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Baildon Street: The Blackest Street in Deptford?

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In 1899, one of Charles Booth's investigators, George Arkell, visited Deptford to revise the classifications provided on Booth's *Descriptive Map of London Poverty 1889*. Arkell was more shocked and offended by Baildon Street than any other street he visited in Deptford. He was scathing in his comments and assessment of the street, and decided that it should remain coloured black, meaning 'Lowest class. Vicious, semi-criminal'—an assessment that Booth agreed with. This article takes issue with Booth's assessment of Baildon Street and, in particular, with George Arkell's comments and the picture he painted of the lives and living conditions of those who resided there. The article shows that Baildon Street was not a chaotic place of social transience, nor was it a place systemically rife with prostitution, crime, violence, and child neglect. It also reveals the surprising ideas and factors that influenced Arkell in his investigative work.

KEYWORDS Deptford; South London; Charles Booth; poverty; community; religion; social survey; microhistory

In 1897, the social investigator Charles Booth published a ten-volume study, the *Life and Labour of the People of London*.[1] Alongside his examinations and conclusions on 'Poverty' and 'Industry', Booth also published his innovative *Descriptive Map of London Poverty 1889*.[2] This map employed a colour-coding system to document the social class and character of each street in London, as evaluated and determined by his study. At the top of the social scale, streets identified as predominantly accommodating the 'Upper-middle and Upper classes. Wealthy' were coloured yellow, while at the opposite end, streets classified as housing the 'Lowest class. Vicious, semi-criminal' were coloured black.[3]

This article has been corrected with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.

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Booth then turned his attention to what he described as ‘Religious Influences’, and for three years he and his team undertook a meticulous interview-based survey into how social, political, religious, and philanthropic organisations interacted with the working classes.[4] The prospect of publishing a final sixteen-volume series, including the religious influences and revisiting all the work to date, prompted Booth to reconsider the 1889 map. After nearly ten years, he was keen to update the map, not only in preparation for re-publication, but also to identify any changes to the social character of the streets during the intervening period. This task was assigned to George Duckworth, one of Booth’s trusted assistants, who had worked extensively on the industry series and survey of religious influences.

Duckworth was charged with conducting a comprehensive revision of the map. Drawing from the ‘hands-on’ approach of the religious influences survey, he devised a process whereby an individual would systematically walk every street in a particular area and, based upon their observations and enquiries, would decide whether the colour-coding for those streets should be altered. Those decisions, and the detailed notes that underpinned them, were recorded in notebooks carried on the walks. The updated map was published in 1900 as the *Map Descriptive of London Poverty 1898–99* and it appeared, in sections, in the *Religious Influences* series published in 1902–1903. Despite the enormous scale of the task, the work of revising the map was predominantly undertaken by Duckworth and three of Booth’s other assistants, including George Edward Arkell.

So it was, then, that on Wednesday, 19 July 1899, George Arkell found himself, notebook in hand, standing at the junction of Deptford High Street and the New Cross Road in what would soon become the London Borough of Deptford.[5] Arkell was waiting for the arrival of Police Sergeant Goddard who would accompany him on his walk around the district. Booth’s assistants were escorted on their walks by Metropolitan Police Officers, which served three purposes. The officers helped ensure comprehensive coverage of the area and provided an element of protection. More crucially, the officers were generally familiar with each street and could provide valuable insights about the character of the people who resided there.

In due course, Sergeant Goddard arrived: ‘A thin man of about 40, face mottled, the result of bad digestion or too close application to the worship of Bacchus, walks slightly lame, owing to Rheumatism’, as Arkell candidly described him.[6] The two men set off west along the New Cross Road towards New Cross Railway Station, turning right into Amersham Vale, and then right again into Douglas Street. All the while, Arkell observed and made notes: ‘Douglas Street: wide airy street. Houses uniform, 2 ½-st, seven or eight rooms. Clean, well-kept windows. Some trade plates by doors. People rarely move. PINK as map’.[7] In Arkell’s opinion, based upon his impressions that day, Douglas Street was populated by people who could be classified as ‘fairly comfortable. Good ordinary earnings’ and, as such, the street should remain pink, as in 1889. Leaving Douglas Street, Arkell continued along Stanley Street, Glenville Grove, Mornington Road, and Watson Street, before he turned right into Baildon Street. What George Arkell saw in Baildon Street appears to have shocked and offended him more than any other street he visited in Deptford and, perhaps, more than any other street he encountered in his work for Booth.

