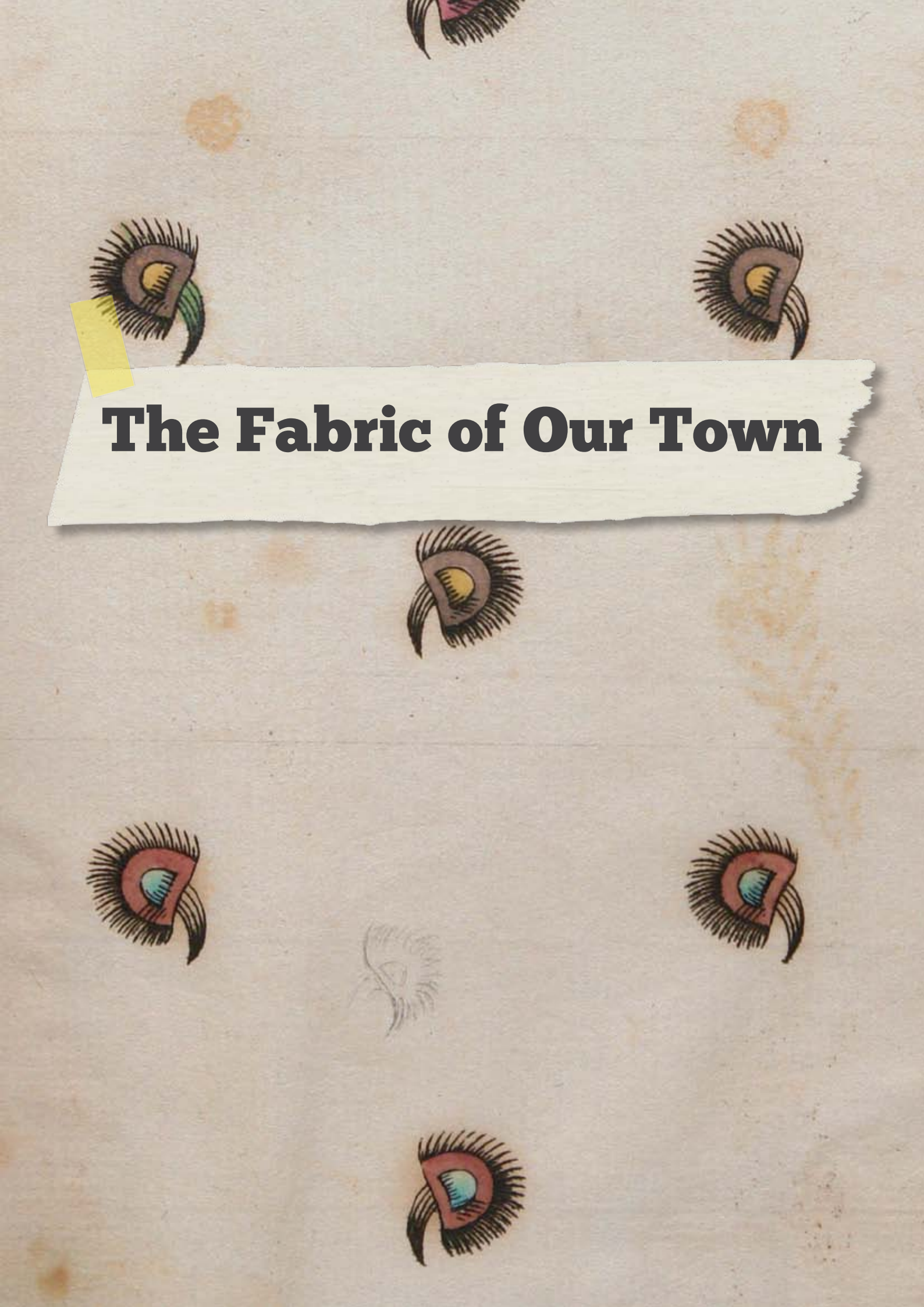




The Fabric of Our Town

All Hope Abandon Ye Who Enter Here

"All hope, abandon ye who enter here."

The words seemed to mock me as I passed through the entrance of the Dartford workhouse. After months of such hardship I thought it impossible to sink any lower. These cold, harsh words were the final indignity. Why am I here? I'm old, nearly eighty years of age and have no family to keep me. When my illness forced me to give up the job I'd had since I was a boy, I could no longer pay my rent and was forced to come here to beg for help.

Now I'm sitting outside the Master's Office waiting for him to admit me. My Sunday best was pawned a long time ago, so the sorry rags I'm wearing are all I have left in the world. Soon even they will be taken from me and once in uniform I'll blend in so perfectly with the grey walls of the workhouse that Richard Roberts will be invisible to the world outside.



A tram passes by the Dartford Workhouse building on West Hill. Richard Roberts was admitted to the Dartford Union Workhouse on Sunday, 14 August 1904. Crayford Town Archive



The Dartford Workhouse today. The workhouse eventually became West Hill hospital before closing in 2000. However the main workhouse buildings were saved and are now private flats and offices. Peter Daniel

THE UNION INSTITUTION. A RECORD OF CHANGE AND ITS EFFECTS. *Chronicle* 25-9-1924

Following the reform of the Poor Laws in the reign of William IV., Dartford Union Workhouse was established in the year 1836. On one of the hills overlooking the town from which the Union took its name it was erected and surrounded with high walls. It resembled a prison or a fortress rather than a home of rest and a refuge for the needy, but it was an acknowledgment of the fact that humanity makes certain demands on humans.

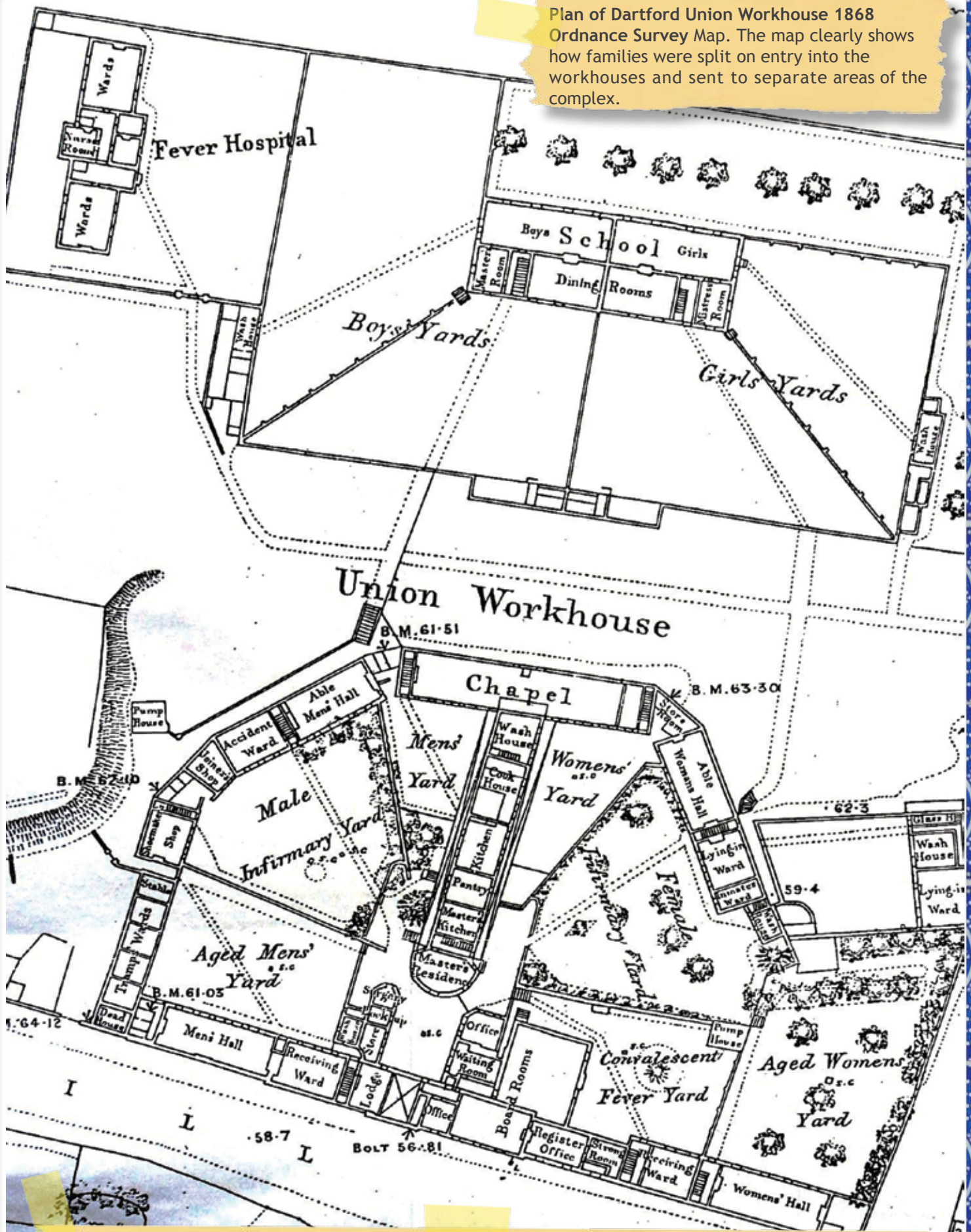
The expression of this acknowledgment in the shape of gloomy buildings, small grated windows, labour yards with iron grills through which stones were passed before the casual was liberated from his cell like lodging and a dreary front elevation, which prompted one to look over the portals for the inscription, "All hope abandon ye who enter here," stood unaltered for well nigh a century. It was the only institution which defied the processes of time and the changes due to the advances of men's minds, and it remained to be an anachronism and an eyesore. The

The Dartford Chronicle, 25 September 1924



Elderly inmates of the workhouse. 1905

Plan of Dartford Union Workhouse 1868
 Ordnance Survey Map. The map clearly shows
 how families were split on entry into the
 workhouses and sent to separate areas of the
 complex.



Dartford Poor Law Union was formed on 19th May 1836. It was overseen by an elected Board of Guardians representing 21 local parishes (figs in brackets indicate more than one Guardian): Ash-next-Ridley, Bexley (2), Crayford (2), Darenth, Dartford (2), Eynsford, Erith, Farningham, Fawkhams, Hartley, Horton Kirby, Kingsdown, Long-field, Lullingstone, Ridley, Southfleet, Stone, Sutton-at-Hone, Swanscombe, East Wickham, Wilmington.

God Save the King!

That outside world passed by the barred windows of the Receiving Ward that fronted onto West Hill. Through them I watched as a tram trundled by so close I could recognise the faces of some of my former workmates at Swaisland's, the fabric printers, who were sitting on the top deck. In a few minutes they would be getting off for work opposite the new clock tower they'd built in Crayford to mark the coronation of King Edward VII. We'd had a right good knees up when they'd built that.

The whole town had come out to march behind the Swaisland's brass band and a coronation banner made by the silk printers at David Evans that declared our loyalty to the new king. I think I must have been the only one there old enough to realise how different things were the last time there'd been a coronation when a young Queen Victoria had been crowned so many years ago.

That day King Edward was crowned I followed the procession as far as St Paulinus church but as they wheeled off towards the Rectory Field I was suddenly so overcome with emotion that I'd had to sit down and rest. A vision of a long forgotten scene had flashed into my mind for a second, then dived away leaving me gasping for air. The wind, the tower, the weather-stained old porch had not changed. The sunshine and clear blue sky never change but those I'd once joined on a very different march so many years ago were no longer with us. Their lives had once interlocked with mine like the warp and the weft of a fine calico cloth but now all that was left of them were their faded shadows stored in my memory.



Crayford Clock Tower. Built by Dartford Rural District Council in 1902, it served as a sewage lift station as well as commemorating the coronation of Edward VII.

Crayford Town Archive



Edward VII Coronation Parade Church Hill, 1902. The children of Crayford National School marched behind a silk coronation banner made for them by David Evans.

Crayford Town Archive



*St Paulinus Church, Crayford.
Watercolour by William Hubbard, c1840*



*St Paulinus Church, from near the entrance of
the Rectory in Perry Street Crayford.
Watercolour by William Hubbard, c1840*

The Hungry Forties

In my youth Crayford once stopped at St Paulinus churchyard. No single building ventured farther; the houses ran the other way instead, pouring down the steep hill in a tumble of bricks and roofs. We had no station then, just the London Dover Road that connected us with the outside world.

Along that very same road, by the Bear and Ragged Staff, I'd glimpsed the pale white face of a young Queen Victoria. Our eyes met for a fleeting moment as her carriage thundered past me along the narrow cobbles to Dover and I'm sure I saw fear in those blue eyes. You see it was 1842, the 'Hungry Forties*,' and a time when revolution was in the air and there had already been three attempts on her life.

** The 'Hungry Forties' were a time of economic depression and crop failures that led to widespread starvation across Europe at the beginning of the 1840s. The despair this created led to the revolutions that swept through Europe in 1848.*

The Swaisland's Upper Works dominates the town. It had become Murgatroyd's tanning factory by the time this picture was taken around 1900 from Crayford Station.

Crayford Town Archive



Crayford Bridge. Watercolour by William Hubbard, c1835



Queen Victoria and her husband Prince Albert travelled from Windsor Castle to see the Duke of Wellington at his home at Deal Castle in Kent in November 1842. This visit included her first train journey from Slough to Paddington and then she travelled along the Dover Road passing through large crowds in Crayford and Dartford en route.





Two Assassination Attempts on Queen Victoria's Life in 1842

On May 29, 1842 one John Francis took a shot at the young queen in St. James's Park. His motive, it has been suggested, was fame. Francis missed and was convicted of high treason, which would ordinarily carry a sentence of death, but he was bundled off to a penal colony for the rest of his life.

Just over a month later John William Bean fired a pistol at Victoria. The July 3rd attempt was designed to fail because Bean had loaded his weapon with only paper and tobacco.

He received a remarkably lenient sentence of 18 months imprisonment.



British Museum AN250259001

Look and Learn Archive

VISIT OF HER MAJESTY TO WALMER CASTLE.

As a matter of course this visit was the signal for hearty and unbounded demonstrations of loyalty along the whole line of route by which the Royal party passed. Dartford, Rochester, Canterbury, and Deal, poured forth their thousands to hail their Sovereign and her illustrious Consort, and to catch a glimpse of the little heir-apparent and his sister, so that the journey almost assumed the character of a triumphal procession.

Bucks Herald, Saturday 19 November 1842



Dr Peter Murray M'Douall

Whilst the Bucks Herald remarked on the popularity of the Royal family as they made their way through Kent in 1842, widespread unrest known as the Plug Plot riots spread through the factories of northern England. Dr Peter Murray M'Douall, who was later to come to Crayford in 1844, led an uprising in his home town of Ashton-Under-Lyne. In 1848 he was arrested and sentenced to two years in prison where he wrote his 'Ode to Queen Victoria' to highlight what he believed was the true cost of the Queen's crown.

Ode to Queen Victoria

The jewelled crown upon thy youthful head
Was chased and wrought by men
who pine for bread
The flowery lace, the silk and satin train,
Were wove by hands all cramped
by cold and pain.

*Dr Peter Murray M'Douall
April, 1849*

A Child Worker at Swaisland's

My father Richard got me my job in the colour house at the Swaisland's Mill when I was 12. I had to meet one of the owners, Charles Swaisland, before I started. The Swaisland's factory had opened in 1814, although I heard there'd been fabric bleaching and printing long before that in Crayford. A short distance from us was another calico printing factory owned by Mr Augustus Applegath, but it was dwarfed by the Upper Works of the Swaisland's firm. Here 240 men worked in the biggest factory for miles around, certainly the biggest in Kent. It rose four stories high in the centre of town and its tall chimney, which puffed sooty black clouds into the heavens, helped place our village on the map.

The River Cray was at the heart of everything we did. Calico cotton came by barge to the factory along it and before the use of steam engines all of the calico mills in Crayford had relied on water wheels for power. The clear fresh waters of the Cray were also used to bleach the grey cotton material and to wash the freshly dyed fabric we made. The fabrics were pegged out on the bleaching grounds in the meadows of Barnes Cray and from the hill above created the mirage of a great lake.



A photograph of Swaisland's Lower Works owned by G.P. and J. Baker from 1894 until 1963. It is now the site of the industrial park behind the Tower Retail Park.

Swaisland's Upper Print Works from Orchard Hill The Upper Works is now the site of the British Telecom depot opposite Sainsbury's.

*Swaisland's Upper Print works.
Watercolour by William Hubbard, c1840*





Swaishland's Lower Print works. Watercolour by William Hubbard, c1840

The road on the right in the painting above is Swaisland Drive and the cows occupy the current site of Barclays Bank. Both pictures show how rural Crayford was at this time and the prominence of the River Cray.

Crayford Village. Watercolour by William Hubbard, c1840



A Plan of the Swaisland's Print Works 1840

The River Cray was ideally suited for textile production - a fast flowing chalkstream ideally suited to washing, dyeing and printing. The fields beside the river at Barnes Cray were used for the laying out of the cloth for bleaching in the sun. Water mills were common in the Crayford area. They were used for grinding corn and wheat to make bread at Bexley and for grinding gun powder at Dartford. Water wheels also served the fabric printing factories in Crayford, powering the washing wheels and dyeworks.

Bexley Local Studies and Archives



Our Beautiful Surroundings

My job was in the colour house preparing the dyes that would be applied to the fabrics. We made natural dyes like ‘madder red’ that made a rich red from the roots of the madder plant. To make sure dyes like these didn’t run, they were fixed to the cloth using chemicals known as mordants, the excess of which was removed in a bath of hot water containing cow dung!

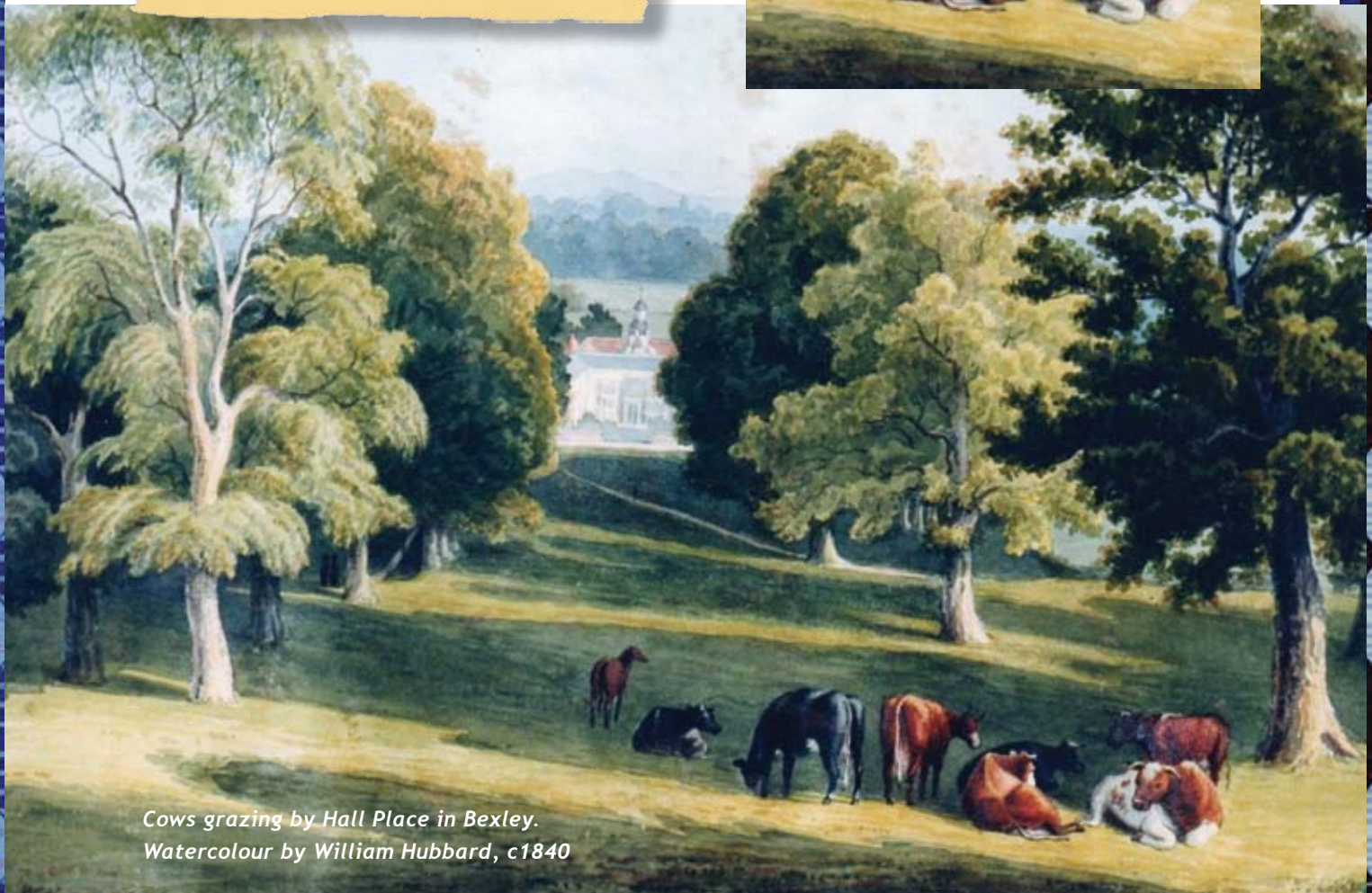
As having a ready supply of muck was such a vital part of the dyeing process, printers like Mr Swaisland always kept their own herd of cows. This meant that once I walked out of the factory gates at the end of the day, it was just like entering another world, a landscape full of grazing cows and lush green meadows. I know that it wasn’t just me who was inspired by our beautiful surroundings.

David Evans kept a herd of cows at Shenstone to keep him supplied with muck for the dyeing process.



Blind Lane Morning (Chapel Hill)
Watercolour by William Hubbard, c1845

Chapel Hill. The immediate foreground to the left of this painting is now the site of Chastilian Motor Spares (2013).



Cows grazing by Hall Place in Bexley.
Watercolour by William Hubbard, c1840

William Hubbard

There was a togetherness about all who worked at Swaisland's mill at this time. There were two owners of the factory, Charles Swaisland and his nephew, Amos. We were particularly fond of Charles because we felt he was one of us. He'd been born in Crayford and still lived in the village and seemed genuinely concerned about our welfare.

Charles Swaisland took great pride in the quality of our work and made sure we employed the best fabric designers in the country at Crayford. To make sure of this he later set up our own design school and we were proud that people called our factory the "Mecca of Calico Printing". One of the designers I remember well was William Hubbard. He loved to paint pictures of the local area and of his family. He had five beautiful daughters, perhaps that's maybe why I remember him so well!



William Hubbard,
around 1849-51



Hubbard's wife, Mary Grocer
Hubbard around 1849-51

William Hubbard's family originally came from Ireland. A talented designer, he initially worked for William Tagg, the original owner of the Upper Works, who ran his calico printing firm from 1796 until 1832 until he sold out to Charles and Amos Swaisland. Tagg left £1000 in his will to William Hubbard who went on to become one of the designers at Swaisland's and helped them become known as the "Mecca of Calico Printing". Following the company's success at the Great Exhibition, Hubbard and George Haité became involved in the development of a school for designers at Crayford, developing talent for the nationwide industry.



Three of William Hubbard's
five daughters.

Watercolour by William Hubbard, around 1849-51

CRAYFORD.

WORTHY OF IMITATION.—Crayford being the chief place of the London trade of calico printers, and the factories of Messrs Swaisland and Evans, employing a considerable proportion of designers, it has been proposed to open a local school of design, free to all the neighbourhood, upon finding their own materials; the designers in the above factories laudibly promising instruction, gratuitously to all who offer themselves. Such a movement cannot but be beneficial in any locality, but especially to one where designers are so much required, and where there are so many clever artists, not only capable but willing to impart a knowledge of this beautiful art.

West Kent Guardian, Saturday 29 January 1853



Iris (1836)



Wild flower studies (1836)

William Hubbard's wife Mary was a keen gardener and picked wild flowers every day for William to study and illustrate. These beautiful fruits and flowers became the inspiration for many of the fabrics he designed.



Garden flowers (1836)



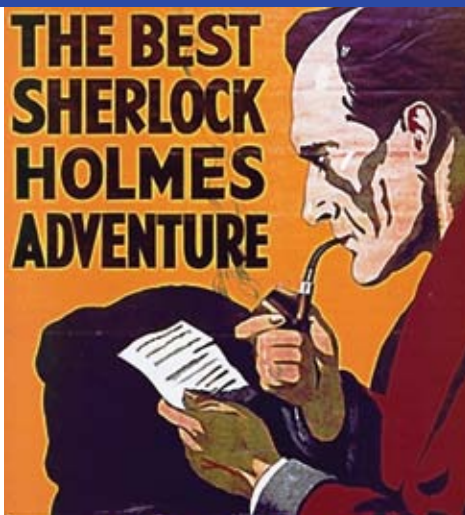
Wild Blackberries, Rosehips & Cobnuts (1866)

The Haité Dynasty

Another of our top designers was George Haité Senior. George was descended from a French Huguenot family who had settled at nearby Darenth. His father Henry was a highly skilled block printer but George followed the footsteps of his grandfather, William, and became a designer. It must have been in their blood as his son, George Charles Haité, is now the famous illustrator of the Strand magazine. He produced some beautiful designs for ladies shawls and always managed to keep up to date with the latest fashions. We were all thankful he did as he kept us in work even when other factories were struggling during those 'Hungry Forties.' When work dried up we would be laid off and then it was only a new order coming that would keep us out of the workhouse at Dartford.



