George'

1623 - 'Triumph'

1631 - 'St Denis'

1633 - 'Henrietta Maria'

1634 - 'James'

1646 - 'Assurance'

1647 - 'Tiger'

1649 - 'Bonadventure'

1650 - 'Assistance' and 'Foresight'

1652 - 'Diamond' and 'Ruby'

1652 - 'Drake' and 'Naseby'

1653 - 'Hampshire'

1656 - 'Henry'

1658 - 'Leopard' and 'Reserve', the latter weighing 573 tons.

1665 - 'Deptford'

1666 - 'Loyal London'

1668 - 'Charles', 'Cambridge' and

'St George'

1670 - 'London'

1673 - 'Sandadoes'

1674 - 'Royal Oak'
 1678 - 'Hampton Court' (70 guns, 1072 tons), 'Hope' (70 guns, 1082 tons) and 'Lenox' (70 guns, 1072 tons)
 1679 - 'Alcide', 'Duchess' (90 guns, 1418 tons), 'Elizabeth' (70 guns, 1114 tons), and 'Sterling Castle' (70 guns, 1087 tons)
 1683 - 'Impregnable' and 'Neptune' (90 guns, 1448 tons)
 1690 - 'Centurion'
 1692 - 'Boyn'
 1693 - 'Canterbury', 'Falmouth', 'Margate', 'Norwich' and 'Torbay'
 1694 - 'Cambridge', 'Coventry', 'Soleby' and 'Swann'.
 1695 - 'Granado', 'Harwich', 'Pendennis' and 'Windsor'
 1696 - 'Barfleur'*, 'Nonsuch' and 'Warwick'
 1697 - 'Deal Castle', 'Charles' and 'Ranelagh'
 1698 - 'Burford' and 'Orford'.
 1699 - 'Buckingham', 'Revenge' and 'Southampton'*
 1700 - 'Berwick'*
 1701 - 'Lenox'*, 'Oxford'* and 'Swallow'
 1703 - 'Folkestone', 'Nottingham' and 'Panther'
 1704 - 'Northumberland' and 'Reserve'
 1706 - 'Colchester' and 'Restoration'
 1707 - 'Defiance'* and 'Portsmouth'
 1708 - 'Humber'*, 'Romney' and 'Ruby'
 1709 - 'Dublin', 'Lion' and 'Success'
 1710 - 'Charles'*, 'Charlotte'*
 'Cumberland', 'Jamaica',
 'Princess Augusta' (184 tons, 40 men) and 'Tryal'
 1711 - 'Bideford', 'Ferret', 'Gibraltar',
 'Gloucester', 'Ossoray'*,
 'Port Mahon', 'Princess Royal'*,
 'Queensborough'* and 'Shark'
 1712 - 'Advice' and 'Rippon'
 1713 - 'Isabella'* and 'Shrewsbury'*
 1716 - 'Barfleur'*(a hulk - 1147 tons)
 1718 - 'Mary'*
 1720 - 'Catherine' (a large yacht - 166 tons, 40 men)
 1722 - 'Burford'
 1723 - 'Berwick' (a hulk, 1147 tons) and 'Prince George'*
 1724 - 'Fubbs' (a yacht of 157 tons and 40 men), 'May' (a yacht, 164 tons, 40 men) and 'Tubb'
 1725 - 'Deptford'
 1726 - 'Cornwall'* and 'Romney'
 1729 - 'Namur', 'Torrington', 'Windsor', and 'Wolf'
 1731 - 'Penguin'
 1732 - 'Deptford'
 1733 - 'Perigrine'
 1734 - 'Prince of Orange' and 'Tartar'
 1735 - 'Russel'*
 1736 - 'Augusta' and 'Eltham'
 1738 - 'Lion'*
 1739 - 'Boyne' and 'Prince Frederick'
 1740 - 'Port Mahon' and 'Rye'
 1741 - 'Blanford'
 1742 - 'Baltimore', 'Dreadnought', 'Monmouth' and 'Revenge'
 1743 - 'Berwick' and 'Chester'
 1744 - 'Colchester', 'Defiance', 'Jamaica',
 'Nonsuch', 'Spanish Launches'
 'Tryal', 'Tryall', 'Winchester'
 and 'Yarmouth'
 1746 - 'Dover', 'Kent' and 'Lynn'
 1747 - 'Colloden' and 'St Albans'
 1748 - 'Lyme'
 1749 - 'Peggy', 'Rochester', 'Royal Caroline'
 and 'Royal Charlotte'
 1750 - 'Swifsure'
 1751 - 'Buckingham'
 1752 - 'Cruizer'
 1753 - 'Dorset'
 1754 - 'Seaford'
 1755 - 'Cambridge' (1615 tons, 200 men)
 and 'Medway' (1285 tons)
 1756 - 'Bideford', 'Deal Castle' (400 tons),
 'Hunter' and 'Viper'
 1757 - 'America', 'Norfolk', and 'Preston'
 (1044 tons, 350 men), 'Princess
 Amelia' and 'Shannon' (28 guns)
 1758 - 'Active', 'Dublin' (1561 tons,
 600 men), 'Flora', 'Shrewsbury' and
 'Warspite'

1759 - 'Basilisk', 'Carcass' and 'Hercules' (1608 tons)

1760 - 'Superb' (1612 tons) and 'Dragon' (1614 tons)

1761 - 'Collossus', 'Cornwall', 'Courageous' and 'Culloden'

1762 - 'Kent' (74 guns, 1617 tons, 600 men)

1763 - 'Albion' (1662 tons), 'Alexander', 'Blake' and 'Bombay'

1765 - 'Monarch' (74 guns, 1612 tons)

1766 - 'Magnificent' (1612 tons, 600 men)

1767 - 'Marlborough' (74 guns, 1642 tons) and 'Otter'

1768 - 'Egmont' (1643 tons) and 'Fame'

1769 - 'Swallow'

1770 - 'Resolution' (70 guns)

1771 - 'Grafton' (1652 tons)

1774 - 'America', 'Cumberland', 'Enterprise' (594 tons), 'Lurcher' and 'New Alcide'

1776 - 'Culloden' (1659 tons, 600 men), and 'Galatea' (429 tons)

1777 - 'America' (1370 tons)

1778 - 'Alexander' (1621 tons), 'Amphitrite' (24 guns, 514 tons, 164 men)

1779 - 'Alcide' (1625 tons), and 'Pegasus' (28 guns, 594 tons)

1780 - 'Flora', 'Magnamine' (1370 tons) and 'Myrmidon' (481 tons)

1781 - 'Goliath' (74 guns, 1604 tons)

1782 - 'Resistance' (a frigate, 44 guns)

1783 - 'Katherine'

1786 - 'Impregnable', 'Vanguard', 'Standard' (64 guns, 1370 tons, 64 guns) and 'Windsor Castle'

1787 - 'New Union' (90 guns, three-decker)

1793 - 'Hawke' (16 guns) and 'Norwich'

1797 - 'Neptune' (98 guns)

1800-10 - 'Fame', 'Blake', 'Bombay', 'Colossus', 'Courageux' (74 guns; 4 frigates, 3 sloops built in this period)

1803 - 'Repulse' (74 guns)

1807 - 'Marlborough'

1810 - 'Queen Charlotte' (120 guns) - 'Blenheim' (74 guns) and 'Orpheus' (36 guns)

1819 - 'La Blonde' (a frigate, 46 guns)

1822 - 'Comet'

1843 - 'Worcester' (50 guns)

1844 - 'Porcupine' (3 guns, 582 tons)

1845 - 'Spitfire' (3 guns, 432 tons) and 'Terrible' (a paddle steamer, 21 guns, 1850 tons, 800 h.p.)