Baildon Street originated in the early 1850s as Moore Street, a short thoroughfare running parallel to the New Cross Road and connecting Waterloo Place and Mornington Road. In 1853, ‘15 substantial modern brick-built houses of neat elevation’ in Moore Street, ‘many of them let to respectable tenants’ were sold at auction producing a rental income of £280 per annum. By 1861, there were sixteen properties in Moore Street and, after an engineering works was built between Waterloo Place and Mornington Road, Moore Street was rerouted via a ninety-degree right-hand turn and extended towards Douglas Street. By 1871, further extension and house building took the total properties to fifty. In April 1876, the Metropolitan Board of Works announced that Moore Street was to be renamed Baildon Street. Further extensions increased the properties to fifty-eight by 1891 and by the time George Arkell visited in 1899, there were seventy-six properties in Baildon Street.

What did George Arkell have to say about Baildon Street in his notebook? The first things he noticed were, ‘Doors open, short blinds, rough women … empty Costers’ barrows, knife-grinder’s wheel, ice cream barrows standing in street’, but his impressions quickly declined from there.[8] Arkell continued:

> Women, frowzy and half-dressed, eye you curiously as you pass; one asked the sergeant whether he had come for her ‘this time’. Children, some shoeless, all dirty and ragged, playing in street. A few men getting ready to go out with their stock. Windows and doors open. Nicknamed Tug-of-War street because so many fights take place here.[9]

Arkell noted the opinion of Sergeant Goddard, ‘¥better than it was”, says the Sergeant, ¥fewer cases come from here”. Used to have to send 20 men to make arrests. He would hardly call it criminal now’.[10] Despite the clear, positive assessment from the Sergeant, Arkell reached his own scathing conclusions about Baildon Street: ‘To me, the street looks worse than it did ten years ago. If any men and women have the criminal brand on their faces, these seem on my two visits unmistakably to bear it.’[11] Based upon this judgement, Arkell recorded that the street should remain coloured ‘Dark Blue with Black line as map’. In the language of Booth’s map, Baildon Street had always been one of the ‘blackest’ streets in Deptford, housing those who were of the ‘lowest class, vicious and semi-criminal’, and when George Arkell visited in 1899 he saw and heard nothing to alter his opinion.

Baildon Street did not fare much better in Booth’s wider study. In an interview in May 1900, it was reported that the Rev. John Hodson, Rector of St Paul’s, Deptford, ‘appeared to think that Baildon Street was the very worst in his parish, although one outside it contains more unmitigated vice’.[12] The ‘one outside’ was Addey Street, located nearby but east of Deptford High Street and, therefore, in Christchurch parish. Here, Hodson remarked, most of the houses were let out as furnished rooms in which there was ‘not a virtuous woman living’. Hodson complained that ‘some of the houses in Baildon Street are let out the same way’, but he also conceded that, ‘the people here are more mixed, and there is more ordinary poverty’. Nonetheless, he concluded that Baildon Street was ‘a thoroughly rough and bad street'.[13] This was also the opinion of William Bennell of the London City Mission based in Charles Street. When interviewed in June 1900, Bennell reported that a local lady, Miss Rice, had 'tried hard to start a meeting there [Baildon Street], but they served her so badly that she was obliged to give up; they imposed upon her and even ill-treated her'.[14] Bennell recalled an incident in Baildon Street where a woman with a crutch had 'stormed and raved' to such an extent that Miss Rice was forced to hide in a back room until the woman had left.[15] Bennell reported that he no longer attempted to keep an address book for Baildon Street, because the residents there 'change more frequently than in any other street'.[16] Finally, he echoed Arkell's claim that, 'Baildon Street … is far worse than it was. It has changed for the worse during the last ten years.'[17]

