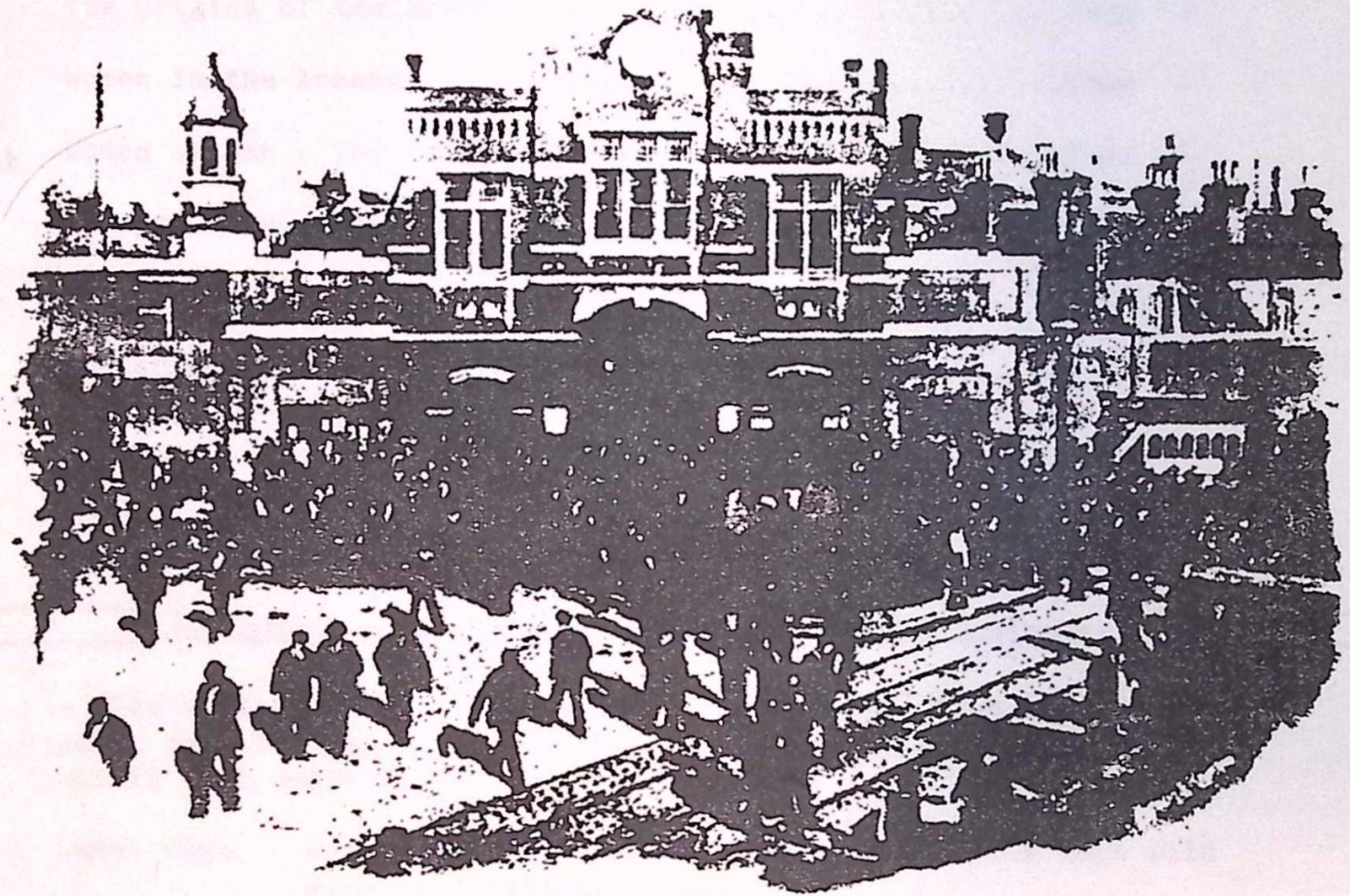
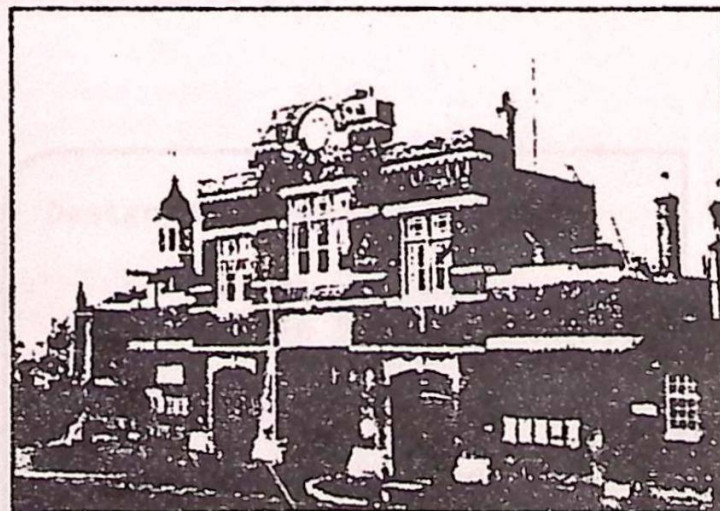


Eaglesfield School

HISTORY DEPARTMENT



WOOLWICH ARSENAL



WOOLWICH ARSENAL

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Relation of a Site to its Historical Context

- The ability to see the historical context in which the site is set, and the importance of the site, typically or atypically, within that context.

Level One: Generalised background with no connection made with site in question.

Level Two: Generalised historical, or historico-geographical or architectural background broadly placing site in question.

Level Three: Precise nature of site placed in its historical setting. Historical situations which gave rise to site related to specific characteristics of site.

Level Four: Significance of site in history - local, regional, architectural etc.

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THE IMPACT OF THE ARSENAL ON WOOLWICH

You need to begin this piece by describing the position of the Arsenal, its architecture and its origins.

1. FIRST PARAGRAPH - position of the Arsenal.
2. SECOND PARAGRAPH - brief description of architecture.
3. THIRD PARAGRAPH - brief history of the Arsenal using the following information.

THE ORIGINS OF THE ARSENAL

An arsenal is a place where guns are made and stored for the army and navy. There has been an arsenal at Woolwich for a very long time, but we do not know exactly when it started.

In 1585, in the time of Queen Elizabeth 1, war broke out between England and Spain. That year the government spent 133 on building and repairing a storehouse and workshop for weapons at Woolwich.

Two years later England was expecting to be invaded by the Spanish Armada. The government built gun emplacements at several places along the River Thames. These were to protect London. One of them was at Woolwich.

In 1651 England was at war with the Dutch. The government had three firing ranges built at Woolwich to test large guns. In 1667 England and the Dutch were at war again, and the Dutch navy was at the mouth of the River Thames. King Charles had large new gun emplacements built beside the river at Woolwich.

In 1696 the government moved the Royal Laboratory, for making explosives, from Greenwich to Woolwich. At this time the government did not have its own foundry for making guns. From 1704 to 1716 it had guns made at a private foundry in the City of London. In May 1716 an accidental explosion destroyed this foundry, and the next month the government decided to build its own gunmaking foundry at Woolwich. In the same year a regiment called the Royal Artillery was set up at Woolwich. Barracks were built for it by 1719. The officers in the Royal Artillery had to be very skilled, so a training school for cadets was set up at Woolwich in 1741.

Why do you think the government chose Woolwich as the place to put first the Royal Laboratory, then the foundry and artillery barracks, and then the training school for cadets ?

The laboratory, foundry, storehouses, workshops, barracks and school were all close together on one site called the Warren. This was an area of rough land on the edge of the marshes. It was to the east of the dockyard and behind the gun emplacements built in 1667. There was a lot of rebuilding at this site, and the size of the Royal Artillery grew. By 1763 there were thirty companies. These changes meant that more space was needed.

In 1776 the Royal Artillery were moved to new barracks on Woolwich Common. In 1777 the government bought more land at the Warren and the same year the Ordnance Stores at the Tower of London were brought to Woolwich and new storehouses were built.

About this time the ground level of part of the site was raised by adding eight feet of new earth. What do you think was the reason for this ?

From 1793 to 1815 England was at war with France. The need for guns and ammunition increased and so Woolwich Warren became more busy and important. There were more cadets as well. Already, in 1764 the training school had been given the name Royal Military Academy; in 1805 it was moved to the present buildings at the south end of Woolwich Common. In the same year King George 111 visited Woolwich and gave the Warren a new name - The Royal Arsenal.

The next section deals with the importance of the Arsenal during the first and second World Wars.

This is important because the Arsenal had a vital role to play in

- (a) the development of Woolwich;
- (b) the growth of housing;
- (c) the role of women.

This information will help you to explain how SIGNIFICANT THE SITE HAS BEEN IN THE HISTORY OF WOOLWICH.

Number of Civilian Workers at the Warren/Arsenal

1670	-	3	
1700	-	6	
1714	-	9	
1750	-	60	
1764	-	40	
1780	-	500	
1800	-	1500	
1814	-	5000	
1840	-	1000	
1854	-	2500	
1855	-	8000) Crimean War
1856	-	9000)
1861	-	10000	
1862	-	7088	
1870	-	4959	
1880	-	5153	
1914)		
)	75000	World War One
1918)		
1943		2300	Second World War

During the 1914-18 War the number employed at the Arsenal was:

75,000. 50,000 men and 25,000 women.

The most dramatic effect the Arsenal had upon the people of Woolwich was during the times of War. The following accounts illustrate this:

Great things were accomplished, especially when Lloyd George became Minister of Munitions in 1915. The main work carried out was the making and filling of all types of ammunition and the manufacture and repair of guns, carriages, mountings, ammunition boxes and transport of various descriptions. Labour difficulties arose, first of all because there was a shortage of manpower and secondly opposition to the "dilution of labour" by the employment of unskilled workers. Then came demands for pay rises for skilled men and women. In the summer of 1915 engineers and mechanics obtained an increment of 4s. and labourers demanded a similar award. When they obtained it they held a mass meeting at the Hippodrome in celebration of their victory.

It was not only in the Arsenal that great efforts were being made. Everywhere production was geared to the wartime demands and some unexpected orders came Woolwich way. Western Electric's programme of Post Office telephone development gave way immediately to field telephone equipment, mine detectors and detonator caps for shells. Among the inventories for the period are such interesting items as a field signalling system for the Servian army, a single-line set for the Russians and a complete "Airship Telephone Equipment" for use by the "blimp" balloon crews on anti submarine patrols.

Smaller firms innumerable were "roped in" and often called upon to manufacture special components. Typical of these was the firm of Herwin and Canny. In 1914, they were engaged in the manufacture of motor vehicles but on the outbreak of war there was a complete changeover, the plating of shell cases equipping of anti-aircraft vehicles and motor ambulances. Then in 1915, Mr. Herwin invented an automatic bombing vane which was put in production at the works and every British bomb dropped after 1915 was equipped with an exploding device invented by him.

And at the bottom of the scale were quite small establishments, often mere "one-man" businesses, all playing their part. At the back of the jeweller's or optician's shop, seemingly so remote from the business of war, skilled men might be found engaged in work of highest national importance.

For those whose daily work was not directly connected with the war part-time employment could be arranged, while boys from Secondary schools were encouraged to do voluntary clerical work in the Arsenal during holidays by the gift of a honorarium of 10s. a week. They could also, if they wished, go along with other lads and join the local Cadet Corps. The grown man who still had time to spare and desired to serve his country joined the Woolwich Battalion of South London.

As the War progressed the work done in the Arsenal became of vital importance. Workers were given little lapel badges to show that they were excused military service because they were needed for vital work in the Arsenal. Indeed, Lloyd George recalled many skilled men from the Forces and put them to work in the Arsenal.

All this and the Zeppelins and Gothas meant the end of glamour and glory. Drafts going off to the Front were still headed by the band but the men did not sing, spectators cheer or girls run out to give Tommy a farewell kiss. It was all very well for the band to play "Pack up your Troubles", they would be back again in barracks in half an hour, playing pontoon or having a quiet snooze while the draft was on its way to the jaws of death.

So the months dragged on and the food queues lengthened and the guns of Flanders were said to be heard on Bostall Heath. The death of Lord Kitchener was a terrible blow to the nation and in Woolwich the sinking of the "Hampshire" brought additional sense of personal loss among those who had known and worked with Sir Frederick Donaldson. Such tragedy also served as reminder that there were but few families in Woolwich without some member serving overseas and to the heartache of separation was joined the fear of what might yet come.

And then there were the air raids. First came the Zeppelins to London in May 1915, and Woolwich was involved in some half-dozen attacks before the success of defence measures put an end to them. On September 2nd 1916 cheers went up in the streets of the Town when a Zeppelin was seen in flames to the north-east. Fourteen airships trying to reach London were being attacked by gunfire when Lt. Robinson, in spite of the "flack" flew up and pumped three drums of machine-gun bullets into the great S11 which burst into flames and fell to the ground at Cuffley. He was awarded a V.C. for his exploit and there is a memorial monument to him in Old Cuffley.

After a lull while the enemy prepared a new plan came daylight raids by Gotha aeroplanes. In June 1917, the Albert Docks were badly damaged and two hundred people were killed in the City. In the following month, on 7th people on the heights of Plumstead were startled to see German planes making their way quite low and apparently unimpeded up the Thames. Warnings sounded, troops confined to barracks, work in the factories ceased. Anti-aircraft defences were not equal to this form of attack but bitter criticism spurred those responsible into swift action. By September measures taken were so successful that the enemy could no longer afford day bombing. There followed nine months of moonlight raids, the worst, in May, 1918 proving also to be the last over London. Experiments, many of them carried out over Woolwich Common, had been successful in establishing ground to air wireless communication which was used to excellent effect during the closing stages of the war.

Air raid casualties and material damage were not extensive during the first war. Only six bombs were dropped inside the Arsenal itself though frequent warnings meant cessation of work and consequent loss of output.

Because of the danger involved in working at the Arsenal accidents sometimes happened as the following account shows:

"Safety precautions in the Arsenal, based on the experience of peace time disaster and consequent research, had reached a high state of efficiency and there was no serious occurrence during the war. The greatest tragedy by far in the locality was the "Silvertown Explosion" of January, 1917. The Pioneer of the 26th tells how, on the previous Friday, the whole of London was startled by the biggest explosion that had every occurred in the Metropolis.

Just before 7 pm a fire broke out in the Brunner Mond chemical works in Silvertown where explosives were being refined. The alarm was sounded and the buildings were being evacuated when the whole site blew up together with other factories, warehouses and row upon row of small houses over a wide area. There was a blinding flash of light, visible all over London, buildings north and south of the river reeled and staggered with the shock while the crashing of windows and the clang of fire-bells raised pandemonium. Then, mingling with the flare of flames, came a pall of smoke through the dust-laden air. The whole district was cordoned off and strenuous efforts made to reach the victims and contain the flames. The interval between the outbreak of the original fire and the explosion which came later proved a death trap to the fire-fighters first on the scene. Sixty-nine people were killed, some 400 injured and hundreds of others rendered homeless. A government inquiry was set up immediately, rumours spread to magnify the extent of the disaster and, as is usual on such occasions, especially in wartime, sabotage and espionage were freely hinted.

Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd George called upon Mr. Will Crooks at his Poplar home on the Sunday to express their deep sympathy. The Prime Minister promised that everything would be done to discover the cause of the explosion and gave assurance that red tape would be cut to ensure swift and generous assistance to victims and dependants.

A local office was opened where enquiries could be made and claims lodged. Everything was done to relieve hardship and distress; but human anguish is not so easily overcome and is not compensated by gifts in cash and kind."

An important aspect of this piece of work is to explain how the Arsenal affected the lives of the people of Woolwich. One of the greatest changes it brought was in raising the status of women in society. Before the war it had been thought that women could not do the same work as men. The following account destroys this belief and helped them in their later demand for voting equality with men.

WOMEN IN THE ARSENAL

An interview with Mrs. Florence Clarke, on 1st February 1982. Mrs. Clark was born in 1888. During the 1st World War she worked in the Arsenal in Woolwich.

Q. How did you get the job?

A. I went for it myself and got it. I worked there for two years. I worked nights, loading TNT for the anti-aircraft guns.

Q. What hours did you work?

A. I worked nightwork 6pm to 6am. We had lovely meals, lovely hot dinners. We were well looked after. They fed us up for Christmas.

Q. What do you remember about the Arsenal?

A. We had to wear a veil over our heads because of the dust. It was poisonous. I was putting TNT into anti-aircraft guns and then packing them up with powder. You had to shake them down and then tie them down. If you had a hot hand it was really dangerous. You had nurses walking around all the time. Oh I got a decent wage, 1 to 30 shillings a week for 12 hours. We had two or three hot meals a day and plenty of milk, always plenty of milk. You could smoke in the canteen but not in the other rooms. We used to have to wash the TNT rooms out before you came off in the morning, wash it out for the day workers. You had to do the same work every day and wear the same clothes, a veil, long gown. They were clothes like a nun. After a while I was going yellow in the face. They used to lift your veil up to see if you were conscious. The nurses did this. Often they used to say 'sing out Florrie'.

Q. What did people call you when you went yellow?

A. The canaries. They said we had hearts of gold to go in those places. My poor old mother nearly dropped down dead. My sisters had all become servants. My brothers were in the army and one in the navy. My mother was very worried about me. The people of Woolwich thought we were marvellous to work in the Arsenal, like Florence Nightingales going in there. I had to leave the Arsenal because I was going all yellow. They discharged me. I recovered.

WOMEN AT WAR - The Woolwich Canaries

Benny Green : When men working at the Royal Arsenal at Woolwich flocked to the colours in 1914, the authorities advertised for women to take their places. Young girls, few of whom had any idea of the dangerous nature of the work, came from all over London to apply for the jobs. But it was not only patriotism which inspired the girls to want to work in munitions; the wages also attracted them. Kitchen-maids who had earned five shillings a week in service found themselves earning four pounds a week making shells. And if the girls did not mind the danger, they could earn even more - in the danger buildings, making fuses and handling volatile explosives, like cordite.

Sixty years later, the women who worked in the danger buildings still remember what it was like. Any fragment of grit or metal might cause friction. Friction would make sparks, and sparks could lead to an explosion. So, in the danger buildings, the girls left all their personal clothing and possessions in the dressing rooms and put on special uniforms. Only then could they pass into the 'clean' area - the danger area.

- Mrs. Ellis : The uniform was a long, white coat with a white beret-shaped hat, into which we tucked our hair.
- Mrs. Clarke : After we came out of the dressing rooms, we did not touch the ground; we walked along platforms. All the buildings were surrounded by water. I suppose that was in case of fire; if one shop went up, the others would be alright.
- Ellis : Women had not worked in the danger buildings before, so when we first arrived, there were no women's toilets. The men were allowed to use the toilets between eight and nine o'clock, the women between nine and ten, and so on throughout the day, until women's toilets were provided. Inside the danger buildings, the girls worked for two weeks filling shells, and then for two weeks weighing explosive powder. Working in the TNT powder shop was everyone's least favourite job.
- Mrs. Mascal : I think it was the dust in the shop that got round our faces, and our hands turned a very dark yellow colour. People called us canaries.
- Mrs. Butler : And we had to drink two pints of milk a day and bath before we went home. It was very dangerous stuff we were working with. To their credit, the Woolwich Arsenal authorities did what they could to protect the health of the girls. There were regular medical examinations, for working with TNT was a health risk, to hands, throat and eyes. And the girls had frequent blood tests in an attempt to ensure that the amount of powder absorbed into the system was not too high. In fact, these girls were as much in the front line as the soldiers in the trenches. Keeping a watchful eye over this female army throughout the Great War was the formidable superintendent, Lilian Barker.
- Martin : That a girl had 'got into trouble' was, of course, discovered when she had one of the regular medical examinations. She then had to report to the superintendent.
- Butler : The Superintendent did not mind too much the first time a girl got into trouble, but the second time she sacked her.
- Clarke : And if she found out that it was an arsenal man, married or single, who had got the girl into trouble, he went as well.

Lilian Barker arrived at Woolwich in 1915 to watch over 500 women. By 1917 she had in her charge well over 20,000, both married and single. Those who became pregnant were usually allowed to work until the seventh month of their pregnancy and there were two creches where children could be left in the care of professional nurses. Like the arsenal itself, the creches were open day and night, and while their children were being looked after, the 'munitionettes' as they were called, worked an 84-hour week of days or nights.

Mrs. Penwarden: At night it was difficult to keep awake. The worst part was falling forward on to the machine. But a man used to walk up and down with a stick and used it to poke a sleepy girl with. Her head would then jerk up. But he also used to give a nod to a woman, who would come along turn off the machine and take the sleepy girl outside. She would say 'Come and wash your hands.' The girl would move sleepily forward to wash her hands, and the woman would sling water in her face. 'Now wake up, wake up' she would say.

When the Zeppelins raided London Woolwich Arsenal, the power-keg of southern England, was an inevitable target.

Ellis : The only time that I was really very nervous was on a Saturday morning. We had been working quietly when somebody looked up and saw through the window a damned great Zeppelin right overhead. We knew that if somebody opened fire on it we had had it. But not one gun was fired at it. The Zeppelin simply turned round and followed the Thames out to sea.

There was every reason for the girls to be nervous. One stray spark and it would have been the end of the war for them all. If they needed any reminder of this, there was a high-explosive factory over in Silvertown which, in 1917, blew up so violently that, for the next 50 years, the authorities released no details of the incident to the general public.

Ellis : It must have gone up somewhere between six and half-past six in the evening because I was on my way to night-work and was waiting for the tram at Eltham Church. The explosions were just like the Prince of Wales feathers - one big one in the middle and two smaller ones to the left and right.

Penwarden: The sky lit up and there was a terrible sound - an 'ooooh' sound - and then a terrific bang.

Butler : The Silvertown explosion was dreadful. People talk about the bombing, but that was nothing. The whole of Silvertown was on fire. To me, it seemed like the end of the world.

The girls at Woolwich did not escape entirely from explosions, and though the subject was taboo, it was the centre of endless speculation in the danger shops. After all, no matter how much the authorities tried to pretend nothing had happened, the girls could hear a bang and they could see a fire.

Penwarden : We were told to hide our eyes and that we must not run out, but sit and wait. Ambulances came to take away the injured. Then men came with hoses to wash away the blood; and they also swept up the detonators and took them away in a special container because they were 'dirty'. If it was noon or so, the authorities would say: 'Well, its a bit too arly for dinner, but you'll have to make this your dinner-hour because you've got to work twice as hard this afternoon to make up for all this lost time. But not many of us were able to eat: we could keep on drinking tea. And when we came back to the shop, our places were all ready, with a fresh lot of detonators in. We just carried on working.

Before the end of the Great War, there were 27,000 women working at Woolwich Arsenal. Without them, most of the 19 million filled shells, the 46 million filled cartridges, the 59 million fuses would never have been produced. Women had shown that they could operate the machinery of heavy industry, and their great contribution also gave tyhem the political muscle that the suffragettes had once dreamed of.

HOUSING - WELL HALL

Social workers soon became increasingly worried about the moral dangers inseparable from the situation. Not men only but women and girls and young lads lured by the prospect of high wages for unskilled though patriotic work flocked into the town, emancipated from family ties, flush with unaccustomed cash in the glamorous atmosphere of wartime. Lodgings were hard to find, overcrowding and other undesirable conditions resulted.

The Pioneer newspaper, as early as January 1915, complained about the house famine and urged the Council to do something about it. Council, however, were unwilling to embark on enterprises which might saddle the town with a post-war glut of empty houses. They felt that the Government should bear the responsibility, and this the Government did.

The Well Hall Estate, constructed between February and December 1915, provided 1,300 homes on 96 acres, beautifully designed in a pleasant situation and on the tram and bus route to Woolwich. It was expected that the average cost of each house would be £450 but in the event it was nearer £700. It was wartime and this was an undertaking where speed was essential. Rising prices, overtime and Sunday work, strikes by labourers and scaffolders added to the cost but the enterprises was accomplished in record time.

On completion, the estate was handed over to the L.C.C. and it remained in their care until 1920 when the Office of Works took over the administration. In 1925 it passed into the hands of Progress Estates, a company owned by the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society. After 50 years, the estate is still visited by town planners on the lookout for something worth studying, and the praise meted out by the Daily Chronicle in January 1916 for the "Wonderful Garden Village" is re-echoed today. In contrast, temporary hutments were erected nearby to serve their purpose while the war lasted. In fact, many of them were not demolished until the early 1960's.

After the First world war ended the future of the Arsenal came under review. Although an Arsenal was a national necessity, Woolwich was not a good site for it. It was far from the coalfields and steel centres, liable to air attack and of bad layout which made economic production impossible. Costs were also affected by high rates of pay in the district. Lastly, three miles of river front of great commercial value were being wasted.

But Woolwich Arsenal had to be retained all the same. It had manufacturing capacity and experimental facilities which no other factory had, it was near to government departments in London and to the practice grounds at Shoeburyness and it had trained personnel who lived in the district. Work should be available for 10,000 men but no shell filling should be undertaken in the future. If government orders were not sufficient to occupy all the workers, private contracts ought to be undertaken.

Certain experimental work continued in the immediate post-war years, but there was under-employment and civilian orders were sought. Milk churns were made for the Ministry of Food, war medals, penny blanks, railway engines and wagons. The experiment was not a success, the engines especially proving difficult of disposal and remaining for a long time part of the Arsenal landscape. Moreover private firms made representation about unfair competition, as when the Dairy Appliance Manufacturing Company complained about the churns. The Government, in reply, said that the Arsenal must have work to ensure continuous employment for the men it had to retain on the pay-roll: and it was decided that where the Arsenal could compete fairly without subsidy from the taxpayer, it would accept outside work.

THE ARSENAL DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR --- ---

When George Hicks made a tour of the Civil Defence Centres in the summer, he found that the Force had been practically halved, for Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour, was "scraping the barrel". Direction of labour was in operation, men and women could, within limits be sent to work wherever there was a demand for their particular skills. In the Arsenal, more than 13,000 workers had been transferred to other factories after the bombing in the summer of 1940, but in the spring of 1943, the numbers employed had been increased by 4,000 and now amounted to 23,000 - a mere quarter of the peak total of World War 1.

THE ARSENAL AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR --- ---

Then there was always the fate of the Arsenal to worry about. "We progress by thundering" had been its motto over the years but, with less thunder needed, regression had assuaged some of the fears and the number of workers rose from 8,300 in 1947 to over 9,000 in 1952; but the Shop Stewards' Committee pressed for a long-term policy of civilian contracts and a large reduction of the amount of armament work given to private firms. The Government still felt the need to retain a nucleus of skilled men in the Arsenal and alternative work was allocated. This time it was railway trucks instead of locomotives, knitting frames for the silk stocking industry in place of milk churns. But the writing was on the wall in shape of a notice of the sale, in 1950, of three acres at the western end of the Arsenal for extension to the power station. The Duke of Edinburgh had interested himself in the matter and paid a visit to the Arsenal in October 1952, a month before he was entertained at the Royal Artillery Mess. Then a Select Committee on Estimates published its report in the summer of 1953. The Chairman was Sir Donald Perrott whose family was not unknown in Woolwich. In the 19th Century they lived at Brookhill where the gatekeeper's lodge can still be seen in Elmdene Road; and Sir Edward Perrott was the first churchwarden of St. Margaret's Plumstead, in 1859, Perrott Street, near the Arsenal Middle Gate, perpetuates the memory of the name Committee recommendations included abolition of the filling factories, amalgamation of ammunition, gun and carriage factories and the sale of 112 acres for a trading estate.

The future of the Arsenal is now in the minds of the people of Woolwich as the following account shows.

The Mercury, May 27, 1982.

ARGUMENT AGAINST A PRISON - It could be a penal dustbin.

The first major new prison to be built in years is to be sited at Woolwich Arsenal. Housing 800 male prisoners - up to 50 of them dangerous category 'A' inmates - the prison could be operational in under ten years.

The Home Office argues the jail is "a vitally important remedy in the country's appalling prison conditions". It adds: "We have been searching for 20 years to find a suitable site and Woolwich is the best in London." But prison reformers argue it is not a question of finding a suitable site. They believe no new prison should be built at all. Instead, they advocate a long, hard look at our present penal system which, they say, isn't working.

Andrew Friar is assistant director of the Howard League, a penal reform group. Stephen Shaw is director of the Prison Reform Trust, a national group also dedicated to penal reform. Coincidentally, both men live in the Greenwich and Plumstead areas so the issue is, literally, on their doorsteps. This week they put their case.

The largest prison to be built this century is coming to Woolwich. A massive 800-place prison and court complex is to be sited on the Woolwich Arsenal. We believe that this will be a tragedy. But unless action is taken quickly, it will simply be too late to prevent the plans from going ahead.

The Home Office proposal to build a new prison has aroused much local opposition. However, much of it has been confused and the Home Office has not been forced to rethink its plans. An opportunity to air the issues properly at the recent public inquiry was lost. As a result, work on the construction of the new prison - the biggest white elephant in the penal system - could now begin.

Arguments against the prison have taken two forms. First, that the land could be given over to more productive uses than building a prison. With the present rate of unemployment in Woolwich, the release of a prime site like the Arsenal is of vital importance to job prospects in the area. This is the anything-else-but-a-prison argument.

Secondly, that the local residents do not want the prison. This has gathered force with the knowledge that the prison will house a small number of top security prisoners. This amounts to saying "anything else but here".

Woolwich Prison must be stopped because all the evidence suggests that it will become a penal dustbin of the 21st century and will perpetuate our reliance upon imprisonment as a response to crime. Our banner should be "Not here and not at all".

It is the whole Home Office strategy which is at fault. If we can stop Woolwich Prison, we can change the strategy. Britain is spending some 500 million a year to imprison mainly petty and non-violent offenders. How much better if those who have committed crimes were paying back society. At the moment, it is society that pays. We advocate offenders being ordered to pay compensation more often or to do work for the community, to pay for their crimes.

There is a need to hold a few people in custody when they are a serious danger to other citizens, but this would be a small percentage of present numbers. Petty offences should be dealt with in the community, preferably in a way which allows some reparation to the community.

Some petty offenders are not petty, they are poor and should never have been charged with offences in the first place.

Woolwich Prison will cost tens of millions of pounds to build. In the present economic climate, it is scandalous to spend money on such a project.

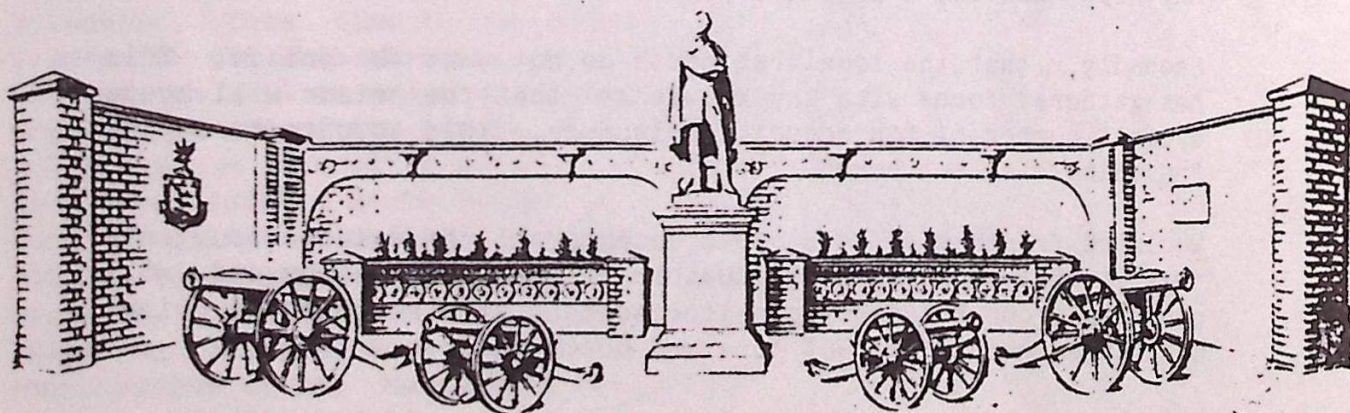
The solution to overcrowding is not to build more prisons. They soon become overcrowded and start to decay. A new prison at Risley, near Manchester is said to be already in a state of disrepair after ten years.

The real answer is to reduce the prison population so that prison is used for those people from whom we all must be protected.

There is a feeling that nothing can be done to stop the prison. This is nonsense. But equally, let no-one underestimate the difficulty of halting this project. The opportunity afforded by the public enquiry has now passed us by. The enthusiasm of the Home Office for this site knows no bounds. What is needed is a determined effort bringing together the various strands of opposition to the proposed prison. We need a concerted campaign to mobilise opinion and organise protest.

The arguments need to be presented as honestly and as forcefully as possible, because all will benefit from falling crime rates and from better penal policies.

We have all the arguments on our side. We have all the supporters, but time is very short.





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DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

Prudence, in the second place, will not dissuade us from the attempt, since a long and successful experience has shown the necessity of a change in our political situation. In every stage of our former existence, the American people have declared their independence, and their loyalty to the King of Great Britain, and their attachment to the British Constitution, as the only foundation for their peace and safety. But in every stage of this process, they have been betrayed by those who professed to cherish their rights and liberties. The same betrayers have again and again, in the face of the most solemn declarations, violated the sacred trust, and have endeavored to bring down upon us the arms of a foreign power. The same betrayers have again and again, in the face of the most solemn declarations, violated the sacred trust, and have endeavored to bring down upon us the arms of a foreign power.

It is the duty of the American people to declare their independence, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them. We therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled, do hereby declare that these United States are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connections between them and the Kingdom of Great Britain are and ought to be dissolved. We do hereby declare that we have full power to do so, and that we do so in the name of the American people.