1846 - 'Hound', 'Sidon' (a paddle frigate), 'Odin' (paddle frigate, 1310 tons)

1847 - 'Emigrant' ('Emerald'?) and 'Termagant'

1848 - 'Reynard' and 'Phaeton' (39 guns, screw frigate, 2396 tons)

1849 - 'Archer' (13 guns, screw corvette)

1850 - 'Wasp', 'Leopard' (18 guns, paddle frigate) and 'Terrible'

1852 - 'Cruizer' (17 guns, screw sloop) and 'Imperieuse' (39 guns, screw frigate)

1854 - 'Hornet' (17 guns, screw sloop), 'Hannibal' (91 guns, 3126 tons), 'Gleaner' (gunboat), 'Ruby' (gunboat), and 'Curlew' (gunboat)

1855 - 'Lark' (gunboat), 'Magpie' (gunboat) and 'Cheerful' (gunboat)

1856 - 'Emerald' (35 guns, screw frigate) and 'Fawn' (17 guns, screw sloop)

1857 - 'Lyra' and 'Racer'

1858 - 'Forte' (51 guns, 2364 tons) and 'Icarus' (11 guns, 950 tons)

1859 - 'Ariadne' (26 guns, screw frigate), 'Ranger' (5 guns, 427 tons), 'Mutine' (17 guns, 950 tons) and 'Rattler' (17 guns, 950 tons)

1860 - 'Rosario' (11 guns, 669 tons), 'Rapid' (11 guns, 669 tons), 'Speedwell' (5 guns, 425 tons), 'Zebra' (17 guns, 950 tons), 'Newcastle' (51 guns, 3027 tons), 'Camelion' (17 guns, screw sloop) and 'Landrail' (5 guns, gunboat)

1861 - 'Investigator'

1862 - 'Columbine' (11 guns, screw sloop), 'Dido' (22 guns), 'Sappho' (17 guns) and 'Jasseur' (5 guns, screw sloop)

1864 - 'Enterprise' (11 guns, an armoured Naval screw sloop) and 'Favourite' (10 guns)

1865 - 'Endymion' (36 guns, frigate)

1866 - 'Niobe' (4 guns, screw sloop, 1081 tons) and 'Nymphe' (4 guns, screw sloop, 1081 tons)

1867 - 'Plover' (3 guns), 'Fanny' (a lighter) and 'Juno' (6 guns)

1868 - 'Thistle' (gunboat, 464 tons), 'Boxer'

1869 - 'Druid' (10 guns, screw corvette), this was the last vessel launched from Deptford Yard.

The 51 Pubs of the Parish

The dairy of Samuel Pepys mentions two ancient Deptford pubs, the Globe in Evelyn Street and the King's Head on Church Street. These two most ancient hosteries are pre-dated by the Dover Castle which stood on the Broadway (untill a recent fire) and gave sustenance to pilgrims who had set out from the Tabard in Southwark on their way to Canterbury to pray at the tomb of Thomas A Becket. Though these houses no longer exist they have no shortage of successors.

Angus Street - *Dewdrop Inn*
 Ashby Road - *Wickham Arms**
 Childers Street - *Lord Palmerston, Pride of Deptford* (Royal Legion Club)
 Clyde Street - *Lord Clyde*
 Cranbrook Road - *Crown and Sceptre, Cranbrook*
 Creek Road - *Hoy Inn, Duke*
 Deptford Broadway - *Fountain, Star and Garter, Crown, Paradise Bar* (formerly *Royal Albert*)
 Deptford Church Street - *Bird's Nest* (formerly *Oxford Arms*)
 Deptford High Street - *Mamie O'Leary's* (formerly *White Swan and the Golden Hind*), *Pilot, Windsor Castle, Brown Bear, Mechanics Arms, Deptford Arms, Centurion*
 Evelyn Street - *Noah's Ark, Harp of Erin, Globe, John Evelyn, Mansion House, Black Horse*
 Grove Street - *Princess of Wales, Victoria, Crow's Nest*
 Lewisham Way - *Flower of Kent, Clarendon, Rosemary Branch*
 McMillan Street - *McMillan's*
 Malpas Road - *Duke of Edinburgh*
 New Cross Road - *Amersham Arms, Walpole, Marquis of Granby, Goldsmith's Tavern, New Cross Inn, Rose Inn*
 New King Street - *Osbourne Arms, Navy Arms*
 Oscar Street - *Prince Alfred*
 Prince Street - *Dog and Bell*
 Tanner's Hill - *Royal Standard, Royal George, Crystal Palace Tavern*
 Trundleys Road - *Rose of Kent*
 Vulcan Road - *Lord Wolseley**
 Woodpecker Road - *Spanish Steps*

* On the Brockley side of the road

Every Placename Tells a Story

In an area as ancient as Deptford and New Cross placenames pass away like the water under Deptford Bridge. Indeed, the immediate area of the bridge was once called Deptford Towne, distinguishing it from the riverside settlement called Deptford Strand. Deptford Towne is a short distance from what was once called Dog Kennel Lane, the name being said to refer to a Royal Dog Kennel built by King John in what later became Mill Lane, and is now known as Brookmill Lane.

Less colourful but just as significant is the renaming of Butt Lane on August 13th 1825 as the High Street. This act marks a shift of focus away from Deptford Strand and Green at a time when the centre of the town shifted away from the Creek and riverside and closer to the main road from London to Dover. Formerly Flagon Row on Hughes Field was the business centre and St Nicholas' Church was at the heart of the town, now the centre moved further north and St Paul's was the High Street church. Transport links had the same focus, stage-coaches set off from the *White Swan* (currently *Mamie O'Leary's*) on the High Street, their stables being sited off Edward Street at a time when it was known, curiously, as Loving Edward's Lane. Likewise, when horses were replaced by trains London's oldest commuter station was also sited on the High Street.

Elsewhere, old and new aspects of Deptford are intertwined in the name of the 1960s estate named Milton Court. Milton Court was the name of a house built in Surrey by John Evelyn, the famous writer and landholder whose name is remembered by Evelyn Street (formerly Broomfield Place); similarly, Arklow Road commemorates the birthplace of Evelyn's grandfather. The now-pedestrianized Woodpecker Road which runs through the middle of the Milton Court Estate goes back to far earlier times. Ancient documents give the name of the road to be 'Wolfacre', or 'Woolacre' up to the 18th century. Historians presume from these names that the area was an oaken woodland stretching down to a swampy riverside.

Nearby New Cross takes its name from a toll-gate which stood at the top of what is now Clifton Rise. In the vicinity of that toll-gate the 18th century Drake family had a formidable influence on place names in both New Cross and Brockley. A Reverend William *Wickham* had two daughters who married two brothers named *Drake*, the Drakes having a large estate in this area. The Drakes had property at *Breakspear*, Oxfordshire (birthplace of Adrian IV, the only English Pope), and *Shardeloes* in *Amersham*, Buckinghamshire, and they also owned *St Donnatt's Castle* in Glamorganshire, and had a cousin who was Rector of *Malpas* in Cheshire. The italicised locations are recalled by witness streetsigns even today.

What now follows is a study of the placenames of the Pepys Estate by the late George Beard. How much more could be revealed by other such studies?