In volume five of the *Religious Influences* series, published in 1902, Booth outlined his findings on New Deptford:

> Here and there a street has been degraded beyond redemption. Streaks of purple and patches of blue may be seen on the map, which shows also one street as bad as anything on the other side of the High Street. I allude to Baildon Street, which, though reported by the police as better, looked to us as black as ever.[18]

Booth described Baildon Street as 'notorious' and 'a very rough place', before concluding:

> The largest poverty areas are found on either side of Deptford Creek, that in Christ Church parish, south of the railway, being the poorest and most vicious; Giffin, Regent, Hales, and Stanhope Streets are known to tramps and low-class prostitutes throughout London, while nearer New Cross perhaps an even lower level is reached at Baildon Street.[19]

In the accompanying section of Booth's *Map Descriptive Map of London Poverty 1898–99,* the parish of St Paul's, Deptford, is predominantly coloured pink, but Baildon Street stands out starkly from the rest, conspicuously dark and inky, and according to Arkell and Booth's judgements, one of the blackest streets in Deptford.

This article primarily takes issue with George Arkell's comments about Baildon Street and his judgments and opinions on the lives and living conditions of those who lived there. Reading into Arkell's comments, a number of his specific conclusions can be identified. With his comments about 'rough and frowzy women' who appeared well known to the police, Arkell was suggesting that Baildon Street was frequented by prostitutes or that prostitution was commonly taking place there. This was also alluded to by Hodson in his interview and by Booth in his conclusions. With his comments about shoeless and ragged children playing in the street, Arkell was certainly suggesting destitution and poverty, but also, perhaps, some inference of child neglect. Arkell suggested that violence, both between residents and against the police, was commonplace in Baildon Street, and that criminality was not only routine but also, in some way, embedded in the very nature of those who resided there. Similar assessments of the violent nature of the street's inhabitants were presented by Bennell in his examples. Despite Sergeant Goddard clearly reporting that Baildon Street was much improved, with criminality and disorder being more a thing of the past, Arkell remained resolute in his judgement that the character of the street was as negative as it had ever been. Arkell decided that Baildon Street should remain classified blue and black, but the evidence put forward here suggests otherwise, and that a higher and fairer social classification was justified. Arkell's assertions and assumptions, as well as his classification, will be examined and challenged, along with revealing exactly what was influencing Arkell in his judgements.

Commenting on Baildon Street, William Bennell said it was not worth him keeping an address book because the residents changed so frequently.[20] This comment also found its way into Booth's published summary of Deptford, and the inference is clear.[21] Rather than containing a coherent community of people, Baildon Street was characterised as a transient place, with an ever-changing and unknowable population of residents that rendered it unapproachable to church and charity. The reality, however, was somewhat different. In 1899 when Arkell visited, and in 1900 when Bennell was interviewed, Baildon Street had experienced at least a decade of consistent residency that would increase further for at least the next decade. Across a ten-year period from 1891 to 1901, twenty-five households, accounting for fifty-eight individuals, remained consistently in Baildon Street. Although only six of those twenty-five households remained at exactly the same address, 20% of households remained consistently at an address in Baildon Street from 1891 to 1901.[22] This consistency of residency in Baildon Street was even more pronounced for the period 1901–1911. Forty-one households, accounting for eighty-seven individuals, remained consistently at an address in Baildon Street from 1901 to 1911, which equates to 32% of households.[23] This is not to suggest that 20% or 32% consistent residency should necessarily be taken as quantitative proof of residential permanence to be marked against an objective benchmark. Rather, these figures act to initially establish a degree of community coherence that presents a challenge to the characterisation of Baildon Street as an unknowable place of transience.