George
Charles Haité



The Strand
Magazine

George Charles Haité was born in Bexleyheath, Kent, on 8 June 1855, the second child and eldest son of George Haité senior. His ancestors were French Huguenot immigrants. His great grandfather, William Haité, and his grandfather, Henry, both worked for William Tagg in Crayford. His father, George Haité senior (1825-1871), became one of the most prominent early Victorian cashmere shawl designers for the Swaisland factory (as did William Hubbard). Sadly, he became so disillusioned with being a "slave of the fashion of the hour" that he actively discouraged his son from taking up design. Ironically, it was his father's premature death of smallpox aged 45 which propelled George Charles Haité to do just that when he became head of the household aged just 16. He, later, became a leading landscape painter and donated copies of his father's work to the V&A. He achieved fame as the illustrator of the Strand Magazine that launched Sherlock Holmes.

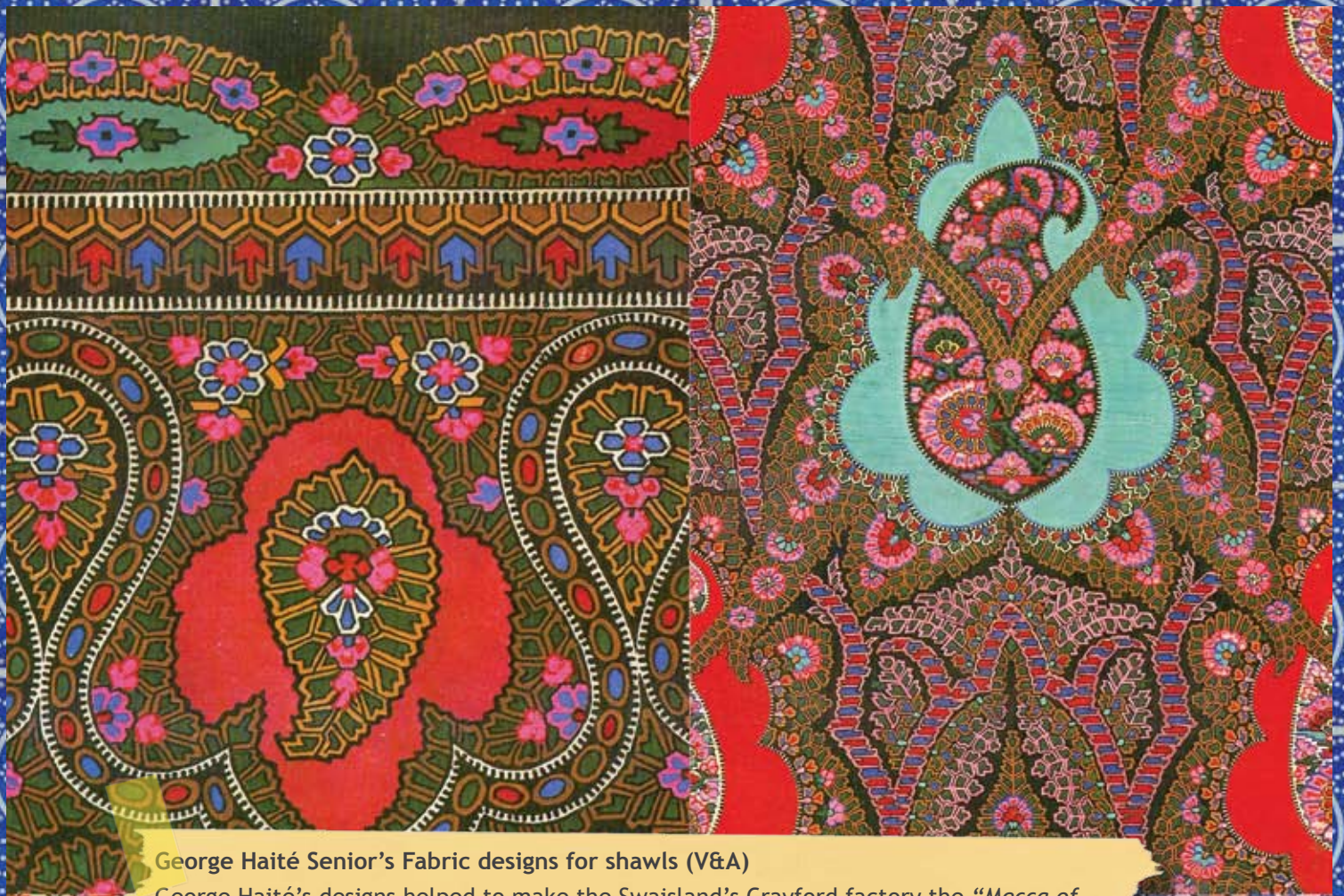
The fantastic quality of the hand block printed fabrics made at Swaisland's Crayford and modelled (left) by Mary Hubbard, helped to keep the firm afloat in the economic depression that hit the industry in the 1840s.



Mary Hubbard
models a
Swaisland shawl

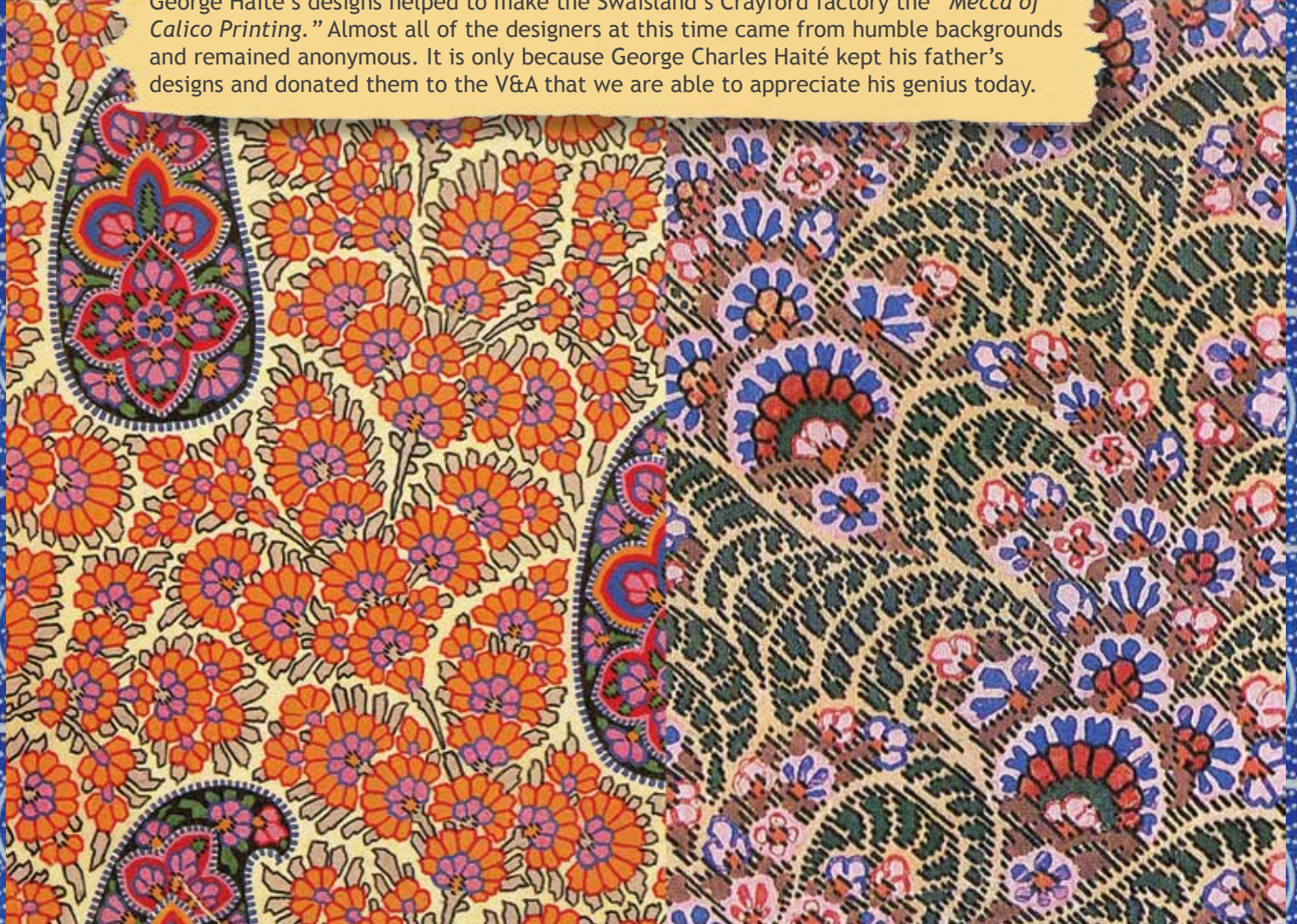
CRAYFORD.—The cotton and silk printing factories have been during the past month extremely busy, working extra hours, &c. It is however feared that the general mourning, consequent on the death of the Royal Duke will restore these establishments to their previous state of inaction, and again throw the poor printers into the miserable destitution from which they were just emerging. Only the finest quality of goods are executed at these works.

West Kent Guardian, Saturday 29 April 1843



George Haité Senior's Fabric designs for shawls (V&A)

George Haité's designs helped to make the Swaisland's Crayford factory the "*Mecca of Calico Printing*." Almost all of the designers at this time came from humble backgrounds and remained anonymous. It is only because George Charles Haité kept his father's designs and donated them to the V&A that we are able to appreciate his genius today.



The Dartford Union Workhouse

The Dartford Union Workhouse. That last word alone was calculated to send a shudder down your spine. It signified the end of the line, the last resort for those desperate beyond all hope.

A family arriving at its gates in West Hill knew that husbands and wives were split up and kept apart from their children. They would be fed just enough to sustain them and given work of such mind numbing weariness that nobody would go there out of choice. It wasn't always so. When I was born the old Poor Law gave some respect to the poor, but now you were punished for your misfortune. I know I wasn't alone in feeling a burning sense of anger at the injustice of it all. It's an anger I still feel within me today.



Dinner time in the Marylebone Workhouse, c1910

Lord Teynham said, he had most strenuously opposed the passing of the Poor-law Amendment Act through the House of Lords. He was sure that a great proportion of the members of that distinguished body were sincere well-wishers to the country, and to the labouring classes particularly, and that they were altogether ignorant of the effects that the Poor-law Amendment Act was calculated to produce, or they would never have allowed it to pass. Their lordships never could have anticipated that under the provisions of that bill no less than half a million of children would be shut up in solitary confinement, without an opportunity of seeing either father, mother, sister, or brother, and deprived of all communication with those who were near and dear to them, cooped up like birds in a cage, to be ultimately thrown loose upon the world. (Hear, hear.) Such was the situation of the poor children at the Dartford workhouse: and at

*London Standard,
Saturday 10 Feb 1838*



The English Pauper

Edwin Chadwick, the social reformer, believed that generous assistance to the poor encouraged idleness and larger families. His Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 was designed to control rising costs that were angering the middle classes who had just gained the vote in 1832.

Chadwick planned to make savings by banning "outdoor relief" (helping people at home) and forcing paupers into the workhouse. Each workhouse had a board of guardians, who raised their funds through a poor rate. By 1839, the 15,000 parishes of Britain were grouped in 600 unions running 350 workhouses.

Dartford was one of the first workhouses in the country to deliberately split up families on entrance to the workhouse.

The Parish Workhouse

There children dwell who know no parents care,
Parents who know no children's love dwell there,
Heart broken matrons on their joyless bed,
Forsaken wives and mothers never wed,
Deserted widows with unheeded tears,
And crippled age with more than childhood fears;
The lame, the blind and far the happiest they,
The moping idiot and the madman gay.

George Crabbe 1783

NAME and SURNAME or Initials of Female	(1) RELATION to Head of Family or (2) Position in the Institution	AGE	COLOUR	SEX	FAME, PROFESSION, or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN	If Dead and Death or Males
1	John Taylor	214			Lebanon	Lebanon	
2	William Taylor	18			Lebanon	Lebanon	
3	Thomas Howard	57	28		Lebanon	Lebanon	
4	James P. Howard	20	28		Lebanon	Lebanon	
5	Henry "	1	28		Lebanon	Lebanon	
6	James P. Howard	39	28		Lebanon	Lebanon	
7	Wm. Howard	29	28		Lebanon	Lebanon	
8	John Howard	60	28		Lebanon	Lebanon	
9	James P. Howard	71	28		Lebanon	Lebanon	
10	James P. Howard	19	28		Lebanon	Lebanon	
11	James P. Howard	74	28		Lebanon	Lebanon	
12	James P. Howard	22	28		Lebanon	Lebanon	
13	James P. Howard	65	28		Lebanon	Lebanon	
14	James P. Howard	15	28		Lebanon	Lebanon	
15	James P. Howard	15	28		Lebanon	Lebanon	
16	James P. Howard	15	28		Lebanon	Lebanon	
17	James P. Howard	15	28		Lebanon	Lebanon	
18	James P. Howard	15	28		Lebanon	Lebanon	
19	James P. Howard	15	28		Lebanon	Lebanon	
20	James P. Howard	15	28		Lebanon	Lebanon	
21	James P. Howard	15	28		Lebanon	Lebanon	
22	James P. Howard	15	28		Lebanon	Lebanon	
23	James P. Howard	15	28		Lebanon	Lebanon	
24	James P. Howard	15	28		Lebanon	Lebanon	
25	James P. Howard	15	28		Lebanon	Lebanon	

Total of Males and Females ... 13 11

1861 Census of West Hill Workhouse

The Charles Swaisland factory went into decline in the 1860s and many local people suffered. This return shows two of his workers in the workhouse.

The Crayford Anti-Corn Law League

Several bad harvests at the start of the 1840s drove the price of wheat so high that people were unable to afford bread. The Government made things worse with their Corn Law that put a tax on wheat imported from abroad. One of Mr Swaisland's friends, Richard Cobden, who owned calico printing mills in Lancashire, formed an Anti Corn Law League, a branch of which was set up at the One Bell pub. Cobden argued that if we stopped taxing food imports, other countries would remove the taxes on the things we sold them. Our fabric would be cheaper for them to buy and the extra demand this would create would allow us all to earn higher wages. Better still, if the price of wheat fell, we would all have more bread. Mr Swaisland told us this was called free trade and it seemed a strong argument to me at that time.



Richard Cobden



The One Bell pub, Crayford

Mr. Middleton, of Crayford, Kent in forwarding two pieces of silk for the bazaar at Manchester, wrote, that "with them trade was at a low ebb, so much so that many of our families, who two or three years ago were living in comfort, were now reduced to subsist on a potato diet". Indeed starvation was staring many poor families in that village in the face and no chance of better times.

The Morning Chronicle, 25 January 1842

Crayford.—At a very numerous meeting of the Crayford Anti-Corn-law Association, held at the Bell Inn, on Saturday evening last, the new sliding-scale of Sir R. Peel was fully discussed and condemned in no very measured terms. The following resolution was put from the Chair and carried unanimously:—"Resolved, That this meeting views with disappointment and indignation the alterations proposed by Sir Robert Peel in the present Corn-law. That this meeting considers it a mockery and insult to a patient and starving people."

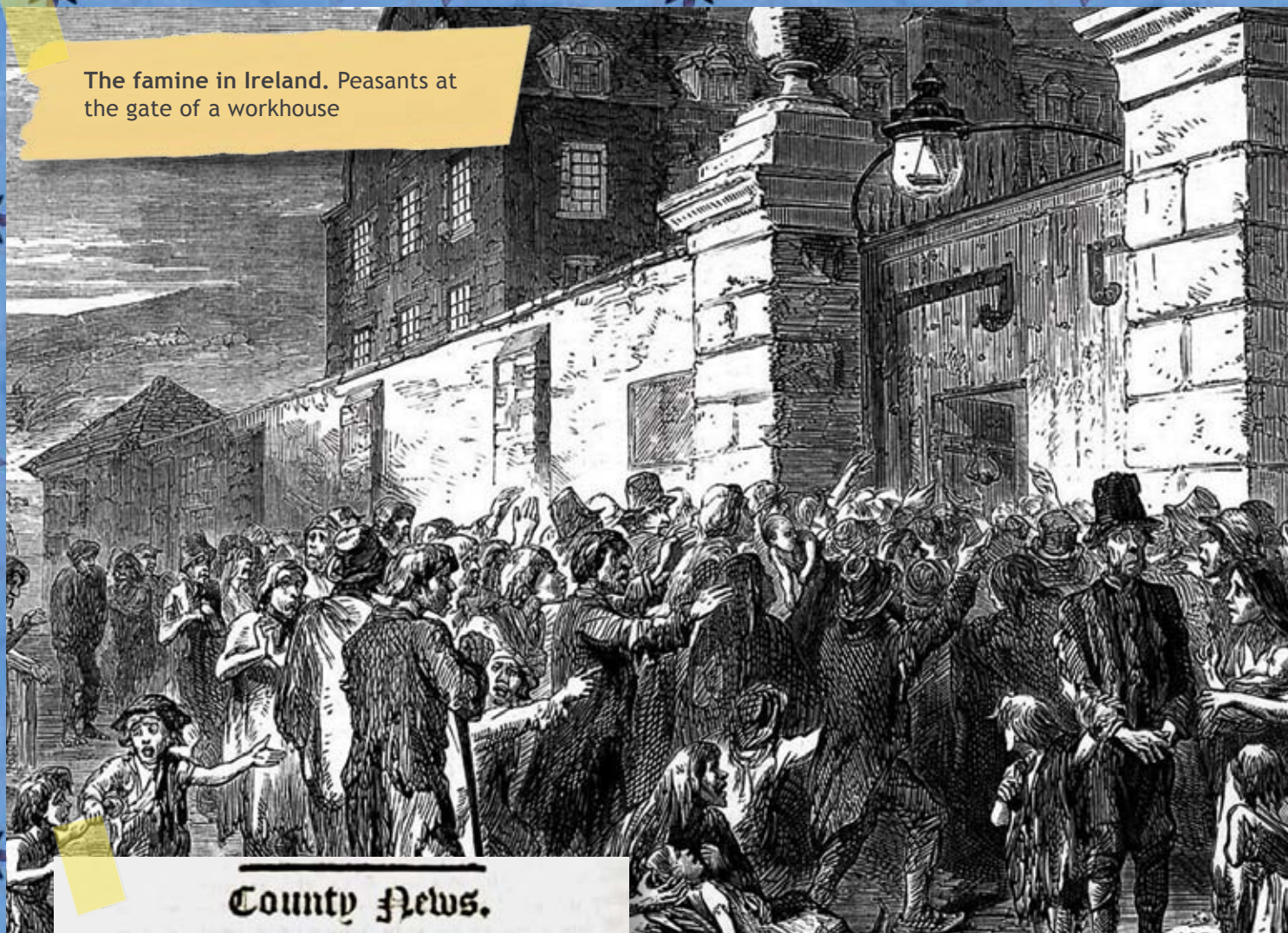
Hertford Mercury and Reformer, 842

The Crayford Anti-Corn-law Association convened a public meeting at the Market-house of Bexley Heath, in Kent, on Monday, to receive a lecture from Mr. Sidney Smith. About seven hundred persons of the middle and working classes attended, one-fourth of the number being females. It was announced after the lecture, that petitions would be circulated throughout the neighbourhood for signatures.

Page 11 of Colonial Gazette, 21 April 1841



The famine in Ireland. Peasants at the gate of a workhouse



County News.

DARTFORD, The immigration of the Irish is not confined to Liverpool, but is experienced here to some extent. During 14 days of last month, of the number of "casual poor" relieved 180 were Irish, the majority of whom had 2s. 6d given them to pay their passage to this country. From Dartford they go to Gravesend or Chatham, claiming relief of the parish officers, and if refused, threaten to break their windows. The overseer of Dartford has been obliged in self defence to have a police-man keeping guard at his home day and night.

County News newspaper, Saturday 15 May 1847

The God's of St Stephen's*

To the Senate of Britain, snug seated at head,
The potato-scour'd millions related their grievance.
Half naked and hungry they begg'd to be fed,
When this answer arriv'd from the clique
at St Stephen's:
"Your ill manner'd noise,
Interferes with our joys,
It spoils all our mirth, and our slumber destroys;
Your murmurs are daily-be warn'd-
Let them cease,
Refrain this bad habit and leave us in peace.

(*St Stephen's = Parliament)

Thomas Raynor Smart

Northern Star, Saturday 18 July 1846

The Irish

When the potato harvest failed in Ireland, the Corn Laws stopped the import of cheap foreign wheat that could have saved the lives of thousands of starving Irishmen. In desperation they fled their country and many came to north west Kent. They roved the countryside in hungry bands and drove down wages for everyone as they were willing to take work at any price. This made them very unpopular throughout England where they were already seen as outsiders because of their Catholic faith. However, Crayford became a refuge for many Irish families thanks largely to the Reverend Augustus Applegath. He was the first parish priest of St Mary of the Crays, a Catholic church built in the grounds of his family home at Shenstone. His father owned one of the Crayford calico mills but despite this privileged position he was always a champion of the poor.

A Model Factory

We always had a lot of visitors come to our factory to see how we worked. I think we were seen as a model factory. I was 15 when I was interviewed by one of Lord Ashley's (Shaftesbury's) factory inspectors. There was a big campaign to try and improve the lot of children who worked in the factories and to cut their hours to 10 a day. Many calico mills in the north of England were employing very young children from the age of 5 or 6. We never took children that young at Crayford and although I was at work from 6am until 7pm, the Swaislands always honoured our breaks. They gave us half an hour for breakfast and an hour and a half for lunch and made sure that working conditions were good. Unlike many factory owners at that time they never cut costs by sacrificing the safety of their workers.

No. 250. Richard Roberts, aged 15 years. Examined April 8th:-

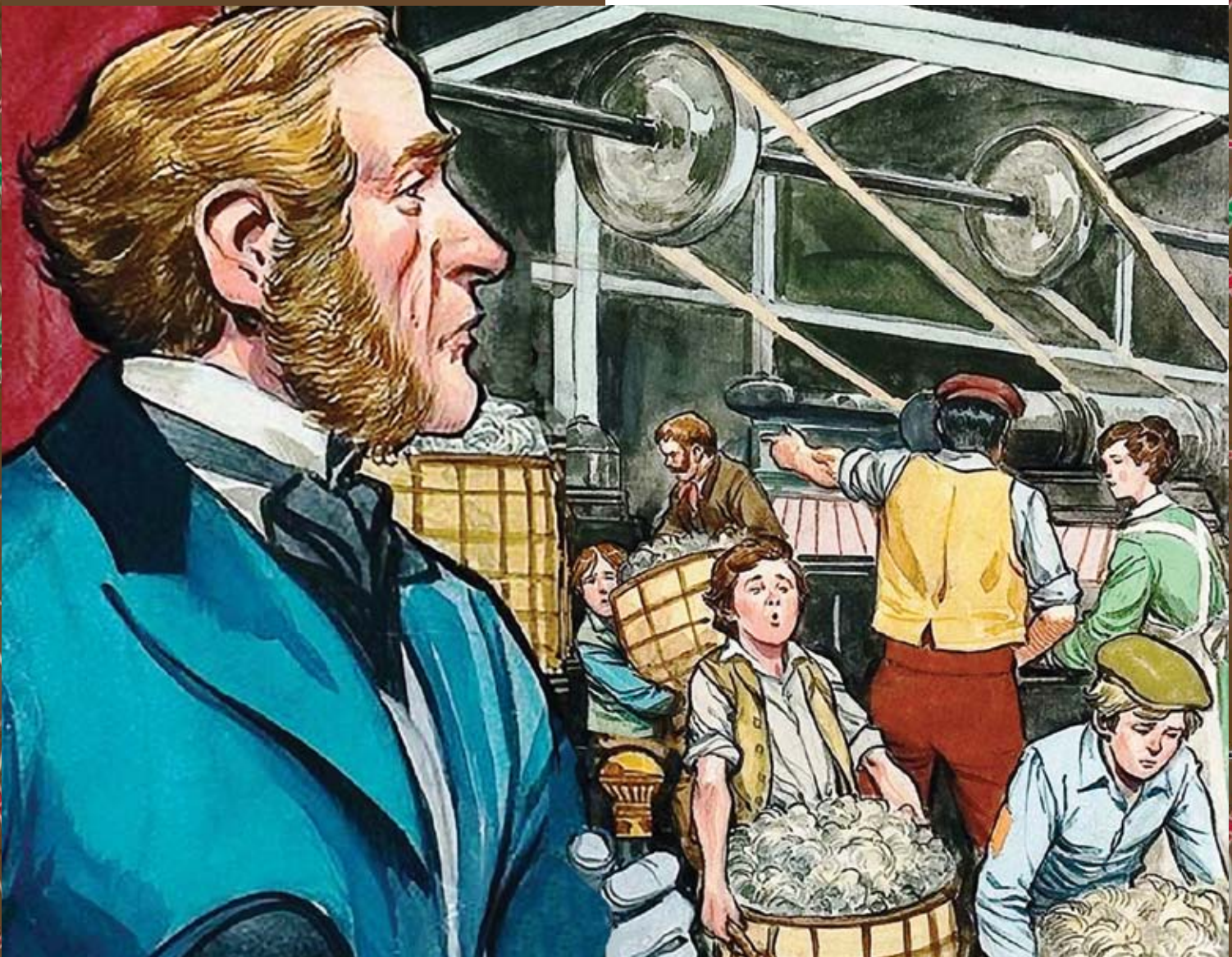
Can read and write a little. Attend a Sunday-school. Been here about two or three years. Work in colour-house. Attend to a copper, boiling fustic chips, and carry gum from next place to colour-house, and wash out the pans and brushes. Come to work at six and leave off at seven in the evening; sometimes longer, till nine, just as the work is oftener in winter than in summer. An hour and a half allowed for dinner, half-an-hour breakfast, go home to meals. It ain't very hard work, does not tire me, don't feel it very hot, used to it, can sit down whenever I like. Pay 6s. a-week, paid for extra work. Mr. Swaisland hired me, he pays my father, who pays me. Plenty of good food. Very good health. Smell of colours don't hurt me, never hardly smell'em. Ain't ill-used, don't get tanned (beaten) once a year. Like the situation. Have time to play at breakfast and dinner. Sometimes have holidays, not very often.

(Signed)

Richard Roberts

Richard Roberts interview transcript from British Parliamentary Papers. Irish University Press

*Lord Shaftesbury visits a cotton mill.
Look and Learn Archive*



Hansard Report of 10 Hours Debate

HC Deb 18 February 1845 vol 77 cc638-68 638 Lord Ashley

"The Rev. John Dempster, Minister of Denny, states that infants may be seen at work as early as five years of age, having got at school little more than a knowledge of the alphabet, and that they go to continuous employments at all ages, from seven upwards. The Rev. J. A. Bonner states, 'Our common schools now often look like infant schools, from the paucity of older children.' **But the printfields in Kent afford, in regard to infant labour, a remarkable exception to all others in the United Kingdom. In the works of Mr. Swaisland there were found only two girls and five boys, and in Mr. Applegath's only six boys, under thirteen years of age.**"

"Robert Crawford, block maker, states, that in the kiln, where the block runs through on rollers to dry the colours, no one can work above three or at most five minutes. Mary Moody and Mary Maxwell, stove-girls, state, that the girls often faint from exhaustion caused by the heat. John Rodger, machine printer, states, that the girls who attend on the dash-wheel have to stand with the feet and petticoats always wet, and that this in severe weather causes great hardship. Mr. David Young, surgeon, of Bridgetown, says, that from his experience as a medical man he knows that at certain periodical seasons the dash-wheel produces very injurious effects on women. **But of Mr. Swaisland's works in Kent, there is a different report: the whole of the premises, particularly the room where the teerers work, are clean, spacious, lofty, and well-ventilated, heated in winter by warm-water pipes, and thoroughly drained. The same is said of the works of Mr. Applegath, and at West Ham, in Essex. Showing, therefore, that health and cleanliness may be consulted by care and attention, and without any formidable loss of profit.**"



'The Angel of Christian Charity' in Piccadilly is often mistaken for Eros. It was originally dedicated to Lord Shaftesbury's memory

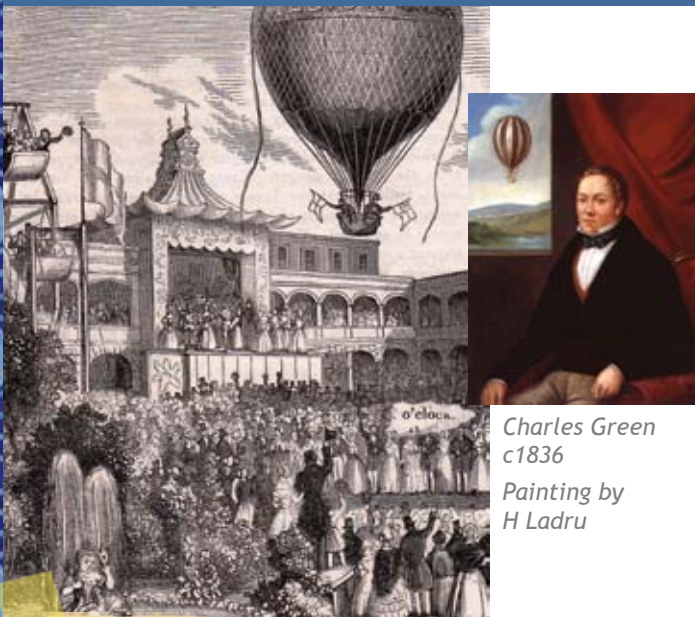


The Earl of Shaftesbury

In 1844 Lord Ashley (Shaftesbury) put forward an act of parliament that would limit to the 10 hours a child could work in a factory. This eventually became law in 1847. The Hansard extracts above show how he used the fine example of the conditions for child labourers at the Swaisland's factory to make his case. Shaftesbury's dedication to improving the lives of the poor and particularly children are remembered by the fountain in Piccadilly Circus. The memorial is sometimes given the name 'The Angel of Christian Charity' and is popularly mistaken for Eros, the god of selfish love, whereas the statue created by sculptor Alfred Gilbert in 1892 to honour the work of Shaftesbury is in fact Anteros, who symbolises selfless love.

The Albion Balloon

One evening in June 1842 I was sitting on the wall of the churchyard when I saw a golden sphere floating towards me through the blue summer sky. Squinting, as it passed over St Paulinus, I could pick out the word 'Albion' written on what I could now see was a balloon. Entranced, I followed its graceful descent and when it finally came to ground, the whole village seemed to be there to mob its occupants. Aboard was the famous balloonist, Charles Green, who told us he'd flown from Hoxton and would soon attempt a flight across the Atlantic. With so much unrest across the country, I thought then how all of us could be inspired by this man's courageous spirit to help change our Albion, the England we all loved, into a better country for all of us to live in.



Charles Green
c1836

Painting by
H Ladru

Ascent of Mr Green with The Albion Balloon, from the Standard and Albert Pleasure Gardens, Hoxton.

Drawn and engraved by Whittock

BALLOON ASCENT.—On Monday evening Mr. C. Green, the veteran aeronaut, ascended in his balloon, "The Albion," from the gardens of the Royal Standard Tavern, Albert Saloon, at Hoxton. It was announced as Mr. Green's 200th ascent, the first this season, and the last preparatory to his intended voyage across the Atlantic, with the great Nassau Balloon on a visit to America. After a delightful voyage of thirty-five minutes, Mr. Green alighted with perfect safety in a ploughed field, about one mile S. S. W. of Dartford, in the parish of Crayford, Kent.

The Kentish Gazette, Tuesday 5 July 1842

MR. C. GREEN'S TWO ASCENTS FROM THE STANDARD AND ALBERT PLEASURE GROUNDS, HOXTON.

During the last four years, the inhabitants of London have seen fewer attractions above the housetops, than they were accustomed to witness, six or seven years ago. About that time, balloon ascents were frequent and common, and even parachute descents sometimes afforded an exciting and interesting diversion.

The falling off of Aerostatic exhibitions, however, seems to have produced a strong and general desire to see a return of them, and Mr. Brading, the enterprising proprietor of the Albert Saloon and Gardens, being aware of this re-action, determined to gratify his numerous patrons and friends, by engaging the celebrated veteran Aeronaut, to ascend with his Albion Balloon, and thereby add a rational and scientific entertainment to other subordinate performances.

At seven o'clock on Monday morning, the 23rd of June, Mr. Charles Green's Albion Balloon was adjusted for the reception of the gas. The weather being favourable for the inflation, that process went on to the satisfaction of the Aeronaut and his assistants. At about two o'clock, P.M., the Albion began to show her bright dome above the garden walls, and soon after the public entered the premises to view the gradual development of the Balloon, to her full and proper shape. The gardens represented a complete country fair, and the swings, roundabouts, ups-and-downs, rocking-horses, and stalls, contributed to the amusement of the company. An excellent band also played many lively and delightful airs, and gave full force to some sentimental and comic songs, that afforded satisfaction. Soon after six o'clock, the Albion had received her full supply of gas; when the veteran, with his accustomed care and self-possession, proceeded to make the necessary arrangements for his departure. These preparations occupied more than half an hour, during which time a cargo of sand was placed in the car. Mr. Green then took his seat, and was followed by a gentleman named Morris, who is a member of the medical profession. Soon after seven o'clock, the stir and shouting, which usually precede a balloon ascent, announced to every looker on, that Mr. Green and his companion were about to start. The band, aware of the customary intimation, struck up an appropriate tune, and the Albion was then liberated, with an easy ascending power, and rose amidst the shouts of a vast multitude of eager and delighted spectators. The aerial voyagers, passing over the city, bore away towards Kent, and effected a safe descent at Crayford, near Dartford.

Charles Green (31 January 1785 - 26 March 1870) was the United Kingdom's most famous balloonist of the 19th century. He experimented with coal gas as a cheaper and more readily available alternative to hydrogen for lifting power. His first ascent was in a coal gas balloon on 19 July 1821. He became a professional balloonist and had made 200 ascents by 1835. In 1836, he set a major long distance record in the balloon "Royal Vauxhall", flying overnight from Vauxhall Gardens in London to Weilburg, Duchy of Nassau (Germany) a distance of 480 miles (770 km) this record was not broken until 1907. By the time he retired in 1852, he had flown in a balloon more than 500 times. Green is credited with the invention of the trail rope as an aid to steering and landing a balloon.

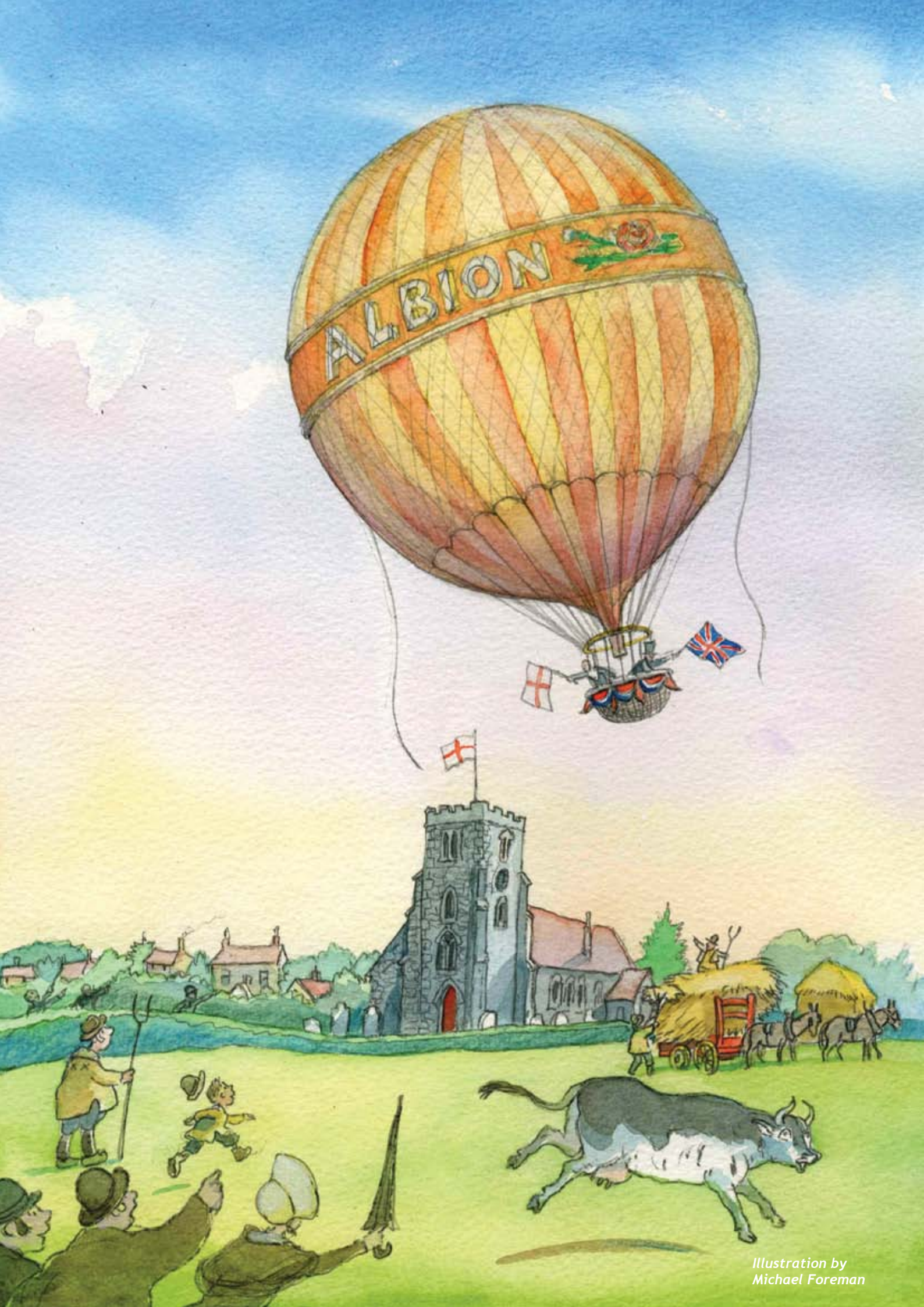


Illustration by
Michael Foreman

The Coming of David Evans

When Mr Applegath was declared a bankrupt later in 1842, we realised how bad things were getting. People said that Crayford made the best printed fabrics in all of England but the problem was we were being continually undercut by cheap machine printed copies of our designs. Printing in both Crayford factories still depended largely on block printing by hand which made our cloth expensive compared to the machine printed fabrics made in Lancashire. As orders dried up, many printers' families in Crayford were close to starvation whilst Applegath lost everything including his home at Shenstone. His son remained as the parish priest at St Mary of the Crays but the church his father had built had not been fully paid for and left a large debt for the poor, mainly Irish, parishioners. The new year of 1843 brought a new owner of Applegath's calico works, Mr David Evans, who moved himself and his family into Shenstone.

The contents were insured in the Kent Office.
COURT OF BANKRUPTCY, SEP. 8.—In the case of Augustus Applegath's bankruptcy, the sitting was for the choice of assignees to the estate of this bankrupt, known in the silk trade for his silk printing (the "Turkey red") establishment at Crayford. His debts and liabilities are estimated at £31,000, but of the assets no idea can at present be formed. Mr. Barnes and Mr. Kilbeck, of Upper Thames-street, were chosen without opposition.

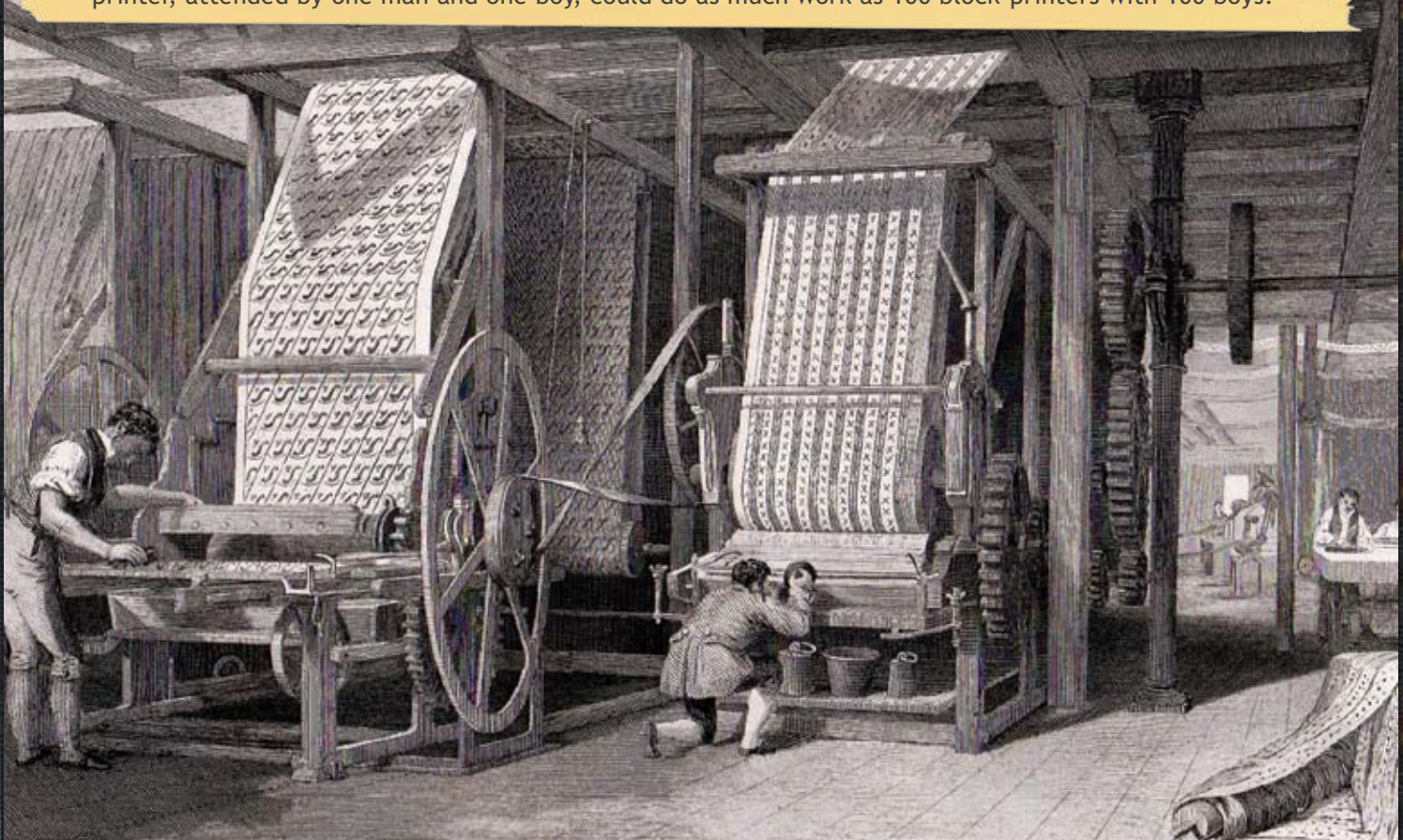
West Kent Guardian, Saturday 24 September 1842



David Evans Wood Block. Crayford Town Archive

Calico Printing in Lancashire

The illustration below shows the calico printing process. The worker on the left is using a machine printing process with engraved copper rollers transferring the pattern onto the cloth. The worker on the far right is a block printer, using hand carved wooden blocks. Note the buckets of dye under the machine. One cylinder-printer, attended by one man and one boy, could do as much work as 100 block-printers with 100 boys.





Shenstone House

David Evans

David Evans, his family and servants appear on the 1851 Crayford Census (below) of Shenstone House, now the site of Shenstone and St Joseph's Schools and St Mary of the Crays RC church.
The National Archives

Parish of Crayford		Borough of Crayford		City of Crayford		Town of Crayford		Village of Crayford	
Name of Street, Place, or Road, and Name or No. of House	Name and Surname of each Person who abode in the house, on the Night of the 30th March, 1851	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age of	Rank, Profession, or Occupation	Where Born			
	Charles Mr	Son		8	Scholar	No			
	Eliza Mr	Daughter		6		No			
178 Mr Evans	David Evans Mr	Head		58	Painter, Fifth Street, 1745-93, 56, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000				
	Ann Mr	Wife		16		Bottom Lancers			
	David Mr	Son		20	Manager of Drail Bank	Kent Crayford			
	Thomas Mr	Mr		20	Mr	No			
	Robert Mr	Mr		18	Mr	No			
	Emily Mr	Daughter		16		No			
	Abigail Mr	Mr		3		No			
	George Mr	Son		1		No			
	Elizabeth Lord	Sister-in-law		126		Lancashire Bolton			
	Martha Ellis	Servant		36	Barman	Wolfehampton			
	Wm Lewis	Mr		59		Montgomeryshire			
	Mary Dwyer	Mr		26		Lancashire			
	Mary Brown	Mr		25		Kent Staplehurst			
	Mrs. Smith	Mr		29		Worcestershire			
	Elizabeth Goodwin	Mr		38		Devon Exeter			
179 Mr	David Pump	Head		40	7-2 barack men	No			
	Wm Mr	Wife		39		No			
	Mary A Mr	Daughter		11	Scholar	No			
Total			Total of Persons						
12			13						

The Kentish Philanthropist

David Evans quickly established a reputation with his workers as a hard task master. In contrast we felt very lucky to have Charles and his nephew Amos Swaisland running our factory. In 1844 they celebrated the 30th anniversary of Charles Swaisland setting up business in Crayford, by organising celebrations for the whole workforce. We walked up what is now Station Road (but was then in those days before the railway, plain old Swan Lane) to the heath and played cricket, bowls and quoits before returning for a grand meal and concert in the factory all at our owner's expense.



Swaishland Royle note
book shirting designs,
c1860
Manchester
Metropolitan
University



CRAYFORD.—On Saturday the 6th instant, the workmen in the employ of Messrs. C. and A. Swaisland, of the printing factory, Crayford, had their anniversary. About 11 o'clock they began to assemble on Dartford Heath, where they partook of luncheon, and afterwards amused themselves with cricket, bowles, quoits, and various other games, till the factory bell rung to warn them that dinner was ready, when they retired to a large room in the factory, fitted up for the occasion, and being joined by the Messrs. Swaisland and their friends, amounting together to near 400, partook of a sumptuous repast, for which they were well prepared by their games on the heath. The cloth being removed the evening was spent in a very pleasant manner. The information from the merchants and others who attended was very encouraging, shewing that trade was on the increase, and that there was every prospect of a good season. On Monday the females of the establishment had their holiday in the same room, and as a finish to the whole, Mr. and Mrs. Pyne will give a concert at the same place on Tuesday, and on Wednesday they commence work in the factory for the autumnal season. The whole of the proceedings, excepting the concert, were at the expense of the Messrs. Swaisland.

West Kent Guardian, Saturday 13 July 1844

Blackheath Royal Standard v. Bexley Heath and Crayford United Club.

On the high road from London to Canterbury there is such a place as Bexley Heath, once the domain of robbers, insurrectionists, and bold outlaws, but now a lovely spot, and one of considerable importance. At the lower end of the Heath is a celebrated tavern, called the "Lord Hill," and immediately facing it, a capital Cricket Ground, where the parties specified at the head of this article met on Thursday, just to see on which side of the heath the greatest strength and wisdom lay. Villagers, in general, are very sensitive on the score of their relative "accomplishments," and on nothing more than their psalm singing and cricket; the former is a matter somewhat difficult to determine, but the latter is easily settled by trial in the tented field. Blackheath, quite agreeable to be thus tested, went in to be bowled at by the Bexley amateurs, and what with the tact of Watson and Lawrence, who stuck to their text, they were got out for sixty-four. These self-same two, when put to the wickets, got thirty before they were parted. The wide balls given by Blackheath looked as bad in the field as they do on the score. It was quite evident that Bexley had the best of the match as far as bowling went. The game, though not played out, was characterised by that honourable spirit of rivalry, which is the proud boast of Englishmen, and which we hope will never be extirpated. For those who are anxious to know more, we have added the statistics of the match—

BLACKHEATH.

First Innings.	Second Innings.	
Hollis, b Watson	12—c and b Aite.....	28
Miller, b Lawrence	6—b Mesnard	0
Street, b ditto	3—run out	2
Noble, c and b ditto	0—b Mesnard	19
Porter, c Barnes, b Watson ..	0—b Hudson	16
Brooks, not out	9—c Hudson, b Mesnard ..	2
Edington, b Watson	5—not out	12
John, c Stillwell, b Lawrence..	3	
Brown, not out	1—run out	0
Tooth, b Lawrence	12	
Lambert, c Lawrence, b Watson	5—not out	8
Leg byes 3, w 5	8	8
Total.....	64	Total 95

BEXLEY HEATH.

Watson, c Mesnard, b Hollis 15	Foxen, b Hollis.....	4
Stillwell, b Hollis	Barnes, b Hollis	8
Lawrence, c Street, b Porter 21	Allsop, run out.....	1
Pugh, c Noble, b Porter.. 12	Aite, not out	0
Hudson, b Porter..... 6	Byes 3, w 22 ...	25
Mesnard, c Porter, b Hollis 10		
Wykes, c Porter, b Hollis.. 10	Total	112

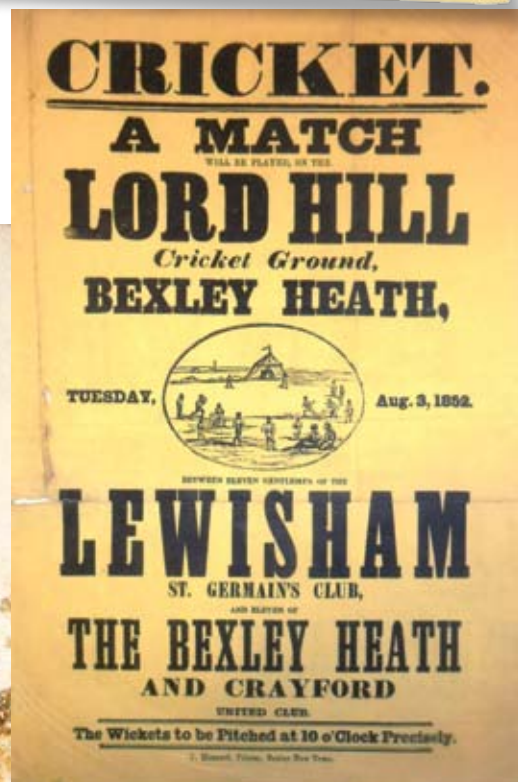


The Lord Hill Pub is now known as the Coach House and is on the Crayford Bexleyheath border. It served as the HQ of the Bexleyheath and Crayford United Cricket Club which played all the leading club sides in the south east.

The report on the left describes a match against Blackheath and comments on the reputation the area once had for highway robbery.

The cricket pitch was situated facing the pub and drew large crowds of locals who liked to bet on the result. The poster below is for a match against Lewisham.

Poster
Bexley Local
Studies
and Archives



This painting is close to the site of the Bexleyheath and Crayford United Cricket ground across the road from the Lord Hill pub.



Gravel Lane (Hill)
Bexleyheath.
Watercolour by
William Hubbard,
1852

Christmas Hospitality

If there was one thing Charles Swaisland knew how to keep well, it was Christmas. The papers said that he should be called 'the Kentish Philanthropist.' I know we thought he was our very own Saint Nick, as during the bleak winter of 1841, he made sure that nobody who worked for him woke up on Christmas morning without the prospect of a roast dinner to fill their hungry bellies.

CHRISTMAS HOSPITALITY, -At Crayford, Dec.7, at the Winter Sale, £100 worth of flannels and calicos were sold to the poor at half price. - Dec.24. The lady of J.F. Fassett-Burnett, Esq., of May-Place, in the parish of Crayford, gave 13 bullocks away to 75 poor families. **On the same day Mr. Chas. Swaisland (who might have justly be called the Kentish Philanthropist)**, gave 120 stone of beef to his men, working in the factory; and Mr Edward Stoneham, gave a quarter of a bullock to his agricultural servants.

West Kent Guardian, Saturday 13 January 1841



The stables where the David Evan's cows were housed can still be seen on London Road, Crayford

Below a herd of cows form part of a telescopic view towards Bexley after a storm.

Watercolour by William Hubbard, c1845



Shenstone Park Cows

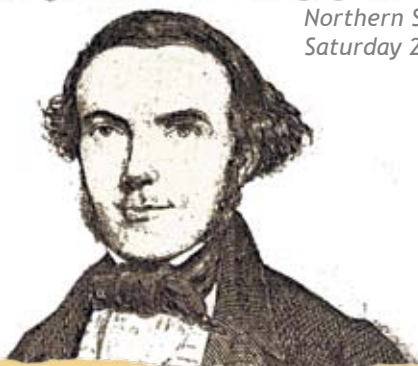
The fields that are now Shenstone Park were grazed by David Evans's herd of cows which were housed in a stable block (pictured left) that still exists on London Road. Evans was not alone in keeping cattle. Charles Swaisland kept a herd of cows and won prizes for breeding champion bulls. In 2011 a memorial (above) to Crayford's colourful past was installed by *Bexley Council*.





CHARTISM IN KENT.—A few workmen from London having been employed for a few weeks past at Crayford, Kent, in which place is established a small society of free traders, and a discussion having arisen between the London operatives and the free traders, the London workmen resolved to have a Chartist lecturer down to explain the principles of the People's Charter, upon which large placards were issued announcing that Mr. Stallwood, from London, would deliver a lecture on the principles of the People's Charter as a remedy for national distress, at the Bell Inn, the use of which the landlord had given gratuitously for the purpose. On Friday evening, June 21st, the large club room was exceedingly crowded. Mr. Drake of the Tower Hamlets, was unanimously called to the chair, pledging himself to obtain a hearing for any one who might be disposed to put questions, or endeavour to confute the arguments about to be adduced by the lecturer. Mr. Stallwood then rose and addressed the audience for an hour and a-half, stating the principles of the Charter, and refuting the arguments usually urged against it. At the close many questions were asked which the lecturer (if we may judge from the applause of the meeting) answered to the satisfaction of the great majority present. Four dozen copies of the People's Charter were sold in the room. A vote of thanks was given to the chairman, and the people dispersed, evidently delighted with the evening's proceedings.

*Northern Star,
Saturday 29 June 1844*



*Edmund
Stallwood*

Edmund Stallwood 1810-66 was best known as the London correspondent for Feargus O'Connor's *Northern Star* from 1843-50. Stallwood was a member of the committees of the National Union of the Working Classes and of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union. He was a key London delegate to the Chartist Convention of 1842.

*The One Bell from Old Road.
Watercolour by William Hubbard, c1845*

The Chartists are Coming!

Trade picked up a little in 1844 and David Evans took on some extra men from the other London calico printers based in Mitcham and Stratford. One of these Mitcham men at Evans, Henry Gardner, called himself a Chartist and would bring a copy of their newspaper, *The Northern Star*, to read to everyone in the One Bell. He told us that we'd all been conned by the free trade factory owners like Cobden. He warned us that as soon as the Corn Laws were repealed they would use the reduction in the price of bread as an excuse to cut our wages. We told him that Mr Swaisland would never do that, but Henry Gardner offered to bring down the editor of the *Northern Star*, Mr Edmund Stallwood, to explain to us why we needed the People's Charter* to protect us from being exploited. * see p34

The Six Points OF THE PEOPLE'S CHARTER.

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 large 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.

Chartism

Chartism was a working class movement, which demanded sweeping changes to the political system of Britain between 1839 and 1848. Above all it wanted the introduction of 'The Six Points of the People's Charter. (see poster left)

The leaders of the Chartists were often at odds with each other. There were the head strong like Feargus O'Connor and Dr Peter Murray M'Douall (who gave a speech in Crayford in 1844) who wanted to use force to get Parliament to accept the Charter. Others like William Lovett and Edmund Stallwood (who was the first Chartist speaker to visit Crayford to speak at the One Bell) wanted to use more peaceful methods to persuade Parliament to accept change.

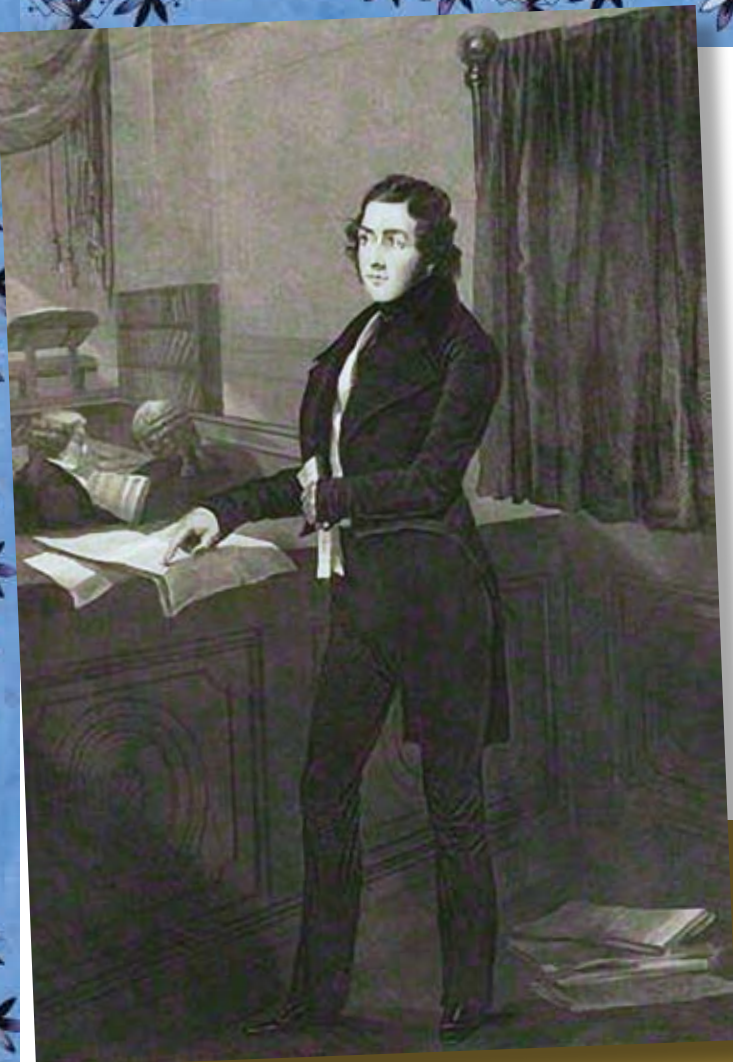
This mixture of persuasion and the use of force did not make for strong leadership in the Chartists. No one knew for sure which direction to take.

One of the methods used by the Chartists to persuade Parliament was the collection of petitions. The theory was that Parliament would be impressed with the number of people who supported the Chartists and would push through popular change. Petitions were collected in 1839, 1842 and 1848. The last petition had 5 million signatures on it but it was a farce. Many of the signatures were faked by the Chartist, even Queen Victoria's signature appeared on the last petition!! The Chartists movement collapsed.



Dr Peter M
M'Douall

In October 1844 Dr Peter Murray M'Douall gave a speech at the Bulls Head Inn in Crayford High Street that radicalised the Crayford calico printers and led to the strikes of 1847 and 1852.
Crayford Town Archive



CRAYFORD, KENT.—On Monday, Dr. M'Douall lectured in the large room at the Bull's Head Inn. The room was crowded with a respectable audience. At eight o'clock Mr. Logan was called to the chair, and introduced the lecturer to the meeting. Dr. M'Douall, who was received with great applause, delivered an instructive and eloquent lecture upon the monopoly of land, legislation, and machinery: showing that the monopoly of legislation was built upon the united influence of the monopolies of land and machinery. He maintained that the soil was created for the benefit of the whole human race, and that it must become the property of the government, and held for the benefit of the whole people before any true political or social happiness could be attained. The worthy lecturer proved to the satisfaction of his audience that no benefit ever could be obtained by the labouring classes of society unless they were invested with the political rights laid down in the People's Charter. At the conclusion of the lecture, a long and friendly discussion ensued between the lecturer and Mr. Rattery. Mr. Wheeler wound up the subject with some appropriate remarks. Several members were enrolled, and the meeting dispersed. *Northern Star, Saturday 12 October 1844*

Dr Peter Murray M'Douall (1814-54) (pictured) was a trained surgeon who came to Chartism first as a campaigner for factory reform. M'Douall attended the first Chartist convention and became a prominent advocate of both physical force and of the Sacred Month (or General Strike). In July, 1839, he was arrested and imprisoned in Chester for a year in

connection with the Bull Ring riots. Following his release, he helped organise the General Strike of 1842. With a reward of £100 for his capture now hanging over him, he fled to France, where he lived until September, 1844. In Paris he mixed with many revolutionaries, which fired his determination to seek change in his own country. On his return to England, Crayford was one of the first places he called at. In 1848, M'Douall was arrested again and sentenced to two years in Kirkdale Gaol following the abortive Ashton-under-Lyne rising. His family suffered badly leading to the death of his daughter. Devastated he emigrated to Australia in 1854, but died soon after arriving.

The Notorious Dr M'Douall

Henry Gardner started something with Mr Stallwood's visit that soon had us questioning the way things were. In October, 1844, the notorious Dr Peter Murray M'Douall arrived in the village fresh from exile in France. We gathered in the Bull to hear him speak with a passion that had not been diminished by his time on the run when a frightened government had put a £100 reward on his head. His message was simple. Nothing would ever change unless the People's Charter was adopted as the law of the land. Without the vote, the working man could never bring about change and improve his lot. He urged us to do all we could to achieve this; peacefully if we could but forcefully if we must. I knew he was right and there and then I pledged my life to the cause of Chartism and my fellow workers.



A Chartist meeting. Look and Learn Archive

Give the Vote to the Working Man

Those that attended the meeting with Dr M'Douall left the pub that night invigorated with the feeling that power to change things for the better lay within our grasp. We no longer had to accept things as they were, as we could take charge of our own destinies. Our Chartist group grew quickly and our new found confidence showed itself when we wrote to Sir Robert Peel, the prime minister, soon after he repealed the Corn Laws in 1846. We congratulated him on what he had done but then urged him to give the vote to the working man.

THE LATE SIR ROBERT PEELE AND EXTENSION OF THE SUFFRAGE.—An incidental remark in a leading article in our columns of Saturday, has induced a gentleman in town to call our attention to an indication of Sir Robert Peel's views on the suffrage, which probably stands alone, and is at least not unworthy of attention at the present moment. After the repeal of the corn-laws, and the resignation of Sir Robert Peel's Government. In 1846, an address in the Right Hon. Baronet was agreed to by the inhabitants of a place called Crayford in Kent. Besides congratulating the great statesman on his free-trade policy, the memorialists ventured on the delicate topic of extension of the suffrage, in the following terms:—"We beg leave likewise to assure you, that if the enlarged views of State policy you have even more recently enunciated have begotten within us a lively hope that the time is not far distant when the propriety of an enlarged enfranchisement May become a topic of prominent consideration with those who have the power and privilege of conferring the boon, the cherishing of these expectations will only serve to quicken the sense of gratitude which your successful efforts in unfettering commerce have already excited." The address was accompanied with a letter, in which it was stated, that if the sentence in reference to popular enfranchisement was disagreeable to Sir Robert, it would at once be expunged; but, to the joy of the Crayford people, and even the surprise of some, a reply was received from Whitehall, in Sir Robert's own hand, acknowledging receipt of the address, and assuring the parties who had signed it, that "the sentiments it expresses had given to Sir Robert Peel cordial satisfaction." The letter is in possession of Mr Ratnay, bookseller in this city, and considered in connection with the address from Crayford, is certainly indicative that Sir Robert Peel, if he had been spared, would in all likelihood have occupied a similar position to that taken up by Sir James Graham on the subject of Parliament-

Caledonian Mercury, Monday 5 April 1852

The late Sir Robert Peel raised a princely income from the invention, or use, of a machine for the manufacture of cotton, termed a "spinning Jenny," his fellow-apprentice, at Crayford, in Kent, often solemnly asserted that, in the early part of their apprenticeship, they were both employed, occasionally, in trundling a wheelbarrow through the streets, with pails of skimmed milk, which they sold at one penny per quart; this equally shows the origin and singular merit and industry of the late Baronet.—*Boulogne Advertiser*.

*Morning Chronicle,
Monday 17 August
1835*



Sir Robert Peel Senior (1750-1830)

Sir Robert Peel Senior was the owner of a calico-printing firm, in Blackburn; educated in London and according to the *Morning Chronicle* article, above, served his apprenticeship in calico printing at Crayford. He made full use of the new textile inventions in his factories. By the 1790s Peel employed over 15,000 workers including many workhouse children from London. He later entered parliament and was involved in putting forward factory acts in 1802 and 1819 to protect child labour and apprentices.



Sir Robert Peel, 2nd Baronet (1788 - 1850) served as Prime Minister from 1834 -1835, and 1841-1846. While Home Secretary, Peel helped create the modern concept of the police force, leading to officers being known as "Bobbies" or "Peelers." He famously repealed the Corn Laws in 1846.



St Paulinus Churchyard.
Watercolour by William Hubbard, c1845



SIDCUP PETTY SESSIONS.—SEPT. 10.

(Before Lord Sydney, H. S. Berens, Esq., and J. Chapman, Esq.)

Two lads, named *Matthew Butler* and *William Sharp*, were brought up in custody, charged upon the police sheet with unlawfully assuming the appearance of ghosts, for the purpose of frightening passengers upon the public highway, at the parish of Crayford.

Mr. Letter, the clerk of the bench, having read the charge from the police sheet, the Noble Chairman inquired under what Act of Parliament it was made?

Hayman Smith, a police constable, stationed at Crayford, deposed, that on Saturday evening he went in plain clothes to a place called the Old Lane, near Crayford, for the purpose of looking out for the ghost, and about eight o'clock, just as it was getting dark, he saw the two defendants coming towards him. One of them said, "The coast is clear—look sharp," and they then both jumped over the bank into a field, and he saw them pull their shirts out over their trousers, which they tied round their waists underneath them, and they then commenced a series of gambols upon the bank, when, being satisfied of their object, he pounced upon them and took them into custody. After he had secured them, they told him that they did not mean any harm, and that they merely intended to "frighten the girls."

Morning Post, Wednesday 11 September 1844

Tragedy and Farce in Crayford

Away from the political debates at the One Bell we did have some lighter moments, none more so than the mystery of the Crayford ghost. All through 1844 people had been terrified by reports that a flaming demon was haunting the road by the graveyard at St Paulinus. Many of the girls at Swaislands were frightened to go home alone at night so Hayman Smith, our local police constable, set a trap and captured two of the village lads who somehow were prosecuted for, 'unlawfully assuming the appearance of ghosts.' If the story showed me anything it was how daft the law was for charging someone with something so stupid.

A Fatal Accident

It wasn't just Chartism that changed the atmosphere in Crayford, but a tragedy that hit Charles Swaisland so hard, I don't think he ever really recovered from it. It happened over Christmas, 1845 when his young nephew, Amos Swaisland, was fatally injured after he was thrown from his carriage outside the White Swan pub. His wife was pregnant and when she gave birth to a son some months later nobody knew what to say to her or Charles Swaisland.

I will never know if the events that followed from then would have been different if Amos hadn't been killed, but his death seemed to mark the end of the togetherness we'd once known.

FATAL GIG ACCIDENT.—On Saturday an inquest was held at the Swan Inn, Crayford, before C. J. Carttar, on the body of Mr. Amos Swaisland, proprietor of the Crayford Print Works, whose death occurred under the following distressing circumstances:—Edward Dear, of Gartly-place, Dartford, gentleman, deposed that the deceased held a tithe audit at Grinstead-green, on Thursday, and dined afterwards at the White Hart. They left together at half-past nine o'clock, and came home in the deceased's gig with Mr. Newman, the deceased's clerk. Witness was put down at his own door, and deceased and Mr. Newman went on towards Crayford; deceased drove very carefully, and at a moderate rate. The whole party had been abstemious. The night was dark. Thomas Mace, of Crayford, farmer, deposed, that at a quarter past ten he came out of the Swan Inn, and directly heard a horse coming from Dartford at great speed. Just opposite to where he (witness) stood, the near wheel struck the kerbstone, and from the violence of the shock and jerk the deceased was pitched out of the gig on to his head. Deceased was picked up in a state of insensibility. John Grantham, of Crayford, surgeon, deposed, that he attended, and found the deceased insensible, with a distinct evidence of compression of the brain, on examination of which he found it was induced by a fracture through the base of the skull, causing external extravasation of blood, and which caused his death. The deceased died in about two hours afterwards. Mr. Newman was too much injured to be examined, but from other evidence it appeared that the horse took fright at something about a hundred yards from Mr. Dear's house, and ran away. The Jury

Morning Post, Monday 5 January 1846



The White Swan (right) stood on the site currently occupied by the Carphone Warehouse on the Tower Retail Park.

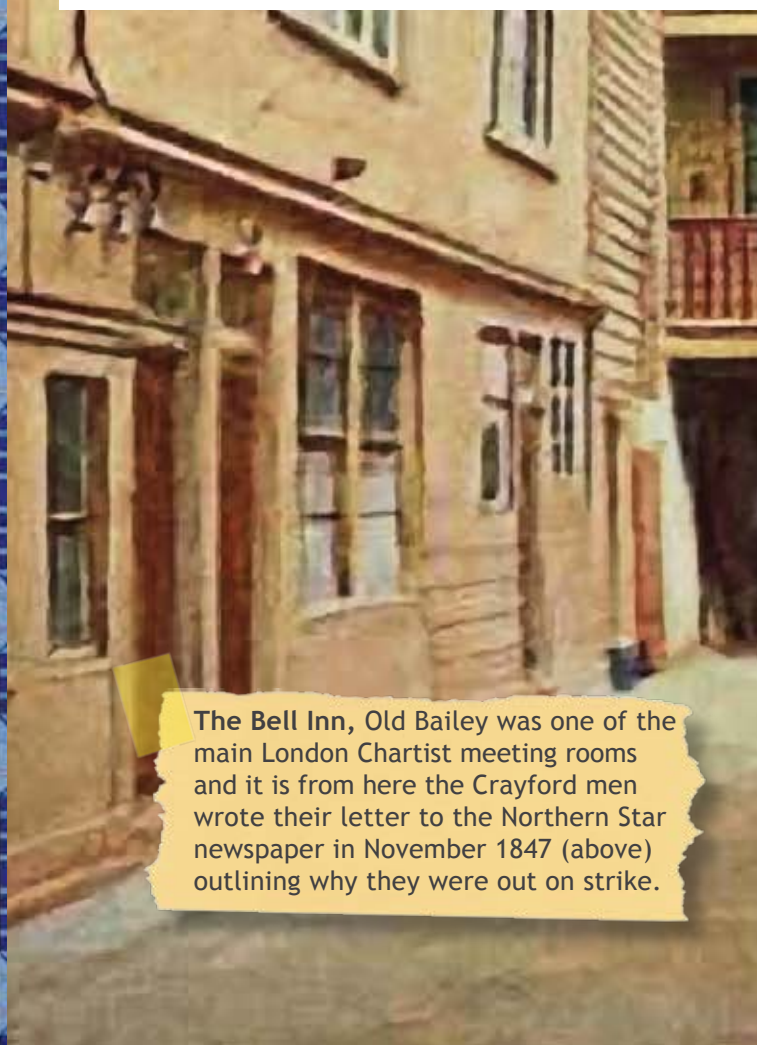
Crayford Town Archive

THE CRAYFORD BLOCK PRINTERS

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NORTHERN STAR,
Committee Room, Bell Inn, Crayford, Kent,
and Bell Inn, Old Bailey London.

November 23rd, 1847.

CRAYFORD BLOCK-PRINTERS.— We, the 'London Silk, Wool, and Cotton Printers' Society,' at Crayford, have resolved to lay our case before the trades in general, and beg to state that a serious reduction is offered by one of our employers, to the amount of 5s. 5d. per pound, which we resist, as we receive no more at present than is paid by the London masters in general, and if this reduction is submitted to, the whole body will in all probability be reduced. Owing to the depressed state of our trade for the last twelve months, and having expended in a recent struggle (since Christmas) upwards of six hundred pounds! our funds are exhausted, and we appeal to you to help us to resist the above encroachment on our wages, which are, without reduction, so low, that a living can scarcely be obtained. Since Christmas our average earnings have not exceeded fourteen shillings per week. Not only does our employer wish to reduce our prices again, having submitted to two reductions within the last eighteen months, but what is quite as important, he is using his endeavours to break up our union. As the breaking up of our union and the reduction of our prices must be resisted by all means; we called the shop out on strike five weeks ago.



The Bell Inn, Old Bailey was one of the main London Chartist meeting rooms and it is from here the Crayford men wrote their letter to the Northern Star newspaper in November 1847 (above) outlining why they were out on strike.

The 1847 Strike

The bleak atmosphere created by this terrible accident was only made worse by a terrible trade depression that followed through 1846. The repeal of the Corn Laws did not bring the wealth and prosperity we all hoped for. In Lancashire the factory owners, having no orders for printed cloth, locked out their workers and we feared the same in Crayford. Both Mr Evans and Mr Swaisland asked us to take pay cuts to keep both firms going. This the block printers reluctantly agreed to twice so that a printer, who once earned twenty five shillings a week, now took home barely fourteen. When Mr Swaisland announced a further cut in wages in June, 1847 the men had had enough. Peter Hoy, who led Number One Branch of The London Silk, Wool and Cotton Printers Society, called the men at Swaislands on strike.

A Diversion from a Bitter Strike

After three months of deadlock, one of the Crayford block printers, Willis Washington, helped divert everyone's attention away from our grim situation. Willis ran like lightning and had long taken part in what was known then as 'pedestrianism.'

There had been much banter locally as to who was the fastest runner over 100 yards, Willis, or a man called Cornforth, who lived in Woolwich. We all went up to the Anchor and Hope at Shooters Hill to watch the two men settle the argument. Willis was the odds on favourite and was heavily backed by the Crayfordians gathered to watch the race. Sadly he didn't win only the bookies did- as they always do. I wondered then if they would back us to win our strike.



We Anchor in Hope pub, Shooters Hill

The We Anchor in Hope pub's unusual name is not nautical, as you might think, it refers to the historic practice of carriage drivers using anchors to negotiate the steep Shooters Hill in slippery conditions.

(Below) *The Era*, Sunday 26 September 1847

PEDESTRIANISM.

MATCHES TO COME. NOVEMBER.

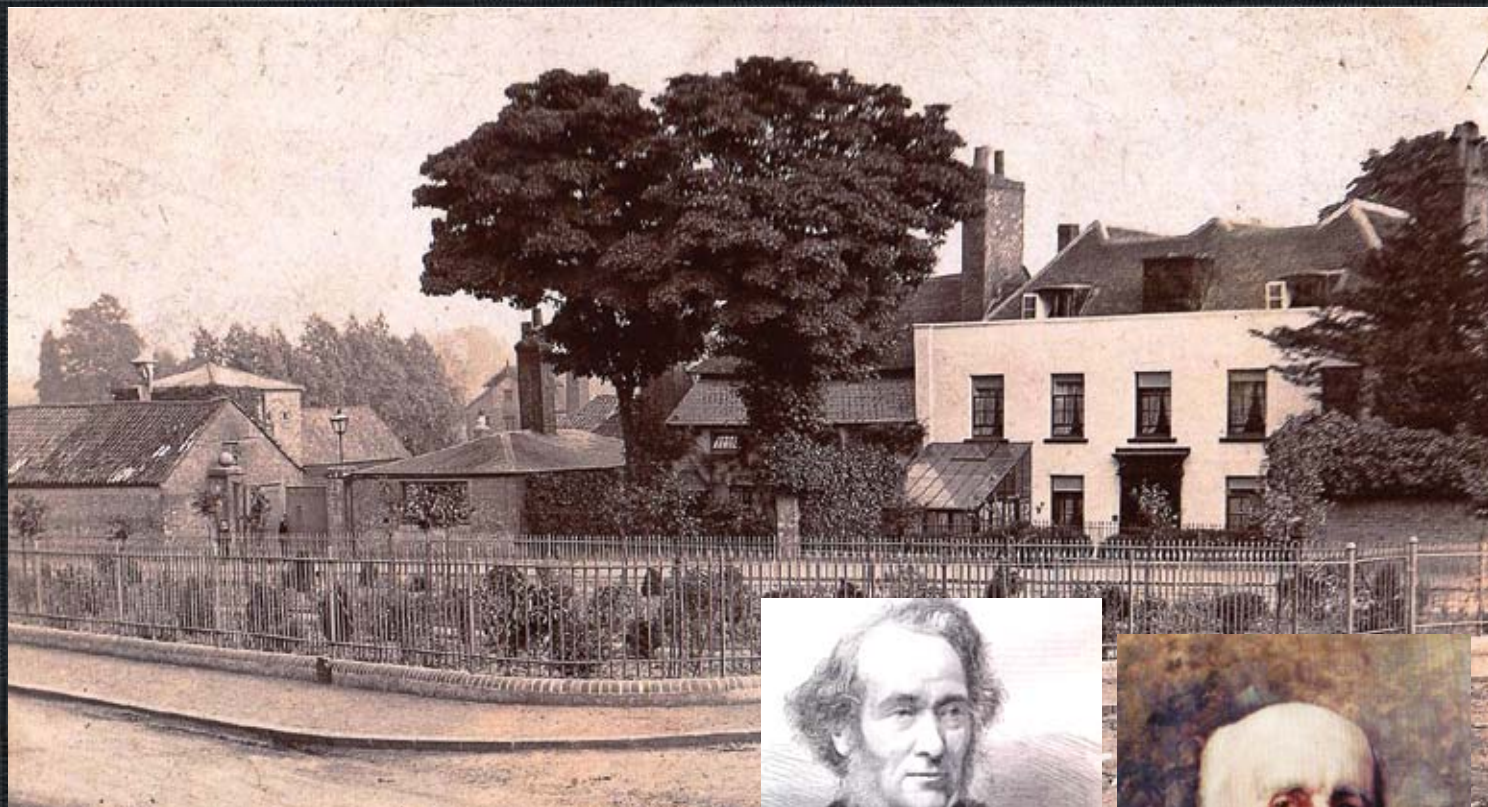
22.—Willis Washington and G. Cornforth, 100 yards, 50 sovs a side. Dartford Heath.

The Era, Sunday 21 November 1847

RUNNING MATCH FOR 5 SOVS A SIDE.—On Monday last, a match came off between George Cornforth, of Woolwich, and Willis Washington, of Crayford, Kent, for 5 sovs a side. The distance was 100 yards on the Welling-road, near the Little Anchor and Hope. At half-past four o'clock the men appeared, and after several false starts, they dashed away in fine style Cornforth taking the lead. The betting was 2 and 3 to 1 agst him. A prettier or severer race never was seen at slow time. Each man's backers was most confident as to the result, when Cornforth came into the winning-post only six inches in advance of his opponent, thus winning the match. Large bets changed hands, contrary to expectation; but, yet, the Crayford youth is nothing daunted, and another match will be made to come off next week.



Crayford Town Archive



The Central Committee were aware that Mr Evans had been in the practice of sending work to be printed in other, and lower wage shops, in Essex and Lancashire; and that in the latter districts alone, there were upwards of 1,000 block printers out of employment. The Central Committee could not by any means, knowing these facts, advise or sanction a strike, even had they supposed that the men had a fair and equitable claim to the Association's support; which they did not, because they considered from the block printers' own evidence, that the whole case resolved itself into an out of work question. They therefore advised them to accept the work under protest, and by that means preserve their shop from non-society men; and at the same time urged, that, while their trade was in its present unprecedentedly languid state, their employer might obtain a sufficient quantity of hands to suit his purpose and would therefore be able to defeat them,

Northern Star, Saturday 13 November 1847

The Secretary said there was a deputation present from the block printers of Crayford, Kent, who were on strike against a shameful reduction of wages and who had been superseded in their employ, he regretted to say, by men sent from the firm of the eminent Free trader, Richard Cobden. They had issued an address, and as their trade had received considerable support from other trades, he hoped now their battle was over, they would help their oppressed brethren, the block printers of Crayford.

Northern Star, Saturday 2 October 1847



Richard Cobden



David Evans

Hunger Forces Men Back to Work

With Swaisland's out on strike, we all waited to see what David Evans men would do. As it was, they had no decision to make as Evans closed the gates of his factory and locked them all out. Both Mr Evans and Mr Swaisland then tried to break the Block Printer's Union. Richard Cobden sent men from Lancashire to replace the men on strike at Swaislands whilst David Evans sent his orders to be printed at cheaper rates elsewhere. Henry Gardner failed with his appeal to the National Association of United Trades to support us, and after a bleak Christmas, hunger forced the men back to work at the start of 1848. It was a hollow victory for both Swaisland and Evans because the men that returned to work for them were bitter, angry men.

The Year of Decision

The anger caused by the failure of the strike only stoked our determination to see change. The Chartist meetings were busier than ever and contact was made with the Chartists in Greenwich. We realised that nothing would ever change for us until we were represented in Parliament. Our Union leader, Peter Hoy, encouraged us to invest in a new scheme that would give ordinary workers the chance to become landowners and with it the right to vote. Money was also sent to support the Chartist leader Feargus O'Connor's fight to become M.P for Nottingham, as he started putting together a huge petition in favour of the People's Charter with the aim of presenting it to Parliament. At the Bell in Crayford, we read about the preparations in the Northern Star newspaper and were excited to hear that nearly 1000 people had signed the petition in Dartford alone. Revolution was in the air and we all felt that 1848 would be, "the year of decision."

Feargus O'Connor (1794-1855) first came to England as MP for Cork in Ireland. His links to Cork would have made him popular with the Irish community in Crayford who were largely drawn from there. He set up the Northern Star newspaper and was National Chartist Association leader. An advocate of physical force he was imprisoned before becoming Nottingham MP (1847). He led the Kennington protest in 1848.



MR O'CONNOR'S SEAT IN PARLIAMENT.—The Chartists and Land members of Coventry, Hyde, Berridsey, St Helena, Gloucester, Hull, Doncaster, Slingsby, Crayford, and Leamington have commenced collecting subscriptions to defend Mr O'Connor against the conspiracy of the Nottingham Whigs.
Northern Star, 12 February 1808

Feargus O'Connor

A letter was read from the Chartists at Tonbridge Wells, stating their willingness to aid us in sending a delegate to the forthcoming Convention. It is requested that the secretary of the Crayford locality will correspond with us for the above object. Letters to be addressed to the Greenwich secretary.

Northern Star, 29 March 1845

The Lion of Freedom (A tribute to Fergus O'Connor)

The lion of freedom comes from his den,
We'll rally around him again and again,
We'll crown him with laurels our champion to be,
O'Connor, the patriot of sweet liberty.

Anon

TO THE CALICO BLOCK PRINTERS OF GREAT BRITAIN:

FELLOW WORKMEN,—We appeal to your sympathies on behalf of Mr John Neil, who now holds a two acre allotment at O'Connorville, but who will be compelled to sell out for the following reasons, unless something can be done to assist him:—There had been an unprecedented depression of his trade for a great length of time previous to his removal to O'Connorville, during which he was nine months out of employment, and at the same time having had a considerable deal of sickness and a death in his family; he was consequently compelled to draw the greater part of his help money, for the purpose of removing his family from Heywood in Lancashire to his location, and the purchasing of a few indispensable articles for immediate use. This, together with the demands lately made upon him for debts contracted under the above circumstances in Lancashire, has rendered him unable to purchase manure, without which it is impossible for him to hold this allotment; and if those who can afford to contribute a trifle will be kind enough to do so immediately, they will be the cause of establishing in comfort and independence, a good, honest, and industrious man. Let it be done immediately, as the season is already far advanced.

Make your Post Office Orders payable to Mr John Neil, at the Rickmanworth Post-office.

PETER HOY JAMES WILSON
HENRY BASCHOFF JAMES RAPLEY
JAMES M'GREGGON

Crayford, March 20, 1848.

Northern Star, 1 April 1848



Feargus O'Connor set up the Chartist Cooperative Land Company in 1846. He helped set up O'Connorville in Hertfordshire.



Whitfield's Mount, Blackheath.

After the Peasant's Revolt of 1381, Jack Cade led 20,000 Kent and Essex Yeoman on to Blackheath in 1450, where they set up camp in opposition to higher taxes being imposed by Henry VI. After fleeing to Sussex, Cade was eventually caught by the King's forces and murdered. A later rebellion, of Cornishmen angry at being taxed for Scottish wars, was put down in the Battle of Blackheath Field in 1497; over 2000 of the slain are reputedly buried in and around Blackheath. Whitfield's Mount is presumed to be their main place of burial. During the English Civil in the 1640s a group known as the Levellers met there and would argue that all men were equal and none had the right to raise themselves above others like the King did. As Blackheath was used for Church revivalist meetings in the 18th century by both Wesley and Whitfield, it was decided to rename the mound. As with similar sites in London (such as Kennington Common and Parliament Hill), people had the right to hold public meetings here.

CHARTIST DEMONSTRATION!!

"PEACE and ORDER" is our MOTTO!

TO THE WORKING MEN OF LONDON.

Fellow Men,—The Press having misrepresented and vilified us and our intentions, the Demonstration Committee therefore consider it to be their duty to state that the grievances of us (the Working Classes) are deep and our demands just. We and our families are pining in misery, want, and starvation! We demand a fair day's wages for a fair day's work! We are the slaves of capital—we demand protection to our labour. We are political serfs—we demand to be free. We therefore invite all well disposed to join in our peaceful procession on

MONDAY NEXT, April 10,

As it is for the good of all that we seek to remove the evils under which we groan.

The following are the places of Meeting of THE CHARTISTS, THE TRADES, THE IRISH CONFEDERATE & REPEAL BODIES:

East Division on Stepney Green at 8 o'clock; City and Finsbury Division on Clerkenwell Green at 9 o'clock; West Division in Russell Square at 9 o'clock; and the South Division in Peckham Fields at 9 o'clock, and proceed from thence to Kennington Common.

Signed on behalf of the Committee, JOHN ARNOTT, Sec.

Wavy Workman, Printer, 5, Broad Street, St. James's Street.

Kennington Demonstration poster, 1848. British Library

MEETING AT BLACKHEATH.

At eleven o'clock yesterday morning a gathering of the Chartists, residents in the vicinity of Greenwich and Woolwich, was held on Blackheath.

A working man named ROBINSON, having been appointed chairman, addressed the meeting to the following effect:—We are determined to conquer to-morrow; nothing shall put us down. ("Hear, hear;" cries of "Bravo, bravo.") We shall not be terrified by bullets or bayonets. They have no terrors for oppressed starving men. (Cheers.) Fellow workmen, it is an old saying that "things are getting worse." Yes; they have been getting worse with us, who are going down in the sinking scale in proportion as our tyrants get in the ascendant. It was said that the repeal of the Corn Laws would benefit—would enrich—the working classes. Has it done so? (No, no, no.) No! But, although we have not benefited by the repeal of those laws, the rich and the middle classes have received the greatest benefits from it and by it have increased their wealth and replenished their tills. (Hear, hear.) Our taxation has been increased, and to reduce that, and obtain the sovereignty of the democratic principle, we shall meet to-morrow in thousands, and in our full strength. (Loud cheer—)

Morning Post, Monday 10 April 1848



The Wat Tyler Brigade

On Sunday, 9th April, the day before the petition was to be presented to Parliament, the West Kent Chartists gathered at Whitfield's Mount in the middle of Blackheath, a place that had once been called Wat Tyler's Mound. As Crayford lads we all knew the story of Wat Tyler, the leader of the Peasant's Revolt, who had once led the men of our area to this very spot in 1381 to fight for the rights of the common man. Speaker after speaker urged the men gathered there to attend the grand meeting at Kennington set for the following day. Ominously they all seemed to predict that the final reckoning had come and that we should come prepared for a fight. One of the speakers, a man named Robinson, received the greatest cheer when he summed up the feelings of the crowd: 'We are determined to conquer tomorrow, nothing shall put us down. We shall not be terrified by bullets or bayonets. They have no terrors for oppressed starving men.'

The Dartford origins of Wat Tyler have been contested in recent years. However, John Dunkin's History of Dartford (1835), written during the Chartist era, placed the starting point of the Peasants Revolt in the town. Local people would also have known of the story because of the well known pub beside Holy Trinity Church, Dartford. Abel Kerr, one of the leaders of the revolt in 1881, came from Erith which would have undoubtedly influenced the Greenwich Chartists to name their Chartist group the Wat Tyler Brigade, as they considered themselves Kentishmen rather than Londoners.

CONTINUING

The DOVER ROAD

WRITTEN AND DRAWN BY
PETER JACKSON



DARTFORD

It has a sure place in history for it was here that the great Peasants' Revolt began. This uprising almost succeeded. But its leader, Wat Tyler, lost his life, and all the concessions that had been granted by the King were taken away the following year.

It began when, in 1381, the poll-tax was introduced which levied a tax of three groats on the head (or poll) of every man and woman over fifteen. The patience of the oppressed poor was at breaking point.



In Dartford, a tax-collector refused to believe that one young girl was under fifteen years of age. He demanded her tax in spite of her mother's protests. The girl was the daughter of Wat Tyler.



The mother went to fetch her husband who was a tiler. He found the tax-collector ill-treating his daughter and killed him.



The news of this blow for freedom by the poor spread like wildfire from village to village.

Peasants came from all corners of Kent. There they joined Wat Tyler in his march on London to lay their grievances before the fourteen-year-old King Richard II.

When Adam Delved and Eve Span, Who was then the Gentleman?

These famous lines acted as inspiration for the Chartists. They were spoken by John Ball, a preacher, banished from the Church and imprisoned for his radical views. He was freed from Maidstone Prison by the rebels at the start of the Peasants Revolt in 1381.

After his release Ball spoke to an enormous audience of peasants on 12 June 1381 from what is now Whitfield Mount, Blackheath; he gave his famous sermon about the equality of man:

"My good people, things cannot go well in England, nor ever shall, till everything be made common, and there are neither villeins nor gentlemen, but we shall all be united together, and the lords shall be no greater masters than ourselves. What have we deserved that we should be kept thus enslaved? We are all descended from one father and mother, Adam and Eve. What reasons can they give to show that they are greater lords than we, save by making us toil and labour, so that they can spend?"

Wat Tyler - Act II Blackheath Song

'When Adam delv'd, and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman?'

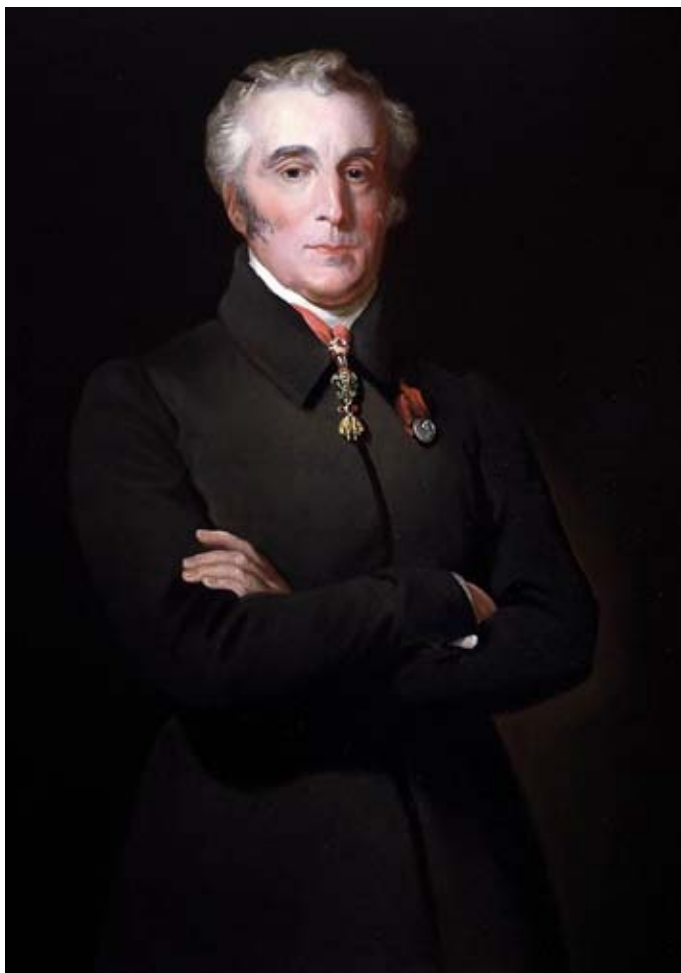
Wretched is the infant's lot,
Born within the straw-roof'd cot!
Be he generous, wise, or brave,
He must only be a slave.
Long, long labour, little rest,
Still to toil to be oppress'd;
Drain'd by taxes of his store,
Punish'd next for being poor;
This is the poor wretch's lot,
Born within the straw-roof'd cot.

Robert Southey (1774 - 1843)



WHEN ADAM DELVED AND EVE SPAN,
WHO WAS THEN THE GENTLEMAN?

Lakeland poet Robert Southey was a romantic radical who, in his younger days, harboured idealistic notions of building a communist society. But the early fire soon cooled once he received payment from the government as Poet Laureate (1813-43) and he was to be a fierce opponent of Chartism.



The Duke of Wellington

Parties coming from Gravesend, Greenwich, Dartford, Bromley, Lewisham, and other districts of Kent, are to meet at New Cross at nine, whence they will proceed along the Old and New Kent roads to the Elephant and Castle, thence along Clapham road to the common, where they will take up their position amongst their respective trades, each trade having a particular spot allotted to it. Parties coming from Merton, Tooting, Epsom, Kingston, Wimbledon, Wandsworth, and places adjacent, are to take up their position on Clapham common at nine, whence they will proceed direct to Kennington.

Sheffield Independent, Saturday 15 April 1848

NOTICE.

WHEREAS divers Large Meetings of Persons calling themselves Chartists have lately been held in the open air, in and near the Metropolis, at which Seditious and Inflammatory Speeches have been addressed to the Persons there assembled, and whereas

SUCH MEETINGS

HAVE EXCITED

Terror and Alarm,

and have caused serious disturbance of the Public Peace, and have led to acts of tumult, disorder, and violent resistance to the Law; and whereas certain Persons styling themselves Members of the Executive Committee of the Chartist Association have declared their intention to call together other

LARGE MEETINGS IN OR NEAR

THE METROPOLIS,

On Monday next, June 12;

And whereas apprehension is entertained by the Peaceable Inhabitants of the Metropolis that such Meetings will be of the same dangerous character, and will lead to the disturbance of the Public Peace:

Notice is hereby given, That

SUCH MEETINGS ARE

ILLEGAL,

AND THAT ALL NECESSARY MEASURES WILL BE ADOPTED :

to prevent any

such Meeting taking place

And all well-disposed Persons are hereby cautioned not to attend, be present at, or take part in, any such Meeting.

C. ROWAN, Commissioners of Police
R. MAYNE, of the Metropolis.

Saturday, June 10, 1848,
Metropolitan Police Office,
Whitehall Place.

MEETING IN BLACKHEATH.

On Sunday morning, an open air meeting of the Woolrich, Deptford, and Greenwich Chartists took place, in spite of the rain, at Whitfield's Mount, Blackheath. A Mr. Robinson was selected to preside. A determined intention was expressed to attend the demonstration on Monday, and an attempt was made to get up the Marsellaise hymn, which signally failed. The speeches were extremely inflammatory.

Sheffield Independent, Tuesday 11 April 1848

Revolution?

As news spread about the revolutionary speeches that were being made across London, the Government prepared for trouble. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were sent away to the Isle of Wight whilst the Duke of Wellington was put in charge of the army. We all knew that the Bobbies would be out in force, as they had been at Blackheath, to put down any sign of revolt. The papers said that thousands of middle class men had been sworn in as special constables and that the government had 200,000 men at their disposal in total. Posters were put up everywhere warning us not to attend the meeting, but all of the lads a Crayford were determined to attend and take our place at Kennington on the 10th April alongside other men of our trade.

THE GREAT CHARTIST DEMONSTRATION.



John Leech, Punch 1849

No. III.—DISTRIBUTION OF THE STAVES.

Kennington 1848

Monday, 10th April, 1848 dawned. As we arrived at the Bell you could see the determination on the face of every man. With Irishman Peter Hoy leading the Swaisland men (No1 Branch) and Harry Gardner leading the Evans men (No 2 Branch), each unveiled banners which showed both our allegiance to *The London Silk Wool and Cotton Printers Society* and the skills and craftsmanship of our trade. We set off along the old Dover Road singing, 'The Chartist's are coming!' and, as we passed the new Catholic church in Old Road, we were joined by some of the Irish lads who were waved off by Father Applegath. Together we marched on over Shooters Hill until we met the other Kent Chartists at Blackheath. As one body of men, now several hundred strong, we then set off for Kennington.

TO THE OPERATIVES OF DARTFORD AND ITS ENVIRONS.

Friends and Neighbours,—

It is with unfeigned surprise and grief that I have learned the success which the emissaries of sedition have obtained among you, under the specious title of Chartism. They well know that you are too wise and too honest to join in any avowed efforts to break up the present peaceful order of society, by which you derive your daily subsistence, and innumerable other benefits, and therefore under the pretence of seeking an extension of those political rights which all Englishmen prize, they are endeavouring to bring you into collision with our mild and forbearing government, in the hope that untoward circumstances may arise to create confusion, and thus indirectly to produce that state of things which they desire, yet dare not openly avow.

Anti-Chartist pamphlet by Augustus Applegarth Senior. 11 April 1848. *Bridwell Library special collections, Perkins School of Theology Southern Methodist University USA*



THE PROCESSION.

The following arrangements were concluded by the members of the National Convention on Saturday:—The whole of the eastern districts of the metropolis are to assemble on Stepney-green by 8 o'clock; the City and Finsbury divisions are to muster on Clerkenwell-green by 9 o'clock; the western divisions are to muster in Russell-square by 9 o'clock; the south division, including Lambeth, Southwark, Rotherhithe, &c., in Peckham-fields at 9 o'clock; divisions from Woolwich and Greenwich assemble on Blackheath; Chelsea, Pimlico, &c., in Belgrave-square at 9 o'clock. The whole of these divisions will march from their separate districts, so as to arrive at Kennington-common by 11 a. m. From thence the procession (the petition placed on a car drawn by four horses, caparisoned) will pass by the Elephant and Castle, down the Blackfriars-road, over the bridge, along Farringdon-street, Holborn, Oxford-street, Regent-street, and Parliament-street. Here a deputation of ten delegates will convey the petition, signed by more than 5,000,000 persons, upwards of 300 yards in length, and considerably more than 2 cwt. up to the House of Commons, the main body passing over Westminster-bridge. All persons are to be unarmed, and any attempt at disturbance immediately suppressed.—*Daily News of Monday.*

Sussex Advertiser, Tuesday 11 April 1848

This watercolour by William Hubbard is possibly of the Red Lion Shooters Hill

The Chartists Are Coming

What a row and a rumpus there is I declare,
Tens of thousands are flocking everywhere;
To petition the Parliament, onward they steer,
The Chartists are coming, oh dear, oh dear.
To demand equal justice, their freedom and rights,
Pump-handles and broomsticks, lawk, how they can fight;
The nation, they say, is o'erwhelmed with grief,
A peck loaf for two pence and four pounds of beef.

Chorus:

Hurrah for old England and liberty sweet,
The land that we live in and plenty to eat;
We shall ever remember this wonderful day,
The Chartists are coming, get out of the way

A Broadside Ballad c1848



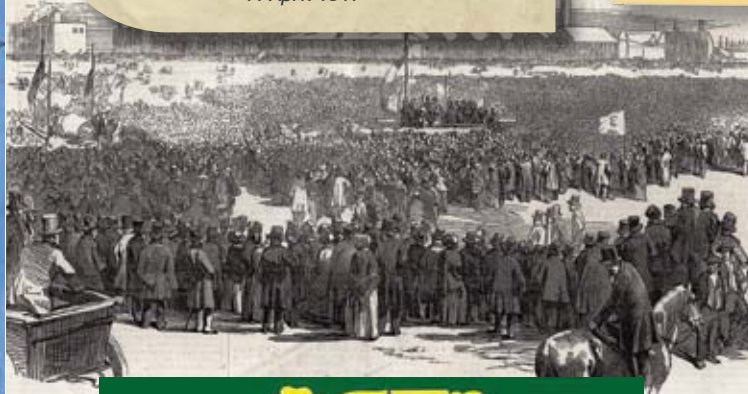
The Chartist National Anthem

God bless our native land!
May heaven's protecting hand
Still guard our shore!
May right its power extend
Industry to defend-
Soon may oppression end
All Britain o'er!

Anon.
The Midland Illuminator
11 April 1841

*Chartist meeting at Kennington Common.
Photographed by William Kilburn*

Early portrait photographer, William Kilburn, took a set of daguerreotypes (an early form of photograph) from the top of The Horns Tavern, of the Chartist meeting held at Kennington Common on 10th April 1848. It is believed to be the first crowd scene ever photographed. The illustration below from The Illustrated London News was engraved from one of these pictures.



At the Dawn of a New Age

On arrival at Kennington the Chartist Marshalls, wearing their bright red, white and green sashes, led us to our designated spot amongst the London Block Printers. Many of our men had friends and family already there from the calico printers at Mitcham and Stratford and they warmly greeted our arrival. I remember how we sang 'The Chartist National Anthem' in the bright morning sun, all of us firm in the belief that we were at the dawn of a new age. Each of the trades represented on the common bore a banner, but only the one belonging to the Irish Confederates could match the ones we'd brought ourselves. Their bright green banner bore the Harp of Erin in gold and the legend, 'Erin Go Bragh!' or Ireland Forever.



Variations of the above flag design have been used at different times to express Irish nationalism. *Erin go Bragh* is most often translated as "Ireland Forever."

Broken Hopes

Finally O'Connor arrived together with the monster petition which needed a carriage all to itself. We waited as he and the other speakers climbed aboard a wagon on the side of which a banner proclaimed: '*The Charter. No surrender. Liberty is worth living for and worth dying for,*' I think we all believed each and every word as expectations had been driven higher than Charles Green's Albion balloon. We were soon brought down to earth with a bump though with what O'Connor was about to tell us. He warned that any attempt to make a procession to parliament was doomed to failure and we soon found out why when we attempted to ignore his advice.

Leaving Kennington, we found the approaches to Blackfriars Bridge blocked by mounted police armed with sabres and more Bobbies on foot eager to crack a few heads to show who ruled the streets. When the rain began to fall like tears on our broken hopes, we knew there would be no revolution and all we had to look forward to was the long trudge home to Crayford.



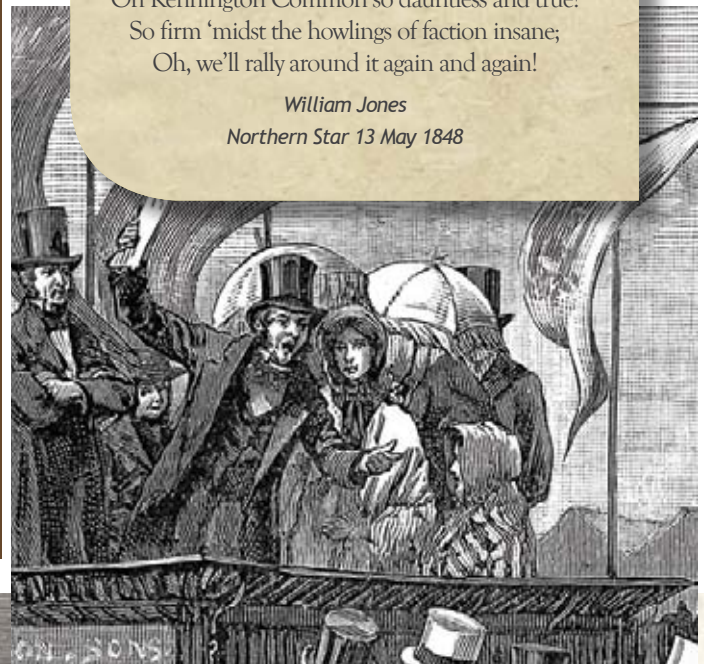
Feargus O'Connor at Kennington. Illustrated London News, April 1848

Let Us Strive for the Charter (v.5)

All honour to Feargus! Our thanks are his due-
On Kennington Common so dauntless and true!
So firm 'midst the howlings of faction insane;
Oh, we'll rally around it again and again!

William Jones

Northern Star 13 May 1848



Blackfriars Protest. Illustrated London News, April 1848

THE CHARTIST PROCESSION ACCORDING TO THE SIGNATURES OF THE PETITION

A very remarkable fact connected with the late Chartist Petition, is the fact that the signatures of the largest amount of names were not forthcoming to back the document on the day of its presentation. Our artist, in his beautiful simplicity following the practice of the present day, has drawn from his own imagination a representation of the procession, and, in place of our periodical quite on a par with our illustrated pictures, he has introduced almost as many characters that never existed in the ceremony, as are usually to be found in the views of events that are drawn expressly by "artists on the spot." In a spot, by the way, is always that convenient spot, there were—*for the illuminated journals.*

Chartist Procession, with which we this day present our readers, we have the view we should be justified in taking of it, if the signatures to the Petition were *just* 5,000, and consisted of the signatures of the illustrious personages whose names were found in the document in conjunction with those of the heroic Sir, PLATONER, and other great naval regents of Chartist opinion, and desirous of being heard in favour of the sick state, or there as our friend CUFFY has ingeniously designated his favourite. Had the petition been anything but a lion, HER MAJESTY would have been at an early hour sending her way towards Kennington, with seventeen LICKES or WELLINGTONS at her side, and this would have been conspicuous in the van that was bearing the document.

Perhaps, after all, the two Premiers—*ex* and *present*—have interest as the CUFFYS the RHYNGRIGHS, and the M'GRATHS.



Kennington and the Chartist Petition 1848

John Leech's Punch cartoon, 'The Beginning and The End,' highlighted the failure of the Chartist protest at Kennington. This was the third and last time the Chartists attempted to present a petition to Parliament following failed attempts in both 1839 and 1842. Fearing an attempted revolution, the Government prepared immensely for the Kennington meeting and filled London with 85,000 special constables, as well as putting 8,000 soldiers on alert. Although there were probably upwards of 20,000 (perhaps as many as 50,000) people present, the meeting was a peaceful one.



No. IX.—THE BEGINNING AND THE END.

2200 "POOR" VENT HER LIBERTY! HARM YOURSELVES! TO THE PULL DOWN WITH HEAVYWEIGHTS!"

2200 "OH, SIR—PLEASE SIR—IT WENT ME, SIR—IN FOR OUR OWN THE QUEEN AND "HOLE BATHING" GOD—HOD—ON BEAST! ON BEAST! (SING) AND SING.

The Debunking of the Charter

After the crowd at Kennington dispersed Feargus O'Connor and the Chartist Executive delivered the petition to Parliament in a series of coaches. O'Connor claimed the petition had 5,700,000 signatures. The former Crayford factory owner, Augustus Applegath ridiculed the Chartist leaders who claimed this figure in his anti Chartist pamphlet (below).

Punch magazine produced the cartoon (left) to highlight that after examination by clerks from the House of Commons it was found to contain only two million names. These included a number of false signatures, such as those of Queen Victoria, Sir Robert Peel and The Duke of Wellington, which only served to discredit the petition further. Despite the huge amount of legitimate signatures, Parliament did not take the petition seriously and it was rejected.

Kentish men—*Men of Kent*—Will you risk your happiness, your good name, and your liberties upon such Leaders as these?

Extract from 'A Letter on Chartism' by Augustus Applegath Senior

Bridwell Library Special Collections, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University

The Kennington Fiasco

We arrived home that evening soaked to the skin, but it wasn't the weather that had broken our spirits but the sense that our moment had passed, Kennington had been a fiasco. The press declared it another victory for the Duke of Wellington, another Waterloo for the old boy. O'Connor had taken the petition by cab to parliament claiming it contained 5,700,000 signatures but it had less than half of that. Some had even put the Iron Duke's name on it, which helped the newspapers poke still more fun at our 'revolution.' Henry Gardner took things very badly. After our own strike defeat, he'd firmly believed things would be different at Kennington. He'd told anyone who'd listen that it would bring us 'our Jerusalem' an England that would be heaven on earth. Its failure seemed to crush him and he was already ill before becoming one of the many victims of the cholera epidemic that brought further misery to the Cray valley in the new year.

Father Applegath 'The Chartist Parish Priest'

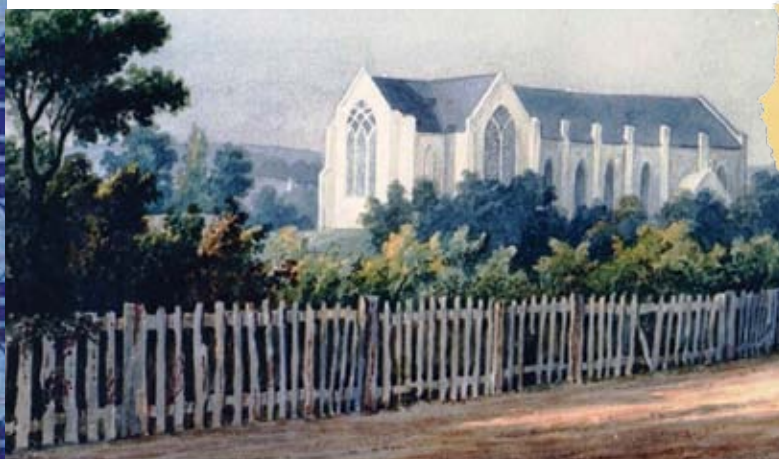
As governments across Europe fell to revolution there was a ferocious backlash against Chartism. Those with a vested interest in keeping political power restricted to a wealthy elite of landowners closed ranks. Queen Victoria called for the leaders of the Kennington protest to be arrested whilst closer to home the bankrupt calico printer, Augustus Applegath, published a pamphlet warning his former workers in Crayford about the consequences of their actions. Almost every newspaper did its best to ridicule us. The only exception was Feargus O'Connor's Northern Star. It's at times like this, when everyone is against you, that you realise who your true friends are. In Crayford the ordinary working man had no greater friend than the parish priest at St Mary of the Crays, Father Applegath. He helped Peter Hoy and other local Chartists write a pamphlet in our defence even though it pitched him directly against the views of his own father.

'Gentlemen of Parliament have looked very carefully after the interest of the land. In my opinion, every profession and trade ought to be represented, then all classes might be treated fairly!'

The "injustice" now consists of the smaller class (the law makers) making most particular care of themselves. I want justice for all - and the people have it now.'

Extract from Rev. Augustus Applegath's defence of Chartism in response to his father's pamphlet (above right).

St Mary of the Crays c1842. Watercolour by William Hubbard



It is an attempt on the part of some of its leaders, to obtain *power* through the ignorance of its supporters. You mean well. Can you say the same of your leaders after the violent and overbearing language which has been held in London? Can good result from intimidation and menaces? Will not commerce and confidence flee before such exhibitions as that of yesterday; and when once the bands of labour are loosened, what will compensate to us, "who wish to live by the fruit of our industry." Let me, my friends, once more entreat you to repudiate the apostles of discord, what have we in Dartford to do with those violent demagogues who talk of rebellion, civil war, and bloodshed, as if such things were trifles, instead of being the greatest calamities which can befall a nation, let me repeat my first advice—Postpone further enquiries into Chartism until reason gains its sway, and the men of violence are totally banished from its councils.

Believe me,

Dear Friends and Neighbours,

Yours faithfully,

A WORKING BEE.

Dartford, April 11, 1848.

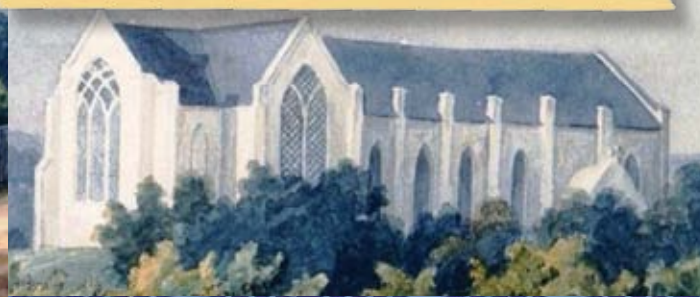
Augustus Applegath

'A Letter on Chartism'

A. Applegath Snr Bridwell Library Special Collections, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University USA

2 — This denunciation of Chartism is, according to the printer, the production of 'A Working Bee;' but we strongly suspect that, in truth, it is the production of an idle drone, or a rucking slug. This pamphlet is another specimen of twopenny trash, and that, too, of the most garbage-like kind. When we inform our readers that this drone or slug has the assurance to talk of 'our mild and forbearing government,' and to assert that the taxes press least upon the working classes, we have said enough to show the combined knavery and stupidity of this precious pamphleteer. Without wasting space upon this clumsy tool of tyranny, we will proceed at once to the next publication in our list. *The Northern Star, 1848*

In 1842 the Rev Augustus Applegath built St Mary of the Crays RC Church in the grounds of his father's (also Augustus) home 'Shenstone'. In April 1848, father and son found themselves on opposite sides of the Chartist debate. After Applegath Senior printed a pamphlet condemning local involvement in the huge demonstration at Kennington, his son collaborated with local Chartists to write a damning response. (The original pamphlet with Applegath's handwritten notes can be viewed on www.crayfordhistory.co.uk)





THE CHARTIST TRIALS.

William Lacey, Thomas Fay, and William Cuffey, whose trial was proceeding at our last publication have been convicted.

The principal evidence against these prisoners was Powell, the spy, who deposed that he had joined the Chartists for the purpose of betraying them. He underwent a severe cross-examination, in which he declined to swear that he had not used expressions much more violent and treasonable than any imputed to the prisoners. Several witnesses were called, who swore from his general want of veracity they would not believe him on his oath. Others swore that he had persuaded them to follow his example in arming and making cartridges and fire-balls, and undertake to set fire to houses; that he had cast bullets, made an instrument with spikes to cripple the cavalry, and even given a man money to go to one of the places of meeting on the night when the party were taken by the police. His evidence was supported by that of another spy, named Davis, of Greenwich, who, all the time he was giving secret information to the police, was receiving money from a landlord for canvassing people, to attend the Chartist meetings held there.

The jury found them guilty, and they were on Saturday, with William Dowling, sentenced to be transported for life. When the sentence was pronounced, Fay exclaimed in a loud voice, "This is the baptism of felony in England." He then looked up to the gallery, called, "Good bye, my flowers; good bye, fellow countrymen." The other prisoners made no observation. The trial of Mullens is postponed till next sessions.

West Kent Guardian, Saturday 7 October 1848

Let Us Strive for the Charter (v.4)

Though Secret assassins-lewd
government spies,
Disgraced our Petition and stained it
with lies;
Our cause shall yet triumph-yea
spite of vile men-
For we'll rally around it again and again!

William Jones

Northern Star 13 May 1848

The Transportation of William Cuffey

Cuffey's conviction for levying war on the Queen was obtained through the evidence of two police spies. One, Thomas Powell, widely known as 'Lying Tom', said in cross-examination that he had told the Chartists how to make grenades: "I told them that gunpowder must be put into an ink-bottle with an explosive cap, and I dare say I did say that it would be a capital thing to throw among the police if it had some nails in it." The other spy, George Davis, a second-hand book and furniture dealer from Greenwich and a member of the Chartist 'Wat Tyler Brigade' there, told how he had attended its meetings and 'reported within two hours all that had occurred at each meeting to the inspector of police. For the past few weeks the people of Greenwich had suspected him of being a spy, and he had lost his trade as a result. The Metropolitan Police had paid Powell £1 per week, Davis a lump sum of £150, and had also bought information from at least two other Chartists. As a result of their evidence Cuffey was transported to Australia.

The Bexley Spy

John Paterson, the Bexley attorney who spied for the Duke of Wellington, sent this poster to the 'Iron Duke' as part of his observation of the Irish Confederates, who in 1848 were plotting to combine with the Chartists to overthrow the crown. Two of the letters he sent are shown on subsequent pages.



Spies

That summer that followed Kennington, the Wat Tyler Brigade from Greenwich, who had marched with us to Kennington, found themselves wrapped up in a revolutionary plot that made national headlines. They became involved with William Cuffey, a black tailor from Chatham in Kent, who believed the time had come to unite with the Irish Confederates and start a revolution. In hindsight, it was lucky that we were never involved with them as otherwise we'd have joined them on a one way trip to Australia. The papers revealed the Greenwich Chartists were betrayed by two of their own men, 'Lying Tom' Powell and George Davis. We'd heard there were government spies everywhere and this confirmed our suspicions. It put us on our guard because we were sure there must be similar men willing to betray us much closer to home.

Bexley Kent 5 Aug 1848
20 minutes to 1 P.M.

My Lord Duke

A Letter is in Town from a policeman in Ireland addressed to his Mother in London. There is no signature to it - and the writer states he withheld his signature for obvious reasons.

Some parts of the letter have been erased - as if purposely to conceal a part of the contents, evidently done by the party who received the letter - The letter is dated from Clonmel.

The writer assures his Mother that there will be in Ireland a dreadful struggle - That the Rebels mean to fight for it at the point of the Pike and no quarter will be shown on either side - That he never expects again to see his family. It moreover states that O'Brien is in the neighbourhood of Killyvally Co of Tipperary surrounded by 6000 - Armed Men - That he is supported by French Officers and Engineers - That the States are all flocking from all parts into Clonmel. My man has been informed that support will arrive from France & America -



The Duke of Wellington



Leading Chartist
James Bronterre
O'Brien

John Paterson

The 'Iron Dukes' spy from Bexley

With the country on the brink of revolution in 1848 a number of spies and informers were recruited to infiltrate local Chartist and Irish Confederate (Nationalist) groups. One of them was Bexley solicitor John Paterson. He began a regular correspondence with the Duke of Wellington, who passed his letters to Sir Richard Mayne, the Head of the Metropolitan Police. Paterson's offices were in Cannon Street and this allowed him to mingle with groups in the City as well as with local groups, including the Greenwich based Wat Tyler Brigade.

Bexley Kent 5 August 1848
20 minutes to one p.m.

My Lord Duke

A letter is in Town from a policeman in Ireland addressed to his brother in London. There is no signature to it - and the writer states he withheld his signature for obvious reasons.

Some parts of the letter have been erased - as if purposely to conceal a part of the contents, evidently done by the party who received the letter - The letter is dated from Clonmel.

The writer assures his Brother that there will be in Ireland a dreadful struggle - That the Rebels mean to fight for it at the point of the Pike and no quarter will be shown on either side - That he never expects again to see his family. It moreover states that O'Brien is in the neighbourhood of Killyvally County Tipperary surrounded by 6000 armed men - That is supported by French Officers and Engineers - That the States are all flocking from all parts into Clonmel. My man has been informed that support will arrive from France and America.

Bexley 19th August 1848

My dear Sir

I have nothing to consequence at present - but expect, that I shall have in the course of the day -
 Whatever I have to communicate will be addressed to you at some Private Residence in Spring Gardens, you will therefore have noted that no delay may take place in forwarding the dispatches, wherever you may be - if any be sent to me -
 I am afraid T. Powell's evidence will bring an odiousness upon the Govt. He is the same person to whom I alluded some time ago in a communication I made to the Duke of Wellington as the person who had such a quantity of spike heads intended to injure the Cavalry Horses in his possession. There is no doubt he has been offering for sale cutlasses, guns, pistols and other implements of destruction and instigating the Chartists to all manners of mischief. In short my informant assures me that it was so - That he was one of the leaders of the 29th May. I remain

Yours Truly
 J Paterson

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Dear Sir
 Yours Truly
 J. Paterson



Anti cavalry spikes

Bexley 19 August 1848
 Addressed to Sir Richard Mayne
 (Head of the Metropolitan Police).

My dear Sir

I have nothing to consequence at present - but expect that I shall have in the course of the day.

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On *29 May 1848 a crowd of 3,000 to 4,000 heard Chartist speakers and marched down Fleet Street, halting to hoot and groan at the offices of the Weekly Dispatch and The Times for their coverage of the Kennington protest.

The North Kent Railway

When you saw how the Wat Tyler Brigade were set up and dealt with so harshly by the courts, you started to question everything. I remember when they opened the North Kent Railway in the summer of 1849 how excited everyone was. Mr Swaisland had been one of the key campaigners for building the line and it certainly helped us get our fabric to and from the factory. However, there was much discussion at the Bell about how else this railway could be used. In 1842 the railway had been used to take troops up to quell the Chartist uprising in the north. If there were any problems in north west Kent you would be sure that they'd do the same here now. In any case, only the rich could afford the shilling it cost to take the train to London from Erith so I wasn't going to make much use of it.

SOUTH-EASTERN RAILWAY

THE SOUTH-EASTERN NORTH KENT RAILWAY is NOW OPEN from the LONDON-BRIDGE TERMINUS to LEWISHAM, BLACKHEATH, CHARLTON, WOOLWICH, ERITH, DARTFORD, GREENHITHE, GRAVESEND, and STROOD for ROCHESTER and CHATHAM.

Down Trains from London Bridge on week days every half hour, from 7.30 a.m., to 10.30 p.m., for Lewisham, Blackheath, Charlton, and Woolwich; and every hour from 7.30 a.m., to 10.30 p.m., for Erith, Dartford, Greenhithe, Gravesend, and Strood for Rochester and Chatham.

Up Trains from Strood, Gravesend, Greenhithe, Dartford, and Erith every hour, leaving Strood, from 7 a.m., to 10 p.m.; and from Woolwich, Charlton, Blackheath, and Lewisham, every half hour, leaving Woolwich from 8 a.m., to 11 p.m.

On Sundays the Trains start, as above, with the exception of the down trains leaving London-bridge at 11 and 11.30 a.m., 12 a.m., and 12.30 a.m., and the up trains leaving Strood at 10 and 11 a.m., and Woolwich at 11.30 a.m., and 12.30 a.m.

	Fares.			Annual Tickets.	
	1st Class.	2nd Class.	3rd Class.	1st Class.	2nd Class.
LONDON to—					
LEWISHAM	1s.	.. 9d.	.. 6d.	.. 13gs.	10gs.
BLACKHEATH	1s.	.. 9d.	.. 6d.	.. 14 "	11 "
CHARLTON and WOOLWICH ..	1s.	.. 9d.	.. 6d.	.. 15 "	12 "
ERITH	2s.	.. 1s. 6d.	.. 1s.	.. 20 "	17 "
GRAVESEND	3s.	.. 2s.	.. 1s. 6d.	} 25 "	20 "
Day Tickets	5s.	.. 3s. 6d.	.. 2s. 6d.		
STROOD for—					
ROCHESTER and CHATHAM. ..	4s. 6d.	3s.	.. 2s.	.. 35 "	30 "
Day Tickets	8s.	.. 5s. 6d.	.. 3s. 6d.		

Time bills and information may be obtained on application at the London-bridge Terminus, and at all stations of the South-Eastern Railway.
G. S. HERBERT,
Secretary.

West Kent Guardian, Saturday 4 August 1849

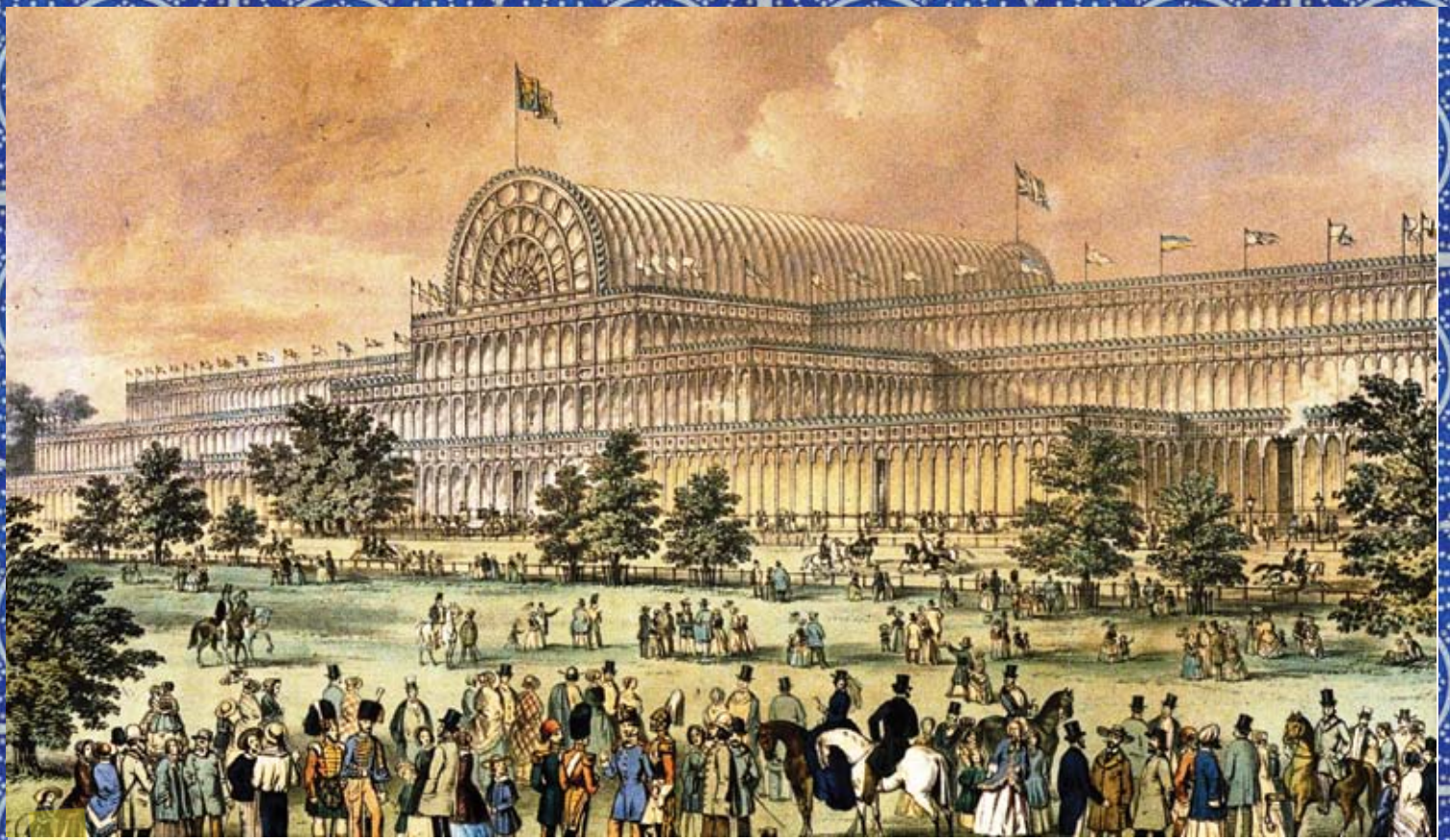


The Smuggler's Retreat in Erith.
Watercolour by William Hubbard

The North Kent Railway

When the London and Greenwich Railway opened on the 8th February, 1836, it was the World's first passenger railway in a capital city. It was built on a viaduct consisting of 978 arches that ran from London Bridge to Greenwich. The extension of the line, known as the North Kent Railway, opened for traffic on 30th July, 1849. At that time Plumstead marked the outer limit of suburban development so the extension of the railway to Erith had a dramatic effect on the area. It led to a rise in Erith's population from 2,082 in 1841 to 4,143 by 1861. Crayford did not get its own station until the Dartford Loop line was opened in 1866, so local people went to Dartford or Erith if they wished to travel by train to and from London.





A contemporary print showing the magnificent glass structure of the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park 1851

The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations was organised by Prince Albert, Henry Cole, Francis Henry, George Wallis, Charles Dilke and other members of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce as a celebration of modern industrial technology and design. It was arguably a response to the highly successful French Industrial Exposition of 1844. Its prime motive was for Great Britain to make clear to the world its role as industrial leader.

Beginning with the display of Mr. Charles Swaisland, of Crayford, in Kent, as the most appropriate name to head our list, the printed shawls exhibited by him and others for whom he prints, require primary attention. The barège shawls exhibited by this veteran English printer are above all ordinary praise. The designs are admirable, and, though Indian—with occasional attempts of an intelligible character to escape from the conventional type, the colouring, the scientific arrangement, the purity of tone, and excellence of work, render them all that the most fastidious in these fabrics and articles of dress can desire.

Morning Chronicle, Wednesday 1 October 1851

THURSDAY.

The number of visitors to-day, though not equal to that of Tuesday, was still more than equal to the usual average. Within the first hour upwards of 20,000 entered the building; by twelve o'clock the numbers admitted were 37,376; by one, 48,508. The total number during the day was 63,746. The amount received was, for season tickets, 71. 7s.; at the doors, 3,023l. 5s.—total, 3,030l. 12s. Her Majesty and Prince Albert were again present.

The number of schools which visit the building daily increases. Among those which arrived to-day was one from Hoxton, number of children, 40; Edgeware School, 75; Crayford Sunday-school, 28; Life Guards' School (boys), 25; Romford British School, 94 boys, 37 girls;

Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper, Sunday 20 July 1851

The Great Exhibition

In 1851 Mr Swaisland and Mr Evans both made the decision to enter samples of their work into the Great Exhibition that Prince Albert had organised. I'm sure they hoped this would try to raise moral amongst the men who worked at both factories. Evans sent in some of their designs for silk handkerchiefs, whilst Charles Swaisland asked Mr Carter, who had worked in Crayford as a designer for over 50 years, to come up with a design for a woollen shawl that could bring the prestigious Gold medal back to the village. The Crystal Palace at Hyde Park, where the exhibition was held, was a wonder in itself but it was what this wonderful building held that was truly amazing. Charles Swaisland paid for 28 children from the Sunday School at St Paulinus to see the exhibition. I was glad to hear this, as this same school was the one that had taught me to read and write.

Impressing the Queen

We heard Queen Victoria took a special interest in our stand at the opening of the Great Exhibition. It made me laugh to think that three years before we could have been kicking her off the throne and here we were now trying to impress her with the quality of our work! Mind you our barege shawl was certainly good enough to impress anyone. The design that Mr Taylor came up with took 550 impressions to print it and easily won Swaislands the Gold Medal award from the judges.



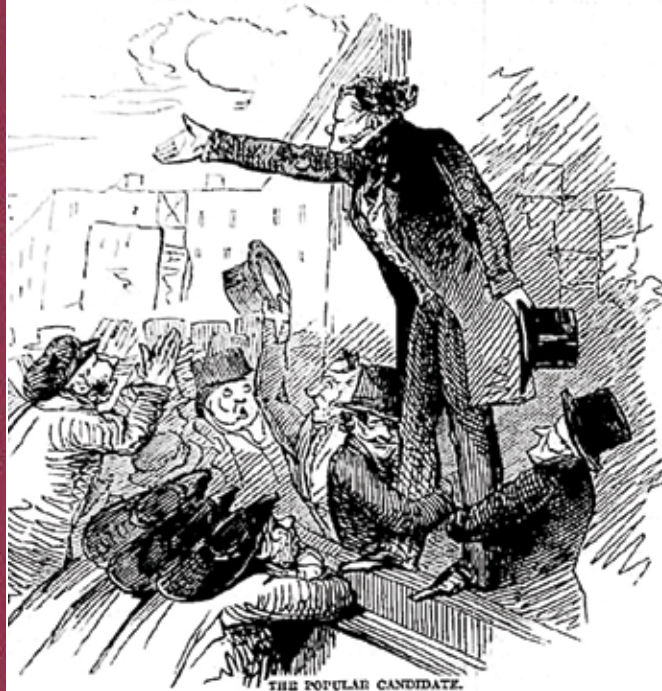
Gold
Prize
Medal



Charles Swaisland won the Gold Prize Medal (left), for printing on wool for his barege shawl design (above). The design used 550 impressions to complete. GP & J Baker



Contemporary print showing Queen Victoria and Prince Albert being welcomed to the Great Exhibition



THE POPULAR CANDIDATE.

And I came upon the hustings,
And exposed my shrinking form,
To the yells, and knocks, and thrustings
Of the people's pelting storm.

Illustrated London News 1859



THE UNPOPULAR CANDIDATE.

I remember, I remember,
How unpopular was I;
And had it been November,
They'd have burnt me for a Guy!

ANNOUNCING THE POLL, AND THE BUTCHERS.
Ald.—"Hearth the Boel!"
Read the poll—
Let every soul,
In anxious waiting meet us.
Some say we've won,
And some we're done,
And both Committees cheat us

The hustings referred to a platform or pavilion, a temporary structure erected at the place of an election. During polling, each vote was declared openly on the hustings, with the elector orally declaring for whom he was casting a ballot. The vote was recorded in a poll book, along with the name of each voter (enabling enquiries to be made about his eligibility to vote). In certain occasions, additional candidates were nominated as the polling continued, since this gave an opportunity for more speeches. Polling could continue for many days, so long as

there were voters wanting to participate and the candidates desired to continue. At the end of the polling, the returning officer was required to declare the result from the hustings and return the members elected. This could be a problem after a hotly contested election, and rioting was not unheard of.

ELECTION INTELLIGENCE.

WEST KENT.—A crowded meeting of the inhabitants of the town of Dartford was held on Thursday evening, for the purpose of considering what course should be adopted with reference to the disgraceful scenes of violence which took place in Dartford on the occasion of the polling for members for West Kent, on which occasion the conservatives introduced a large number of prize-fighters into the town for the purpose of intimidating the liberal voters, which resulted in a general *mêlée*. The chair was taken by Mr.

Morning Chronicle, Wednesday 1 October 1851

'The noise and confusion here this morning is so great that my head is spinning. There about forty flags on either side, two tremendous bands and 150 constables... The voters are drinking and guzzling and howling in every house of entertainment there is.'

Charles Dickens writing as a reporter on an election in 1835

Corrupt Elections

When local hustings were held in the market Place at Dartford to elect an MP for West Kent in 1852, it brought it home to us that the working man was still excluded from the vote. The whole thing was rigged back then. The candidates would stand on a platform to give their speeches and then do their best to ply everyone with enough drink to persuade them to cast their votes in favour of them. Some of the candidates were not even this subtle in persuading the local property owners to vote for them. In 1859, the Tory candidates, Lord Holmesdale and Sir Edward Filmer, hired a team of prize fighters to intimidate voters into voting for them. That's what you got when there was no secret ballot to keep who you voted for to yourself. They said the People's Charter was dead but how could it be when you saw this kind of behaviour in a country of so called free people.

The 1852 Strike

In August 1852 the simmering tension with Mr Swaisland and Mr Evans boiled over once more. Things came to a head when once again both employers informed the men that wages would have to be cut, but we knew there was more to it than that. This time they hoped to break our union once and for all, something they had failed to do in 1847. Henry Gardner had predicted that once the Corn Laws had gone, the employers would use the fall in the price of wheat to force down our wages and he was right. Swaisland and Evans would have Cobden on their side again but we were ready for them and would not back down without a fight.

THE FORETOLD FREE TRADE MANŒUVRE.—The calico printers at Crayford have struck work. The chief cause of the strike appears to be the desire of the masters that the men should work at reduced prices. To this demand the men will not accede.

Hull Packet, Friday 20 August 1852

CRAYFORD.—STRIKE AMONG THE CALICO PRINTERS.—In consequence of the printers not being able to comply with the terms proposed by the masters at the commencement of this season, they have struck work. Last Friday they marched in procession to the factory and fetched away their tools. We do not pretend to give credit to all the reports in circulation as to the demands of the employers and employed, but the chief causes of the strike appear to be, the desire of the masters that the men should work at reduced prices, and should sign an agreement to leave the 'society.' To these demands the men will not accede, and besides refusing to work themselves, they have (or the 'society' has for them) called off the apprentices from their work, thus interfering directly with the master and his apprentices.

West Kent Guardian, Saturday 14 August 1852

Ode

Men of England ye are slaves,
Though ye quell the roaring waves—
Though ye boast, by land and sea,
Britons everywhere are free.

Men of England, ye are slaves,
Bought by tyrants, sold by knaves;
Your's the toil, the sweat, the pain,
Their's the profit ease and gain.

William Sankey

Northern Star 29 February 1840



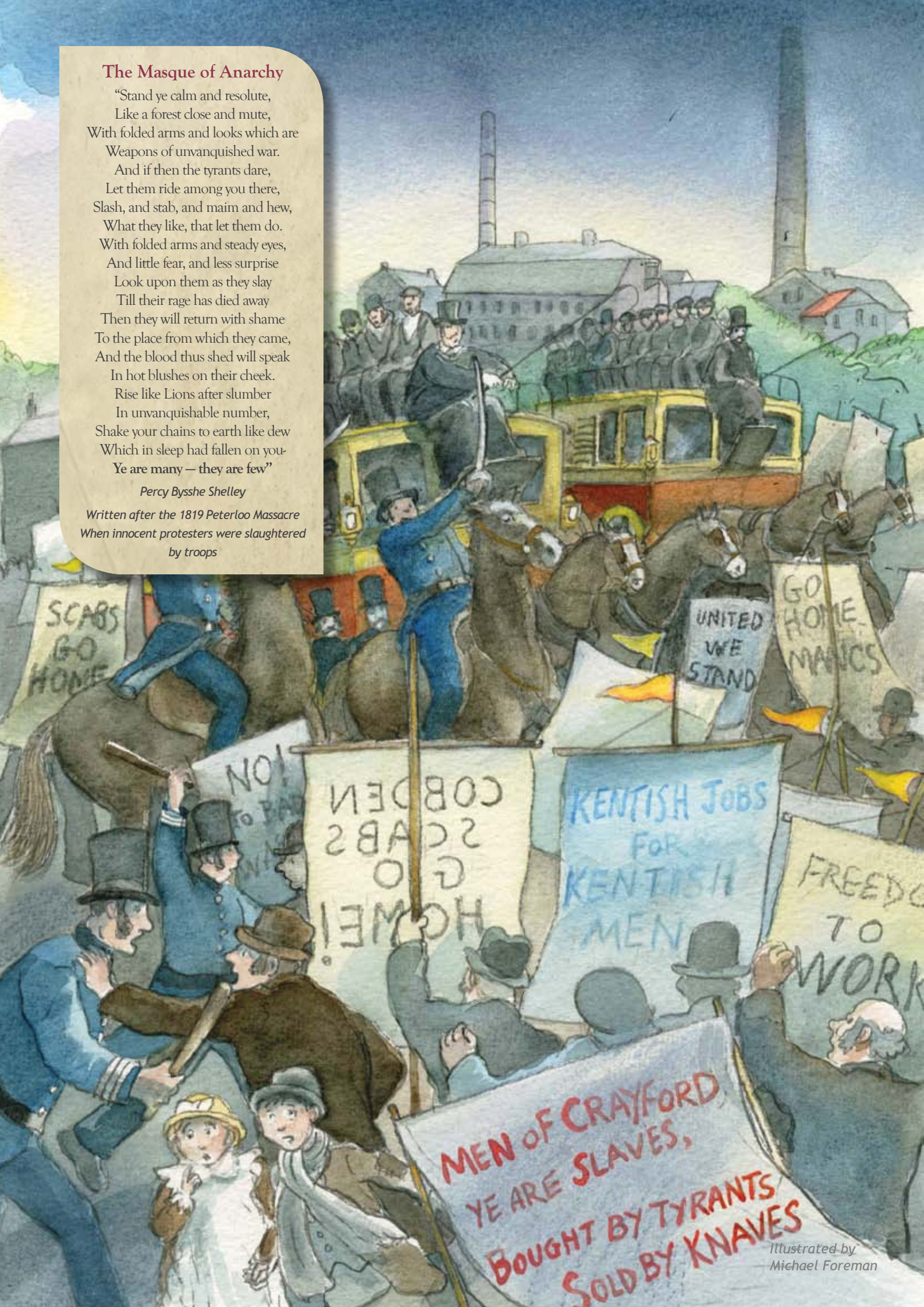
*Mr Swaisland's Crayford Mansion, c1845
Watercolour by William Hubbard*

The Masque of Anarchy

“Stand ye calm and resolute,
Like a forest close and mute,
With folded arms and looks which are
Weapons of unvanquished war.
And if then the tyrants dare,
Let them ride among you there,
Slash, and stab, and maim and hew,
What they like, that let them do.
With folded arms and steady eyes,
And little fear, and less surprise
Look upon them as they slay
Till their rage has died away
Then they will return with shame
To the place from which they came,
And the blood thus shed will speak
In hot blushes on their cheek.
Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number,
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you—
Ye are many — they are few”

Percy Bysshe Shelley

*Written after the 1819 Peterloo Massacre
When innocent protesters were slaughtered
by troops*



*Illustrated by
Michael Foreman*

The Strikebreakers

I expect that Swaisland and Evans had prepared for the strike weeks in advance, but then so had we. We knew that they would try and use the new North Kent Railway to bring in strike breakers from amongst Cobden's men in Lancashire so we had pickets out at Dartford and Erith stations to try and turn them back before they could get to Crayford. This didn't work for long as they hired two London omnibuses to bring them in by the Dover Road. We had no way of stopping them now because just as at Blackfriars Bridge in 1848, a troop of mounted police rode into the village brandishing sabres at anyone brave enough to venture near. Despite the provocation we didn't give them the fight they clearly wanted. Instead, we defiantly looked each and everyone of them in the eye to show them they hadn't broken us.

Richard Cobden owned calico printing factories in Lancashire at Crosse Hall Mill, Chorley and Sabden Mill, Clitheroe. He was one of the leaders of the Anti-Corn Law League whom Charles Swaisland was a committee member. He opposed any restrictions on trade and had a particular hatred of trade unions. This motivated him to assist Charles Swaisland in breaking the 1852 Crayford strike.

KENT.—STRIKE OF CALICO PRINTERS.—Crayford was thrown into a state of excitement one day last week by the arrival of two omnibuses filled with men brought up from Manchester, by Mr. Charles Swaisland and Mr. Evans, to work in the place of the calico-printers who have declined to work at reduced prices. The omnibuses were accompanied by an escort of mounted police, with drawn swords, and some policemen riding on the omnibuses. The demonstration was, doubtless, made to impress the population with an idea that they were apprehensive of violence on the part of the men out of work—an apprehension utterly groundless, as the men are too well informed on such matters, and too much inclined to trust the issue of the matter to the merits of the case, to take any steps which may create a necessity for police interference. On the part of the masters it is asserted that the men out of work have of late met the trains for the purpose of intercepting workmen from other places, either with the view of dissuading or intimidating them from going to work at the reduced prices.

Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper, Sunday 29 August 1852

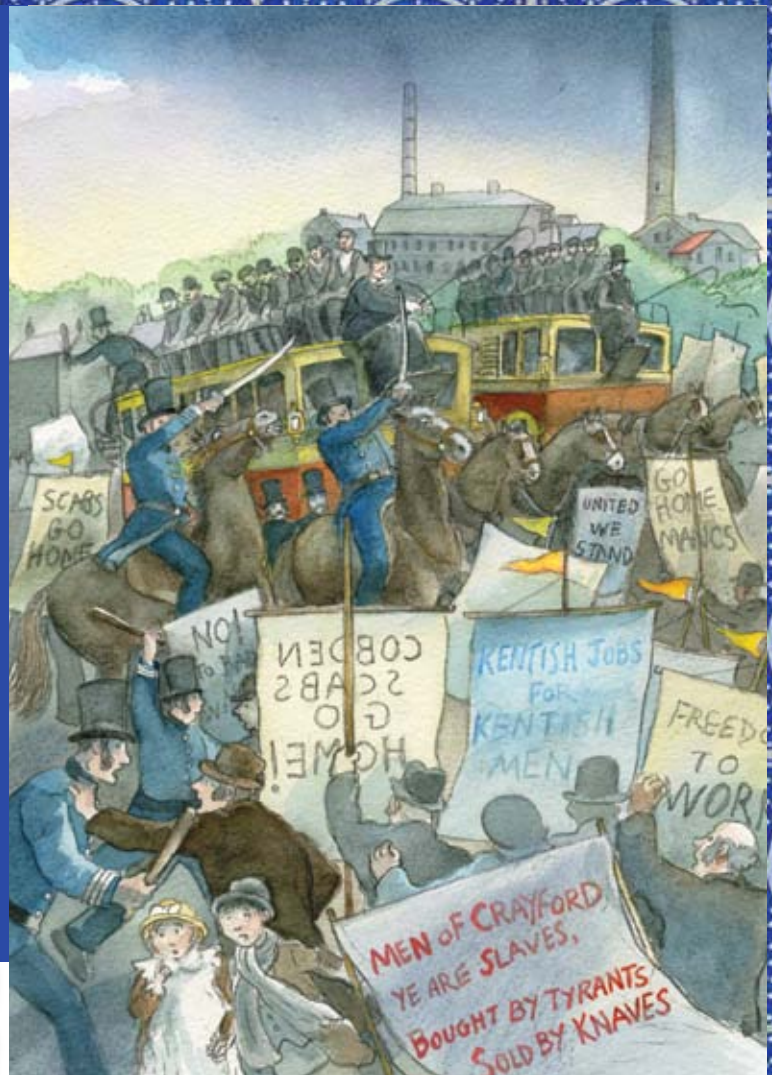


Illustration by Michael Foreman

“Depend upon it, nothing can be got by fraternizing with trades unions. They are founded upon principles of brutal tyranny and monopoly.”

Richard Cobden, 1842

“The miller and his men” have not been forgotten, nor yet “the Lancashire invasion” into the Crayfordian regions. We learn that half a dozen of the invaders arrived at Maidstone at rather a late hour on Saturday night, for visits to the gaol for terms varying from six weeks to a month. These printers, after being engaged by Mr. Swaisland, ran away. Detectives were sent after them. They were apprehended. On Saturday morning, at 4 o'clock they left Manchester: at 1 o'clock they were brought before the magistrates at the Town-hall, Dartford; at 5 o'clock they were en route for Maidstone—rather quick. My son, whatever you do, do quickly—Advice of Mr Punch to his son.

West Kent Guardian, Saturday 18 September 1852



Strikebreakers who returned to Lancashire were arrested.
Illustrated by Michael Foreman

Ode (verse 3)

Men of England ye are slaves,
Beaten by policeman's staves
If their force ye dare repel,
Your's will be the felon's cell.

William Sankey
Northern Star 29.2.1840

APRIL 10TH.
PRATTY SESSIONS, SATURDAY.— Charles William Swaisland, Esq., of Crayford, attended on behalf of his uncle, the printer, of Crayford, to prefer a charge of misconduct and breach of contract against Richard Ellis, Robert Haslam, and John Carroll, three men whom he had engaged a few days previously to serve his uncle, and Messrs. Evans and Co., under a written contract, signed by them, and whose expenses he had paid the day before from Manchester (amongst others), to supply the place of those who had "struck." It appeared that they had refused, on the following morning, to work, and were drunk and unfit to execute their work, although they had had full directions as to their necessary duties, both at the time they were engaged and since their arrival at the factory. Not fulfilling their part of the contract they were given into custody. Mr. Gibson appeared for the defendants, and made several technical objections to the written contract, which was produced, and proved to have been signed by the parties in custody; but the objection was over-ruled by the bench. The defendants were accordingly sentenced to be committed for twenty-one days. Mr. C. Swaisland immediately rose and requested a mitigation of the punishment, and at his urgent request, the magistrates commuted the sentence to ten day's imprisonment. Mr. Gibson thanked Mr. Swaisland for his kindness, and said it ought and would, he was sure, be appreciated.

Kentish Gazette, Tuesday 31 August 1852

Master and Servant

I actually felt sorry for the Lancastrians. They were shunned by everyone in the village and every time they left the factory gates we would follow them to explain how they were hurting our families by breaking our strike. I know now it wasn't as simple as that. These men had been unemployed and their own families were starving and so they were here more out of desperation than greed. I wasn't surprised that some of them turned to drink and that others, realising what they had got into, left to return home. Trouble is, they were not free to decide this. Once they signed their contracts they were no better than slaves. The Master and Servant Act ensured that, and gave Swaisland and Evans the power to send the Coppers after them. Six Mancunians were dragged from their homes in Manchester at 4am one morning and were tried at Dartford Magistrates Court at 5pm the same day. Hard labour followed for them in Maidstone Prison. It was hard not to agree with Mr Bumble in *Oliver Twist* that the law of our land was an ass.

Suicide Extraordinary

After three months on strike and with no funds left to fall back on, we returned back to work in October, 1852 as broken men. If anything this was far worse than 1847, or the debacle at Kennington in 1848. We had to accept wages that were not enough to put bread in our bellies. I was alright as a single man but others with families had a stark choice. They could be honest and watch their children starve or steal from local farms and face stiff penalties if they were caught. Some could not contain their anger and one day an effigy of Charles Swaisland was hung from a tree in Swan Lane before Mr Swaisland and Sergeant Baxter came to cut it down.

Station Road was known as Swan Lane before the railway came in 1866. The road ran down past Swan Farm, shown on the left of this picture, to the Swan pub, which stood beside the clocktower until the Tower Retail Park was built and it was demolished. The picture below was taken in 1905. Could the tree opposite the Charlotte pub be where the effigy of Swaisland was hung at the end of the 1852 strike?

Crayford Town Archive

CRAYFORD —SUICIDE EXTRAORDINARY.—Some excitement prevailed in this village on the morning of Friday, in consequence of the report that a Crayford printer had committed suicide by hanging himself in Swan-lane. At about 12 o'clock Charles Swaisland, Esq., accompanied by Sergeant Baxter and two constables proceeded to the spot, at which a large number of persons had collected, and saw hanging from the branch of a large tree, not a printer, but a well-stuffed printer's effigy. Mr. Swaisland, with the assistance of the police, caused the figure to be cut down, carried to a field near at hand, and deposited on a heap of couch then and there burning, amidst the shouts of those assembled.

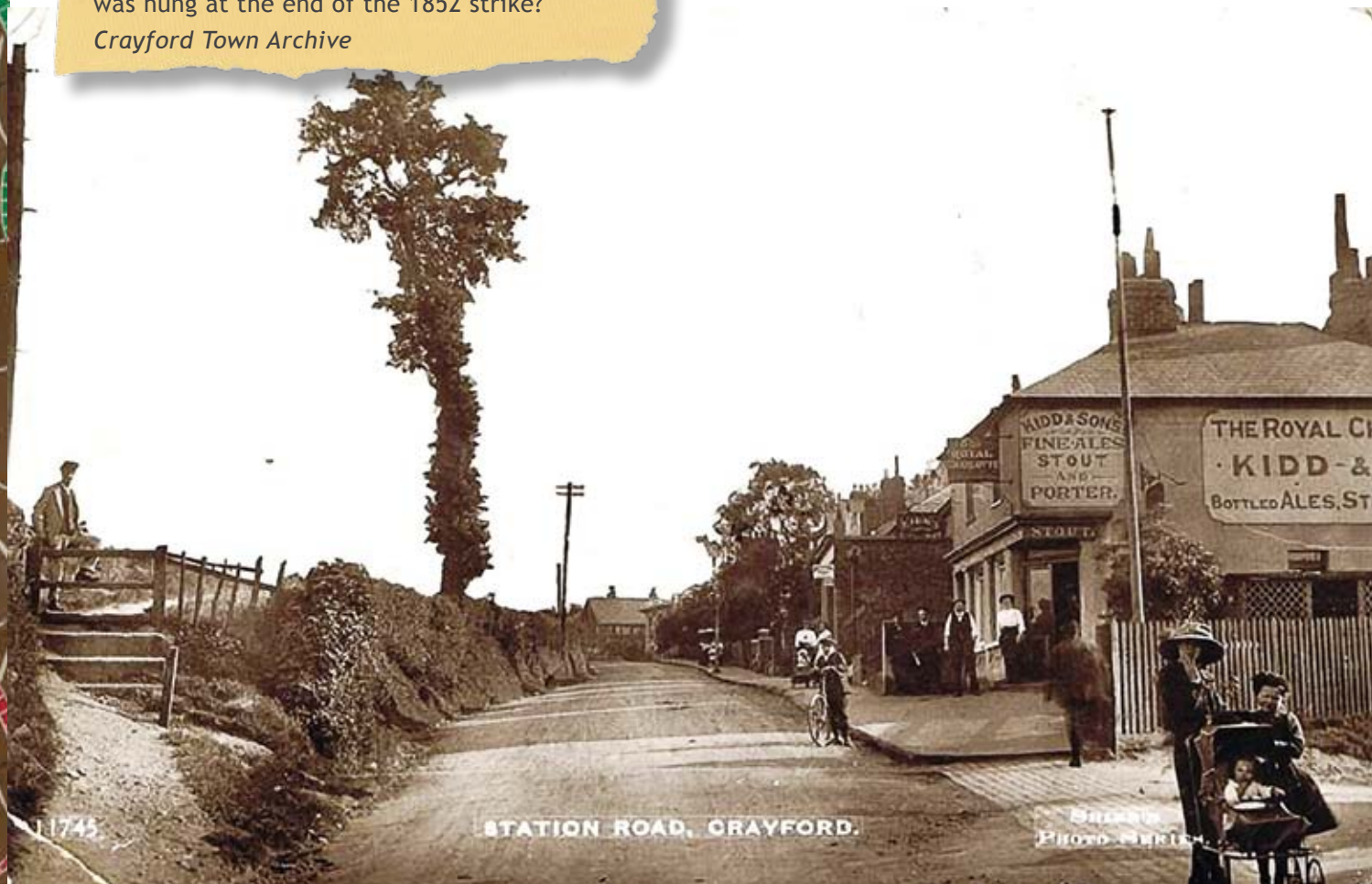
West Kent Guardian, Saturday 30 October 1852

John Knight, a labourer in the employ of Mr. Swaisland, of Crayford, was fined 10s., and the damage one shilling, or 10 days' imprisonment, for stealing a quantity of peas, from a field belonging to Mr. Dunn, of Bexley-heath.

West Kent Guardian, Saturday 2 July 1853

Thomas Wise, a calico printer, employed at the Crayford factory was fined 10s. or 14 days imprisonment for stealing turnips from a field at Bexley-heath.

