

A wild ramble through SE5's murky past, featuring a dubious cast including rowdy fairgoers... proletarian artists... rioting chartists... squatters... feminist authors... mad folk... anti-fascists... and the occasional transexual trotskyst housing officer.

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RARE DOINGS AT CAMBERWELL



***radicals, subversion and social control:
a short tour through Camberwell's
underground history***

RARE DOINGS AT CAMBERWELL

This text is based on research done for a radical history walk around Camberwell, under the title "The Right To Live", held on Sunday 25th June 2006, as part of Camberwell Arts Week. The walk was researched, designed and mostly spoken by Melissa Bliss and Alex Hodson, though other locals contributed their own reminiscences. In April 2007 part of this material was reprised as a talk at the Camberwell squatted Centre in Warham Street. This text owes much to the researches and ideas of Melissa Bliss, but she was not a party to its publication, and can't be held responsible for this pamphlet's arbitrary layout or haphazard approach.

Look. This isn't the history of Camberwell; nor even the history of the events, personalities and movements it covers. It is, at best, a series of linked themes, exploring the more disorderly and politically radical underside of SE5. This present text has been rushed out prematurely; it's a start towards a larger work. It has serious omissions: we'd have liked to cover more social history, industrial development and those who worked in those industries; more on the different communities that have made their home here, and the conflicts they have experienced; more on madness and its containment, especially. A longer and more studied book is clearly called for. Any contributions, ideas, collaborations, corrections of glaring errors, towards that would be welcomed.

Also: we are not historians. We came to history as rebels and activists, fighting for a world where people's lives, personal relations and survival are organised for our needs not for anyone's profit. Our interest in history arises from a wider desire, to change the world collectively. The past, its links to the present and to a future we aspire to create, are not separate areas of study; the ideas and practice of rebellion against the authority of one class over another, and the methods of social control that class society develops to maintain itself, link our ancestors, our battles in our own lives, and visions of how we would live if we could freely choose. Some of us live in Camberwell, and have experienced some of this 'history' firsthand. Grammar, and more

importantly, objectivity, the holy grail of historians, have never guided our hand.

Camberwell versus death!

C. Lee,
past tense, camberwell, July 2008

TOWARDS AN UNDERGROUND HISTORY OF CAMBERWELL

If you believed Southwark Council's 'Facts about Camberwell' on its website, very little of interest has ever gone down here:

"• Historically, Camberwell is one of the most important developments in the borough. It is mentioned in the Domesday Book as being owned by Haimo, half brother of King William I

• St Giles Church still stands on the same site. It was rebuilt in stone in 1154 before burning down in 1841. The new church, finished in 1844, was designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott and contains stained glass by John Ruskin

• 1415 saw high drama in Camberwell, as the scene for the triumphant return of Henry V to London after the Battle of Agincourt. A year later it was the scene of a state visit by the Emperor of Germany

• 188 Camberwell Grove was the birthplace of statesman Joseph Chamberlain in 1836

• Standing on Camberwell Green today, it seems impossible to imagine that the Green was once a traditional village green in a small farming village"

In contrast to this sparse list, concentrating on the history of the great, royal visits etc, Camberwell has a deep and interesting past, full of working class struggles, radical and subversive personalities, and more than a few violent outbreaks of class war.

WELL OF THE CROOKED

Up until the 18th Century Camberwell was a rural village, based around St Giles Church Church, the Green, (scene of the annual Fair) and a spa and healing well, which was located up Camberwell Grove.

Some historians believe the healing well may have given the area its name, as they think Camberwell means 'well of the crooked or cripples'. This chimes in with the local church being named for St Giles, patron saint of lepers. People expelled from the City of London for having leprosy may have settled here for treatment.

However it is also possible that the 'Camber' refers to an old settlement of Britons, who in the days of the Saxon conquest of Southern Britain called themselves Cumbri (in modern Welsh Cymry). This might be linked to neighbouring Walworth, thought by some to be named by Saxons for the 'Welsh' (Britons) who lived there.

The old medieval parish of Camberwell St Giles included Peckham, Nunhead and much of Dulwich. The parish was controlled by the Vestry; when the parish was replaced as an administrative body by the Metropolitan Borough of Camberwell in 1900. In 1965 the Borough was amalgamated with the Metropolitan Borough of Southwark and the Metropolitan Borough of Bermondsey to create the London Borough of Southwark.

The popularity of the Spa gradually transformed the village into a place of middle class retreat, and farms were replaced by big houses up the hill...

The area became more suburban through the 19th century, as London expanded; speculative building firms bought up land and built large estates.

Later in the Century, the class of persons living in area 'went down' especially after "workman's tickets" on trains enabled workers to live further from their place of work. In common with many other areas of South London, large areas of Camberwell saw mass house building to accommodate newer working class residents. Many earlier middle class areas thus were transformed into working class neighbourhoods after 1860s/70s - for example around Southampton Way and St Lukes.

The following population figures give some sense of the massive 19th Century growth of the area, though they are for the whole parish and not merely Camberwell the village/suburb:

<i>Census for parish of Camberwell</i>	<i>Population</i>
1801	7,059
1841	39,868
1861	71,488
1891	235,344

In 90 years a few rural villages were swallowed up by the rapid expansion of the metropolis.

So who were these people who moved into the area, and where did they live?

In *Booth's Map of Descriptive Poverty*, from *Life and Labour of the People of London*, 1890, the relative social class of people living in various parts of the area was sketched out. You can get an interesting picture of what had become a suburb of London, and where people of different classes lived.

- South, up the hill, from De Crespigny Park, to the top of the hill at least, was upper class, and upper middle class, wealthy, almost exclusively.

- The middle classes lived all round Church St, the Green, especially in houses lining the main streets. Also middle class was Brunswick Park, the east end of where the Elmington Estate now is, Camberwell Grove, Grove Lane, Coldharbour Lane, along Peckham Road.

- The next class down, a mix of the '*fairly comfortable*' with others on '*ordinary earnings*', can be found behind Daneville Road, round Wyndham rd and Medlar St.

- Mixed areas of '*some comfortable, others poor*' lived behind the modern magistrates courts and off D'Eynsford Road, round the west part of the modern Elmington...

- The poor ('*18 to 21 shillings a week per family*') clustered to the north of Camberwell Green, round the Father Red Cap pub/Camberwell Road, and also to the north of Southampton Way, north of Commercial Road (now Commercial Way), north of the Elmington. "*A confusion of alleys and courts enclosed by Lomond Grove, Camberwell Green and Camberwell Road*" was described as holding the chronically poor in the 1880s (Dyos)

- Very poor areas ('*Casual, chronic want*') were found behind the Cock in Cock Yard (behind the modern Silver Buckle pub), round yards between the southern bus garage and Denmark Hill, and also in the Sultan Street area (known as Camberwell Mill or Freemans Mill), off Wyndham Road. Several streets here - Crown St, Wyndham road, Pitman Road, and Bethwin Street were said in the 1880s to be "*of very bad character*"... "*The only policemen venturing there were very foolish policemen.*"

- Interestingly though, there were no concentrated areas of the "*lowest class, vicious, semi-criminal*" as could be seen all over Southwark and Newington further north.

With some exceptions and accepting that this is a broad generalisation, it could probably still be said today that Camberwell New Road, Church Street and Peckham Road form a kind of border, and those who live to the south in the main are better off and maybe hang with a 'higher' social class than those who live to the north... Not entirely, and areas are more mixed now than in the past... But it has some validity.

Local industries

In the mid to late 19th century, the printing, small engineering, leather trades became widespread in the area, mainly in the north of Camberwell round Southampton Way, and the modern Burgess Park. The old canal that ran from Camberwell to the Thames through Surrey Docks stimulated industrial growth, especially along its banks.

'RARE DOINGS at CAMBERWELL'

Revelry, Disorder, Space and Social Control

From 1279 to 1855 Camberwell Fair was held, every August. It is first recorded in 1279. Originally the Fair was probably held in 'Gods Acre', the immediate grounds of St Giles Church, which used the event to raise funds... (interestingly in the 1990s a junk/boot fair revived in the same grounds - since deceased.)

The Fair most likely moved out of church grounds in 1444 (when the Archbishop of Canterbury banned fairs in church property) to Church Street, opposite the *Cock* Pub (which was by the corner of Denmark Hill); by 18th century it had moved to the Green itself.

Originally the event ran for three weeks, from the 9th of August to September 1st (the latter being feast of patron saint St Giles). By the 1800s the Fair, with its catchphrase; "*Rare doings at Camberwell*", was only 3 days long - the 19th, 20th, and 21 August. The village had become more middle class, farming had declined, and the Fair's traditional rural economic functions had eroded; the Fair became more a place of urban pleasures: illicit sex, debauchery, drink and food, and bizarre circus acts...

It teemed with stalls of food, stuff like oysters, pickled salmon, fried plaice, gingerbread, with 'pedelerie' (junk), toys; with exhibitions, weird and performing animals, bizarre deformities,

plays, merry go rounds, shies etc...hawkers, pickpockets, jugglers, performers, magicians... All in all a great sprawling rowdy bundle. "*All was dust heat smells and bother*".

People from all over South London flocked to the event, with carts, donkeys, old nags, offering rides, often the drivers singing songs or bantering with each other.

But the growing middle class of 18th-19th Century Camberwell hated this plebeian disruption.

"*For these three days the residents of Camberwell were compelled to witness disgusting and demoralising scenes which they were powerless to prevent*".

There were constant attempts to control and restrict the fair and people's enjoyment of it. Fairs at this time were a major source of moral outrage, asbo material of the day.

Although the 1840 'Kalendar of Amusements' said that "*the Camberwell Fair is one of the most amusing and orderly occurring near the Metropolis*", this may be not saying much as many fairs at this time were all out annual riots-cum-orgies.

It's worth noting that Peckham Fair ran for the next 3 days every year (22nd - 24th August), and was similarly troublesome.

Applications were made at Bow Street Magistrates Court in the early 19th century for "*12 officers to keep the peace at the Fairs of Camberwell and Peckham, at 5 shillings per day.*" The two fairs together were seen by the local authorities and well-to-do as



Camberwell Fair

one big 6 day nightmare.

There were certainly serious incidents in 1802 at the end of Peckham Fair; a "*numerous and desperate gang of pickpockets*" robbed & assaulted respectable folk en masse as they were leaving the Fair. The gentry and middle classes attending the Fairs were seen as fair game (pardon the pun)...

In response to the attempts at repression and control, an interesting letter from '*an Englishmen of the Old Type*' in the Morning Chronicle in 1806, attacked the magistrates'... it described one of Camberwell Magistrates as "*a most zealous and distinguished reformer of the vices of the poor; who is so conscientious he will even sneak into a little shop on a Sunday and purchase a penny-worth of pastry or fruit, in order to punish the vender, and thereby discourage Sabbath-breaking... To the profound legal knowledge of this pious man, the poor fair people were indebted for the enforcement of some obsolete law, by which all the noisy minstrelsy of the Fair... was struck dumb in a moment. Not a blind fiddler was even suffered to exert his dangerous influence...*"

In 1807 a Notice was pasted up: "*Notice is hereby given that no drinking, booths, unlawful exhibitions or music, will be permitted at Camberwell or Peckham Fairs. That the constables have strict orders to prevent all gaming, or seize and carry away all implements used or employed therein, and to apprehend all the offenders, and that no dancing or music will be permitted at public houses, which are required to be close shut at eleven o'clock at night.*

By order of the magistrates."

Apparently "*officers from union Hall Police Office and the Patrole from Bow St, attended... some trifling incidents occurred, but none of serious importance.*"

There were several concerted attempts during the early 19th Century to shut the Fair down. In 1823, a Camberwell Vestry meeting was held to see what authority there was, in the form of an old grant or charter, to hold the Fair, This backfired, as evidence was produced in a Petty Session case to support its right to be held. Another attempt was made in 1825; in 1827, the Vestry managed to ban Peckham Fair for good.

They had another try at Camberwell Fair in 1832: "*such institutions were Intended to be marts for trade and not sources of Dissipation and Riot*". The Fair was called a "*Universally admit-*

ted evil." Well, not universal - the poor loved it. It was a source of income for many of the poor and working classes, both legally, and through crime and the conning of fairgoers; there's no doubt that it also brightened up people's lives, an explosion of wild relief of the daily grind of poverty in a huge party.

By 1855, the Fair's days were numbered: a local Committee for the Abolition of Camberwell Fair was set up by leading residents, who pressurised the parish authorities into buying the Green, and closing down the fair, with the help of the police.

The Green, said before then to be a Waste, was bought from the Lord of the Manor, landscaped, turned into a proper park... the Fair was no more, to the glee of one middle class historian: the Green was "*encumbered for the last time with its horde of nomadic thieves, its coarse and lewd men and women and this concentrated essence of vice, folly and buffoonery was no longer allowed to contaminate the youth of the district and annoy the more staid and respectable residents.*"

The closing down of Camberwell Fair should be seen in the context of a widespread campaign in the early 19th Century, to impose social and moral control over the growing working classes. National government, local vestries and parish authorities, officials of most churches, and various bourgeois organisations such as the Constitutional Society and the Society for the Suppression of Vice, were broadly united in attempting to control and 'reform' the 'immoral' behaviour of the working classes, especially the poor, through encouraging/them forcing them into hard work, proper respect for authority and religion, and by attacking 'vice', disorder and immoral behaviour. This meant repression of 'vice' in the forms of pubs, prostitution, those who radically challenged religion or the political establishment.

Fairs, widely viewed as hotspots of immorality, disorder and in many cases satirical political plays and speeches, were a prime target. Not only this, but in an era of political upheaval and widespread radical agitation among the working class, any gathering of the poor was seen as dangerous. The open spaces where Fairs traditionally took place were also under attack, through the enclosure of commons, Greens and the increasing landscaping into parks, or development into housing. The physical alteration of space was seen as having a moral effect on the disorderly behaviour of the poor: proper ordered open space replacing 'waste' and common was believed to encourage respectability...

For local Vestries, the high cost of policing the Fairs and cleaning up afterwards were also a factor...

But the Green's tradition as a place of entertainment and hedonism has continued. It has long been a site of public meetings, rowdiness, rallies, protests, and parties.

Not only in terms of its continuing use by street drinkers, who, as in many other parks have gradually reclaimed open space in defiance of those who would keep them socially cleansed and invisible.

Festivals and parties have also taken place on the Green over the years.

For instance: in June 1998, during Camberwell Arts Week, a Summer Solstice party was held, featuring a three-quarter size model of Stonehenge, made of fibre-glass. Several hundred urban pagans reproduced their own Stonehenge Festival... during which a slightly inebriated reveller fell against one of the stones and, as they were all roped together) nearly dominoed the whole lot!