Furthermore, the qualitative nature of this consistency of residency further emphasises that Baildon Street was indeed a place of community, where families felt comfortable to settle, and where generations of those families chose to make their homes. For example, in 1891 William Bridgeman, an 18-year-old hawker, was living at 35 Baildon Street with his parents and three siblings.[24] In 1894, William married Catherine Collins and, by 1901, they and their two young children were sharing 44 Baildon Street with three other families.[25] By 1911, William and Catherine's family had grown to seven, but they had become sole occupants of 44 Baildon Street, albeit taking in two lodgers.[26] William's older brother, James Bridgeman, followed a similar trajectory, also remaining and raising a family in Baildon Street until at least 1915.[27] Likewise with Edwin Lewis Jnr, who at the age of 6 was living with his family at 10 Baildon Street in 1891. Ten years later, the family had moved to 20 Baildon Street, but by 1911, having married Alice Mary Reeves on Christmas Day in 1906, Edwin and his own burgeoning family were back in residence at number 10, where they remained until at least 1930.[28] Other families—including the Marshall, Nicholls, Brewer, Ellis, Hill, Hurley, and Jones families—all saw generations remain in Baildon Street and make it their home between 1891 and 1911. It is fair to say that residents did not always remain at exactly the same property in Baildon Street, but if William Bennell was unable to maintain contact with these families, it would appear to say much more about his lack of familiarity with the street, and his patience for engaging with its occupants, than it does about their mobility.

Arkell notes the presence of ‘frowzy and half-dressed’ women in Baildon Street, which on its own might be taken simply as a judgment on working-class sexual propriety and respectability.[29] However, Arkell also documents an exchange between Sergeant Goddard and one of the women that suggests previous illegality, and with that, an inference of prostitution emerges. This was, after all, a street that Arkell knew had been classified as ‘Vicious, semi-criminal’. Furthermore, as Ellen Ross has argued, ‘Every poor woman had to demonstrate almost continuously in her dress, gestures, and movements that she was not a ¥low” woman, a prostitute; her respectability was under perpetual suspicion.’[30] All of this suggests that, from what he saw, George Arkell perceived prostitution or soliciting to be taking place in Baildon Street. A similarly reached perception can be seen in the comments of the Rev. Hodson when comparing Baildon Street to the rooms let to ‘unvirtuous’ women in Addey Street.

However, in their interviews for the *Religious Influences* survey, Booth’s investigators asked participants a standing question about prostitution in their parish. Ten Church of England clergymen from across Deptford were interviewed and, on the question of prostitution, not one of them mentioned Baildon Street as being of note.[31] Frederick Pring of St Luke’s referenced Blackhorse Street, and Robert Pratt of Christchurch highlighted Stanhope Street, but he was quick to add that, where ‘unfortunates’ were concerned, ‘as a rule, they are not natives of the district’.[32] The area around St James Hatcham was described by its vicar, Edmund Kennedy, as being ‘rife’ with prostitution, and he remarked that he frequently encountered ‘couples fornicating’ in the alley beside the church that led to Laurie Grove.[33]

Twenty non-conformist churches and missions in Deptford painted a similar picture.[34] Rev. David Honour, from the Octavius Street Baptist Chapel, remarked that prostitution was not as bad as it had been, but it was not unusual to see it on the New Cross Road and Lewisham High Road.[35] Rev. S. Sabine-Read of the Congregational Church in Deptford High Street also highlighted New Cross Road and Lewisham High Street as having ‘a goodish number of prostitutes’, but added that although a criminal population could be found in Watson Street, it was no longer occupied by ‘fallen women’.[36] Other ministers referenced, ‘Quiet roads off Lewisham High Road’, ‘Giffin Street’, ‘Charles Street’, and ‘the area around the Empire and the theatre’, as being well-frequented locations for prostitution but, once again, not a single mention of Baildon Street.[37] Even in Booth’s published summary of Deptford, Baildon Street is absent from the discussions of prostitution, with Giffin Street, Regent Street, Hales Street, and Stanhope Street being explicitly mentioned.[38] Arkell and Hodson’s comments give an impression of prostitution being prevalent in Baildon Street, but the multiple accounts of others appear to contradict that.