West Kent Guardian, Saturday 2 July 1853



Manchester Row (below right) was built by Charles Swaisland to house the many Lancastrians who arrived in Crayford as a result of the strikes of 1847 and 1852. The terrace homes were built in a field away from the village in an area in front of where St Paulinus Primary school now stands in Iron Mill Lane. They were badly damaged in World War 2 and demolished at the end of the war.



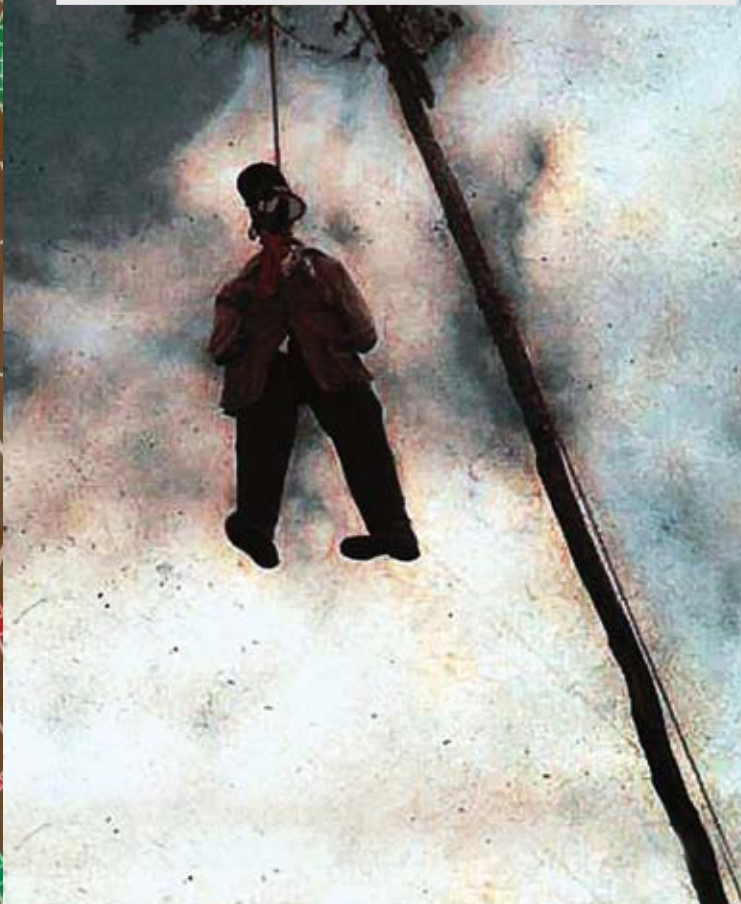
1861 Census Manchester Row

The Ashtons (below) are typical of the Lancastrian block printer families that moved to Crayford. They came from Chorley where Cobden owned the Crosse Hall calico printing mill. You can see that their daughter Mary was born in 1855 marking roughly when they came down. Was her father Henry one of the men that were bussed down to break the 1852 strike? Volunteer, Muriel Hudson, found that 8 of the 18 Lancastrian families on the 1861 census had children born in Crayford between 1854-56 linking their arrival to the strike.

Henry Ashton	b1825 in Chorley, Lancs
Elizabeth (Wife)	b1827 in Chorley, Lancs
John Ashton	b1853 in Chorley, Lancs
Mary Ashton	b1855 in Crayford, Kent
Henry Ashton	b1857 in Crayford, Kent
Elizabeth Ashton	b1860 in Crayford, Kent

CRAYFORD

SUICIDE. On Saturday week, John Wheatley, a printer about 66 years of age who had for many years in the employ of Mr. David Evans, left his home around 11 o'clock in the forenoon and about three hours afterwards he was found hanging on a bridge between Crayford and Bexley. Immediate information was given to the police and surgical assistance procured, but life was perfectly extinct. It appeared that Wheatley had previously attempted to hang himself, during the period of the printers' strike about four years ago. An inquest was held on the body on Monday week, before C.J. Carttar Esq coroner, when a verdict of "temporary insanity" was returned. *West Kent Guardian, 1855*

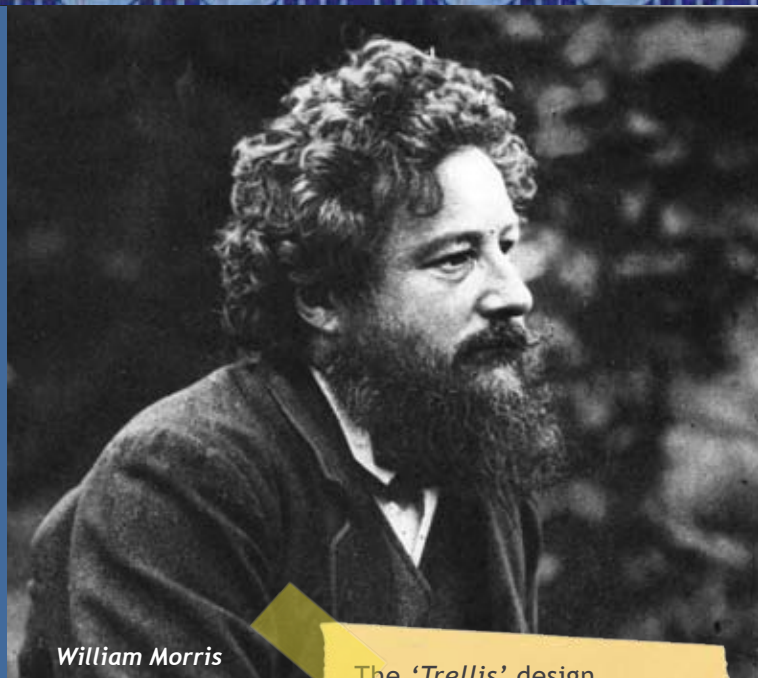


Manchester Row

After the first group of Mancunians had caused him so much trouble, Charles Swaisland ensured that the men he brought down in future would not return so quickly. He knew that if they came down with their families they would stay. However, he also knew they would struggle to find acceptance. After the strike in 1852 he set about building Manchester Row in a field set away from the village. Those homes stood out on the hill like a blistering sore for decades. Only after some time had passed did their link to the strike of 1852 and our bitter defeat start to fade from memory. Some of the block printers from those strike years never recovered from what happened and more than one was to take their own life in the immediate years that followed.

William Morris

After the crushing nature of our defeat, it was little wonder that so many Crayford printers felt so desperate. It was a bitter sweet victory for Charles Swaisland though. Worn out by those years of struggle, he continued to run the firm until he died in 1865. By then Chartism was dead too. With no hope of gaining the vote to help bring about change it was left to a handful of men to continue the struggle on behalf of the working man. One of these men, William Morris, built a beautiful home, *Red House*, just a few miles from Crayford in Bexleyheath.



William Morris

William Morris (1834-96) asked his friend, the architect Philip Webb to design a house for him on land he had bought in Bexleyheath, which was then a rural area. Morris wanted a modern home which would nevertheless be 'very medieval in spirit'. This is exactly what Webb gave him. Morris and his wife Jane moved into Red House (below) in 1860 and spent the next two years furnishing and decorating the interior. Morris did much of the work himself, with help from his artist friends.

Prompted by the success of their efforts, Morris and his friends decided to start their own company, Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. in 1861. Their aim was to produce a range of original

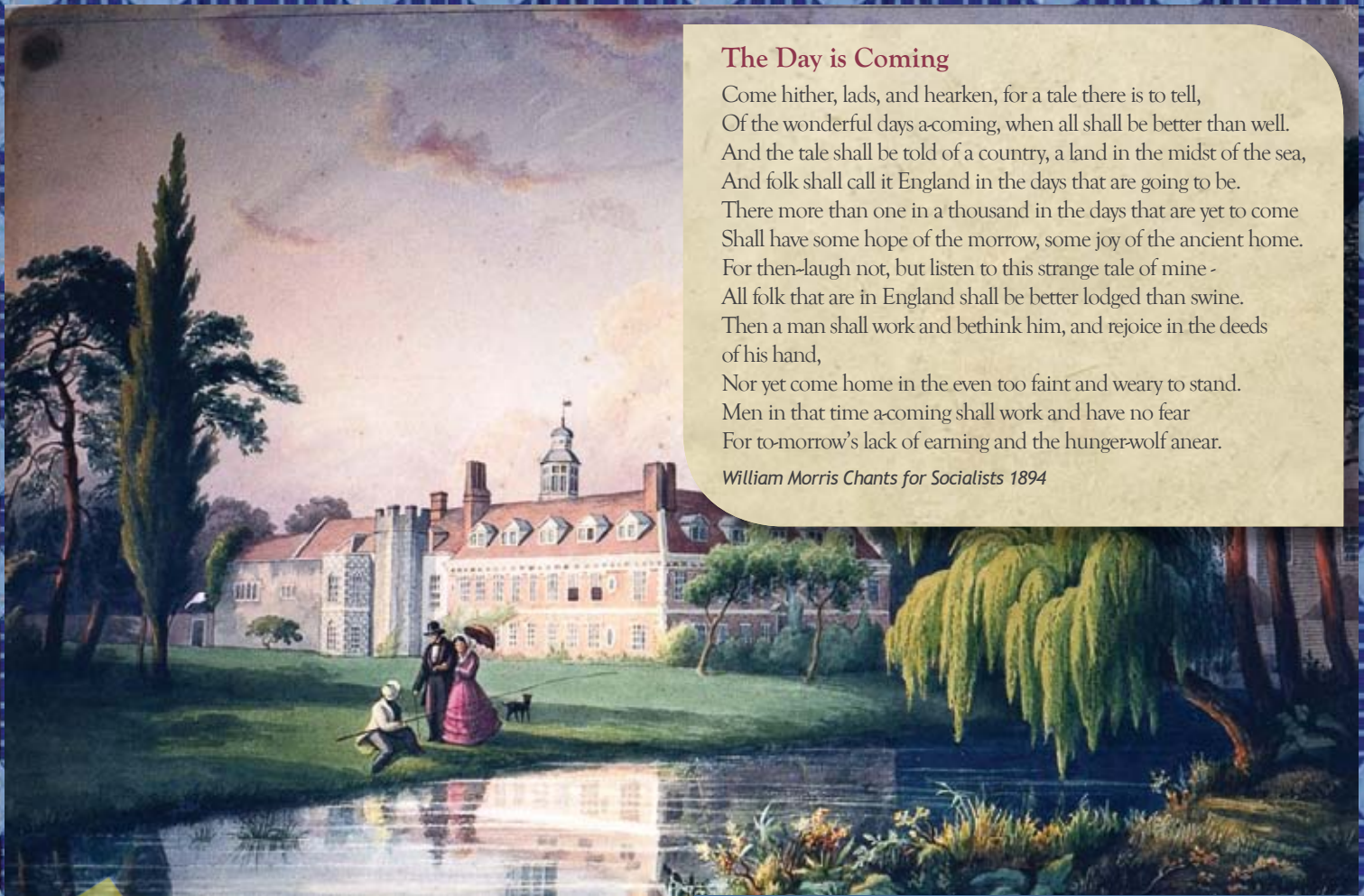
domestic furnishings that valued traditional handicraft skills, such as those possessed by the Swaisland block printers, rather than items mass produced in a factory. This arts and crafts movement inspired designs like the '*Trellis*' wallpaper and '*Cray*' fabric designs below. This was Morris's first attempt at designing a wallpaper, which he did because he was unable to find any he liked to use in his own home. Its pattern is said to have been inspired by the gardens at Red House, which were organised on a medieval plan with square flowerbeds enclosed by wattle trellises for roses.

The '*Trellis*' design (below) was inspired by William Morris's *Red House* Medieval garden.

The fabric design '*Cray*' (below left) was part of a series designed by William Morris to celebrate the tributaries of the Thames. It was featured on a Royal Mail first class stamp in 2010.



Red House, William and Jane's Bexleyheath home



Hall Place. Watercolour by William Hubbard, c1840

William Morris loved Bexley's links to the Medieval period. Places like Hall Place (above) with its stories of the armour clad spectre of Edward 'The Black Prince' were inspirational for him.

The Day is Coming

Come hither, lads, and hearken, for a tale there is to tell,
Of the wonderful days a-coming, when all shall be better than well.
And the tale shall be told of a country, a land in the midst of the sea,
And folk shall call it England in the days that are going to be.
There more than one in a thousand in the days that are yet to come
Shall have some hope of the morrow, some joy of the ancient home.
For then-~~laugh~~ not, but listen to this strange tale of mine -
All folk that are in England shall be better lodged than swine.
Then a man shall work and bethink him, and rejoice in the deeds
of his hand,
Nor yet come home in the even too faint and weary to stand.
Men in that time a-coming shall work and have no fear
For to-morrow's lack of earning and the hunger-wolf anear.

William Morris Chants for Socialists 1894

When Adam Delved & Eve Span, who was then the Gentlemen?

Red House gave Morris the taste of a Medieval England he so admired. It was perched above the Cray Valley, looking across ancient fields that had once borne witness to the Peasants Revolt. Just as we had been inspired at Blackheath in 1848, he drew inspiration from the words of John Ball, the rebel Kentish priest: '*When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentlemen?*' Why should some men be born into privilege when the Bible said all men were equal? Why should some men have the vote and others be deprived of a voice? Morris dared to ask these questions at a time when the working man's voice had been silenced. He also spoke up for the skilled craftsman and many Crayford men were able to find work at the factory he later set up at Merton Abbey Mills. Through both his words and deeds he gave us hope that our struggles had not been in vain and that one day we would have the things we fought for.



WHEN ADAM DELVED AND EVE SPAN,
WHO WAS THEN THE GENTLEMAN?

A Dream of John Ball (1888) William Morris

'A Dream of John Ball' told the story of the Peasants Revolt. At the time it was written, Morris took part in a violent march on central London himself. On Sunday November 13th, 1887, he joined thousands of Londoners in a huge demo to defend the right of free speech,

after the government banned public protests in Trafalgar Square. Morris was one of thousands of demonstrators cleared from Trafalgar Square by a violent police charge followed by Guardsmen with drawn bayonets. Three people died and hundreds were injured on what came to be known as 'Bloody Sunday'.

G.P. & J. Baker

After the 1852 strike the company seemed to struggle and in 1861 I found myself out of work and having to take a job as a farm labourer. I eventually got my job back, but after Charles Swaisland died in 1865, things were never quite the same and in 1893 we went into liquidation.

The Upper Works was sold to Murgatroyd's, a leather tanner, but the Lower works was taken over by G.P. and J. Baker and I was lucky that they kept me on in my old job. I think when I finally had to leave, because of my increasing frailty, I was the only one left that had been there throughout those years of struggle. Still the old factory name lives on, because even though G.P. and J. Baker, are the owners everyone still calls us Swaisland's. By the time I left many things had changed but one thing that never did throughout my time there was the quality of our work.



George Percival Baker (left) took over the bankrupt Swaisland company in 1893. Together with his brother James he was to restore the factory to the prominence it had enjoyed in the mid nineteenth century. George was a keen gardener and many of the textiles he commissioned celebrated English fruit and flowers.

JANUARY 26TH, 27TH, AND 28TH, 1893.
THE SWAISLAND PRINTING COMPANY, LIMITED
(In Voluntary Liquidation).

IMPORTANT SALE OF THE
ENTIRE CONTENTS OF THE EXTENSIVE
FACTORIES

Belonging to the above celebrated firm at Crayford, Kent.
WHEATLEY KIRK, PRICE & GOULTY
are instructed by the Liquidators, Messrs Alfred Lister Blow and Ernest Honey, to sell, by Public Auction, on WEDNESDAY, 26TH JANUARY, 1893, and following Days, commencing each day at Ten for Eleven o'clock prompt, on the Works Premises, Crayford, Kent.

THE WHOLE OF THE VALUABLE
TEXTILE FABRIC PRINTING, FINISHING,
ENGRAVING, DYEING, PACKING, &c.,
MACHINERY AND APPLIANCES,
ENGINES, BOILERS, Shafting, Hydraulic Presses, Pumps,
Loose Tools, Furniture, and Effects; also, about 100,000
Blocks for Hand Printing, including numerous complete sets
for which this Firm were famous; and several miles of
Polished Stone Tables for Block Printing.

Detailed Catalogues may be obtained from William Sturt,
Esq., Solicitor, 14 Ironmonger Lane, Cheapside, London,
E.C.; Messrs Jasolyn, Miles & Blow, 28 King Street,
Cheapside, London, E.C.; or from the Auctioneers,
Wheatley Kirk, Price & Goulty, 49 Queen Victoria Street,
London, E.C., and Albert Chambers, Albert Square, Man-
chester. (Telegrams: "Indices, London.")

Glasgow Herald, Saturday 21 January 1893



Printers from GP & J
Baker Ltd 1920
Crayford Town Archive



Mr Tagg

The head printer,
Mr Tagg, came from
the famous Crayford
printing family from
whom Charles Swaisland
originally purchased the
company.



G.P. & J. Baker floral design for Liberty of London 1900

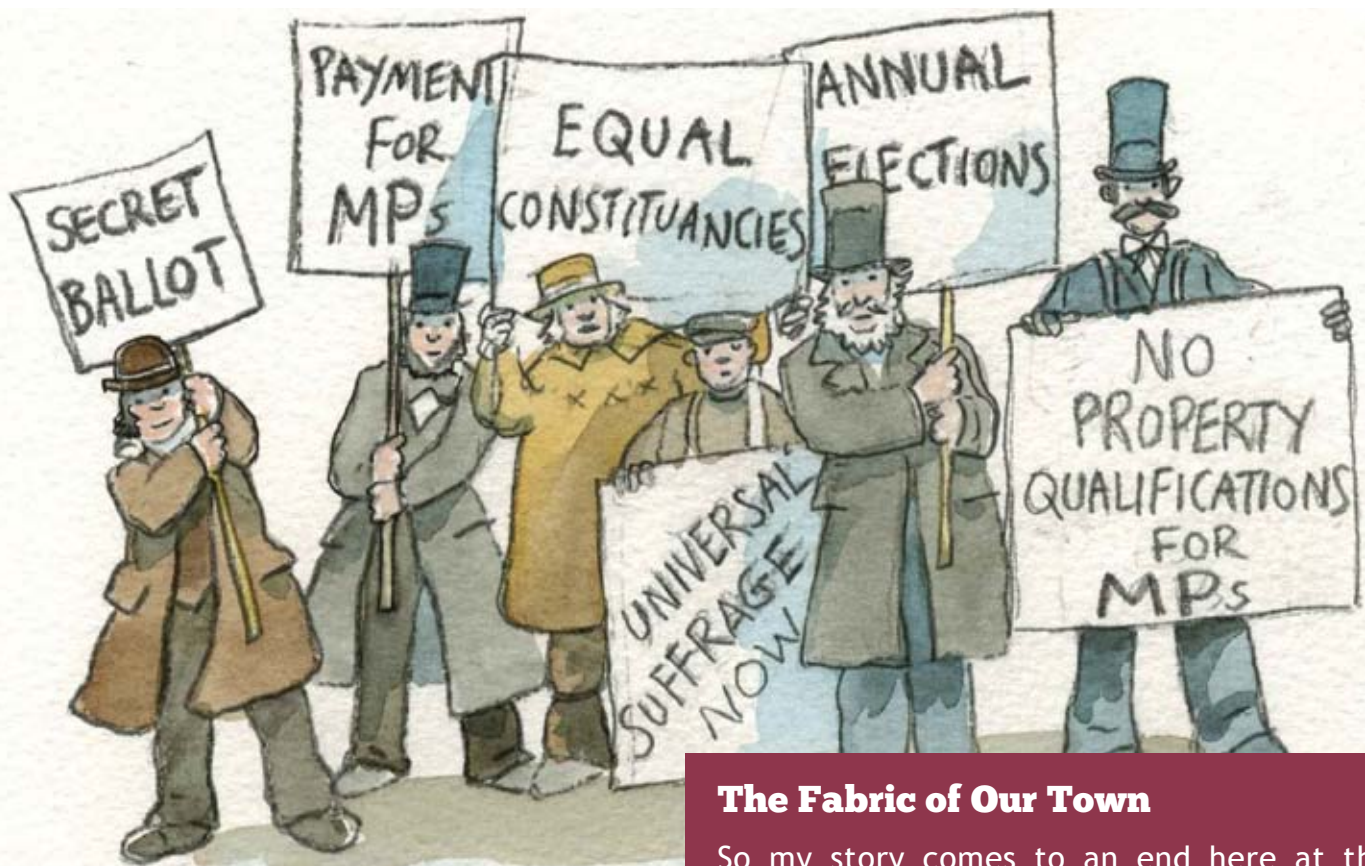


Illustration by Michael Foreman



Above the Six Points of the People's charter that the Crayford men fought for. Eventually all the demands of the People Charter were made law, except for annual elections.

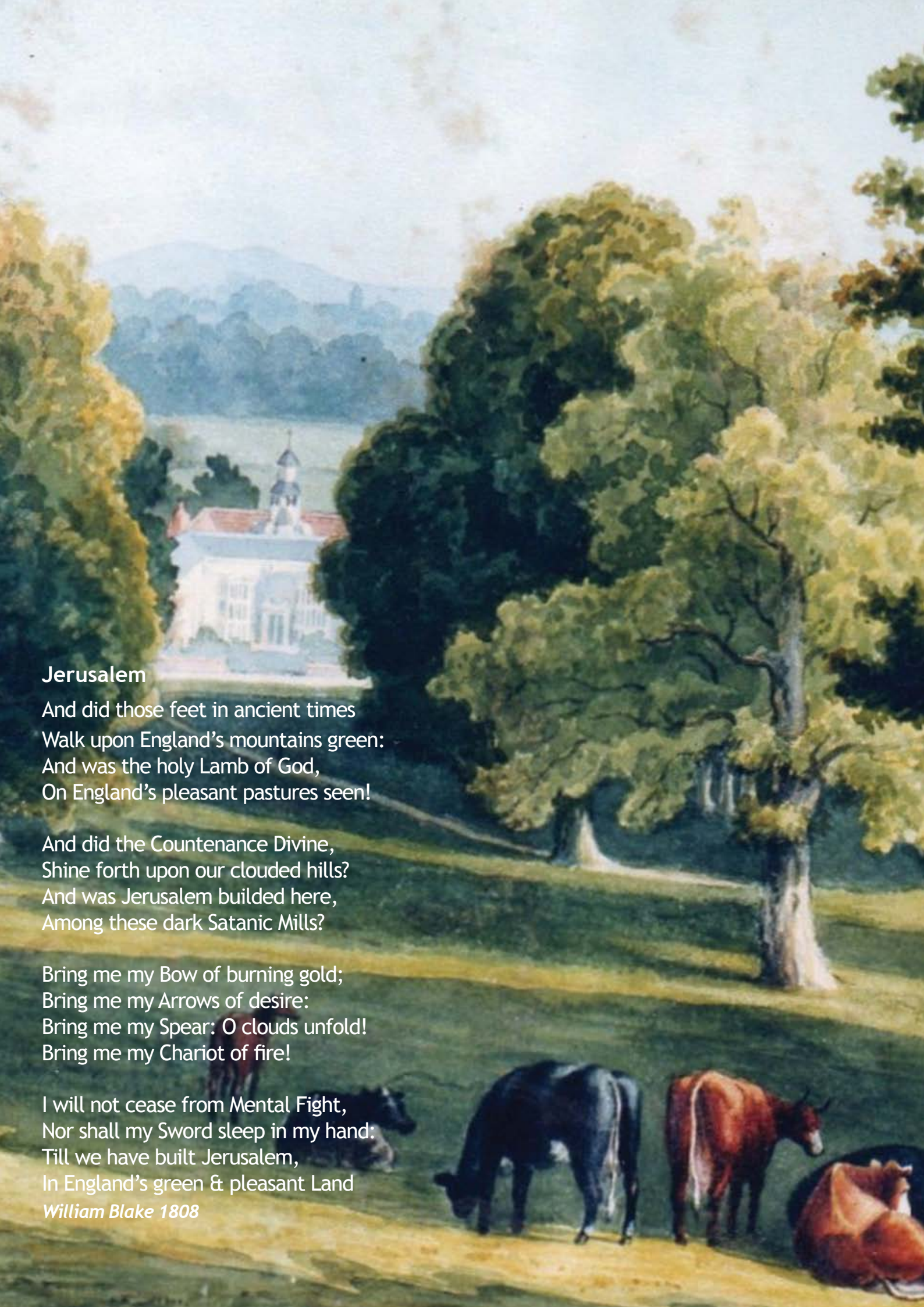
The Fabric of Our Town

So my story comes to an end here at the workhouse. I have nothing left but my pride and that's something they will never take away from me. I'm proud of what we did as Chartists and I'm proud of the fabric of our town and I don't just mean the wonderful printed cloth I used to make at Swaisland's. It's something more than that, something I was reminded of every time I passed St Paulinus church. I'd look at that ancient tower and realise that in this life we are all just passing through.

Each of us like a wandering weft thread must trace our own path through the events and relationships that make up our lives. Each of us is different yet we're bound together by the common thread, the warp, the pillars that hold our community together and like that church will remain long after we're all gone.

I know that even though I'll die a pauper, I can take pride in leaving behind something far richer than gold. I fought for those six points of the Charter to '*build our Jerusalem in this green and pleasant land.*' and that's my gift for those that will live in this town in the future.

Richard Roberts died in the Dartford Union Workhouse on December 29 1904.



Jerusalem

And did those feet in ancient times
Walk upon England's mountains green:
And was the holy Lamb of God,
On England's pleasant pastures seen!

And did the Countenance Divine,
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here,
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

Bring me my Bow of burning gold;
Bring me my Arrows of desire:
Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold!
Bring me my Chariot of fire!

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand:
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In England's green & pleasant Land

William Blake 1808