SOME PEPYS PLACENAMES

Albermarle House - named after the Duke of Albermarle, Master of Trinity House in 1660

Aragon Tower - named after Catherine of Aragon, the first wife of Henry VIII.

Argosy House - an argosy was a large merchant ship

Barfleur House - named after a ship built in the Yard in 1696

Bembridge House - named after Bembridge lighthouse

Bence House - named after Alexander Bence, Master of Trinity House

Bowditch - a former street name

Clement House - named after the Guild of the Holy Trinity and St Clement

Cockayne Way - named after Sir William Cockayne, Brother of Trinity House, 1621

Crandley Court - Capt. Richard Crandley of Trinity House, 1621

Daubeney Tower - Lord Daubeney, fought battles at Deptford Bridge in the 16th century

Dolben Court - named after Dr Dolben, Bishop of Rochester, younger of Trinity House

Eddystone Tower - named after Eddystone lighthouse

Foreshore - that part of shore between high and low watermarks

Gransden House - named after a donor to Deptford charities

Harmon House - named after Capt. Thomas Harmon of Trinity House

Lanyard House - a short cord kept close at hand by sailors and dockers

Leeway - a ship's direction, away from the wind

Limberg House - named after Capt. John Limberg, Elder Brother of Trinity House

Longshore - describing things or people found by the shore

Marlowe House - named after Christopher Marlowe, playwright at the time of Shakespeare, killed locally and buried at St Nicholas' Church.

Merrick House - named after Hugh Merrick, Master or Brother of Trinity House, 1603-10

Millard House - named after a donor to Deptford charities

Oxestalls Way - named after an old Deptford place name

Pelican House - named after Francis Drake's most famous ship, later renamed *The Golden Hind*

Pendennis House - named after a ship built in the Yard in 1695

Windlass Place - named after a maritime machine for hauling and hoisting

Tragedies of Peace and Wartime

PANIC ON THE STREETS OF DEPTFORD

* St Nicholas' church records reveal that 1200 Deptfordians died as victims of the Great Plague in 1665. The previous twenty years had also seen great disturbance, Civil War skirmishes near Deptford Bridge in 1647 and New Cross in 1648, and a flood in 1651.

* In January 1928 a ferocious flood hit Deptford. Such was the volume of water that a 20 foot high brick wall in the Victualling Yard was sent flying, sending a torrent of barrelled grain and rum from their stores. Town Hall officials distributed blankets to the needy of inundated Grove Street. Floods have been recorded in the area from earliest times, the last such crisis occurred in 1968 when some local streets were under four feet of water.

* Incredible though it may seem, Fr Desmond Trant McCarthy recalls that 3,000 people died in this area in the winter months of 1951/52 as the result of breathing



After the great flood of January 1928, blankets are distributed on Grove Street.

difficulties due to the fog. This was before the Clean Air Acts when London was famed for its smog and doctors feared to visit the poverty-stricken inhabitants of properties condemned full twenty years before.

* On January 18th 1980 13 youngsters died at 439 New Cross Road when an horrific fire devastated an early morning party. The victims were from 14 to 22 years old, black and white, and from a variety of churches in the locality and beyond. At a joint memorial service in St Paul's Anglican Church both the living and dead were united in prayer.

A WORLD WAR ON YOUR DOORSTEP: 1939-45

648 people lost their lives in Deptford as a result of enemy action in the Second World War. The area was a prime target because of the Admiralty Yard, the docks, the railways, and the high density of population. The area closest to the Surrey Docks and the network of railway marshalling yards in the New Cross area came in for a particular punishment. The attacks came in two principal waves, the blitzes in the first half of the War and the V1s and V2s towards its end. An article such as this cannot hope to describe each attack in full (Lewis Blake does as much in his two exhaustive works *Red Alert* and *Bolts from the Blue*, both widely available), but aims to throw light on the subject by giving the final statistics and a few sketches of the human reality of the war as it affected this parish.

On Sunday September 7th 1940 came hundreds of Luftwaffe bombers on an autumn afternoon, the first mass air raid of the war, the largest that the world had ever yet seen. Once the bombers had retired a million tons of burnt timber was left smouldering on Surrey Docks. In Deptford and New Cross the list of burning

properties seemed endless: Gilbey's printing ink works, the wood on Canon Wharf, the Haberdasher Aske schools, New Cross Tram Depot and New Cross Gate Station, 50 houses on Childeric and Ruddigore roads. In fact incidents in the borough numbered 93. Nearby refugees from Bermondsey flocked aimlessly into Deptford, as did burnt out families from Silvertown in nearby Woolwich.

The raids continued nightly, tragically for the 26 who were killed in the basement of the Methodist Mission Hall on Creek Road, a crowded public shelter, on September 11th; Convoys Wharf was gutted in the same raid. Just a few hundred yards away in Clyde Street in the early hours of October 18th 6 first-aid attendants met their death in the destruction of the evacuated Clyde Street School. Malpas Road suffered minor damage the same night, while October 25th saw the death of 13 workers at Deptford Power Station, and November 10th saw 7 die at Waller Road.

Christmas time saw little aerial goodwill. On December 27th there were 70 fires in Deptford and New Cross, one of which completely demolished New Cross Bus Station (18 killed, 20 injured) and wrecked the synagogue next door - apart from its still-burning 'perpetual light'; J. Stone's factory on Arklow Road was also damaged. Two nights later 120 bombers caught London relatively unprepared and blitzed the city into the Second Great Fire of London. John Evelyn had seen the first great fire from a distance, now the Deptford street named after him was part of the inferno. There was serious damage done to the upper floors of Goldsmiths' College and Stone's was hit again.

Grief came calling in the New Year too. On January 17th 1941, 8 were killed by a half ton bomb at Dennett's Road, Deptford, and on March 19th came the heaviest raid of the Blitz so far, lasting from 8pm to 2am. The Royal Victoria Victualling yard was devastated by a fire which claimed three-quarters of its 35 acre site, and demanded the services of 100 fire-pumps. In Chubworthy Street an ARP warden was killed and another 'simply disappeared'; the roof of the church in Knoyle Street was left in the middle of the devastated road; five acres of the Muzawattee Tea Co. were destroyed; a family of four were killed in an Anderson shelter at 58 Albyn Street; St James' Church, New Cross and Goldsmith's College had roof fires; Aspinall's paint manufacturers on Goodwood Road was set on fire; Grove Street and John Evelyn schools had roof fires, fires also burned at Convoys Wharf and Deptford Cattle Market. Also, the whole premises of the Ursuline Convent School, Greenwich was seriously damaged, its roof was burned off. More miserable headlines than would fit in a Sunday supplement.

The pattern of tragedies continued on April 15th when a mine hit 105-113 Malpas Road and claimed 12 lives, but four days later came at least a partial victory against the terror from the skies. At 12 Reginald Road, Mrs Lloyd, her six daughters and her son Tommy took shelter in their basement. With a crash, their battered house came down around them, the basement buried in brickwork. Miraculously, 12 year old Tommy not only managed to squeeze himself out, but his six sisters too... but not his mother.

Another year, but the same horrific story. January 20th 1943 saw several chapters of the old tale: *The Chichester* pub on Evelyn Street demolished by a direct hit, 9 killed; 5-7 Oscar Street, 11 killed; 25-31 Oareborough Rd (now Folkestone Gardens), 11 killed; 73 Etta Street, 2 killed; Deptford West Power Station, direct hit; St Norbert's Road, Brockley, machine-gunned. Outside the parish came an outrage that revolted the whole country on January 20th when Sandhurst Road Primary School Catford was blasted by a bomb which killed 38 children and 6 teachers. The pain still lingers.