Furthermore, in a survey of newspapers covering the district of Deptford from 1878 to 1921, there was only one significant accusation of prostitution in Baildon Street reported as coming to court.[39] On 22 March 1887, George East, residing at 43 Baildon Street, was charged with owning 41 Baildon Street and knowingly allowing it to be used for the purposes of prostitution.[40] Ada King, a girl of 15, was living at the house with another woman named Smith, and both King and Smith had been summoned on charges of drunk and disorderly. King testified that she had been living at 41 Baildon Street for five weeks with another 'unfortunate' named Gosden, and each paid Smith 4s a week in rent. King told the court, 'She thought prisoner [East] knew well enough what she was.'[41] When asked by the magistrate if she would like to give up the work, King replied, 'I would willingly give it up if I could' and a police inspector confirmed he knew of a home where King could be taken.[42] The magistrate, Montagu Williams, ordered East to be remanded, but offered to take £50 in bail. Asking the court if it would accept his own money, East took out a cheque book and said, 'I can write you a cheque for £50', to which Williams replied, 'I have no doubt you could; it is a profitable trade', and he ordered East to be removed.[43]

There was evidence that Baildon Street, in 1887, was a location for prostitution. Police Inspector Dawkins reported that, 'he knew the house, 41 Baildon Street, was occupied by prostitutes' and also that the defendant Mary Smith, was known 'as an associate of bad characters'.[44] A constable gave evidence that Gosden, living at 41 Baildon Street, was 'known for walking the streets', and several residents testified to the poor character of the house and that 'quarrelling often took place there'.[45] On 5 April 1887, East was convicted and fined £20 for keeping an immoral house, while Annie [Mary] Smith, described as East's 'Housekeeper', was sentenced to thirty-one days in prison for several offences of drunkenness.[46] All this suggests that Baildon Street *had* been a location for prostitution in 1887, but there is very little evidence to suggest that was still the case over a decade later when George Arkell visited.

By maintaining that Baildon Street should remain classified as black, George Arkell must have believed that a significant number of its inhabitants were of the 'lowest class, vicious, and semi-criminal'. He justified that belief through his comment that 'If any men and women have the criminal brand on their faces, these seem on my two visits unmistakably to bear it.' He also references Sergeant Goddard's comments about how the police used to face violence and resistance when trying to make an arrest. However, surveying the newspaper reports for cases being heard in the courts covering the district of Deptford from 1878 to 1921 reveals a different picture. To balance or counteract any editorial or reporting focus or bias, this survey examined a range of different newspapers, some of which were Deptford focussed and others that worked more widely.

Looking explicitly at cases where the perpetrator of the crime was living in Baildon Street, the average number per year is just eight. However, this average is slightly misleading, and a more detailed examination reveals two sustained periods when links between criminal activity and residents of Baildon Street were noticeably higher. These were 1887–1890, an average of eighteen cases per year

(1887 being the most prolific year of all with twenty-two cases), and 1892–1898, an average of fifteen cases per year. Of particular interest is that 1899, the year that Arkell visited, marked the beginning of a five-year period when the average dropped significantly to nine crimes per year.