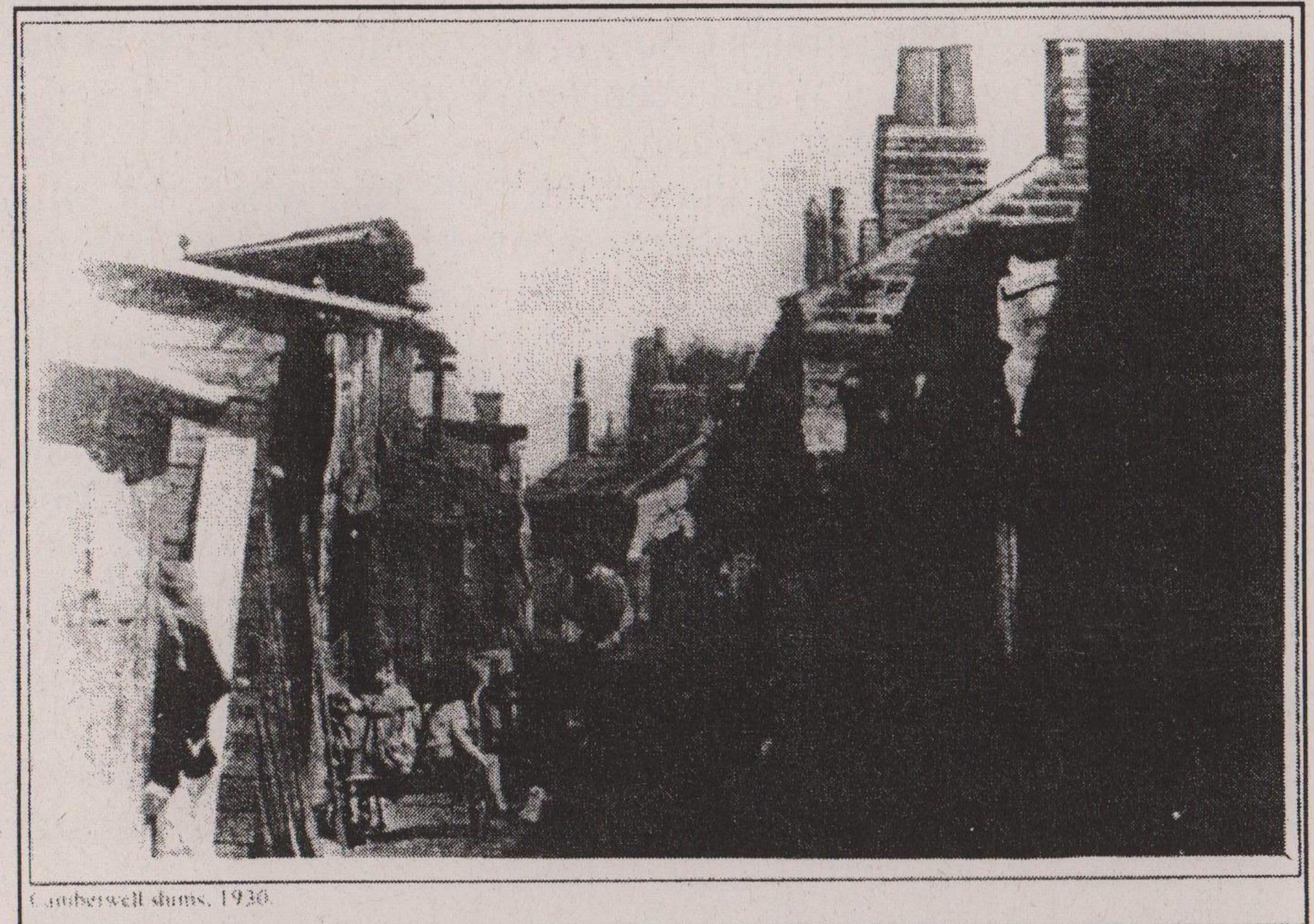
Most recently since 2006 'Bonkersfest' has annually celebrated madness and creativity, two of the main pillars of Camberwell life, there.

The Poor Are Always With Us

Tigers Yard and Joiners Arms Yard, behind the *Cock Inn* (ie behind the modern *Silver Buckle & the Joiners Arms*) were among the poorest places in Camberwell in the mid to late 19th century. The people who lived here existed in chronic poverty. Large numbers of families living in a few houses, often unemployed and overcrowded. (These yards were still described as one of the area's blackspots when demolished in 1930s. There had been much agitation by local Labour councilors to demolish the old overcrowded houses and rehouse the inhabitants, despite much opposition from the Tory controlled Borough Council.)

The bottom of the hill had always had some poor even when the area was rural; not all forelock-tugging law-abiding poor either. Some inhabitants who lived in cottages opposite the *Cock* (round about Kennedy's Sausages) were said to watch out for wealthy travelers dismounting from the coach, which stopped at the cor-

ner of Camberwell Green, and setting off walking to Dulwich. They would then follow them and lighten them of their possessions in some suitable dark spot.



Camberwell shims, 1930.

This re-distribution of wealth led to the building of the constables' Cage and Watchhouse, which stood on Denmark Hill, next to today's Joiners Arms, until the founding of the Metropolitan Police in 1829. This was replaced as the stronghold of local law and order by a Police Station the Northwest corner of the junction of the Green and Camberwell New Road, (now the bank) which was built in 1848, and demolished in 1898.

The Cage was succeeded by other centres of control and restraint. On the corner of Medlar Street and Camberwell New Road, Lambeth County Court used to stand, in the early 20th Century (with a Masonic hall and Sorting Office behind it, next to the railway).

Wyndham Road used to house the Southwark Diocesan Boys Shelter, in the late 19th/early 20th Century. This was an Approved Probation School for boys 16-19 put on probation in police court. The institution attempted to "*build them up morally mentally and spiritually*", by prayer, a tough physical training regime, and training in domestic skills so they could better themselves by becoming servants in hotels and the homes of the

wealthy etc. The usual mix of morality and brutality.

And later still, Camberwell Magistrates Court, opened in 1971 (on the site of houses demolished by a WW2 V2 rocket) is said to be the busiest Magistrates Court in the country. Outside of the usual, some occasions it has seen heavy use include: after the Brixton and other riots/rebellions of April and July 1981, after the 1985 Brixton riot, and during the Poll Tax, when not only were non-payers from Lambeth prosecuted there but anti-poll tax rioters from various shindigs in 1990 at Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton Prison etc were had up. Anti-poll tax activists generally supported non-payers here, 1991-93, including a (somewhat damp squib, by my memory) demonstration called against the first prosecutions for non-payment in Lambeth on February 14th 1991: *'St Valentine's Day... Massacre the Poll Tax!'* (More personally the author has known the cells there, more than once, one time for criminal damage after being interrupted painting anti-poll tax graffiti on a wall in Angell Town in Brixton... sadly before the said graffiti made grammatical sense!)

The Beat Goes On

I'm the Marquis of Camberwell Green

I'm the downiest dude ever seen

I'm a gusher, I'm a rusher

I'm the Marquis of Camberwell Green

(Verse from a music hall song)

Post Fair, venues for working class entertainment became more enclosed. Camberwell became well-known for music halls; many were in the back hall of pubs. Music Hall arose from the last of the old tavern 'free and easies', where people could get up and do turns, usually songs or comedy acts.

The People's Palace of Varieties, or Lovejoys, at the *Rosemary Branch*, Southampton Way, was held in "a long, shabby room adjoining the tavern, furnished with chairs and tables, and illuminated with flaming gas brackets. At one end a stage with footlights screened with blue painted glass. A Chairman sat in front of the stage facing the audience. He wore the most deplorable evening dress. Another gent sat at the piano on the stage. Everybody seemed to be drinking and talking while a man in shirt

sleeves was dashing about with a tray loaded with glasses of beer. Each turn was announced by the Chair. He rapped with his hammer both to attract attention and to assist applause. A tall gent sang a song about his wife, his trouble and strife."

The *Rosemary Branch* was demolished in 1971. The *Castle* on the Camberwell Road bears the name of an earlier pub that housed the *Bijou Palace of Varieties* or *Godfrey's Castle Music Hall* from 1875 to 1889.

The *Father Redcap* pub, on the north side of the Camberwell Green, originally held a music hall built in 1853. On 2nd December, 1867, the audience here could enjoy "*the great W J Collins, a banjoist from America, a Shakespearean sketch, Professor Davis in the renowned rope trick, and Mr Mucus Hellmore in his great delineation of Mephistopholes*"

(Later it was was a gay bar at least back to the 1970s til 1997, and is now the *Red Star*, a party venue, holding many gigs including benefits for various worthy causes.)

In 1896, the Dan Leno company opened the '*Oriental Palace of Varieties*', on Denmark Hill, which was soon replaced with a new theatre, with a capacity of 1,553, in 1899, named the "Camberwell Palace". Famous old timers who appeared here included Marie Lloyd, Harry Lauder, Nellie Wallace and Harry Tate. By 1912, the theatre was showing films as a part of the programme; it became an ABC cinema as "The Palace Cinema" in 1932. Later it reverted to a variety theatre in 1943, but closed on 28 April 1956 and was demolished. (The 1957 film *The Smallest Show on Earth*, the story of a family-run suburban cinema, was probably based on the Palace).

Nearby at the corner of Denmark Hill and Coldharbour Lane was the '*Metropole Theatre and Opera House*', opened in 1894, which held transfers of West End shows: "The theatre had a very ornate interior with private boxes, stalls, dress circle, balcony and gallery. Ladies who came in their fashionable hats were respectfully informed that hats and bonnets were not allowed in the stalls or first two rows of the dress circle."

No wonder Camberwell starred in a 1915 music hall song, *Chalk Farm to Camberwell Green* by Lionel Morrekton, about a young lady who went for a ride on the top of a bus with "a fellow, a regular swell", on what is still the no. 68 bus route:

All on a summer's day

*Up we climbed on the motor bus
And we started right away
When we got to the end of the ride
He asked me to go for a walk!
But I wasn't Camberwell Green
By a very long chalk.*

The replacement of live theatre and music by cinema was also reflected locally: the *Empire* was demolished to build an Odeon cinema in 1939; itself since closed in 1957, becoming Dickie Dirts (see below)... Besides these, on Denmark Hill, where Somerfield now stands, there was the *Golden Domes*, (later called the *Rex* and then the *Essoldo*); across the road, on the site of the Post Office, was the *Bijou*, known locally as the Bye Joe; and the *Coronet*, a small cinema in Wells Way.

In many ways though working class Camberwell recreation had become no less rowdy for being forced inside off the Green.

The *New Grand Hall Cinematograph Theatre* in Camberwell New Road, opened in 1912, on the north side of Camberwell New Road, next to the tram depot (it's now the Snooker Hall).

In 1956 there was a Teddy Girls and Boys riot, after they'd watched the pioneering rock 'n' roll film *Blackboard Jungle*, featuring Bill Haley & the Comets. Teddy girls in black jeans encouraged by their boy-friends swarmed across the rows to stamp seats free from their hinges. They stamped, clapped their hands, screamed and beat out the 12 bar blues by kicking seats until they splintered... The police scattered them, then restored order by escorting the Teddy boy ringleaders from the theatre.

Teds were the hoodies of the time: teenage working class kids, in an era of increasing prosperity emerging after the restrictions and poverty of the war years... They were listening to outlandish music that baffled their elders and betters, and getting together for dancing, drink and some splatterings of violence. Gang warfare was common between different ted gangs. The Elephant & Castle area was one of London's strongest ted areas. A 2000-strong crowd of teds had fought the police outside Elephant & Castle's *Trocadero* cinema shortly before this, inspiring similar battles across the country, mainly after viewings of the film. Respectable fears, moral panic and mass crackdown followed.

Teds were often scapegoated as the cause of all troubles and

many paranoias of authority and conforming social hierarchies were projected onto them.

Today's kids are similarly seen as out of control, street violence, knifings, shootings etc are widely seen as new and frightening developments: in many ways the terror and legal/political responses mirror the reaction to the teds, but similar scares have emerged repeatedly in the last 200 or so years. Usually no matter how serious developments are, they are represented as unprecedented; often in fact patterns and numbers are very similar. Not to disparage the genuine despair, fear and anger that the current crop of South London murders arouses. Fear of crime though, is always often out of kilter with the reality of crime. Returning to Camberwell Green, many kids now avoid the place, seeing it as too dangerous to hang out there; recently Peckham and Camberwell teens have been especially targeted as being out of control. Control of space and potential troublemakers' access to it, seen in the enclosure and respectabilisation of the green in the 1850s, is reflected in the 6 month exclusion order imposed on the centre of Camberwell, allowing the police to escort anyone under 16 found in the area home whether they are up to anything dodgy or not.

RADICALS AND RIOTERS

19th Century Camberwell may have been a middle class suburb but also had a local working class tradition: possibly originating in the tradition of London trades traveling out to rural pubs for days of merriment and sometimes political debate.

In the early 19th Century, with working people being increasingly forced off the land and into urban areas, with the growth of factories and massive spread of Cities, working class people were rapidly becoming politicised and conscious of themselves and their class interests. Working class organisations, radical clubs and early Trade Unions formed a growing network across many cities... London was no exception.

In 1832 the National Union of the Working Classes met at the *Duke of York*, Camberwell New Road (opposite the modern *Union Tavern*). The NUWC had arisen from an alliance of radical artisan societies in London, who had been organising both on economic levels, fighting for better wages and conditions, and politically, seeing parliamentary reform and more rights for

working people as fundamental to achieving economic improvements... They were involved in encouraging working class pressure in support of the campaigning for the 1832 Reform Act; however, the Act enfranchised the middle classes and reformed outdated constituencies and corrupt practices, but did nothing for the workers. More radical elements of the NUWC together with other groups, prepared to step up their activities - many felt armed uprising would be necessary to achieve change... This led to confrontations with the new Metropolitan Police as at the Battle of Coldbath Fields in 1833, when a NUWC rally was attacked by the Met and a policeman killed in the ensuing riot (it was later found by a Jury to be Justifiable Homicide in self defence, due to the police attack on the crowd!).

In 1833, Camberwell's *Sawyers Arms* (which we haven't yet located) hosted meetings of the 91st Class of the NUWC, in particular they held a dinner for the acquitted George Fursey, a defendant from the Battle of Coldbath Fields.

The Chartists

The NUWC and groups like them evolved in the course of the 1830s into the first national movement of the British Working Class - the Chartists.

The Chartists are usually quoted to be '*the first national movement of British working class*': they aimed broadly at an increase in political power for working class people, excluded from the vote or political process. Although many of their leaders nationally were of middle class (or even aristocratic) origin, (actually in London they tended to be more artisans or working class) they were a hugely broadly based mass movement, organized around six major demands for political reform that had been the program of the British reformers and radicals since the 1760s:

1. A vote for every man twenty one years of age, of sound mind, and not undergoing punishment for crime.
2. The ballot - To protect the elector in the exercise of his vote.
3. No property qualification for members of Parliament - thus enabling the constituencies to return the man of their choice, be he rich or poor.
4. Payment of members, thus enabling an honest tradesman, working man, or other person, to serve a constituency, when

taken from his business to attend to the interests of the country.

5. Equal constituencies securing the same amount of representation for the same number of electors, — instead of allowing small constituencies to swamp the votes of larger ones.

6. Annual Parliaments, thus presenting the most effectual check to bribery and intimidation, since though a constituency might be bought once in seven years (even with the ballot), no purse could buy a constituency (under a system of universal suffrage) in each ensuing twelvemonth; and since members, when elected for a year only, would not be able to defy and betray their constituents as now.

The Chartists' tactics included huge monster meetings, and a petition to Parliament, presented and rejected three times between 1838 and 1848. The movement was made up of thousands of local branches, whose activities went far beyond pressing for reform, but built a whole culture, of education, songs, history, their own ceremonies and open discussion; they were conscious of their links to radicals of the past and similar movements abroad. and included all kinds of people, women and men, black people. Although many did not advocate the vote for women, others did, and female democratic associations formed a part of the movement.

As their petitions and political pressure failed, many Chartists began to advocate a working class seizure of power by armed force, and divisions split these 'Physical Force' Chartists from their 'Moral Force' counterparts. Several Chartist uprisings were planned in 1839-40, which failed or were repressed. Plotters, and Chartists involved in organising rallies, strikers and other actions were jailed, transported to the penal colonies in their thousands.

Some local Chartists we know of include one Simpson, of Elm Cottage, Camberwell, a local agent selling tickets for a Chartist-sponsored soiree in honour of radical MP TS Duncombe in 1845; and David Johnston, born in Scotland, a Weaver, then apprentice baker in Edinburgh and Camberwell. Johnston married a Soho baker's daughter and, with her dowry, bought a baker's shop in Camberwell; he was elected Overseer of the Poor in St. Giles, Camberwell, 1831, '*by popular vote*'; and "*was a keen (moral force) Chartist until rowdies from Kennington wrecked my shop in 1848*". Johnston emigrated in 1848 and after labouring work

in New York and Philadelphia, lived and worked in Chicago till 1890, when he died. (*Autobiographical Reminiscences of an Octogenarian Scotchman*, Chicago, 1885)

The Chartists held mass meetings in South London the 1840s, mainly on Kennington Common, especially in 1848, the year of the last great Chartist upsurge, when they prepared the third petition. While the plans for presenting the petition were developed, physical force Chartists again prepared uprisings; in London in '48 several riots ensued when rallies were attacked by police. Through the Spring and early Summer the capital was in a state of alert: the authorities feared revolution (which was breaking out in France and across Europe), and Chartists hoped and worked for a popular rising to achieve their rights.

"Sticks of all descriptions"

On 13 March 1848, a week after a mass meeting in Trafalgar Square, that led to 3 days of rioting, a Chartist mass meeting was held on Kennington Common. Nearly 4000 police were called out; despite this 400 or 500 demonstrators moved off to Camberwell by back streets, led by a band. When they got to Bowyer Lane (now Wyndham Road) a riot broke out; looters



South London Chartists, 1840s.

armed with "*staves of barrels, and sticks of all descriptions*", including palings, rifled shops and fought with the constables. The whole episode occurred within the space of an hour and only nine arrests were made (by a party of mounted police, assisted by special constables) at the time, but since a number of the rioters had been recognized by the locals twenty-five were brought to trial in April. Identified among the leaders were Charles Lee, a gipsy, and David Anthony Duffy, a '*man of colour*' and unemployed seaman, known to the police as a beggar in the Mint, where he went about "*without shirt, shoe, or stocking*"; and Benjamin Prophet, known as 'Black Ben', another '*man of colour*' and seaman. These and fifteen other men, of whom four had previous convictions, were sentenced to from seven to fourteen years' transportation and three to one year's imprisonment.

The Camberwell police superintendent dismissed the offenders as: "*All Labourers and Costermongers*"; yet of the twenty-five tried in 1848 a substantial number had trades, even though most of them were still in their teens. On 8 and 10 April sentences were imposed upon the Camberwell rioters.

Although the Camberwell riot was of short duration it was intense and also of historical importance, for it contributed to the hysterical prelude to 10 April 1848, when Chartist met nationally on Kennington Common, aiming to march on Parliament/ Much smaller numbers turned up than expected though, and shocked by the rebellious atmosphere in London and the country, the Government had fortified the bridges over the Thames and brought in the army and recruited middle class volunteers to defend them. The Chartist leaders backed down and the movement began to collapse.

Black radicals

The participation of black radicals in the riot is interesting: the early 19th Century radical movement was notable for the involvement of prominent activists of African descent. One of the leaders of the London Chartists was William Cuffay, a Black tailor whose father had been a slave from St Kitts in the Carribean. Cuffay was arrested in 1848, accused of involvement in the planning of a Chartist Uprising and transported to Tasmania for life. Another Black radical well known in South London was Robert

Wedderburn, ex-slave, who had come to England, become a Methodist preacher, and then got involved in radical politics, Wedderburn used to preach on Kennington Common.

After the anti-climax of 10th April 1848, the Chartist movement went into a decline; although many groups still existed, the Chartists were largely a spent force. Smaller groups of radicals continued to agitate and meet, but mass agitation for reform did not revive till the mid-1860s, when the National Reform League formed and many local reform-minded groups began to spring up. From this pressure came the 1867 Reform Act, which won some limited increase in the franchise for working men. Liberals and Radical clubs agitating for once again became widespread in the 1870s, many emerging under the influence of the Secularist Movement, others from growing Republican agitation.

Camberwell Hall

Behind the Grove Tavern, at 45 Grove Lane, Camberwell Hall, built in 1748, was by the mid-19th Century used as a venue for social activities, including the Camberwell Working Men's Institute, who held classes and lectures here. Dickens included it in *Sketches by Boz*

The Working Men's Institutes were set up initially by middle class reformers to oversee education of working class men; partly to help them improve themselves, though also to try to wean them from either drink, immoral behaviour and crime, or from extreme radical politics. They mainly encouraged adult education, sobriety, self-improvement; but they also did provide a venue for many artisans and working class men to come together and discuss ideas and knowledge. Although politics was generally frowned upon, many groups of working men drew upon this experience, and became radically political active; some groups split directly from Institutes to form self-organised working mens political and social clubs.

Radical groups met at Camberwell Hall: for example a meeting of the Freedmen's Aid Society at Camberwell Hall was held to hail the abolition of slavery in the United States.

Art critic John Ruskin lectured here in 1865, it being a short walk from his house Born in Herne Hill, Ruskin lived at no 163 Denmark Hill at this time, opposite modern Ruskin Park. We'll

come back to Ruskin later.

Like so much of London's interesting underground geography, Camberwell Hall has now sadly been sold off for the rich. In an advert for the sale of the building its history was regurgitated to bump up the developers' profit.

Secularists and Republicans

The Secularist movement arose from scattered radical groups, many of which had survived the collapse of Chartism, others of which emerged in the reform agitation of the 1860s. Influenced by powerful speakers like George Holyoake and Charles Bradlaugh, they discussed, debated and attacked the religious control over many aspects of people's lives, much stronger and integrated into all walks of social, working and home life then. Secularists spoke at street corners, often in direct competition with Christian preachers, and formed clubs or branches of Bradlaugh's National Secular Society. Gradually they also became associated with pressure for the right to birth control, and a strong republican strand, demanding the removal of the royals and a British Republic.

In the 1870s Church Street was a local Speakers Corner: Secularists regularly denounced religion in large open-air meetings. The area became one of their strongholds - the Camberwell National Secular Society branch, built a hall at 61 New Church Road in 1882.

The United Republican League held Sunday morning meetings in Church St (and afternoon ones in the Rose & Crown Pub, Acorn Street in Peckham) in the early 1870s, when republicanism was very strong among the working class, and the Royal Family very unpopular. Militant atheist, communist, class warrior Dan Chatterton spoke here.



Dan Chatterton

There were also two Radical Clubs in Camberwell - one in Denmark Hill, one in now vanished Muswell Road.

Some other radicals who have lived in Camberwell

Mary Hays

A novelist and early feminist, friend of Mary Wollstonecraft, (author of *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, the first great feminist text), Mary Hays lived in Camberwell from 1807 to 1824. Born in Southwark, almost nothing is known of her first 17 years. She took up writing, probably spurred by an early love affair with a man her parents disapproved of, who shortly afterwards died. Her to take up writing. Throughout the 1780s she wrote essays and poems. A short story *Hermit: an Oriental Tale* was published in 1786. It was a picturesque tale, which warned against feeling too much passion. She exchanged letters with Robert Robinson, a minister who campaigned against the slave trade. She attended the Dissenting Academy in Hackney in the late 1780s (founders & members of which were very active in the reform and anti-slavery movements)

In 1792 Hays was given a copy of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* by Mary Wollstonecraft, which made a deep impression on her, and she became friends with Wollstonecraft. Hays next wrote a book *Letters and Essays* (1793) and invited Mary Wollstonecraft to comment on it before publication. She was inspired to leave home and support herself by writing. After borrowing a copy of *Enquiry concerning Political Justice* by William Godwin, she became friends with its radical author, who became a guide and teacher. About this time Hays started writing for the *Analytical Review*, a liberal magazine, of which Mary Wollstonecraft was fiction editor. She is popularly credited with introducing William Godwin to Mary Wollstonecraft; the two married in 1797. When Mary Wollstonecraft was dying, due to complications following the birth of their daughter, Mary (later Mary Shelley, author of *Frankenstein*), Mary Hays helped to nurse her and also wrote an obituary of Wollstonecraft for the *Annual Necrology*. Hays and Godwin drifted apart after Wollstonecraft's death.

Memoirs of Emma Courtney (1796), probably Hays's best-known work, draws on the experience of her affair with Cambridge

mathematician William Frend, and possibly her relationship with Godwin. The heroine falls in love with a penniless man Augustus Harley, and offers to live with him as his wife, without getting married. She is rejected and then turns to Mr Francis, a character based on Godwin. They exchange philosophical letters, but in the end he advises her against becoming too emotional. The critical response to the novel was divided along political lines. Free love is seen to be aligned with social revolution, and domestic repression is shown as upholding the political order.

Her next novel *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799) is emphatically feminist and critical of class hierarchies. The backlash against the French revolutionary terror led critics to slate the novel as too radical and hysterical. In 1803 Hays published the six volume *Female Biographies*, detailing the lives of 294 women. However by this point Hays perhaps realised that it was politically dangerous to praise Mary Wollstonecraft, and somewhat bottled it by omitting her from the book.

Moving to Camberwell, Hays associated with many leading literary figures of the age, including Charles and Mary Lamb and William Blake. The last 20 years of her life were somewhat unrewarding, with little income and only her work increasingly ignored. She is buried in Abney Park Cemetery, Stoke Newington.

Una Marson

"No more moaning and groaning No more self-hatred masquerading as integration. No more rejecting your own Ethiop's child for somebody else's Barbie doll. You are part of a strong African-Caribbean influenced literary tradition. Affirm your right as an individual, a woman and a writer to be both Black and British."

Una Marson (1905-1965), Jamaican writer, feminist, activist, lived in Brunswick Square (now Brunswick Park) for a short while in the mid-1930s.

Born in a middle class rural Jamaican village, her pioneering social work in Kingston's slum yards, Marson came to England in 1932, originally for a few weeks, but like many other migrants this turned into many years. She was the first Black woman programme maker at the BBC, where she worked from 1939 to 1946 and helped many service men and women and Caribbean people

during the war. *West Indies Calling* was her maiden programme in her five years of association with BBC, 1940 to 1945. She founded her own programme, *Caribbean Voices*, in March 1943, and became the BBC's first Black woman producer. But, she became increasingly sceptical and disenchanted with the "internal battles and troubled moments" with BBC managers, who thought only of promoting British authors to Caribbean listeners, influenced by government policy to requisition colonial labour



Una Marson

and resources while stifling nationalist activism.

Two main issues provoked her poetic work. She captured the calypsonian air of topical stories, sounds and music; and she exposed colonial fears and prejudices. She combined themes of cultural identity and female sexuality, of self-doubt and disadvantage... "her

Black poetics and politics offer a firm basis for a writer's commitment to a fair and equal world". Marson explored the multi-layered heritage of Blacks in colonial Jamaica, emphasising ancestral African roots. In *Songs of Africa* (1930) she applauds the music of Afro-Creole people of the Americas that fosters race pride and the determination to be free. Again, in *There will come a time* (1931) she cries out for racial equality as the foundation of her dream of the oneness of the world's diverse peoples. Marson illustrates how women used poetry to express their sufferings and avoid terrible retribution, like the Black preacher during slavery. Her first collection of love poems *Tropic Reveries* (1930), set in Jamaican colonial culture, explores women's political and subversive yearning for freedom from cultural domination. Marson honed her skills in political poetry. Her narrative wartime poem *Convoy*, which appeared in the League's journal, salutes "my own blood brothers/ Brown like me."

Una Marson became well known in London as a feminist and anti-racist activist, putting her energies into helping disadvantaged Black people in south London. She worked as secretary to the League of Coloured Peoples, the first Black-led political organisation in England, in the company of activist CLR James and welfare officer & cricketer Learie Constantine. Believing that building Black solidarity around the world could open the road to Black Freedom, Marson welcomed Jamaican Marcus Garvey's pan-Africanist message of "*African liberation, at home and abroad*". As a writer, she kept in touch with the icons of the Harlem Renaissance, African Americans writers Langston Hughes and James Weldon Johnson.

She railed against the maltreatment of women workers, students and nurses, (in particular the discrimination against black nurses) and joined the radical Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Later as secretary to Haile Selassie she traveled to the League of Nations with him in 1936 to plead for Abyssinia, when it was invaded by Italy; and later still the 1960s she worked in Israel. Una has gained a pioneering literary reputation, as the first major woman poet of the Caribbean and a playwright.

The Life of Una Marson 1905-1965, by Delia Jarrett-Macauley. Manchester University Press 1998.

<http://www.deliajarrettmacauley.com/>

Vera Brittain: Camberwell Versus Death

From a well-to-do Derbyshire family, Vera Brittain later became a feminist and pacifist. She served as a nurse during WW1 at the 1st London General Hospital in Camberwell from October 1915-September 1916, as a VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment) member of the British Red Cross.

Her fiancé, Roland Leighton, her brother Edward and many of their friends were killed during the war.

Returning to Oxford after the war to complete her degree, Vera found it difficult to adjust to peacetime. It was at this time she met Winifred Holtby, a close friendship developed with both aspiring to become established on the London literary scene, and the bond developed between them until Holtby's untimely death in 1935.

Brittain's first published novel was *The Dark Tide* (1923). In

1933 that she published *Testament of Youth*, detailing her war experiences, (it features the chapter *Camberwell Versus Death*) followed by the sequels, *Testament of Friendship* (1940) - her tribute to and biography of Winifred Holtby - and *Testament of Experience* (1957), which spanned the years between 1925 and 1950. Vera Brittain wrote from the heart and based many of her novels on her experiences and actual people.

In the 1920s she became a regular speaker on behalf of the League of Nations Union, but from 1937, after previously speaking at a peace rally with Dick Sheppard, George Lansbury, Laurence Housman and Donald Soper. she joined the Peace Pledge Union. Her newly found pacifism came to the fore during World War II, when she began the series of Letters to Peacelovers.

During WW2 she worked as a fire warden and travelled around the country raising funds for the Peace Pledge Union's food relief campaign. She was widely denounced for speaking out against saturation bombing of German cities in her 1944 pamphlet *Massacre by Bombing*.

Vera Brittain died in 1970. Her daughter is former Labour Cabinet Minister, now Liberal Democrat peer, Shirley Williams. Oh well!

WORKERS AND UNEMPLOYED

Camberwell Trades Council, representing local trade Unionists and Union branches, was founded in 1913. Almost immediately it was thrown into the political hotbed with the outbreak of World War 1.

Unlike most unions and Labourites who capitulated to jingoism, supporting the war, Camberwell Trades Council took an anti-war position when World War 1 broke out. It issued pacifist leaflets, including a leaflet calling for people not to worry about paying rent during war, as surely landlords wouldn't evict people during such a national emergency! The police tried to suppress this leaflet - unsuccessfully.

The Trades Council held meetings about the high cost of living, denouncing privations caused by the War, and launched campaigns for free school dinners for kids; useful work for the unemployed and democratic control and distribution of food.

In 1915 it also founded a Trades Council bakery, officially to try and increase the distribution of bread to the local working class; unofficially the bakery also provided jobs to conscientious objectors on the dodge from the authorities. Although this project collapsed by end of year, its work was incorporated into a similar scheme run by Bermondsey Trades Council.

In 1916, when the Government introduced conscription to force men into the trenches, anti-conscription demonstrations were held on Peckham Rye and on Camberwell Green by the Trades Council and The No Conscription League. One motion passed by a mass meeting stressed: "*Conscription would be against the best interests of the working class and would be a strong weapon in the hands of reactionaries to enslave the British People.*"

Trade unionists were outraged when Military Tribunals were set up under the oversight of Borough Councils to hear claims for exemption from conscription. Trades Unionists were in most places appointed to these borough tribunals, but Tory-controlled Camberwell refused to appoint any.

The Anti-war movement locally centred around the Independent Labour Party. Some ILP delegates followed the Christian, pacifist line of George Lansbury. Some were inspired by the ethical conviction that violence, organised or not, was evil and immoral. Others argued against the War on socialist, internationalist

grounds.

Along with Charles Ammon, (later Lord Ammon of Camberwell) a member of the Fawcett Association, the postal sorters union, and Parliamentary Secretary of the No Conscription League, and Dr Alfred Salter, (later to become MP for Bermondsey), Arthur Creech-Jones, twenty-three year old Secretary of Camberwell Trades Council, became a leader of anti-war activity in South London. In 1916 Creech-Jones was called up for army

service. On appeal he attended four Tribunals and although supported by Labour Party leaders Fenner Brockway and Herbert Morrison his appeals were dismissed: he was finally arrested in East Dulwich in September. After being taken to the Recruitment Centre at Camberwell Baths, and refusing to take orders, he was imprisoned for three years in Wandsworth and Wormwood Scrubs Prisons.

Creech-Jones gained much support in the local press. One letter from the National League of the Blind, Camberwell Branch praised his Trades Council work. When he was jailed, he was replaced as Secretary by Florence Tidman, delegate from the Women's Labour League. Many trade unionist soldiers had returned from the front and were now sympathetic to pacifism.

Not all Trade Unionists locally opposed the War however. In March 1917 NATSOPA disaffiliated from the Trades Council

**ADVICE TO WORKERS OUT OF WORK—AND
THEIR WIVES.**

DO NOT worry if you are unable to pay your rent. No landlord will evict under the extraordinary circumstances created by the war.

DO NOT let your children go hungry because of a foolish sense of pride. If you are unable to feed them properly, see that they are fed at the schools. All children can now receive at least breakfast and dinner at school.

DO NOT reply to any prying questions put by the Distress Committee. The Government have stated that no such questions shall be asked.

ASSIST the Camberwell Trades Council to induce the Authorities to carry out the following urgent measures:—

Three meals a day for ALL school children.

Provision of useful work for the Unemployed.

Provision for Sailors' and Soldiers' Wives and ALL needing Relief.

The Democratic Control and Distribution of Food.

UNEMPLOYED COMMITTEE.

COME ALONG AND HELP.

IF IN DISTRESS, COME AND REGISTER.

Camberwell Trades Council leaflet, 1914

because of its anti-war position. The majority of the local population capitulated to the upsurge of national chauvinism. Racist hysteria against the "Hun" was whipped up to a crescendo in South London. Riotous mobs burnt and looted shops with German names in East Street, Camberwell Green and the Old Kent Road. Many trade unionists were often just as jingoistic as the wider population they lived among.

Mutiny!

At the end of World War One, there was widespread unrest. Not only was there increased disillusionment with the war but there was an upsurge in strikes. The unrest spread to the army.

In January 1919 Army Service Corps men in a camp somewhere in Camberwell went on strike, during a mass movement of mutinies and demonstrations to demand faster demobilisation of troops all over Britain and in the army abroad. Despite some investigations we've not discovered where this camp was, whether in the Borough or SE5 proper, though possibly it could have been somewhere near to the present Territorial Army Barracks in Flodden Road.

In 1920, the British Government's determination to send troops, including conscripts, to Russia to try to overthrow the new Soviet state, led to a mass movement inspired by socialists and trade unionists who were sympathetic to the Russian Revolution, to prevent troops and supplies reaching Russia. Local councils of action formed to oppose the move, and actions included dockers refusing to load goods for these ships. In August 1920, the Camberwell Council of Action demonstrated on Peckham Rye where it called for "*complete trade and peace with Russia*", and demanded that the National Council of Action send an ultimatum to Lloyd George along these lines.

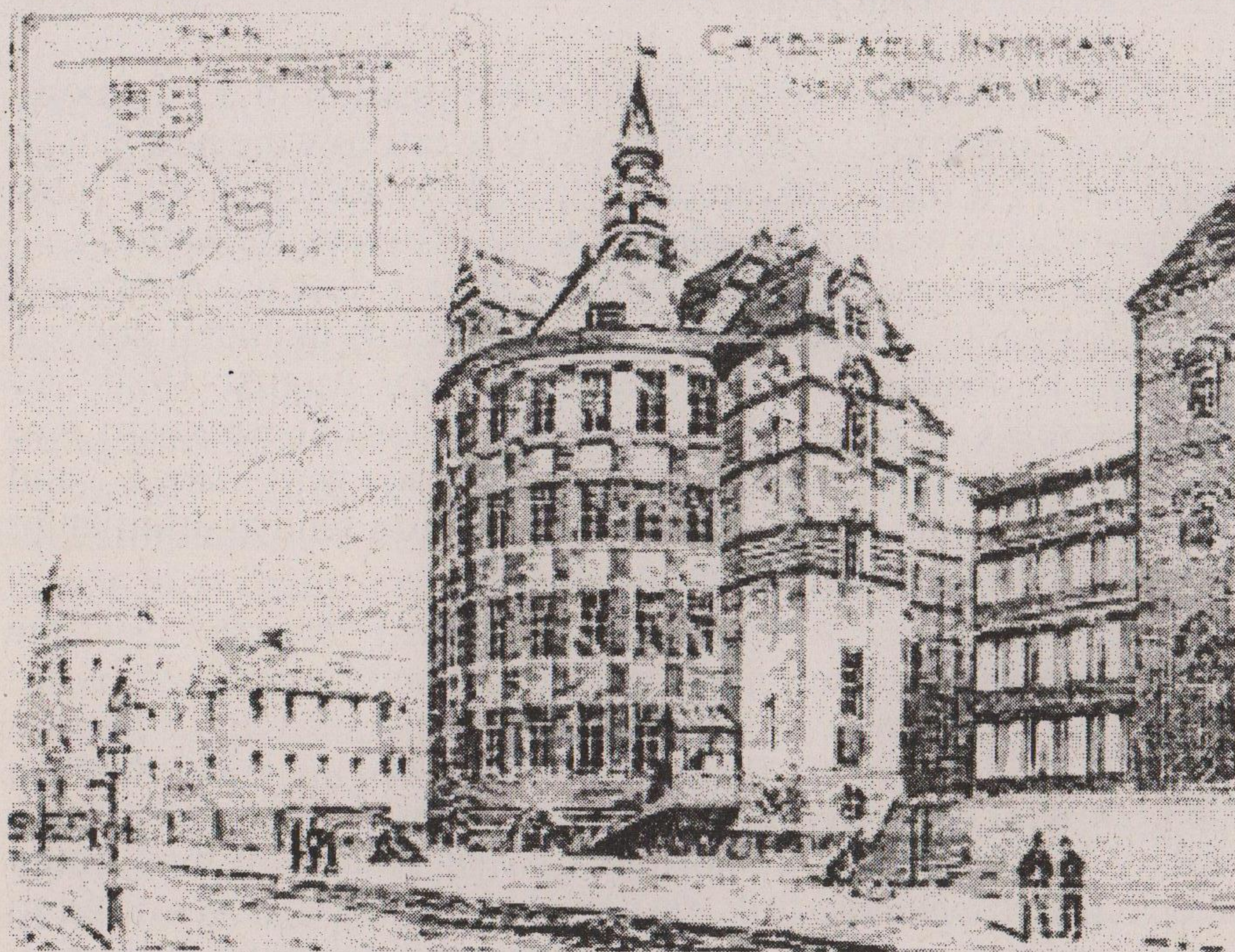
Unemployment

Under the old Poor Law systems that preceded the Welfare State, the poor who were unable or unwilling to work were the responsibility of the Parish authorities. These local worthies being ratepaying respectable folk, responsible to their fellows, tried to spend as little as possible on relieving the destitute. Poor folk

were often forced out of the parish if not native, or incarcerated in Workhouses, which increasingly became prisons for the lower orders, feared and hated. Especially after the New Poor law was introduced in 1834, the Workhouse was made as inhospitable and repressive as possible to discourage people from resorting to it unless they had no other option. Men and women were split up, families divided, backbreaking labour was normal and the food was usually scanty and of dubious quality.

Camberwell's old Workhouse stood on the corner of Camberwell Church Street and Havil Street, opposite the Town Hall. It was built in 1727-8, despite opposition from local worthies, who didn't see why they should pay for it. It was rebuilt several times here, most notably in 1827. This latest building was *"very hot in the summer and particularly drafty in the winter."*

Over the years, the Havil Street site became increasingly important as a hospital. In 1873 a large new infirmary was erected at the north of the site, at the junction with Brunswick Road. Its central administrative block was five storeys high and contained offices, staff accommodation, and special wards.



The Havil Street Workhouse, after its conversion to a hospital

The infirmary building were further extended in 1899-1903 with new ward blocks, operating theatre, and nurses' home. A large administration block fronted onto Brunswick Square (now St Giles Road). The Board of Guardians, the Borough Council officers responsible for giving out 'relief' to the needy and administering the Workhouse, had their office built on the site of the old Workhouse (maybe not just because the land was vacant: presumably the Workhouse site would have had enough bad resonances with the poor to scare some off from applying for relief!?) The Workhouse buildings were demolished in 1905.

In 1930, the Havil Street site was taken over completely by the London County Council and renamed St Giles' Hospital. Many of the original buildings have now been demolished to make make way for flats.

In 1878, Camberwell erected a new workhouse at a site to the west of Gordon Road, Peckham.

The Right to Live

Camberwell had a long tradition of unemployed organising: during the high unemployment of 1905, a Camberwell Joint Unemployed Committee campaigned locally for more relief from the Guardians, having a membership of 1,500. Interestingly too, Myatt's Fields Park in the Lambeth end of Camberwell was built in 1887-8 by the unemployed! After unemployed rioting in the West End in 1886 the authorities set up work-for-your-charity schemes for doleys. Locals had been campaigning since 1874 for pastureland and market gardens here to be turned into a park. It opened in 1889.

In the early 1920s Camberwell Green was also the starting point for rallies and demonstrations against unemployment, and against government measures which hit the unemployed hard.

After the First World War, unemployment rocketed. Partly this resulted from the change in the economy from the ending of the War/munitions industries, partly employment and economic figures had been distorted with hundreds of thousands of men in uniform. With large numbers of unemployed ex-servicemen looking for work, and firms laying people off, many working class people were thrown into poverty. This was not taken lying down however. From 1920 on, local unemployed committees organised against government measures to restrict money for

relief of poverty and unemployment; against local authorities who were administering these restrictions (and in many cases adding some of their own) and against firms who were laying workers off, or working lots of overtime. Many of these committees were organised by trade unionists and socialists and communists who had been active in the strike movements before, during and after the War, and many members were unemployed ex-servicemen, who had spent years in the trenches only to come back to hardship.

In 1921, most of the Committees combined to form the National Unemployed Workers (Committee) Movement or NUWM.

Camberwell unemployed in 1920 occupied Camberwell School of Art, as part of a campaign for free places for the unemployed to meet.

"Their local strength was reflected in the fact that they could 'pack' a Labour Party meeting in the Camberwell Baths and get the following motion carried: 'We the workers at this meeting, under the guidance of the Mayor, realise the impossibility of any proffered solution to unemployment during the life of the Capitalist system. We pledge ourselves to work unceasingly for the overthrow of Capitalism and the establishment of a workers Republic.'"

On Sept 21st 1921 there was a mass march of local unemployed, from Camberwell Green to Peckham.

In 1922, the Camberwell Board of Guardians (the Council body that administered not only relief but the Workhouses etc.) planned to stop milk for babies of the unemployed. On February 1st, Camberwell women marched to the House of Commons, as the order was rumoured to have come down from the Ministry of Health. A Ministry inquiry reversed the decision.

Unemployment being high, it became a hot political issue. In 1922, elections were held for the Board of Guardians. A flurry of electoral leaflets from various candidates addressed the issue. Labour candidates Arthur Andrews and Louis Edwards campaigned on the platform of giving out full rations to those on relief (not as was current policy, on the Mond scale, half-rations). They also opposed giving out food instead of money as out-relief. Their leaflet invoked the class nature of unemployment: *"It is only our class that go to the Workhouse or Infirmary. Send*

the Labour candidates to make the institutions as comfortable as possible. They stand the same risks as you do of having to go there." They also amusingly advised: *"Don't wait for our car [presumably to pick up voters and ferry them to the polls]. We haven't got one. Workers don't own cars, they only make them."* Not a line that would pick up votes today.

There were also two candidates from the 'Camberwell Central unemployed', Burnett and Smith, who stood on the basis of their long activism in local unemployment politics, having been members of delegations to the Board of Guardians several times. What their affiliations? They disparaged political parties in their leaflet, who would make loud noises to get elected and then make no changes.

The General Strike

In May 1926, the leaders of the Trades Union Congress called a General Strike. Nearly 2 million workers all over the country joined the strike, in support of a million miners, locked out by mine-owners for refusing to accept wage cuts of up to 25 per cent, after the ending of the Government's coal subsidy. The General Council of the TUC didn't want to call the Strike: they were pushed into it for fear of workers taking action themselves without them.

Nine days later, afraid of the losing control of the situation, in the face of massive working class solidarity, the TUC General Council called the Strike off. Since then the General Strike has entered into the mythology of the working class and the left in Britain.

The General Strike was a massive defeat for the working class. The TUC General Council capitulated; many of the strikers were forced to accept lower wages and conditions: the miners in whose support the Strike was called were eventually starved into submission.

Locally Trades Councils or Councils of Action co-ordinated the union branches and workers involved in the Strike.

Camberwell Borough Council fully supported the Government against the strikers, it was cooperative with the Emergency Powers Act and its functionaries, and it appointed the Treasurer and Town Clerk as the officers in charge of food and fuel. This

contrasted with other local boroughs eg left-wing Bermondsey, where the local Council supported the Strike and opposed the Government.

Camberwell Trades Council organized the Strike locally. We have very little information on how they organised themselves. There is however a letter to the TUC from G.W.Silverside, General Secretary of the Dulwich Divisional Labour Party in which he explains that at a meeting on May 3rd it was decided to collect money and distribute literature. Also *"the question of the possibility of duplication arose"* and Mr. Silverside explained that he had been in touch with the *"Secretary of the Camberwell Trades Council who informs me that there are three duplicators available and that they are prepared to duplicate anything that may be necessary."*

According to a post-Strike Report by the Trades Council:

"only a fortnight before the strike, [we] obtained a roneo duplicator and a typewriter. When the possibility of a strike loomed up we made three tentative preparations for this eventuality, viz:

(a) We enquired for an office, which we might take for a month as a minimum.

(b) (b) We obtained a lien on a hall where we might have a large



Camberwell trades Council demo during the General Strike

meeting and would run no danger of the hall being cancelled by opponents.

(c) We made arrangements for a Committee meeting to be called the day after the general Strike began, if it did so begin. On May Day we thought the importance of demonstrating was sufficient to warrant us paying for a band, banner bearers etc, and for us to give a lead in having a good turn out. This we had organized and we secured a fine response from Camberwell workers. Whilst on route to Hyde Park came the news of the General Strike declaration - truly a fitting send off, thus demonstrating to the rich loafers in the West End out power and solidarity."

The Strike Committee organised effective picketing of workplaces. Tramwaymen and busmen, who made up 3000 of the 8000 workers affiliated to the trades Council, were solid, as were roadmen of the Borough Council also came out, (bar one depot where men were reported working.) Tillings Bus Co., however, of Peckham, a major local employer, was a black spot: large numbers of police specials were stationed to ensure these buses were never stopped from running.

Reports which came to the Strike office as to the need for pickets were transmitted to the Strike Committee concerned at once by an organised messenger network.

The Trades Council concluded that: *"we were not ready. We quickly improvised machinery... Everything had to be found on the spur of the moment, and we rose to the occasion fairly well I our own estimation., considering the difficulties of lack of our own premises, voluntary workers, and having to set up, equip and run an office after the Strike had commenced."*

In the Borough of Camberwell as it was then, two strike bulletins were produced, the *Camberwell Strike Bulletin* and the *Peckham Labour Bulletin* - both from Central Buildings, High Street, Peckham. The *South London Observer* of Saturday May 15th reports that a man was convicted of selling the *Peckham Labour Bulletin*. The paragraph headed *"French workers refuse to black-leg"* was thought by the court to be provocative. Police Inspector Hider in his evidence stated that it would cause *"a certain feeling among certain people"*. Inspector Hider also saw copies of the *Camberwell Strike Bulletin* also produced at Central Buildings on a duplicator by Eddy Joep, who denied any connec-

tion with the Peckham Labour Bulletin.

Trams were not running, till the local electricity generating station was reopened by naval ratings.

On May 5th, commercial vehicles were stopped & trashed here by strikers. The trams were in the main kept off the roads. Altogether there were 12 attempts by OMS (government organised volunteers, mostly middle class) recruits supported by police and special constables to run trams from Camberwell Depot to New Scotland Yard - resulting in crowds of pickets and supporters attacking scab trams, smashing their windows and pushing them back inside, preventing them from running.

The *British Worker*, a daily paper put out during the Strike by the TUC, reported: "*BANNED TRAMS SCENE: An unsuccessful attempt was made shortly after four o'clock on Wednesday afternoon to run LCC tramcars from the Camberwell depot.*

Earlier in the day two lorries with higher officials of the tramways Department and OMS recruits arrived at the Depot, where a strong force of police had been posted.

A large crowd, including tramwaymen, their wives and sympathisers, collected, and when the first car came out of the Depot gates in Camberwell Green there was a hostile demonstration.

Some arrests were made. Following this incident the cars were driven back in to the Depot to the accompaniment of loud cheers." (*British Worker*, 5th May 1926.)

Newspaper reports that "*Women pickets stopped them by putting kids in front of the vehicles*" seem to be rightwing propaganda spread at the time (by the *South London Press*, which was resolutely opposed to the Strike) - there is no evidence for it!

Buses were also stoned in Camberwell on Saturday night (8th May) There were huge public meetings at Camberwell Green, as well as at Peckham Rye and at the triangle near the Eaton Arms, Peckham. An eye-witness account describes the police activity during a public meeting at Camberwell Green as terrifying. He was ten years old at the time. He had been taken by his father and was standing on the edge of the meeting only to see waves of police with drawn truncheons marching on the people, who broke and ran after repeated baton charges.

Camberwell Borough Guardians took a hard line during and after Strike - issued '*Not Genuinely Seeking Work*' forms to stop strikers getting any relief.

After the TUC sellout, there was confusion in the area. Crowds of workers gathered at the Tram Depot, not knowing what to do. many wanted to continue the Strike and the TUC General Council were widely denounced. Each worker had to sign a form on future conditions of service, hours and wages. Some never got their jobs back at all.

At the end of the Strike Camberwell Trades Council sent £10 to the Miners from the funds collected during the Strike, continued that support as the miners fought on alone after the TUC sellout.

Following the defeat of the Strike, the Government brought in the Trades Disputes Act, known as '*the blacklegs Charter*', which outlawed all General or solidarity strikes and prevented many civil service workers from affiliating to Trades Councils. Camberwell Trades Council formed a Trade Union Defence Committee to oppose the Act - without a lot of success.

Workers Defence

In 1927 the Government introduced the '*Not Genuinely Seeking Work Clause*', as well as cuts in benefit. In 1931 the National Government introduced the means test, and more dole cuts. Local NUWM branches responded by organising more broadly based organisations known as Workers Defense Movements. In 1931 the Camberwell WDM claimed an active membership of 1,000 and got even more support at meetings outside the Peckham Labour Exchange. With the support of the Labour MP, John Beckett, thousands marched along Peckham Road via the Unity Labour Club in Consort Road, to the Rye. (John Beckett later lurched to the right, joining Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists.)

Towards the end of 1931 Southwark and Camberwell Workers Defence Movement joined forces for a mass march of 4,000 local unemployed from Walworth Town Hall via Camberwell Green to the Rye. En route factories and other places of work were visited and employers asked to sign a statement to the effect that they

had no work to offer.

The Workers Defence Movement was also involved in preventing evictions, especially during rent strikes, for example in Peckham's Goldsmith Estate in 1932. They also supported NUWM-organised hunger marchers and passive resistance to public works not given to local unemployed.

Arthur Cooper, Secretary of the Camberwell Trades Council after the Second World War, remembers that a common local tactic was to inform the police that the mass unemployed would converge on a local street such as Southampton Way. Hundreds of police would arrive to find Cooper addressing a meeting of ten outside the Samuel Jones factory (a waxed paper works, by Peckham Grove) while the bulk of the unemployed were attending demonstrations in the West End!

The London Bus strike of 1958

The Tram Depot later became a Bus Depot. In 1958, bus workers struck for higher wages, in a dispute that lasted nearly two months, but was eventually severely defeated. On May 24th the T&GWU, Camberwell Bus Garage branch organised a march of 250 from Camberwell Green to Peckham Rye to publicise the busmen's plight. But the strike hadn't 100% support in the area. A scab organisation known as the People's League for the Defence of Freedom, recruited drivers to drive buses. The scab drivers later revealed in the fact that they had scabbed and publicised an organisation they had formed known as 'Blacklegs Incorporated'.

MAD AS HELL

Camberwell's association with mental health care (imprisonment in many cases) goes back centuries: there were 2 large lunatic' asylums on Peckham Road in the 18th-19th centuries. South London was also home to the Bethlem Hospital, the original 'Bedlam', notorious for its brutal treatment of inmates; it moved to the present site of the Imperial War Museum in Lambeth in the early 19th Century.

The early to mid 19th Century saw a sharp rise in the number of people diagnosed as insane and committed to institutions; possible reasons for this include the social dislocation and pressures of industrialization, urbanization, with vast numbers of people being forced off the land and flocking into factories and slums to survive; although higher numbers being diagnosed may have contributed.

Rebellious, awkward or unorthodox behaviour could also land you in the asylum; poverty and increasing turbulence of life also drove many people mad. No adequate figures exist, but large numbers of people were forced into asylums as social control, or as a cheap alternative to workhouse.

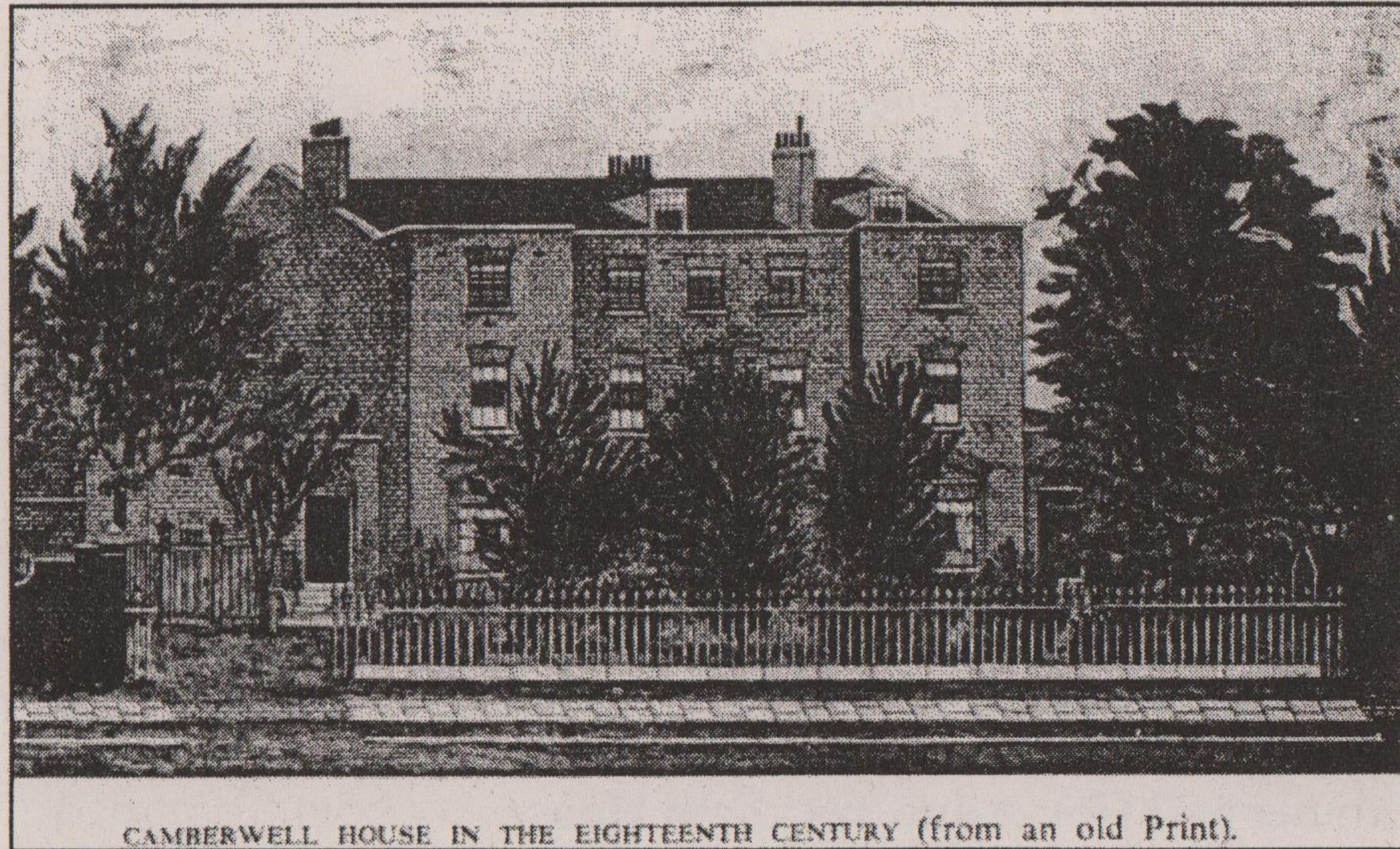
Camberwell House and Peckham House

Camberwell House, a huge private establishment, stood on the north side behind the Town Hall, occupying the land as far as Southampton Way (where the Sceaux Gardens Estate is now). Built originally as a school, it was converted into an asylum in 1846. Holding up to 483 inmates it was the largest of its kind in the metropolis in the late 19th Century.

The institution was held to be "*the epitome of the enlightened approach to mental disorders at a time when the public asylums were busy creating the ignorance and brutality, the mistrust, that still lingers in the public mind today of mental homes*" (Blanch); the proprietors' pioneering regime contrasted with the cruel and barbarous conditions prevalent in Bedlam and other asylums. "*The utmost liberty, with safety, is permitted*", it was said of the regime there.

While it was said to cater to 'all classes', the private paying guest was clearly at the forefront of the proprietors minds. Not only

was care emphasized, but the hospital also provided some pretty plush facilities for its 'patients': 20 acres of grounds (some of which were over Peckham Road, where Lucas Gardens are now) cricket, football and hockey pitches, tennis and squash courts, croquet; there were garden parties, dances (in a purpose built ball room!) theatricals, concerts, billiards. Camberwell House eventually closed in 1955.



Peckham House, on the other hand, was clearly intended for the more plebeian end of the market. An old mansion till 1826, when it became a public asylum, in response to the urgent need for "*a suitable establishment for the insane poor*"; and to the urgent need for local parishes to cut the cost of sending their mad poor to public asylums north of the river.

It was smaller than Camberwell House, holding around 350 people; again it was supposed to be for "*all ages and classes*", but in 1844, there were 203 pauper and 48 private inmates. Pauper inmates were sent from various parishes, (an allowance was paid for their upkeep - 17s. 6d. in 1874, though not sure if that's per year, per week or what?)

Being a public asylum, Peckham House was regularly checked out by the authorities that paid for it. Although much more so than today, you have to read between the lines, the inspectors reported that the accommodation was "*excellent*", but consis-

tently there were complaints about the food. Even the stingy worthies who pulled the purse strings were stirred into action: "*this house has always been a source of trouble to us upon the subject of diet...*"

In 1844, patients received on alternate days either meat, potatoes and bread, or soup and bread. It was described mouthwateringly: "*the soup is made from the liquor in which the meat from the whole establishment (private paupers and servants) is boiled the previous day.*" Please sir, can I have some more?

All in all, despite its 'excellent' accommodation, Peckham House was considered to be in a bad state in 1844, and may have only stayed open because the vestries who paid for it realized that the only alternative place for most of its poor inmates would be the workhouse - at their expense.

Class and money divided those interned here. In 1874, 'Private' patients whose "*friends paying from one to one and a half guineas for their board, lodging and attendance*" lived in separate blocks, in better circumstances than paupers... According to a South London Press reporter, "*the rooms are light and cheerful, ruddy fires burn in the grates. Here are bathrooms, with a supply of hot and cold water, and a bagatelle table for the amusement of the patients...* In connection with this block is a pleasant strip of garden..." In the next ward "*we rise a step in the social*



scale. 'People who have moved in a superior station' my guide whispers as we enter. They are quiet and orderly people... The apartments are superior to the last... lounges and couches give a decided air of home comfort to the place." The final ward was "a long and elegantly furnished room..." About 42 'ladies' inhabited this ward, paying fees of 5 to 20 guineas a week... Every comfort was allotted to them.

The asylum in 1874 had clearly improved from thirty years previously - so that it "can be fairly compared with any similar establishment in the kingdom..." Peckham House closed in 1952.

The Maudsley

The Maudsley Hospital dates from 1907, when Dr Henry Maudsley offered London County Council £30,000 (subsequently increased to £40,000) to help found a new mental hospital that would: be exclusively for early and acute cases, have an out-patients' clinic and provide for teaching and research.

The Hospital was always intended to be a progressive centre of treatment and research rather than confinement and "asylum". World War I intervened and the Hospital didn't open until 1923. A specific Act of Parliament had to be obtained (1915) to allow the institution to accept voluntary patients.

The Maudsley continues to provide in-patient and community mental health care to local people in Southwark and Lambeth and nationally across the UK, (though contested, and problematic, see below) In close proximity to the Institute of Psychiatry at King's College London it is also a contributor to both psychiatric research and the training of nursing, medical and psychology staff in psychiatry.

As part of the South London and Maudsley NHS Trust (SLaM) it also has close links with Bethlem Royal Hospital - the original "Bedlam".

Reclaim Bedlam, and Mad Pride

"How can you celebrate LOBOTOMY, LIFETIME INSTITUTIONALISATION - TAKING YOUR OWN LIFE - DEPRESSION - DRUG DEPENDENCY ECTS..." (Survivors Speak Out)

1997 saw the 750th anniversary of 'Bedlam' - the asylum which was the precursor of the Maudsley. Inside the Maudsley were anniversary "celebrations", outside was a big demo of mental health survivors under the banner of "Reclaim Bedlam", organised by Pete Shaughnessy. *"Pete, who had been a patient at the Maudsley, saw nothing to celebrate in either the original Bedlam ('a symbol for man's inhumanity to man, for callousness and cruelty,' in historian Roy Porter's words), or the state of mental health care."*

Reclaim Bedlam organised 'Raving in the park', a picnic/rave/a sit-in outside the original Bedlam site at the Imperial War Museum to protest.

"Maudsley & Bethlem Mental Health Trust saw itself as la crème de la crème of mental health. In 1997, it was more like the Manchester City of mental health. Situated in one of the poorest areas of the country, it put a lot of resources into its national projects, and neglected its local ones."

It's history went back to the first Bedlam, the first institution of mental health. If you pop down to the museum at Bethlem Hospital, you will see a picture proudly displayed of the 700th celebrations in 1947, with the Queen Mother planting a tree. Well, not exactly planting, more like putting her foot on a spade. So, when some PR bureaucrat came up with the idea of 750th celebrations, it must have all made sense. An excuse for a year of corporate beanos. The Chief Executive could picture the MBE in the cabinet. There was only one problem: in 1947, the patients would have been well pleased with a party, in 1997 some patients wanted more."

In the so-called 'user friendly' 90s, I thought 'commemoration' was more appropriate. So, a few of us went to battle with the Maudsley PR machine. It was commemoration vs. celebration. I think for the first time, we were taking the user movement out of the ghetto of smoky hospital rooms and into the mainstream. We spoke at Reclaim the Streets and political events. We would gate-

crash conferences to push the message. I know we pissed users off by our style; personally I found some users more judgemental than the staff we talked to. They were even a few users who wanted to have their stall at the 'Funday' and cross our picket line. Frustrating. When that proposal was put to me, I lost my nut, which meant I threatened to bring Reclaim the Streets down to smash up their stall. Because of that remark, I had two police stations hassling me up to the day of our Reclaim Bedlam picnic and the picket at the staff ball, the appropriate opening event of the celebrations, had to be dropped.

We had our first picnic at Imperial War Museum, one of the sites of Bedlam Hospital; Simon Hughes MP came and spoke. Features in Big Issue and Nursing Times, and we were afloat.

Our next event was to screw up the Thanksgiving Service at St Paul's Cathedral which a member of the Royal Family was attending. BBC2's 'From the Edge' got in on the act for that one, and it's widely thought that because of our antics on the steps of St Paul's - as well as stopping the traffic at 11am with a boat forcing Tower Bridge to open - that the Chief Exec didn't get his MBE.

Our next event was to join up with ECT Anonymous and the All Wales User and Survivor Group and picket the Royal College of Psychiatry. It was the first time Reclaim Bedlam had been involved in International Direct Action. Keeping up the pressure on the Royal College of Psychiatry we hijacked their anti-stigma campaign, 'In Every Family in the Land'. The soundbite I used was: 'the psychiatrist is patting you on the head with one hand, and with the other hand he /she is using compulsory treatment to inject you up the bum.' (Pete Shaughnessy)

Hundreds of mental patients around the country supported Reclaim Bedlam, and the BBC2 series *From The Edge* made a programme about it. At a time of many community-care horror stories, a very different message was finally getting out.

Pete and others around Southwark Mind organized a demo against SANE head-quarters in 1999 "opposing their support (at the time) for compulsory treatment orders being proposed by the government - to no small part because of SANE's lobbying - things started to get serious. We managed to get 200 people turning up to the SANE march - which at the time was an unprecedented figure for a 'mad' demo. We had whistles, drums, a 7-foot long syringe together with a kitchen table, corn-flakes and milk,

tridents (because we're the devil), banners, flyer you name it - we pulled out the stops. SANE didn't know what the fuck had hit them. They dropped their support for CTO's and to this day, they're still reeling from this event."

Then Pete went on to found Mad Pride with Robert Dellar, Simon Barnett and Mark Roberts.

Mad Pride orchestrated a campaign of publicity and protest - holding a vigil on Suicide Bridge in Archway, to remember all of the people who've died there and all of the other people who commit suicide - 'murder by society'; protesting against the pharmaceutical industry's predominance over psychiatric services; organising a Mad Pride open-air festival in Stoke Newington in July 2000; the publication of a book 'Mad Pride: A Celebration of Mad Culture,' which was highly acclaimed and successful... "we got user-led mental health issues into the media as never before, and we inspired many people. We also, without a doubt, moved the paradigm of the British 'user movement' left-wards."

Pete Shaughnessy took his own life in December 2002.

For memories of him see:

http://www.asylumonline.net/archive/v13_n4_15-23.htm

Into the Deep End, Pete's chapter for *Mad Pride - A Celebration of Mad Culture*, edited by Ted Curtis, Robert Dellar, Esther Leslie & Ben Watson, is on line at:

<http://www.peteshaughnessy.org.uk/intothedeepend.htm>

<http://madpride.org.uk>

Closing the Emergency Clinic

More recently, South London mad folk were up in arms about the closure of the the Psychiatric Emergency Clinic at the Maudsley, the 24 hour emergency service for mentally ill people in crisis, earmarked for closure in October 2006. The mental health trust, the South London and Maudsley Trust, ran up surpluses in the preceding year, and was told it had to find £8m of savings the following year, because the two primary care trusts which fund the NHS locally were cutting their mental health budgets. The Maudsley's walk-in emergency clinic, the only 24-hour self-referral service of its kind in the UK, open since the 1950s, was

targeted for the cuts. The Maudsley said that King's College Hospital A&E, just across the road, was creating a separate area to deal with this, and that voluntary sector providers were coming in to run an information service: None of which has happened. Rallies, demos, of mad and allegedly sane alike followed for two years, but the clinic closed for clinical admissions and treatment in January 2007.

The chief executive of King's admitted that they never had any intention of creating a separate area to replace the emergency clinic. I'd rather be mad than a lying bureaucrat. The campaign continues.

Madness, Creativity, Individuality

"Creative Routes have identified normality as a mental health issue."

Creative Routes is an arts charity, run by the mad for the mad, which celebrates and promotes the unique creativity of mad people, promoting mental well-being, and creatively campaigning against discrimination and for the acceptance of individuality in society... they also believe MADNESS should be viewed positively facilitating an outpouring of immense and unique creative energy. Wahey!

CR run arts-based workshops available to mad people, collaborating with organisations like the Young Vic Theatre, the Royal Festival Hall, South London Gallery, Royal Court Theatre, Live Music Now and Endymion.

Apart from their arts work they have been involved in the campaign to prevent the closure of the Maudsley clinic and other campaigns, and since 2006 have organized the Bonkersfest on Camberwell Green: a free annual one day summer arts and music festival, illuminating and celebrating madness, creativity, individuality and eccentricity; combating stigma and promoting good mental health - A day of bonkers celebrations for everyone - bonkers or not

<http://www.creative-routes.org/>

SQUATTING

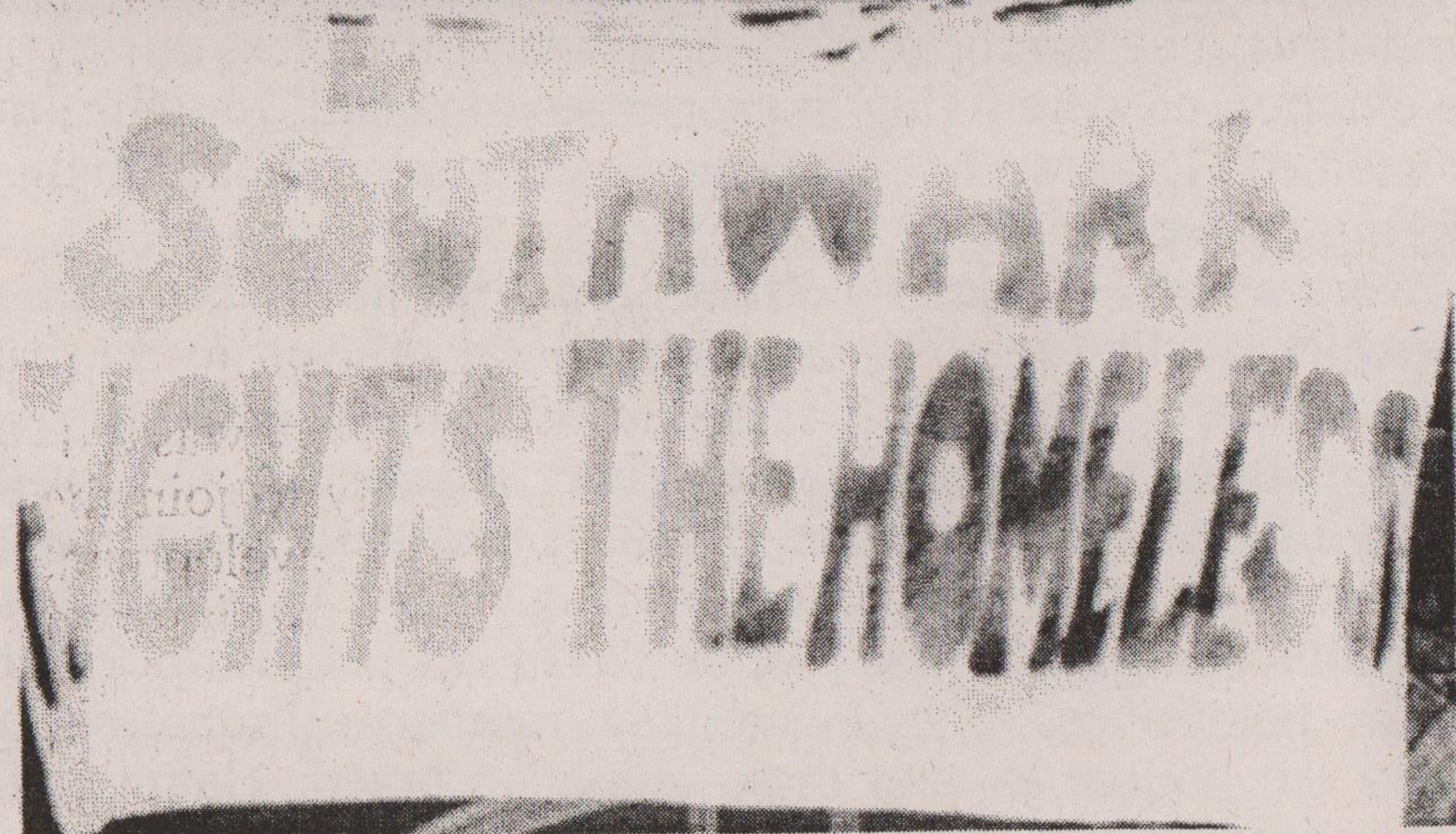
The modern squatters movement started in 1969, caused by the contrast of rising rents and widespread homelessness, while thousands of houses stood empty, many being slum clearances and Compulsory Purchase Orders, that local councils had left to rot for years (up to 7 years in some cases). The 1970s saw a huge increase in squatting, both for personal housing needs and increasingly as part of an alternative lifestyle that questioned, opposed or rejected traditional conformist ways of life, including work, the sanctity of private property (including leaving houses empty), and conventional social, sexual and economic values.

Southwark Family Squatters Association had originated in October 1970 when Lewisham squatters occupied some empty houses in Peckham. At this time councils had, under pressure from squatters and lengthening waiting lists, started to licence squats in property they were planning going to use, notably in Lewisham.

Squatting in Camberwell began in January 1971 in Cuthill Road, Allendale Road and Kerfield Crescent (all just to south of Daneville Road) in houses left empty, while the Daneville Road/Selborne Road area was waiting for redevelopment, scheduled in 1974. Southwark Family Squatters Association moved 4 homeless families in to nos 13 and 25 Cuthill Road, 44 Allendale, and 22 Kerfield Crescent. The Council claimed they were going to repair the houses and use them, but squatters, and others, had their doubts. The families had all been made homeless due to private eviction or were living in properties too small or unhealthy, and had been let down by the council refusing to rehouse them or dragging its feet.

There were some 1600 empty street properties in the Borough of Southwark at the time. Southwark Council refused to do deals with squatters as other councils had - the local authority was old-Labour controlled, John O'Grady (later infamously to join the gentrifying redevelopers of the London Docklands Development Corporation) was in charge, and their approach to housing and local politics in general was "we do stuff FOR people, they don't do it for themselves." They evicted the Camberwell squatters and trashed the houses to stop them being occupied, claiming the houses could be patch repaired & used for people in the normal way, and that squatters were "queue jumping".

In response the squatters launched a campaign for the Council to recognize the squatters, and give them licences... their tactics included marches, demos, and deputations to the Town Hall. On 21 April 1971 FSA families invaded the Town Hall Council Chamber, 50 people barricaded themselves in and held an alternative council meeting. When Council Leader John O Grady tried to speak the squatters' Mayor ruled him out of order! They also occupied Transport House (the Walworth Labour Party HQ on Walworth Road, since sold off) on 10 May 1971, 30 peo-



Camberwell Squatters occupying the Labour Party HQ

ple were involved, waving a banner reading: "*Labour Southwark fights the Homeless*".

The Council still refused to deal with the squatters, and pressed on in court, but good legal defences meant cases got adjourned in many cases. Some Council social workers were in fact supporting the squatters, despite pressure from above. Southwark applied for injunctions to stop named squatters entering council property - but made a mess of it. (A tactic revived by Southwark against squatters in the Heygate Estate in Elephant & Castle in 2006.)

No 93 Grove lane was the site of Southwark's Homeless Families Department. On 2 June 1971, the office of Edna Cummings (head of the Dept) was besieged, then occupied by Southwark Families Squatting Association. They answered phones and claimed they'd set up a new council department! 25-30 people got inside' other squatters stood outside with placards. They demanded Edna Cummings' resignation and more housing for homeless families. The 5 hour-occupation was eventually removed.

Eventually after the 1971 elections, younger, left Labour councilors who supported the squatters pushed through deals and many squats got licences. In July 1971 the council made deals with the FSA, led to Southwark Self Help Housing, a very respectable body, being set up. 30 houses were initially given over, many of which had been previously scheduled for demolition. It is still going today, having bought all its housing stock from the Council.

GLC squatters

In 1974, Elgin Avenue squatters got rehoused by the Greater London Council (which then owned 1000s of houses and flats all over the capital) in Rust Square, New Church St, St George's Way, Jardin St and Albany Road, around Burgess Park. 170 people were rehoused in 14 properties. These squatters had fought a long and widely publicised campaign for rehousing by the GLC, and arriving in South London, they of course got active and made links/caused trouble locally. They were still there in April 1976. At this time Kathleen Hoey and her family were squatting in Kitson Road (behind Addington Square/Rust Square). The coun-

cil took them off the waiting list because they were squatting council property; however the Housing Dept were at the same sending people down to the Rust Square squatters group with letters of recommendation! A widely publicised campaign was waged on behalf of the Hoeys.

Eventually the Rust Square squatters got rehoused again.

Camberwell Grove

In the 1980s many of Camberwell Grove's huge Georgian houses were lying empty, in decline. They were in a very bad state of repair, rising damp, wet and dry rot, leaking roofs, gutters/ down-pipes knackered, smashed windows. But their old spiral staircases had been listed, so the Council couldn't just knock them all down, to their great dismay.

Originally several houses, at least numbers 201 to 218, were squatted in 1983, and a community built up, which worked very communally and collectively at least for a while. Organic gardens, growing vegetables were set up, and many houses shared power supplies with each other - some of it obtained in slightly unorthodox ways:

"I lived for a couple of grim years, in a gigantic pile on Camberwell Grove, just round the corner from the top secret government listening station (easily identified by the large graffiti we used to place on local road signs reading "This way to Top Secret Government Listening Station"). I became adept at tapping neighbours gas and water supplies. At one point a resident eight houses down was supplying 40 squatters with power from the spur that ran the train layout in his garden shed. I think he had half a dozen Hornby Dublo models that, for the six months before they caught us, were drawing more power than the British Rail London to Manchester line..."

In 1984 Southwark Council offered them a deal: short-term tenancies of 18 months up to 5 years through Hyde Housing Association. This sparked a furious debate over what to do; since many squatters in those days, especially those influenced by anarchism and other similar ideas advocated refusing to co-operate with councils and other authorities at all. A leaflet was circulated urging people to do no deals, and a meeting (at no 207 in November 1984) urged this position. The majority voted to accept the deal with Hyde, though. Nos 201-218 were 'short-

lived' (given indeterminate licences to remain with no guarantee of rehousing or proper rights, but free from immediate eviction) in February 85. They formed a Housing Co-op. Some houses were taken to the high court for eviction proceedings in July 1985, and many were evicted around 1989-90, though some squatting survived and sporadically still houses in Camberwell grove were being occupied into the 21st Century. I'm not sure when the CO-op was evicted if it was...

Brunswick Park/ Vicarage Grove

Many empty houses were squatted in Brunswick Park & Vicarage Grove in the 1980s, most of which were initially divided into flats. There were 70 squatters in Brunswick Park and Vicarage Grove, c. 1984-87. It was very much a community: squatters set up an active group here, based at 9a, Brunswick Park, in March 1984. Plans for a communal centre in the basement of no 4 were being worked on in October 1984. The Council had no plans for the houses, but tried to evict squatters at first, though by April 1984 they had come to an unofficial deal (after some defeats and adjournments in court) that they wouldn't evict them till they had plans for the houses. The squatters regarded themselves as unofficial licensees after this... But the Council was constantly undecided as to what to do with the buildings; there were rumours (eg one which spread in November 1984) of plans to evict and gut them, make them unusable. In early '85 there were still odd attempts to evict individual houses... none succeeded. Cases usually got suspended.

On 24 Oct 1985, Council officers and workers turned up and evicted 2 squats here, helped by a van load of cops... and a High Court Sheriff. He claimed there had been notice given, which was a lie. 30 squatters soon gathered outside. Several houses were evicted, people's belongings were chucked out and their homes boarded and steel-doors attached. Then the Council and their lackeys bugged off... leaving the squatters to immediately re-occupy the houses!

The Brunswick/Vicarage Squatters group still existed in 1987, at this point it had its own van. Some squats were turned into galleries and museums. But by January '87 Southwark Council had evolved a pilot scheme to evict Brunswick Park and Vicarage Grove squats, do them up and use them for shortlife housing, ie

to evict some young single homeless to make room for other young single homeless. This was to become Borough wide policy for long term empties.

25 squatters from the two streets here went to a Housing Committee meeting in August '87; local council tenants had signed petition on support of them... But the scheme got voted in, and there were no more negotiations. Between 1987 and 1990, many of the squats were evicted, with some legal and not so legal resistance; several got adjournments in court on the grounds that they had had licences from the council, also the council had done work on them while squatted.

Some squatters in Brunswick and Vicarage formed housing co-ops, some of which I think still exist; and squats were still popping up in these streets occasionally until very recently.

Many other streets and estates in Camberwell have known squatting, over the last 40 years: especially the Elmington Estate, Crawford Estate off Coldharbour Lane, and the Southampton Way Estate (many of whose blocks have now disappeared), in Caldicot, Bavent and Cutcombe Roads near Kings College Hospital (many Lambeth Self-Help Co-op flats, whose long-term residents were moved out by the Hospital, on the grounds that they were planning to demolish them to extend the Hospital for much needed ward space, were squatted, then evicted in 1999 en masse; then sold off for huge profits.)

Skyrocketing house prices, changes in housing legislation, sell-offs of council property, and inner city gentrification (as the middle class decided that decades after leaving areas to the poor, now they want it back) have made self-help housing initiatives like squatting and housing co-ops endangered species, but who knows what will happen, with the so-called credit crunch and increasing council inability and unwillingness to house anyone at all. There are fewer empties than there used to be, but many newly built so-called luxury flats are now lying unused or unsold... Lets go for it! Crowbars at the ready...

Squat Venues

Camberwell has also played host to a number of squatted venues and social/political spaces and centres.

Dickie Dirts, at the junction of Coldharbour Lane and Denmark Hill: the old building used to be the Empire theatre, later a cinema, later still a clothing warehouse. It was squatted in August 1984 as a back-up/centre/crashpad/gigspace holding benefits, for the September Stop the City actions/defence fund. Stop the City was a series of days of action against the capitalist exploiters in the City of London, initially against firms making profits from war and arms manufacture, later expanding to oppose many other causes... 1000s of mainly young anarchist-influenced activists attacked, demonstrated against and besieged City institutions. The Dickie Dirts squat was evicted on 3 October '84 by cops, bailiffs and builders; the building's owners apparently turned up in a Rolls Royce to watch! The three people in Dickie Dirts at the time were kicked out. The police had broken in for bailiffs, obviously the Met were slightly aggravated by the Stop the City link. Dickie Dirts was resquatted several times, eg in June 86 for gigs, when Camberwell indie band House of Love played here. The Dickie Dirts building, after standing derelict for most of a decade, was demolished in Spring 1993, and a block of flats for homeless young people called 'The Foyer' was built on the site, plus a restaurant.

The *Labour Club*, at 84 Camberwell Church Street was squatted for gigs & parties in November 1990 or so... Some of crew involved had previously run the pioneering Peckham Dole House Squat 1989-90, one of first inner London Squat rave venues.

The Labour Club was described by Southwark Squatting/Housing Comic *Ship News* thus: "*Conscientious types, world muzak, Country and western etc... Scenewise, a bit off the beaten track. Labour party nipped back in to resquat their ideological home while occupants were out...*"

According to one of the organisers/residents:

"Not much I can remember about the Labour club, bit too tripped out. Got pigged one night when Eat Static were due to play... The Caff was on a Friday called 'Fresh From The Skip...' or something similar... Bands that played included Poisoned Electrick

Head, Back To The Planet, RDF, Brain Of Morbius... we also used to put gigs on in what is now The Stirling (or is it The Castle), over the road, even persuaded the Levellers to play for nout... The saddest thing about the place was that we weren't evicted, we all fucked off to a festival one weekend and when got back to London the owners (the labour party) had squatted it and were turfing everything out onto the road (we'd all moved out by then, squatting somewhere a lot cleaner in Peckham, the Labour Club was very difficult to use as a home although good as a



AT 84 CAMBERWELL CHURCH STREET
(EX LABOR CLUB)

EVERY FRIDAY 1pm till 8pm

CHEAP AND HEALTHY VEGETARIAN FOOD
CHOICE OF MAIN MEALS, SNACKS, SNACKS, SOUP, PUDDING,
TEA COFFEE

dow attached to some empty beer cans; if they'd bothered to look at the flex they'd seen it was attached to nothing. Thick cunts!!...

The building is now the Fus club...

Groove Park, 1990-2. A large squat centre/gig venue, occupying a Council childrens home in Grove park, closed down after a scandal due to mistreatment of kids in September 1990, and immediately squatted. It was renamed Groove Park, and put on gigs, cafes, raves, and other fun and games. "Human-sized ducks

hang from the ceiling. Parachutes in others; industrial waste grows into metal sculptures and the walls have been decorated by a dozen Jackson Pollocks." 20 odd people lived here, and formed an 'Arts Co-op'. leafletting the neighbours claiming to be all tee-total non smoking vegetarians (somewhat inaccurately). Many locals signed their petition to be allowed to remain in the building, including neighbour Terry Jones of Monty Python (though he later came round to complain about the noise, apparently!).

The old Muesli Factory behind the Joiners Arms was squatted around 1992-3, mainly for rave parties etc. By some of our remembrance, it could be a bit nasty in fact, a lot of aggro and some bad drugs.

Area 7, 64 Camberwell Church Street: An ex-Council Building squatted for an arts centre in 1993 but quickly evicted.

Camberwell Bus Garage, the northern half, formerly the tram depot, was left empty and squatted 1998 for exhibitions and parties. It's a bus garage again now.

Crawford squatted social centre, on the corner of Crawford Street and Coldharbour Lane, 2003. Run by the Black Star Collective (who had previously occupied another squat in the Coldharbour Lane area), the place held gigs, a "lost film festival", and served as a drop in centre for some local old Jamaican dudes... fter the collective handed out invitations to locals to come and get involved (in which they charmingly asserted that they "are well-mannered and reasonable people.... Not into drugs or anything alike." This building is still empty 5 years after its eviction by Lambeth Council.

Kwik Fit, Denmark Hill, was squatted for 2 (or more?) punk shows in October + December 2003.

Warham Street

The most recent squatted centre in Camberwell was briefly in existence from March to August 2007, at 190-192 Warham Street, off Camberwell New Road, opposite the union Tavern (and also opposite the site of the old Duke of York pub used by the National Union of the Working Classes 176 years before). The old Good Food Cafe was squatted by a group of mainly anarchist rebels and troublemakers living locally, some who had been involved in many alternative, radical and activists projects for years, some of who had been around slightly less time. It was quickly done up, replumbed and rewired, painted, and opened up, with weekly cafes, a bar, film nights, benefits, meetings, parties booksales and discussions... (as well as housing several people upstairs.) A large argumentative collective ran the space, organising events, fighting eviction from the property developing landlords, (holding them off physically and in court for a while). Hundreds of people came down, both locals and from further afield, and many widely varying happenings followed. The building was eventually evicted in August, and smashed up to prevent us going back in; though planning permission for their grotesque flat and shop complex has been repeatedly knocked back. But it was a fun and mind-expanding experience for the people who ran and frequented the space, re-invigorating some people's energy for collective rebelliousness and putting us in contact with others locally who felt like us. Unlike some previous squatted social spaces it was very open, wide in its appeal, welcoming and broad-ranging in what went down there. As the graffiti decorating it says: "Missing You..."

eat drink make merry at the
Camberwell Squat Centre

friday 13 April
7.30pm

cheap food... bar...
plus acoustic music from
the **no frills band**
("we play pissed")

192 Warham Street, SE5
(off Camberwell New Road)
Buses: P5, 36, 436, 185.
Nearest Tube: Oval.

Cafe nights every Friday... films
every Wednesday night... come
down and create your own event...

email: blackfrog@alphabettthreat.co.uk
check out our website: www.56a.org.uk/warham.html

Some of the story and writings from Warham Street can be seen at <http://www.56a.org.uk/warham.html>



ANTI-RACISM/ANTI-FASCISM

St Giles Church features the first recorded black presence in Southwark, as being in Camberwell, in its records of the African John Primero, servant to Sir Thomas Hunt, baptised April 3 1607, buried St Giles Church 3 Feb 1615. (Obviously this only means that earlier records may no longer exist).

West Indians began to settle in numbers in Camberwell in the early 1950s, an offshoot of the Brixton community, though there were more Pakistanis and Indians mixed in here. Caribbeans moved in mainly to the north of Camberwell Green, ie in the poorer parts of the area, mostly in run-down short lease 2-3 storey houses. The black community here was less dense, more scattered than the more obvious Brixton West Indian community; Camberwell was maybe a slightly more favourable climate than Brixton in some ways. There seems to have been less racial tension, maybe partly because the incomers were less clustered and noticeable as a group. The long association of Harold Moody and his family here as local doctor and activist may have also contributed to a more accepting attitude. Camberwell Borough Council were said to be more positive towards the migrants than Lambeth. A figure of 1500 black people comes up for 1956, though that can't be in Camberwell alone, as Brixton was quoted to only have 1000 black people then then (so perhaps its for the Borough?)

Since then clearly the population has grown, and black people now number some 20 per cent of Camberwell's inhabitants, according to the stats.

Racism and fascism have reared their head in the area; anti-racism has been around for just as long.

Harold Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples

Dr Harold Moody (1882-1947) was a doctor, activist, and founder of the League of Coloured Peoples in 1931.

Born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1882, the son of a pharmacist, He came to England to study medicine at King's College.

He was completely unprepared for the colour bar in Edwardian

London. He found it hard to find lodgings; after winning many prizes and qualifying as a doctor in 1910, he was rejected for the post of medical officer to the Camberwell Board of Guardians, despite being the best qualified candidate, because the matron refused "*to have a coloured doctor working at the hospital*": "*the poor people would not have a nigger to attend them*". Nice one, blame the poor for you own prejudices! In February 1913 Moody started his own practice in Peckham which became very successful.

For 30 years Dr Moody helped hundreds of black people who came to him in distress, having experienced at first hand a degrading, or humiliating aspect of the colour bar: finding it hard to get lodgings, or work. Moody would confront the employers and plead powerfully on behalf of those victimised.

He was instrumental in overturning the Special Restriction Order (or Coloured Seamen's Act) of 1925, a discriminatory measure which sought to restrict subsidies to merchant shipping employing only British nationals and required alien seamen to register with their local police. Many Black and Asian British nationals had no proof of identity and were being laid off.

Moody and other black activists founded the League of Coloured Peoples in 1931 in London, with the goal of racial equality around the world: the League was a powerful civil rights force until its dissolution in 1951. Though the League's primary focus was black rights in Britain, it also pursued other civil-rights issues, such as the persecution of the Jews in Germany. In 1933, the League began publishing its civil-rights journal *The Keys*.

At the inaugural meeting, the League established four main aims:

1. *To protect the social, educational, economic and political interests of its members*
2. *To interest members in the welfare of coloured peoples in all parts of the world*
3. *To improve relations between the races*
4. *To cooperate and affiliate with organisations sympathetic to coloured people*

In 1937, a fifth aim was added:

5. *To render such financial assistance to coloured people in distress as lies within our capacity.*

From the League's founding until the outbreak of World War II,

its primary focus was eliminating the colour bar in the British workplace, in social life, and in housing. Throughout Britain in the 1930s, black people were refused service in many restaurants, hotels, and lodging houses, and also found it extremely difficult to find a job in many industries; the medical profession in particular drew the attention of the league, most likely due to founder and president Dr Moody's personal struggles in that area. By 1935, a branch of the league focusing on equality in the shipping industry had grown to over 80 members. During the 1930s, The League of Coloured Peoples struck many blows for blacks in the workplace.

Dr Moody died in 1947 at the age of 64. He lived in a house in Queens Road, Peckham, which now has a blue plaque dedicated to him. On 1st May 1947 Dr Moody's funeral service was held at Camberwell Green Congregational Church, in Wren Road, opposite the Green. The Church was demolished in the 1980s.

Fascism

Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts reappeared as the union Movement on the streets of South London in 1957, having been defeated in their post-WW2 agitation (mainly against Jews) by the Jewish ex-servicemens 43 Group, which battered them off the streets. Several parts of Lambeth and Southwark had by now a growing West Indian community, which became the new focus for fascist hatred. By 1961 organisations such as the European Union of Fascists and the (original) British National Party were meeting regularly in the area. In October 1961 a BNP rally on Peckham Rye was attended by 60 people. The BNP's John Tyndall, later NF leader and later still in the 80s, reborn BNP fuhrer, used to speak on Camberwell Green... Never will again though eh, since he popped his little nazi clogs a couple of years back.

The National Front marched from Camberwell to Peckham, in the 70s and in, 1980, and on Oct 23 1982.

Local anti-fascists opposed the rise of such racist groups: Southwark Campaign Against Racism and Fascism was set up in 1976. In 1979 SCARF secretary Rod Robertson was prosecuted under the Representation of the People's Act, for a leaflet suggesting people not vote for the NF.

The Brunswick Ward By-election, 1991

In July 1991, the British National Party stood Steve Tyler as a candidate for the council by-election in Brunswick Ward (most of which consists of the Elmington Estate). Their campaign was vigorously opposed by local anti-fascists, squatters, etc, but they did manage to march in force round the estate.

At the time the Elmington was very run down, Southwark was one of the poorest boroughs in London. The Estate in fact had a transsexual trotskyist housing officer, I kid you not. Rachel Webb, who was actually a councillor in Lambeth at the time. The BNP campaign was aimed at attacking her and squatters living on the estate. "[Rachel Webb] is more interested in evicting white residents for being 'rascist' than in evicting the drunken and drugged up squatters that infest our estates." "Squatter scum off our estate" graffiti was seen round the estate at the time. There had also been racist attacks on the estate: dogs set on black kids and black families had their windows bricked; passers by had been hassled by a group of 20 white kids in combat gear, linked to the fash... At the time BNP were doing paper sales in East Street Market and the Blue in Bermondsey, and saw this area of South London as having potential.

10 or so people had to sign backing them from the ward, some of whom were living on the estate. It's possible that Charlie Sargent, later Combat 18 supremo, lived here at the time - he was officially living there a couple of years later.

The BNP campaign was opposed by a number of groups, including the South London branch of Anti-Fascist Action, which one of your authors was then active in. We took the position you have to oppose their presence as it leads to racial attacks increasing (as in Welling and Thamesmead at the time), even if electorally they were not going to win. We did leafleting, talking to people (some of group lived on the estate or in the area), one on notable occasion someone put an anti-fascist leaflet through a door and a huge black bloke came running out with a hammer, then stopped and looked at leaflet in his hand and realised: "oh, ANTI fascist action..." We had a rally on the estate, also we organised a public meeting in the Walmer Castle Pub on Peckham Road - which turned into a disastrous squabble between lefty factions. Some other left groups, plus some councilors (eg Ian Driver) were involved in the opposition to the BNP; others,

like the SWP, informed us the BNP were a distraction from the real issues. In contrast to their later position and their reforming of the Anti Nazi League. We had one march against the BNP, and the BNP in fact had a march of about 70 people round the estate, which we found out about too late and could do very little to oppose (although their transit got its windows bricked on the day). The day did consist of running round chasing shadows, not unusual for anti-fascist activity. Anti-fascists went into the *Orange Tree* pub on Havil Road, which was a bit of a mistake, as it was not too friendly, seemingly because there were some black people in the anti-fascist group. Nice.

BNP leafletters weren't as open as us, preferred to do publicity at 2 in the morning. They also didn't attack our rally or public meeting, a favourite tactic of theirs elsewhere in those times.

A Picket was held outside Town hall during the election count, ending in a fight - between two of the picketers, as some were squatters, and another was the Acorn Estate housing officer Willis, who was at the time going round kicking in squatters doors and evicting them illegally. The BNP's Tyler got 132 votes, quite a lot for a fringe candidate in a council by-election. Police heavily protected Nazis at the count.

Some dodgy white residents who were strongly suspected of being among those who signed BNP forms burgled squatters who were heavily involved in AFA activity; the squatters were forced to move.

After all this Rachel Webb did try to evict some of the people who'd signed the BNP list; which was something that divided the anti-fascists, not only as a tactic, but as it was clear to us that it was Labour/Council neglect of the estate that opened the door to the BNP, anti-fascism was not enough really, it had to be linked to opposing the council's running down of the area.

The BNP presence was not massively sustained and built on, as they never stood again.

THE ROLE OF ART

Camberwell is of course awash with artists, you can't chuck a paintbrush without hitting one. The presence of Camberwell College of Art partly accounts for this. But art, and questions about the role of art in the society that we live under, or a potential society that we could create, have long been posed here.

John Ruskin

"Trade Unions of England - Trade Armies of Christendom, what's the roll-call of you, and what part or lot have you, hitherto, in this Holy Christian Land of your Fathers? Whose is the wealth of the world but yours? Whose is the virtue? Do you mean to go on for ever, leaving your wealth to be consumed by the idle and your virtue to be mocked by the vile?"

The wealth of the world is yours; even your common rant and rabble of economists tell you that: "no wealth without industry." Who robs you of it, then, or beguiles you? Whose fault is it, you cloth-makers, that any English child is in rags? Whose fault is it, you shoemakers, that the street harlots mince in high-heeled shoes and your own babies paddle bare-foot in the street slime? Whose fault is it you bronzed husbandmen, that through all your furrowed England, children are dying of famine?" (John Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera*: 89th Letter (1873))

John Ruskin, 1819 -1900, who lived most of his life in Herne Hill and Camberwell, is best known for his work as an art critic and social commentator; he was also an author, poet and artist. Ruskin's essays on art and architecture were very influential in the Victorian and Edwardian eras.

As an Art critic, he was heavily judgemental. He Supported the pre-Raphaelites when they were widely disapproved of as being too avant-garde, and was particularly outspoken in support of Millais' "blasphemous" paintings of Christ.

His books on architecture, *The Stones of Venice* and *Seven Lamps of Architecture* argued that art cannot be separated from morality, by which he meant that the arts should be the expression of the whole moral being of the artists, and of the quality of the society in which the artist lived. He believed that man achieved their own humanity through labour, but through cre-

ative labour, not drudgery. He attacked mechanization and standardization of goods; this led him increasingly into rebellion against 19th century capitalism. "*Mens pleasure in the work by which they make their bread*" lies at the heart of a just society, this was his underlying thesis. His view was that Capitalism was turning workers into machines: he viewed craft and artisan skill as vitally important, and looked back in some ways to the Middle Ages, to craft-based guilds. He also condemned the separation of manual and intellectual labour... "*the workman ought to be often thinking, and the thinker often to be working....As it is... the world is full of morbid thinkers and miserable workers.*"

Ruskin lectured at the Camberwell Working Men's Institute; his talk on "*Work and Play*" was given on January 24th, 1865, and took this theme: that work had to be useful, fulfilling and enjoyable.

Fundamentally Ruskin condemned the division of labour, which formed part of the heart of capitalism. In many ways he pointed the way for liberals and radicals towards socialist ideas without quite going there himself. His ideas were crucially influential on the development of William Morris, and the Arts and Crafts Movement; he also influenced the setting up of the National Trust, the National Art Collections Fund and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

Following a crisis of religious belief Ruskin abandoned art criticism at the end of the 1850s, moving towards commentary on politics, under the influence of his great friend Thomas Carlyle. In *Unto This Last* he expounded his theories about social justice, which influenced the development of the British Labour Party and of Christian socialism. Upon the death of his father, Ruskin declared that it was not possible to be a rich socialist and gave away most of his inheritance. He founded the charity known as the Guild of St George in the 1870s and endowed it with large sums of money as well as a remarkable collection of art. He also gave the money to enable Octavia Hill to begin her practical campaign of housing reform. He also taught at the Working Men's College, London and was the first Slade Professor of Fine Art at Oxford, from 1869 to 1879, he also served a second term.

In 1871 Ruskin began publication of *Fors Clavigera: Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain*. Between 1871 and 1878 it was issued in monthly parts and until 1884 at irregular

intervals. Ruskin intended the work to be a "*continual challenger to the supporters of and apologists for a capitalist economy*". It was Ruskin's socialist writing that influenced trade unionists and political activists such as Tom Mann and Ben Tillett.

The League of Socialist Artists

Based at 18 Camberwell Church St in the 1970s, the League favoured ultra-marxist realist art, and sound today hilariously dogmatic. "*Our art must serve revolutionary politics. We place our art unreservedly at the service of the working class.*" By which of course they meant "*under the overall leadership of the Marxist-leninist party....*"

In some ways they echoed Ruskin's view of the role of art and the artist: "*Within [the] overall tasks of the proletarian socialist revolution a role of unprecedented importance devolves upon... creative artists. For it is precisely through art that science., the knowledge, understanding and experience of the laws of motion of the universe, including particularly of human society, is distilled... artists, whether of the visual or the dramatic arts, are no less than "engineers of the human soul" {JV Stalin}... Quotes from Stalin in the 70s, no less.*"

"*Proletarian socialist art is a reflection in artistic form of the class struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie... The method of artistic creation of proletarian socialist art is therefore proletarian -socialist realism...*"

They had some great rhetoric: "*we Socialist Artists declare our aims and work to stand completely apart from and in irreconcilable opposition to the formalism and commodity fetishism of capitalist art which serves at one and the same time to mystify the movement and conflict of social classes, to preach and inculcate the helplessness of man before the "unknowable" universe, and the "atomic chaos" of the "existentialist" society - as also to provide the effete, luxury loving ruling class with those soporific, sensationalised and alienated titbits which might, for an hour or a day, provide an anodyne to bring forgetfulness of the moment of doom for their class which the approaching proletarian-socialist revolution is bringing ever nearer.*" And so on... Socialist realism was the only path: "*In place of the pop art,*

mobile junk, psychedelic and other fringe lunacy of decaying capitalist art we will erect an art which expresses the dignity of working people, into which life is breathed from out of their very struggles..."

We hesitate to comment.

Camberwell Art College

Camberwell School of Arts & Crafts was opened in 1896, developed partly through links to the local printing industries strong in the Camberwell area.

In 1920, the School was occupied by unemployed organised in a local committee through the National Unemployed Workers Movement, for a place to meet and get stuff done, a social centre if you like. The NUWM, particularly strong in Camberwell, campaigned for the free use of municipal property such as Manor Place Baths and the Camberwell College.

In 1999 the College was occupied again, on 10 March 1999, by students in protest at lack of tutors, equipment, space, grants and hours of access. College management used various methods to harass them, including bogus fire alarms, threats to prosecute, turning off heating & hot water. 8 students were taken to court over the occupation.

That's it. For now. There's so much we haven't covered... Burgess Park. Music. 1970s Communes. The 1980s South London Animal Rights Movement held demos at the Institute of Psychiatry... the TOWN HALL - peace camp, the poll tax... feminism... so much more.

We know. Get in touch if you know about subjects, events, struggles, we haven't covered, or more info on things we have... Or are willing to do research towards a future larger publication.

SOME USEFUL READING

Life and labour of the People of London, Charles Booth, 1890.

The Story of the London Boroughs: Camberwell, Camberwell Borough Council.

A Tour of Camberwell, Olive M Walker (1954)

The Parish of Camberwell, William Herbert Blanch.

Southwark Trades Council: A Short History 1903-78, Dave Russell

Speak of Me As I am: The Black Presence in Southwark since 1600, Stephen Bourne.

The Story of Camberwell, Mary Boast.

A Description of Camberwell Fair, George Alexander Stevens (poem)

William Morris, Romantic to Revolutionary, EP Thompson,

London Chartism 1838-48, David Goodway.

Reports of the Committee for the Abolition of Camberwell Fair, 1855-6.

Letter From Crawford Social Centre to residents, 2003.

Manifesto and Theses on Art, League of Socialist Artists

The Squatters, Ron Bailey

Squatting, the Real Story

Mutinies 1917-20, Dave Lamb

Nine Days in May: The General Strike in Southwark

Unemployed Struggles 1919-36, Wal Hannington

Newspapers and Newsheets

South London Press

Fighting Talk (magazine of Anti Fascist Action)

Camberwell Candles Newssheet, Feb 1971.

The Wire/Ship News (Southwark Squatters newsheets)

Crowbar (Brixton squatters magazine)

Camberwell Occupaper (produced by Camberwell Art College occupiers 1999)
and various fliers, leaflets from squat centres

Personal Recollections and interviews, as well as research cheekily carried out online, especially on wikipedia, also contributed... Thanks to everyone who helped.

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