Less seriously, Millwall Football Club was hit on March 18th, as it had been the previous May 10th. Four days later, on March 22nd, much greater damage was done when the U.S. War Department Supply Depot on Grove Street (probably in the Victualling Yard) was engulfed in flames which ate up 15 storehouses of ether, sulphuric acid, teleprinters, machinery and bedding, and Nissen huts and their contents. In Brockley 14 houses were set on fire on Wickham Road.

THE V1S

Light and heavy bombs, landmines, incendiary devices, machine-gunning - all had been used so far; but more was to come. In the closing months of the war came the deadly and unmanned rockets crammed with high explosive - the dreaded V1s and V2s. The 'v' stood for 'Vergeltung', 'retaliation' from a Nazi enemy now on the defensive and reeling from the decimation of its own cities by the bombers of Britain and the United States. The attack on Reginald Square on June 17th 1944 was the worst of the opening salvos of the V1 campaign. 22 lives were lost as Victorian terraced cottages collapsed, the whole High Street shuddered, and destruction was spread as far away the Broadway, Church Street and Deptford Bridge. The area has only recently been redeveloped.

A month later, in the early morning of July 8th, a military target was hit. On Deptford's riverside 13 U.S. officers and ratings were killed and 11 injured at the U.S. Navy Amphibious Maintenance Base in Prince Street when a V1 devastated three linked-up 1,500 ton tank-landing craft. Several firemen suffered ammonia burns in the inferno that followed there and at the nearby Palmers cold storage plant. Three days later the Stowage Wharf power station suffered a direct hit. 11 were killed and 9 injured when dockside plant and a jetty were decimated along with the fireboat *John*. To make things worse the quayside took a second blast one week later, claiming two lives and numerous vehicles, and a further two hits on July 21st, causing 3 deaths and 30 injuries.

In the same area the Victoria Victualling Yard, still desolate after its Great Fire, took the full blast of a V1 on August 16th; 7 people were killed and 74 injured. Some weeks earlier June 23rd saw 21 separate rocket attacks including one on Drakefell Road, Brockley that left 29 injured. Two days later yet another V1 caused 2 deaths and 20 injuries when it demolished flats at Finch House on Bronze Street. In fact, Lewis Blake maintains that not a single residential, public, or works building was left undamaged in Deptford and New Cross at the end of August 1944, a month that saw 97 missiles fall on one single day, August 3rd, most of them before 7am.

London was devastated and fearful. Parishioners of the Assumption would have been particularly affected by these and other bombings, as yet unmentioned: in June, Gosterwood Street (25th, 9 killed); in July, Evelyn Street (1st), Breakspears Rd (6th, 9 killed) Arklow Road (12th), Hoopwick Street (13th), New Cross Gate Station (21st), Brookmill Rd (22nd), Watson Street/Baildon Road (24th), Gilbert House, Deptford Green and Cranfield Road (27th); in August, Achilles Street (1st, 5 killed), Troutbeck Road (2nd, 4 killed), Millmark Grove (6th, 3 killed), Bush Road (12th), and Endwell Road (16th, second incident, 8 killed).

THE V2S

The V1s were terrifying enough, but the V2s were even worse. They had a range of up to 220 miles, and a speed up to 3,600 mph, with a flight time of 5 minutes to London from the French or Dutch coast. Increased range, speed, explosive and devastation was the new enemy. The Victorian terraces of Brockley were first to experience the horror of the V2 on November 1st 1944. The corner of Shardeloes Road and St Donatt's Road was lit by a brilliant flash, a blast, a roar, a fountain of debris. A dozen three-up, one-down dwellings sagged and tumbled into a mountain of debris. Rescue help came from as far away as Croydon and Wimbledon, great work was done, but eventually the death toll reached 35 with 155 injured.

NEW CROSS: NO GREATER V2 HORROR

On November 25th 1944 in New Cross Road came the most appalling episode in all the V2 campaign. A Saturday afternoon of pre-Christmas shopping was cursed by the explosion of a missile behind Woolworths at the junction with Goodwood Road. In a shower of dust and smoke the store collapsed on hundreds of unsuspecting shoppers, its victims aged from 4 weeks to seventy years old. The carnage stretched from the old Town Hall to New Cross Gate station as the Co-op next door collapsed, and the London to Dover road lay strewn with bodies flung feet and yards by the force of the blast. Further deaths were sustained in an overturned army lorry, a double-decker bus sent spinning like a top, and a car coming over the brow of the bridge outside New Cross Gate station. Four clerks died at their desks in an office on the corner of St James' Street opposite, and a dozen parked cars and vans burst into flame. In the grisly aftermath 21 rescue squads worked for 3 days and nights to save the injured and recover the dead and dying. The final toll came to 168 dead and 123 seriously injured. An area which had known the excesses of the Blitz had now been hit by the worst single blast of the war, no future V2 blast exceeded its horrific effect.

CONTINUING CARNAGE

The vicious onslaught continued in the early hours of January 6th on Kitto Road and Waller Road where 10 houses and a church were demolished; the number of deaths was unclear because of reporting restrictions, 62 people were injured. Three days later, in snowy sub-zero temperatures, behind the Church of the Assumption a row of terraced houses in Adolphus Street was felled by a bomb, causing burning house-coal to set fire to the debris. 20 people were killed and 103 injured, 47 of those seriously. The dead arms, asking where he should put it.

March began with the quayside of the Royal Victoria Victualling Yard being hit on the 3rd, causing damage to a U.S. army depot. 10 were injured as red-hot missile fragments started fires. Four days later damage was very much wider when the second worst V2 disaster in south-east London hit an area less than a mile distant from what had been Woolworths. A rocket fell at 3.20am between two blocks of flats known as Folkestone Gardens, precisely 100 feet east of Trundleys Rd and 260 feet north of

Sandford Street. Both blocks were destroyed, along with a row of houses on Trundleys Road. Emergency helpers from the Bermondsey Light Rescue rushed to be of help, looking for survivors in the rubble:

"We heard a child whimpering underneath a collapsed house... The supervisor gave orders that no one was to pull out any long timbers, no one was to get on top of the debris and digging was only to be done with bare hands... The baby kept quiet for a while, and the supervisor said, 'Cry, you little bugger, so we can find you'... A voice said, 'Mind my face'. It was the child's father, completely wedged, couldn't move at all..."

Eventually a long-awaited whimper was heard and father and child were saved. Other families were not so lucky: 6 Colwells, 5 Hoares, and 4 Chattendens were killed in their beds. In all 52 died, and 134 were injured.

Just four days after Trundleys Road 8 houses were demolished by another V2 in Wickham Road, Brockley. 500 houses and 60 shops were damaged as far away as Brockley Cross, 9 were killed, including 2 year old Jill Lenton, 59 were seriously injured. On March 17th another bomb landed in the mud of Deptford Creek sinking the coal barge *Cosmic*, and damaging the wharf and cranes, 12 were injured.

PEACE AT LAST

The last incident of the war came on March 27th 1945 in Orpington, making a total of 157 incidents in south-east London. Lewis Blake points out that the final death toll came to 737, almost a third of the national total. Statistically, deaths and injuries as a result of V2 attacks were twice as frequent in built-up south-east London than in the rest of the country. May the dead rest in peace, and may the living cherish it.

Industry and the Parish

In the Light of the Trinity

What connection does Deptford have with the Holy and Most Blessed Trinity? Two particular connections come to mind: The Trinity Estate off Grove Street, and the *Trinity Light* parish newsletter, up to 2000 copies of which were distributed weekly from 1957 to 1969.

THE TRINITY GUILD

Both the Trinity Estate and the Parish newsletter were inspired by an event over 450 years ago. A Guild for river pilots and seamen, a type of early trades union, was founded in Deptford in 1514 when Henry VIII was still loyal to the Pope. This same Guild was dedicated to the honour of the Holy Trinity and St Clement. The motto of the Guild was 'Trinitas in Unitate', recalling Christian faith in the three divine persons in one God.

Why Deptford? Largely because of the presence in Deptford Strand of the College of Sea and River Pilots that was a foundation of Deptford's great ship-building

tradition. The Guild had responsibility for ensuring safe passage for the ships and boats using the winding river Thames, to this end 'Trinity lights' were set burning on the riverside to guide the traffic. Eventually the Guild moved out of Deptford to the City and devoted itself to providing lighthouses for the more dangerous parts of the British coast.

THE FEAST OF THE TRINITY

The Trinity House Corporation, as it came to be known, ran two local almshouses, at Stowage next door to St Nicholas' Church and on Church Street close to St Paul's. Its feastday was Trinity Monday, this being the day when the annual choice of Master, Wardens, Assistants and Brethren was made. Up to 1852 local people enjoyed the spectacle of a big occasion as the various dignitaries came down river from Tower Hill in barges to Deptford Green, heading then for their meeting at Trinity Hall on Deptford Strand. The new officials would each drink from a single 'Loving Cup' and then proceed back to St Nicholas' church for a service, returning to London for a festive meal. At the end of the meal an Italian grace dating from 1310 was always said:

"Alla Trinita beata

Da noi sempre adorata

Trinita gloriosa

Unita meravigliosa

Tu sei manna superna

E tutta desiderata. Amen. Amen"

(“To the Blessed Trinity, by us always adored, the Glorious Trinity; Wonderful Unity, you are heavenly manna and wholly desired. Amen. Amen.”)

THE TRINITY IN OUR TIMES

After the 1939-45 war the terraced housing on the corner of Evelyn Street and Grove Street came to the end of its life. It was replaced by the Trinity Estate, a name which recalls the Guild of the Holy Trinity and St Clement. This association was doubtless in the mind of those who supported the proposal that a new Parish newsletter be called *The Trinity Light* in the 1950s. Fr Desmond Trant-McCarthy, the force behind the newsletter, was delighted that the Parish should remember this historical link. As he saw it: "Our little magazine invokes the light of the Trinity to guide our souls through the dangerous waters of this earthly life. The ship (the Church) under the guidance of its safe earthly pilot (the Pope) finds its course to safety by the rays of this heavenly light".

St Joseph's Amateur Boxing Club

In May 1959 St Joseph's Amateur Boxing Club was founded through the enthusiasm of two local boxing fans, Jack Pearson and his nephew George Tucker, and the organizational talents of parishioners Con Egan and Billy Moriarty (son of the local piper of that name), and with the backing of Fr Michael Frost.

Encouragement for the club drew together many strands of local life: St Joseph's School, which made its premises available for training; the Deptford Street Traders Association, represented by ex-boxer Charlie Bridgeman, Harry Crockford, Bill Gallagher and John Terry; and numerous local publican sponsors, especially Mrs Kit Layzell of the *John Evelyn*. The Street Traders Association, co-founded by Fr Frost, was of particular assistance in raising the funds necessary for equipment and kit such as the first aid kit, punch bags, ropes, weighing-scales, and a clock-bell.

Boxing is a dangerous sport. For this reason expert medical advice was welcome from Dr Conway opposite the parish church. All potential boxers had to have a medical examination and a doctor had to be available during bouts. Tom Davis, still of this parish, tended to the boxers' general welfare.

Over the following years the club flourished under the secretaryship of George Gittings, and the dedication of committee members such as Harry Hadden and Steve Shell. Young boxers such as Vic Chandler and John Carroll came through the ranks and eventually the club moved to larger premises on Evelyn Street. The name, however, remains the same to this day: St Joseph's Amateur Boxing Club.

Making and Fixing This Century Industry and the Parish

Mr and Mrs Walter (Wally) and Mary (Queenie) Zillwood have this year celebrated their 65th Wedding Anniversary. All those years and long before they have lived in Deptford, so they remember when Deptford was famous for the three "P"s, Poverty, Pubs, and Pawnbrokers. That's not the whole story though, they remember the local industries which gave work to the population, particularly the big local employers: the Royal Victoria Victualling Yard (1742-1961), and the Foreign Cattle Market (1871-1913).

There were other employers too, other trades and activities now consigned to history. Wally and Mary remember the following firms which drew on an older tradition of casting tin and brass in local foundries:

* Molins light engineering firm, based at the northern end of Trundleys Road. This firm was famous at the turn of the century for its revolutionary tobacco-packing (cigarette-making) machines.

* Deptford Power Station, the final tower of which was demolished in 1991.

* Frederick Braby and Co. were barge builders, zinc roofers, and manufacturers of galvanised iron water cisterns and suchlike. This big local employer, based at the wharf near Black Horse Bridge, was noted for the educational and social care of its employees.

* Lloyd's, Francis' and Scotts', were also 'tin bashers' and galvanisers. These were processes used in the production of tin drums and the cans used for the storage of household provisions, vital objects in the days before plastic.

* Stone's Brass, Copper, and Iron works began in 1842 in the arches near Deptford Railway Station and moved on to Childers Road. It held patents for pumps and fire engines supplied to the Navy, the Royal Mail, and to various overseas governments.

OTHER INDUSTRIES ALSO FLOURISHED:

* Carroll's Potteries on Deptford Church Street, and was famous for its chimney stacks, drains, flowerpots and suchlike until after 1945. When it was based in Copperas Lane in the 1700s it was famous for Deptford Ware tableware.

* The Sackmakers works was also on Church Street.

* Soapery (soap makers) on Frankham Street, formerly a pin factory.

* The Tannery, off Trundley's Road.

* Sawmills cut wood under the railway arches near Payne Street.

* Peek Freans, based in Bermondsey, was a firm which employed many Deptford people, particularly women, in its biscuit production.

* Crumbs of comfort were also to be found at the nearby 'Den', the Millwall Football Ground, a local employer since October 20th 1910 when it moved from the Isle of Dogs. The club is soon to move to Senegal Fields, a short distance north.

Without doubt, local firms appealed to a range of different tastes:

* Seagers by Deptford Bridge was a gin-packing plant, gin having first been distilled there by Holland's around 1700. Nearby Norfolk's Deptford Brewery had closed in 1905.

* The Mazawattee Tea Company was based off Cold Blow Lane from the end of the 1800s. Teas and coffees from all over the British Empire were blended, weighed and packed here, likewise chocolate and other confectionery.

* Eno's Fruit Salts, the famous 'tummy-settler', began in Pomeroy Street, New Cross in 1878 and provided work making the salts until 1940.

During the two World Wars unemployment was put to one side as the army, munitions, and 'war effort' provided jobs for all. The 179th Deptford Gun Brigade based at John Penn's works at Blackheath Road and the 174th Deptford Gun Brigade on Evelyn Street were part of the army in the First World War. A soldier of the Second World War gives this account of his working life: teenage assistant in the Victualling Yard, candle-wax worker, munitions worker at Woolwich Arsenal, pawnbroker's assistant, stevadore at Surrey Docks for 13 years unloading sugar, cheese, flour and wood, soldier in North Africa and Europe (injured), messenger and commissionaire in the City until retirement.

Since 1945 local industry has been in decline. Bombing and the relocation of offices and industries outside of London have hit Deptford hard. Wally and Queenie three 'P's.

The Cradle of Steam Navigation

What right does Deptford have to consider itself to have been the cradle of steam navigation? The first experimental boat was started on the Clyde, but Dudman's Dock, near the ancient Red House, was the place where the *Enterprise* was built, it being the first steam vessel to travel from England to India. More to the point, a steam-boat company was formed in Deptford shortly after the *Comet* ran on the Clyde.

That company was lead by Thomas Brockelbank of Westcombe Park, who built a small steam vessel at Deptford in 1822 when he persuaded a number of investors to join him in founding the General Steam Navigation Company, probably the oldest steamship company in the world. The steamships *Harlequin* and *Columbine* were built on the banks of Deptford Creek as part of that company's fleet.

Brockelbank's company based itself on the spot where the store rooms, rigging sheds, mast sheds, and sail-lofts of the East India Company were situated. The street where they were situated was originally called 'Storage' and is now known as Stowage.

Deptford – Water Source for the County of Kent

One of Deptford's earliest claims to fame was a waterworks begun in 1701 by the Ravensbourne Water Company on what is now Brookmills Park. The company drew drinking water from a river which took its source from Caesar's Well (or Raven's Well) at Keston. A Royal Charter was granted to it in 1782 allowing William Yarnold and Robert Watson the sole right to take water from the River Ravensbourne and to deliver it by pipe to the inhabitants of the Royal Manors of Sayes Court and East Greenwich for a period of 500 years.

To this end, a water mill was built with by the engineer Smeaton who built the first Eddystone lighthouse; one wheel was for raising water, the other for grinding corn. In 1809 the Ravensbourne Water Works became part of the Kent Water Works. In 1884 Nathan Dews described this water as unequalled in purity within the metropolis of London. At that time steam pumps supplied 9 to 11 million gallons of water every day.

In Bob Gilbert's *Green London Way* the author points out a grey-brick storehouse from the last century which still stands in what is now Brookmills Park. Next to it the water company sank a well 272 feet deep to reach the artesian water basin under London. Water trapped below was forced up to the surface by the weight of the rock above it. Artesian wells were the source of London drinking water for many years. It was only when too much water was being withdrawn that the government turned to reservoir building. The lake in Brookmills Park is the last remnant of the reservoir that once covered the site.

In this century the water company has dwindled to nothing and the area has become a beautiful park of azaleas, rhododendrons, blue-bells and forget-me-nots and a rose pergola. The process began in 1880 with a recreation ground around what was the Emmanuel Church; the park grew in stages until it reached its present size in 1951.

On the south end of Brookmills Park today an embankment from the 1888

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On the south end of Brookmills Park today an embankment from the 1888

Greenwich Park branch railway line can be seen. This unsuccessful line became part of a tramway by 1917. On the other side of the River Ravensbourne lies Brookmills Nature Reserve and Silk Mills Path. Like the waterworks and the short-lived railway the silk mills are long since gone.

The East India Company: Beginings in Deptford

The East India Company, given its charter by Queen Elizabeth I on December 31st 1600, and based itself in Deptford, Woolwich, Blackwall, and finally Leadenhall Street. This, the most famous and most wealthy trading company in the history of Britain, was founded at a time when journeys of discovery, inspired by the prospect of quick profits, were being made to Africa, Muscovy (Russia), the Levant (the Middle East), Hudson Bay (Canada) and elsewhere. The Muscovy Company, for example, was founded by Chancellor and Willoughby who set off from Deptford in 1553 looking for a north-eastern route to India and ended up in Moscow! These companies were rewarded for their discoveries by being given the sole right to trade with the market they opened up. Their trade was the basis for the growth and consolidation of the British colonies, the British Empire, and the present Commonwealth.

The East India Company was encouraged by the British Crown to challenge Dutch and Portuguese control over trade with the Indian sub-continent. It began by purchasing and fitting out four ships in Deptford, the *Malice Scourge* (600 tons, afterwards known as *Dragon*), the *Hector* (300 tons), the *Ascension* (260 tons), the *Susan* (240 tons), and a pinnace called the *Guest* (100 tons). Command of the expedition was given to Admiral James Lancaster, who sailed from Deptford on the February 13th 1601 for the east. The expedition raised a profit of 150%, some of which was invested in a piece of ground adjacent to the Royal Dockyard near to the mouth of the Ravensbourne river at Deptford Creek. Here the adventurers had a dockyard and store-houses.

The increase in wealth based such commercial exploitation of the overseas world lead to an increase in the importance of Deptford, as seen in the development of building and the increase in population of the town. The launching of a ship was a high profile event equal in glamour to a Hollywood film premiere. Royalty, state dignitaries, sometimes even the monarch, would gather to attend the naming of a ship which would carry out to seas the hopes, and risks, of both rich and poor from Deptford and beyond..

After a serious fire the East India Company stopped building its own ships, ships were then built for them in private dockyards throughout the 18th century; amongst them were Deptford's Bronsden's Dock, West's Dockyard, Well's dockyard, and Bronsden's and Well's Yard. Ships built in Deptford returned home with all manner of rich and exotic merchandise. Amongst the company's imports from afar came the occasional surprise, such as this one:

"A.D. 1732, June 11th. Yesterday 7-night, a Tyger at Deptford, on board the *Cadogan*, from the East Indies, broke his chain, which obliged most of the Sailors on Board to get out of his Way, the Boys on Shoar that used to feed him. He jump'd from Ship to Ship and cleared all before him, till a Sawyer belonging to the King's Yard, knocked him down with a Handspike and killed him on the spot" (*Showell's Collections*).

"The High Street That We Used to Know"



Deptford High Street 1910

With the help of the 1912 Post Office Directory and of Wally and Queenie Zillwood, who have both lived in the area for over 80 years, one can recreate the spirit of Deptford High Street between 1914 and 1945.

From today's standpoint one of the most unusual sights in the High Street of old must have been that of the Wellbeloved herd. Wellbeloved was a butcher's firm with a shop in the High Street and another still to be seen at the foot of Tanner's Hill, where they are also described as 'butchers and graziers'. They used this description because they grazed their stock near Catford and every Thursday herded a bullock, some sheep, and a couple of pigs up to the High Street. The next day the animals were hanging up as fresh meat, steaks at 6d a pound.

The High Street today is famous for its market and its small shops. In the days before supermarkets Deptford drew on greater numbers of customers and there were many more medium-sized stores including Bland's and Philip's, the Co-Op, David Greig's, Home and Colonial, Maypole's Dairy (two shops), John Brown's, Marks and Spencer's, Woolworth's. The best-known local name was Peppercorn's, the owner of an enormous department store on the Broadway from 1822-1916, and another outlet, an ironmonger's, on the High Street from the 1890s.

The range of clothes shops was also extensive: Banks and Bryans, Birchwood's (hats), County Tailoring, Crook's, Draper Brothers, Edward's, Jones Pugh's, Judd's, Lawrence and Bentley's, Lazarus', Levy Henry's, Munro's, Owen's, Oxenburgher's, Reid's, Samuel's, Shapiri, Simmons', and Wright's, amongst others. In addition there were nine shoe and boot shops.

Wellbeloved's was not the only butchers on the High Street. Others were Bell's, Couture's, Creed's, Diggen's, Howse's, Hunt's, the Premier Meat Company, Preston's,

Reed's, Sewell's, Wolsey's, and Pfisterer's. The last was a German, a nationality which specialized in bakery. Four German bakers are listed in the High Street in 1914, John Gobel, John Hahn, Robert Menzler and Andreas Rehm. According to Wally Zillwood their bread was good but bad political relations with Germany led to their leaving the area. Tasty food was also to be found at Goddard's and Manze's, the pie-makers who are still going strong. Wally also remembers a cafe opposite the church owned by an ex-boxer, it had a strong football team named Invicta, the Latin for 'unbeaten'.

How many of the footballers also visited the Deptford arena? Just off Giffin Street, between the wars this venue featured all-in wrestling, boxing between locals and outsiders, and a boxing booth - a contestant could win money for lasting 3 rounds against the house champion. Nearby, close to the current housing office, were a collection of small fairs, side shows, roundabouts, swings, and a tombola - winning tickets gave credit at the local shops.

Diversion could also be found at the Electric Palace cinema, the local 'bughatch' or 'flea pit', and many other local theatres including the New Cross Empire Variety Theatre on the corner of Watson Road (1899-1954, demolished 4 years later), and the Broadway Theatre (founded 1897, a cinema from 1916, closed in 1963). Attractions could also be found at the Albany Institute (founded in 1898) on Creek Road, which was named after a duchess who was Edward VII's sister-in-law, also there was a dog track at New Cross which later featured motorbike racing. Simple pleasures were much cheaper, shove-ha'penny, cards and ludo, and walks in Deptford or Greenwich Park.

In addition to the Church of the Assumption, other churches were also found on the High Street, the Congregational Church at number 120 and the Wesleyan Mission Chapel at number 121. Here the prosperous thanked God for their good fortune and the poor sought refuge from the horrors of their poverty. The market had closed only hours before at 1am on Sunday morning, Deptford must have been yawning as it made its way to church.

Trends in Local Public Housing

Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner's study of the buildings of London gives a useful overview of how and why our public housing, largely council housing, has developed in the way that it has. Walking around Deptford one can see the whole story of housing this century.

BEGINNINGS

Long before this century, in the 1720s, Deptford lead the field with Thomas Lucas' Union Street, later renamed Albury Street, which still contains some of the earliest terraced housing outside central London. A century later Florence Road gave a fine display of mid-19th century terracing on both sides of the road. Nevertheless, along-

side these developments, and dwarfing them by far, was a great huddle of poorly built, cheap and cramped housing for the masses of people flooding the area. So it was that London's central government, the London County Council and later the Greater London Council, began to intervene directly to regulate what could be built and where. A sign of this new intention could be seen in the widening of Creek Road in 1896, an action which meant the end for a great swathe of condemned buildings, and a reduction in numbers for this parish.

FLATS AND COTTAGES

At the turn of the century, London's housing policy was directed towards two aims: to shift population out of the centre of the city and towards new cottage estates on the outskirts, and to remove and replace the inhabitable slums in the inner city with modern flats. In Deptford, traces of the latter policy can be seen in Brookmill Road, formerly the notoriously crumbling Mill Lane. In 1902-03 a Lodging House for 800 men was built, later to be known as Carrington House until it was closed in the late 1980s. A row of pre-1914 London County Council cottages stand beside it as an advertisement, perhaps, for life in the suburbs. The development of 'cottage suburbia' first affected Deptford after the 1914-18 war, with the development of the Bellingham and Downham estates, developments which drew vast numbers of incomers from Bermondsey and Deptford. The trend continued, in line with housing policy, up until after the 1939-45 war.

POSTWAR PANIC AND PEPYS

After the Second World War, the first priority of planners for a new London was to replace buildings which were unhygienic, overcrowded, or war-damaged. Secondly, they intended to redesign whole districts, separating industry from housing, and providing facilities such as shops, parks, and schools close by. One such development was the demolition of the criss-crossing sidestreets beyond New Cross Station to produce Fordham Park. The same philosophy took down the pre-war blocks on what is now Folkestone Gardens Park. Developments in the design of new housing included greater access to lifts, staircases instead of access via balconies, and maisonettes as an alternative to flats. Nevertheless, architects still had to work under pressure to meet a target of 200 persons per acre.

The Pepys Estate of 1963-69 was in some ways the climax of the planners' dreams of the 1950s and 60s, a blend of Modern Movement with the conversion of 18th century Naval warehouses and offices. Three forceful 26 storey towers stand close to the Thames overshadowing a forest of relatively lower-level neighbours. Pepys is characterized by the deliberate toughness of its exposed concrete, chunky architectural style, and also by its pioneering use of internal corridor access on alternate floors, the lower blocks using the 'scissor' style of building to make better use of internal space. Sadly, what pleased the architects has not always suited the inhabitants. Despite access to open space around the blocks, people feel dwarfed by the scale of the project; the density of population is too high, and the internal corridors are thought to be a mistake.

MODERN MOVEMENT - BACK TO BASICS

The 1960s were a time when buildings for public housing were made in factories instead of craftsmen's workshops, so the layout was rigid rather than inventive, fine detail was impractical, and big was 'best' and most economical. All this coincided with the reorganization of the Greater London Council in 1965, leading to the bigger boroughs organizing their own public housing. Ambitious building programmes experimented with the number of people that could be fitted into a particular area, having for the first time to include large-scale car-parking in their plans. One result was the 'austere identical towers' of the Milton Court Estate in the late 1960s, factory-built skyscrapers which were later humanized by the Woodpecker Road pedestrianization of 1977-82. However, by the end of the 1970s towers were totally discredited. The collapse of Ronan Point in 1968 brought about the final thumbs down from the architects, and a new way forward came into view.

The Modern Movement gave way to a revival of traditional forms and materials, brick walls and sloping roofs, abandonment of population density levels and readoption of picturesque cottage-looking layouts, for example the Peabody Vangard Estate of the 1970s. This initiative was coupled with a revitalization of decaying areas by conversion and the in-filling of empty lots, for example, Albury Street. Also, there was a widespread desire to make council housing look the same as private housing, an aspiration which has born fruit in the 1980s-90s. The truth of this can be seen by comparing Lamerton Road and Albury Street, and comparing and contrasting 1980s/90s Enterprize Way and the nearby buildings in Deptford and Surrey Docks. The gap is being narrowed even more by an increasing number of housing associations and co-operatives.

What of the future? At the end of the 1970s the GLC put the best of its houses on the open market and handed the rest over to the the boroughs. In line with government policy, the 1980s saw much of that remaining stock being sold off. The result of these changes is that in contrast with the rest of Lewisham, and most other boroughs, Deptford still has a very large proportion of public housing stock, a resource which is routinely drawn upon to house those who have nowhere else to go. This has in turn produced a 'lodging house' mentality fuelled by a desire to move on, an attitude which destroys a sense of loyalty to the locality. To shelter the homeless is a worthy aspiration, but one worth sharing with other areas. Lewisham borough currently plans to gradually demolish the Milton Court tower blocks and replace them with terraced houses. Fewer people will be housed, but more will have found a place to call home.



Buildings change but building the community goes on. This picture shows a well-known group of post-war "builders": Fr Desmond Trant-McCarthy, Miss Peg Herlihy (teacher) Fr Michael Frost. Mrs Lambert Williams and Fr Don Quinlivan.