Examining these periods in greater depth reveals the prevalent crimes that Baildon Street residents were being tried for. During 1887–1890, the highest number of crimes was related to drunkenness (34%), then theft (27%), and assault (20%). For 1892–1898, the same categories of crime were still highest, but the distribution had shifted; theft was the highest (36%), then drunkenness (18%), and assault (15%). When questioned by Arkell about criminality related to Baildon Street, Sergeant Goddard replied that the street was better than it had been, that fewer cases now came from the street, and fewer officers were needed to make arrests. Goddard's informed opinion is strongly supported by the statistical evidence. Towards the end of the 1880s, drunkenness and violence accounted for 54% of crimes. These were behaviours more easily associated with degeneracy, viciousness, and immorality than theft, and were more publicly visible, and more likely to require additional officers when making arrests. The seven-year period preceding Arkell's visit saw drunkenness and violence fall to 33%, and in the period 1899–1901 it fell further to just 20%. This all suggests that Goddard was correct, not only in his overall assessment of the street, but in his reasoning that it was 'better' than it had been.

The data presented here is derived from the cases that came to court, and these could arguably reflect policing practices or priorities as much as the quantity and frequency of actual crimes.[47] That said, the fact that drunkenness, theft, and assault remain the three most common reasons for someone appearing in court across the ten-year period under examination suggests that practices and priorities did not alter significantly in that period. Furthermore, when considered alongside Sergeant Goddard's assertion that Baildon Street had improved in that period, the statistical analysis reinforces that position. When examining the criminality of residents, the data and statistics are not intended to provide a comprehensive account of every crime committed, which would be virtually impossible for a street like Baildon Street in this period. Rather, they provide some valuable insights into broad patterns and directions of movement for levels of criminality and the types of crimes committed. To gain a more nuanced picture, it is necessary to engage more qualitatively with the lives of those who resided there, particularly in the two periods when criminal activity was highest. In both periods, we find a core of repeat offenders accounting for much of the reported crime linked to Baildon Street, rather than the street overall being rife with crime and criminals.

In 1887–1890, the aforementioned George East and Annie Smith frequently appeared in the courts. On 2 February 1887, Smith, living in Baildon Street, was convicted of being drunk and using obscene language in Deptford Broadway.[48] She was fined 7s and 6d and charged the doctor's fee for attending to her. The *Kentish Mercury* reported that Smith 'had about half-a-dozen gold rings on her fingers, and pulling off one handed it to a woman at the back of the court to pledge for the purpose of paying the fee'. This is not dissimilar to East's flamboyant behaviour in court and demonstrates that East and Smith were far from being poor. Smith was back in court on 25 July 1888, charged with being drunk and incapable in Watergate Street, for which she was fined 10s or seven days' imprisonment.[49] A year later, on 19 August 1889, Smith appeared charged with stealing £10 from George East.[50] When the court heard that Smith and East had been living together, the case was discharged, but this was not the only incident involving the pair.

On 4 August 1887, Smith appeared charged with assaulting East, who reported he had been living with Smith but, recently, she had taken up with 'an unfortunate' named Elizabeth Collins who lived in Stanhope Street. East alleged that Smith had 'struck him on the head with a boot and given him a blow in the face with her fist, knocking him down' and that Collins had also attacked him.[51] In her defence, Smith said East was withholding a lot of her furniture, worth £50 or £60, and if that was made good 'then she would be glad to leave the man'. The magistrate ordered East and Smith to reach an amicable agreement and adjourned the case for one month. However, when the court reconvened, on 6 September, rather than settling the matter there was another charge against Smith for assaulting East in a public house.[52] Smith did not deny the assault, but claimed it was in self-defence. As before, the magistrate adjourned the case, but East then withdrew his complaint, and the case was dismissed. So, although 1887–1890 appears to represent a spike in criminal activity in Baildon Street, much of its reputation was generated by the behaviour of a handful of individuals, rather than being indicative of the whole street.

It is a similar pattern for 1892–1898. Most prolific was William Taylor, of 53 Baildon Street, who appeared in court seven times and was described by one magistrate as 'one of the worst roughs in Deptford'.[53] Taylor was a drunken and violent man; he did fourteen days hard-labour in 1892 for assaulting Samuel Stanton, and two months in prison in 1895 for assaulting Ann Stone.[54] He was convicted, on two occasions, for resisting arrest, on another occasion for breaking windows, and he was involved in illegal prize fighting.[55] