

# **Housing the Workers**

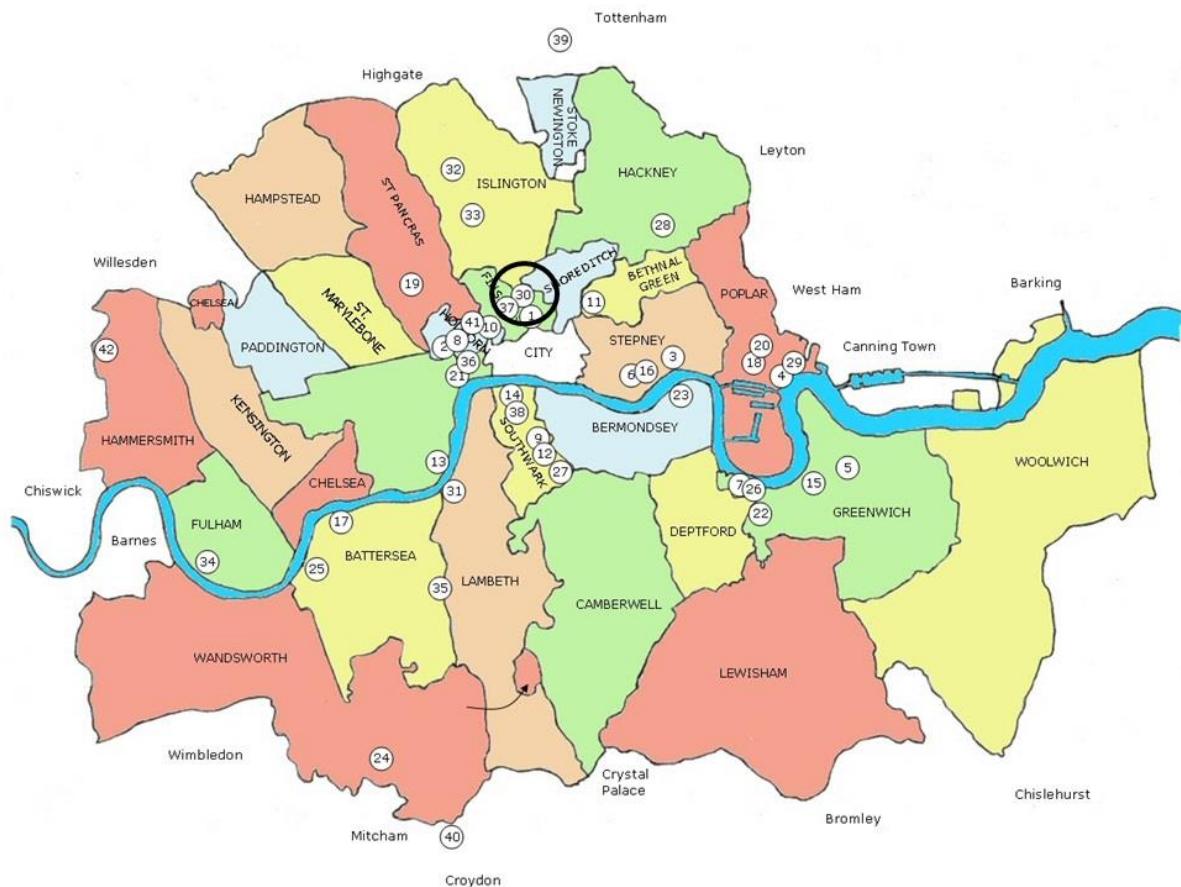
## **Early London County Council Housing**

### **1889-1914**

**Martin Stilwell**  
**August 2015**

#### **Part 3 – the schemes in detail**

##### **30 – Garden Row, Roby Street, Baltic Street and Honduras Street scheme**



## **Garden Row, Roby Street, Baltic Street and Honduras Street scheme**

**Wenlake (1905) & Chadworth Buildings (1907)**

**Built under Part I of the 1890 Housing of the Working Classes Act**

This was a straightforward slum clearance scheme in the parish of St Luke's, Clerkenwell that resulted in Chadworth and Wenlake buildings. The four clearance areas were named Garden Row, Roby Street, Honduras Street and Baltic Street. The first two were used as sites for the replacement housing.

The map below shows the four clearance sites in St Luke's.

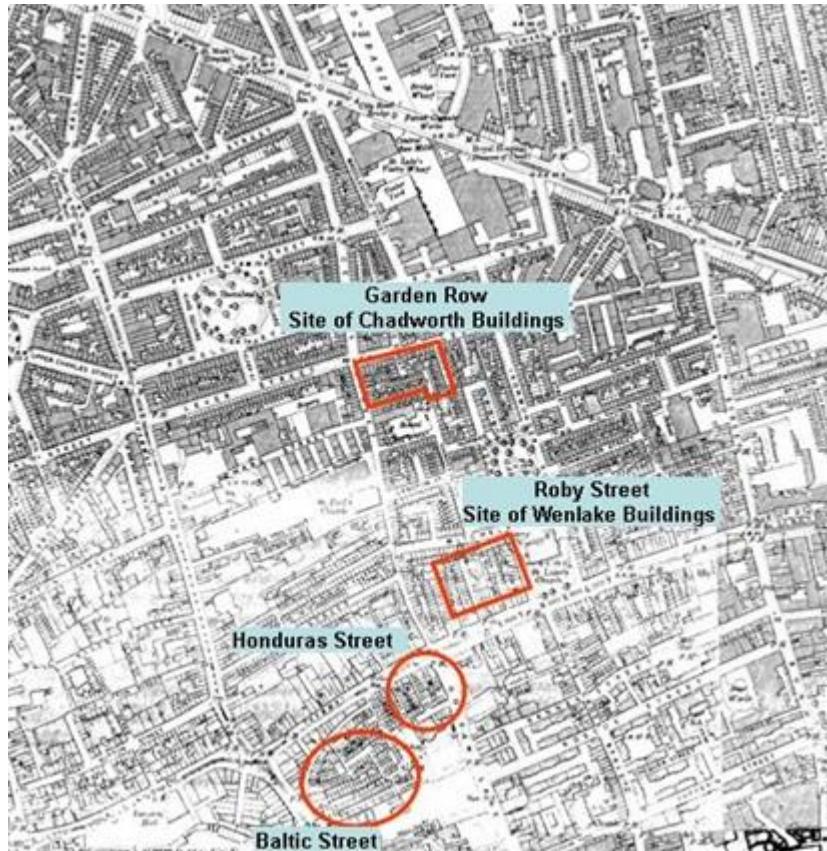


Fig. 1: The four clearance sites making up the Garden-row, Roby-street, Baltic-street, and Honduras-street Scheme from the 1896 OS map. City Road is the large road diagonally across the top.

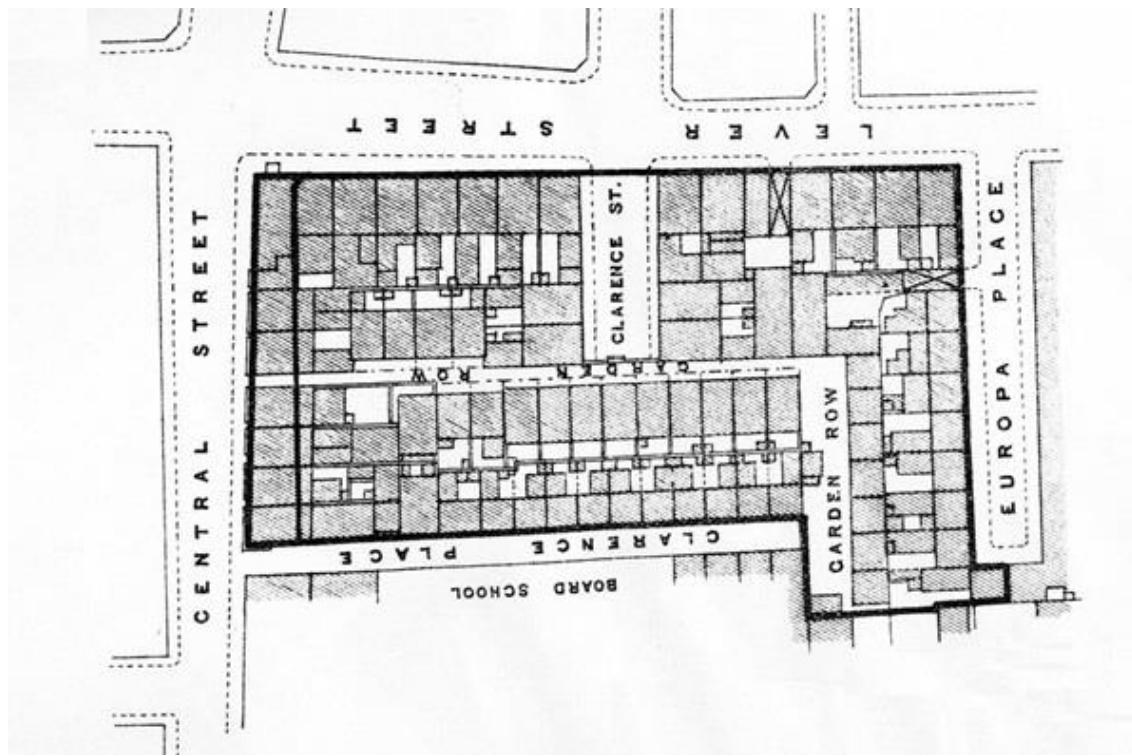


Fig. 2: Map of the Garden-row site before clearance (plan is inverted to position the roads on the correct compass alignment)

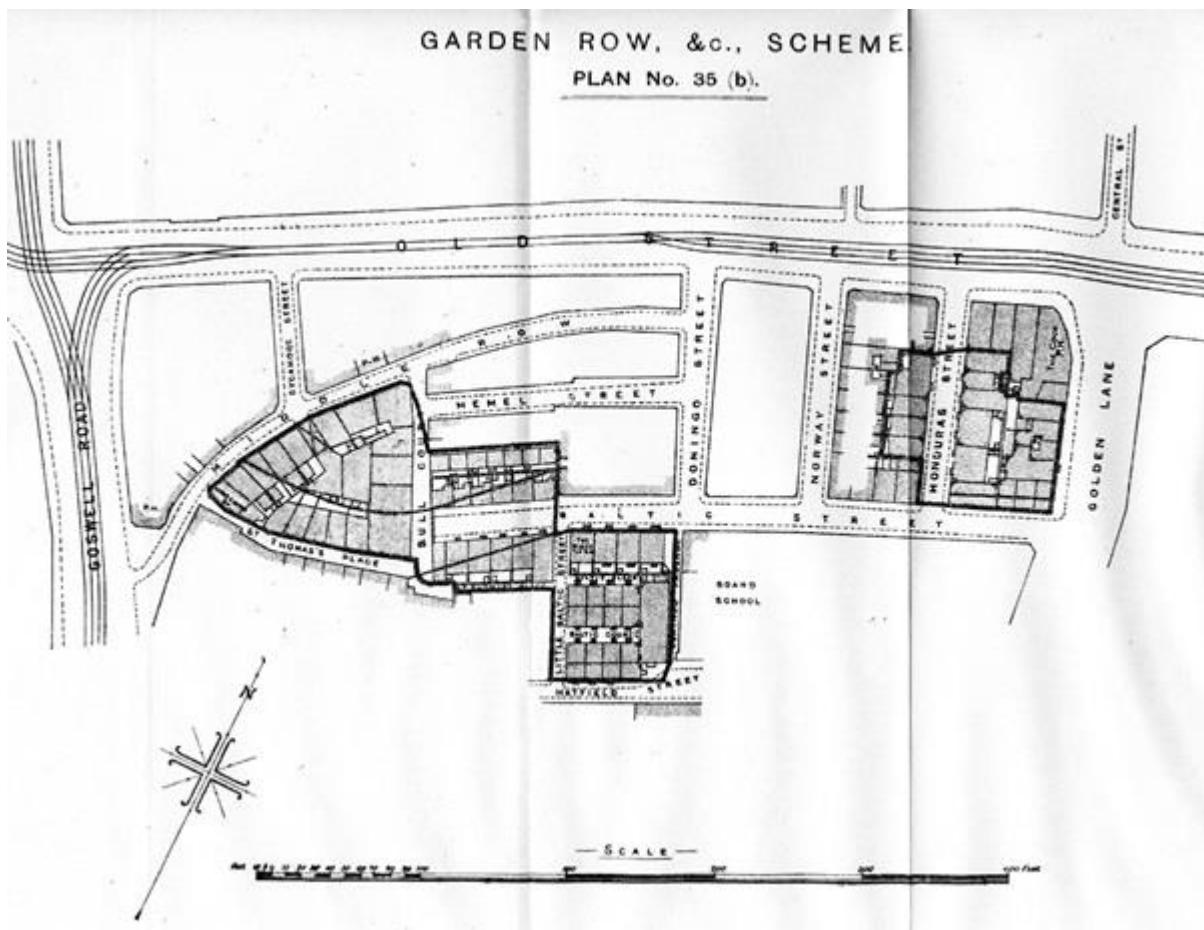


Fig. 3: Map of the Baltic-street and Honduras-street area before clearance

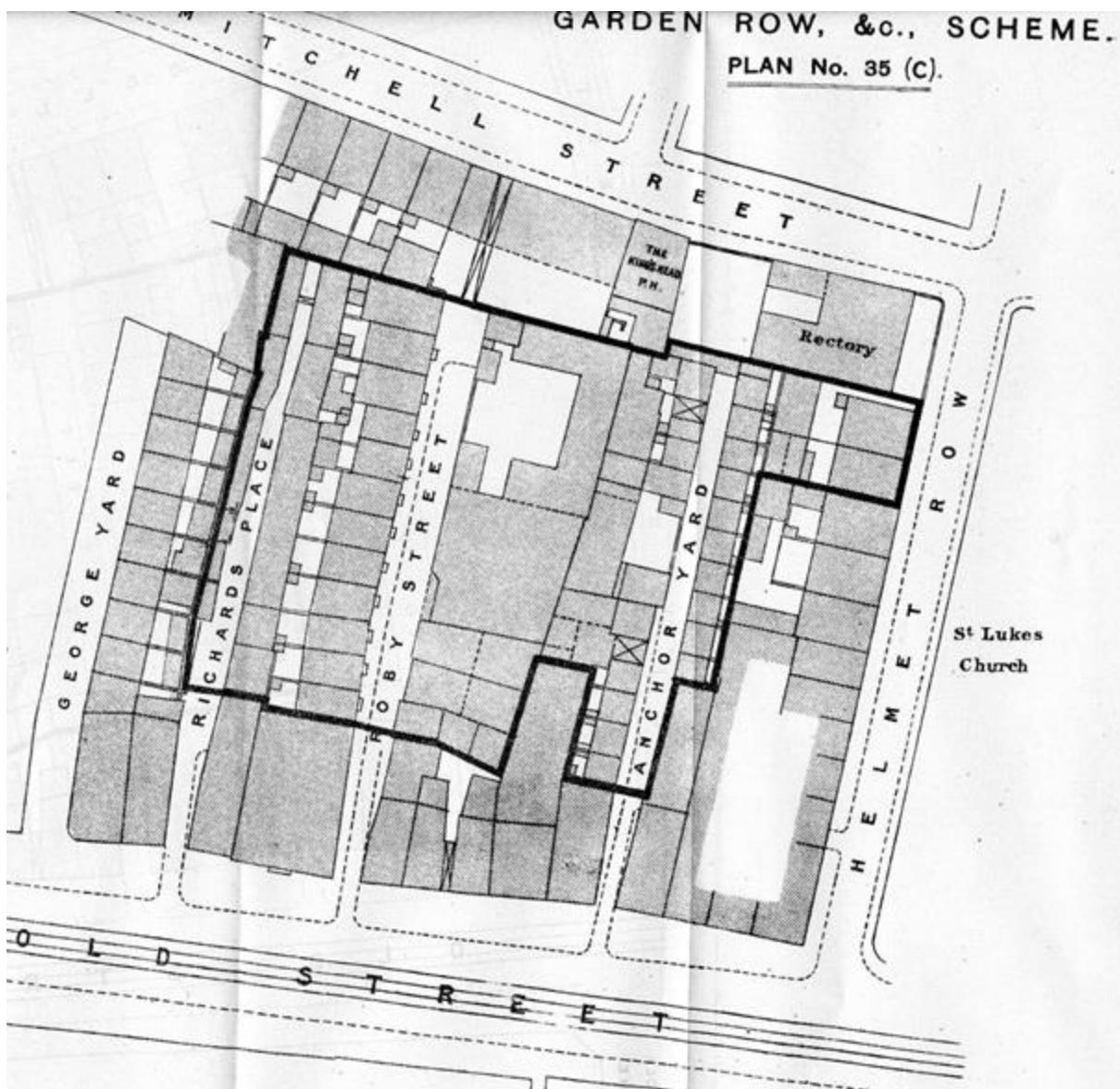


Fig. 4: Map of the Roby Street site before clearance

In July 1899 the St Luke's medical health officer, Dr G. E. Yarrow, made representations to the Housing of the Working Classes Committee regarding the conditions of 10 areas within the parish. Many of these areas had been the subject of representations for the previous 10 years. The Committee decided that 4 areas would come under the control of the Council but the other six would be dealt with by the Vestry of St Luke's as they involved a smaller number of displaced persons.

The condition of the four areas is summed up by the Council as "*The areas generally have about the worst reputation of any in London*"<sup>ii</sup>. The death rates confirmed the condition of the areas as St Luke's, a notorious parish with many slum areas, had an average death rate of 28.44 per 1000, but the average for the four clearance areas was 40.7 per 1000.

Clearance of the four areas would displace 1,193 persons; a very large number for an area of only  $2\frac{3}{4}$  acres where most of the old housing would be 2 or 3 storeys.

The buildings designed to re-house the numbers displaced were fairly straightforward 5-storey blocks, typical of the housing the Council were building. Wenlake Buildings housed 496 persons and were built first and opened in 1905 and were of the open-balcony type. They consisted of 25 two-roomed tenements, 46 three-roomed tenements and 15 four-roomed tenements. After completion, the Garden Row area was cleared and Chadworth Buildings erected for 720 persons and opened in 1907 but this design did not have external balconies. They consisted of 58 two-roomed tenements, 68 three-roomed tenements and 10 four-roomed tenements. Fifteen shops were built on the ground floor of the Lever Street block. The plans were signed by J. G. Stephenson.

The remaining two slum areas were cleared in 1909 and the land was sold at commercial values. The blocks made good use of the available land as can be seen in the plans below<sup>iii</sup>.

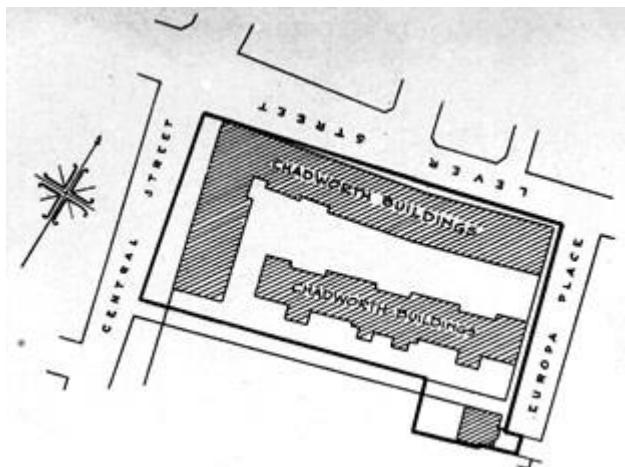


Fig. 5: Chadworth Buildings plan<sup>iv</sup>

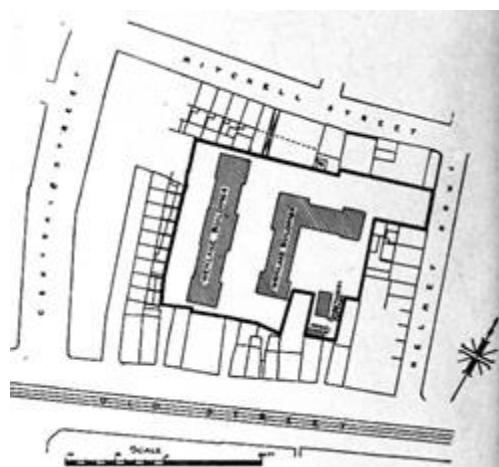


Fig. 6: Wenlake Buildings plan<sup>v</sup>



Fig. 7: Wenlake rear  
(LMA ref: SC/PHL/02/0890)



Fig. 8: Wenlake Buildings front with  
Priestley House on the right  
(LMA ref: SC/PHL/02/0890)

The floor plan of Chadworth Buildings (the later of the two developments) shows the interesting shape of the long wing which utilised the space well. The dwellings have little obvious redeeming features in their design with tight measurements for all rooms, including the scullery. But the design is a clever one, with almost every square foot of floor being used for the dwellings. The floor plan of the smaller Chadworth Buildings shows even more skill by

Stephenson to squeeze as much living space in. All the rooms were generously proportioned and, for once, meet the 160 and 110 sq. ft. minimum for living and bedrooms for post-1897 housing built under Part I of the 1890 Housing Act.

A caretaker's cottage was built on the Wenlake site and can be seen in the bottom RH corner of the site map in Fig. 6.



Fig. 9: Third floor plan of larger Chadworth Building (LCC/AR/HS/03/014)

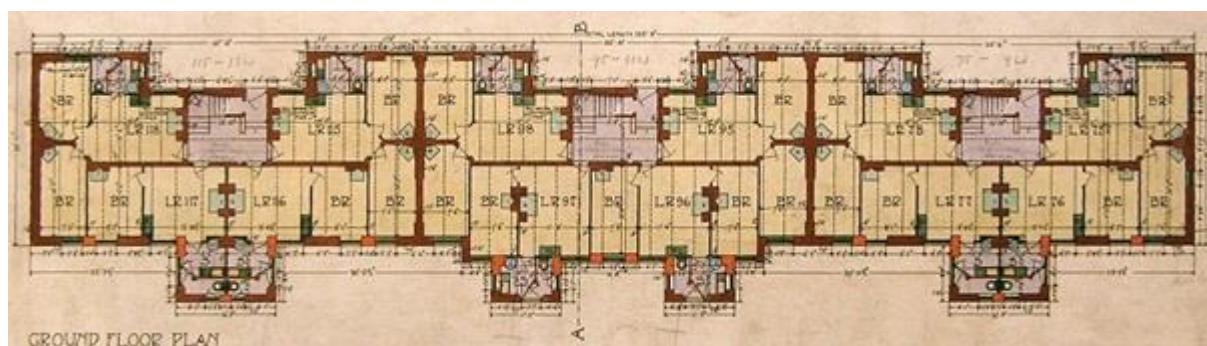


Fig. 10: Ground floor plan of smaller Chadworth Building (LCC/AR/HS/03/014)

	Outgoings	Income	
Net cost of scheme after sale of surplus land	£90,633		
Cost of Buildings	£55,588		
<b>NET COST</b>			<b>£146,221</b>
Cost per person (based on 1,216 persons)			<b>£120pp</b>
Balance of Accounts 1913-14 – Wenlake	£1,680	£1,892	£212 (11.2%)
Balance of Accounts 1913-14 – Chadworth	£2,871	£3,043	£172 (5.7%)

Table 1: Garden Row scheme costs

The naming of the buildings is a small mystery. Following the Council practice of the time of naming buildings after obscure Bishops, there is a John Chadworth, Bishop of Lincoln from 1451 to 1471. However, no obvious ecclesiastical match can be found for a Wenlake.

The 1911 census returns show a well occupied building with many heads of household being in what is called in modern times the “service industry” and also in skilled trades to be found in and around the Barbican area. The latter area was known for its gold and silver workers and the manufacturing of fancy goods. There are also a number of porters and railway workers, some specifying they worked for the Great Western Railway (GWR). This is initially a mystery as the GWR terminus is Paddington which is not close or convenient to get to. However, the Smithfield Market was a short distance to the south, close to Farringdon Station, and the market had an extensive rail yard underneath that was owned by the GWR and accessible from the Widened Lines from Kings Cross. This could account for the porters employed by the GWR. The printing and box making industries are well represented with over 10% of the occupations of the heads of household. The actual occupancy of the buildings was low 68% for Wenlake Buildings and a healthy 80% for Chadworth Buildings. Overcrowding was generally under control. Significantly, only 2 tenancies of the 85 in Wenlake were unoccupied and 5 of the 136 in Chadworth. Of the five in the latter, 2 were numbers 1 and 2 on the ground floor and another two were, suspiciously, adjacent to the caretaker’s tenement. It is unlikely that the LCC would have allowed revenue-earning tenancies to be used for storage as the buildings should have contained suitable storage space, but this may account for some of the 5 unoccupied tenancies. Wenlake Buildings, the more southerly of the two, had 57% of its tenancies occupied by heads of household born in the vicinity whilst the more northerly Chadworth had a lower 43%.

Both buildings have lasted well and have been well-maintained. The northern-most end of Wenlake Buildings (the furthest end of the photographs in Fig. 11 & Fig. 12) was damaged by bombing in WW2 but has been repaired well and now show no sign of the damage or repair. The smaller of the Wenlake Buildings was renamed Priestly House in the 1960s, possibly suggesting there were ecclesiastical connections to the name “Wenlake”. Both sites have recently been modernised as can be seen from the photographs below and give an impression of well maintained and desirable flats. The caretaker’s cottage also survives and is known as Wenlake Cottage.



Fig. 11: Wenlake House front 2009  
Compare to Fig. 8



Fig. 12: Wenlake House 2009  
Compare to Fig. 7



Fig. 13: Priestley House 2009



Fig. 14: Chadworth House (from Lever St) 2009



Fig. 15: Chadworth House (Central St) 2009



Fig. 16: Chadworth House courtyard 2009

## Footnotes

<sup>i</sup> All three maps: C. J. Stewart; *The Housing Question in London*; The London County Council; 1900; p224

<sup>ii</sup> *The Housing Question in London*; LCC; p225

<sup>iii</sup> Building site plans from *Housing of the Working Classes 1855-1912*; LCC; 1913; p44 and p46

<sup>iv</sup> *Housing of the Working Classes 1855-1912*; p44

<sup>v</sup> *Housing of the Working Classes 1855-1912*; p46