Postscript

We can remember a dead past by moaning that "things aren't what they used to be", and reflect sadly that all the best people have gone. Or we can remember and celebrate a living past, as this book does. This history of our Parish helps us to understand the present by telling us the story of how we got to where we are now. This in turn should help us to plan for the future. The priests, sisters and people who have lived and served here have, helped by the grace of God, given us the Parish we now have.

The Church lives in the world, and a Parish lives in a local community. It is appropriate, therefore, that Father John also tells us more about the history of Deptford in general alongside the story of this Parish. No mission could be effective if it isolated itself from the local community. Canon James Mahoney knew that when he served as a local councillor. Father Michael Frost knew that when he defended the traders on Deptford High Street.

Our Parish continues. The community of faith begun here in 1842 is very much alive in 1992 and is planning for the future. For good or ill, we are at this moment providing material for a future history of the Parish. May God who began this good work in 1842 continue to inspire and guide it and bring it to completion in his eternal Kingdom.

Rev. James McGillicuddy
Parish Priest

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO SOURCES

I gratefully acknowledge the use of information given by the following sources, particularly Nathan Dews' *The History of Deptford*.

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Photographic acknowledgements are due to Lewisham Local History Centre (pp. 32,41 and 50). Those remaining are from the Parish Archives.

Second Edition, June 1993

Additions and Alterations

As the first edition of this Parish History was sold out three months after publication, the opportunity presents itself to add some additional historical information which has since come to light.

PARISH CLERGY:

Bishop James Bellord and Fr. Thomas Smith

At the Sesquicentennial Celebration on November 24th 1992, marking 150 years of the Parish, Fr. Jim McGillicuddy referred to the connection between Bishop Michael

Bowen's birthplace, Gibraltar and a previous assistant priest of Deptford, Fr. James Bellord. Little was known about Fr. Bellord at that time other than he was Bishop of Milevia in Gibraltar. Two days after the celebration Bishop Michael sent more information, culled from Fr. Charles Caruana's book *The Rock under a Cloud* and supplemented by archivist Fr. Michael Clifton's excerpts from the magazine *The Shield*.

James Bellord was born in London in 1845, of a family that produced four nuns. Three years after ordination in 1845, frustrated by his inability to take part in missionary work, he became a Military Chaplain. In the next twenty-five years he saw service in Bermuda, Nova Scotia (where he founded a convent and high school), and Africa, during the Boer and Zulu wars and the Egyptian campaign. Fr. Bellord was also noted for his authorship, producing works concerning the spiritual life and the teachings of the church. After the unexpected death of Bishop Gonzalo Canilla he was appointed to succeed him as Vicar-Apostolic of Gibraltar on 1st May 1899. He became Bishop of Milevia with responsibility for Gibraltar. 'The Rock' did not become a diocese in its own right until a later date.

The key figure in Bishop Bellord's ministry in Gibraltar was Magdalena Lugaro. 'Suor (Sister) Magdalena', as she called herself, had founded a religious order to cater for the needs of young school children and to clean St Joseph's Church. Bishop Canilla had given her permission for helpers to wear the religious habit of the Franciscan Third Order but she alone wore it.

Bishop Bellord found himself in a bizarre situation, Suor Magdalena was a self-declared one member religious congregation! He questioned whether she really was a religious sister. St Joseph's congregation, however, praised her good works and asked him to allow her to pass her few remaining years as she was. The Bishop, rock-like, would not be moved: "Either she goes or I leave Gibraltar". So he did. Less than two years after his appointment Bishop Bellord tendered his resignation... leaving a lesson for us all, perhaps. He died in 1905.

* * * * *

Fr. Thomas Smith was born in 1891 and brought up in Deptford. He was ordained priest in 1917 and served in Gillingham, Croydon (St Mary's), Plumstead, and Dockhead as an assistant, and at Battersea Park, South Norwood and Peckham Rye as Parish Priest. He was buried from this church in 1962, his brother Gerald being a well-known parishioner.

LITERATURE, MUSIC AND ART IN THE LOCALITY

The fame of Deptford's sea-going past make it a necessary component in many maritime novels. Two such examples would be the opening pages of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (a study of the discovery of Africa by European profiteers, published 1902), ad C.S. Forester's *Hornblower and Atropos* (derring-do in the days of Nelson, published 1937). A more mundane suburban atmosphere is evoked by mention of *Bricksham* in the novels of a contemporary local Catholic author. David Lodge uses the word to describe the flavour of Brockley and New Cross (Hatcham) in his youth.

Music has also flourished in Deptford. The well known tenor Heddle Nash (1894-1961) was born here, and in more recent times groups such as Dire Straits, the

Flying Pickets and Squeeze have called Deptford home. Little wonder that Vaughan Williams Close and Elgar Close are local place names, standing as they do opposite the Lewisham Academy of Music.

And art? Consider the dramatic art taught at the Rosa Bruford school of acting on the corner of Creek Road and Deptford Church Street, and practising in the Albany and the Birds Nest pub-theatre. Consider the community of artists resident in the mural-bespeckled Crossfield Estate. Consider Hales Gallery in the High Street, the studios long-established in Childeric Road or those presently occupying part of Carrington House. The vitality and colour of the area is evidently inspirational.

LOCAL CATHOLICS 300 YEARS AGO

Since publication of the 1st Edition of the Parish History, Mr Michael Egan has supplied the names of Catholics known to be resident in the area of Deptford many years ago. Surnames of some of those resident between 1606 and 1715 are as follows: Brown, Harris, Hawkins, Leech, Lewys, Marshall, Morris, Payer, Payre, Shepheard, Thayre, Trevinion, Williams and Whitbeard. More names come to us from the records of the Justices of the Peace in the area around Blackheath (the Blackheath Hundred) in 1743. The surnames of those interrogated about their Catholic faith are as follows: Alexander, Bents, Blewit, Boylan, Doyle, Ferrall, Harford, Hayes, Holt, Jordon, Lockyer, McDaniel Matthew, Mooney, Murphy, Punch, Savage, Shields, Sherlock, Sherewood, Wheeland, White and Willson.

PARISH HOUSEKEEPERS OF RECENT TIMES

Word has come to us of the links between Mrs Ada Riley (formerly Bennett), now of Orpington, and the parish. Ada's father, Mr Thomas Bennett was appointed school caretaker shortly before the 1914-18 World War. He died soon after as a soldier, and was succeeded by Mr Peter Smith. As a girl, in the time of Canon Mahony, Ada helped to clean the church and presbytery, at that time - and under the previous Parish Priest - the housekeeper was a Miss Brown. Ada also remembers Canon Douch's housekeeper, Miss Liz Sheehan, who continued to care for him through his blindness and after he left Deptford. Ada's service to the parish, and that of her book-keeping husband Paddy, continued for thirty years, and is remembered to this day. Her modern-day equivalent is Mrs Sheila Gibson, who has cooked and cleaned at the presbytery in four successive decades.

CORRECTIONS

- * The figures at either side of the Cross in the painting of the Crucifixion in the Church apse are Mary and the apostle *John*, not 'the apostle God' as printed (p.6).
- * The designer of nearby St Paul's Church (Anglican) was Thomas Archer, not Nicholas Hawksmoor (p.10).
- * The date of ordination for Fr. James Malone was 1913, not 1890 (p.22).

Fr. John Kenny
June 1993

£3

(Deptford Church Restoration Fund)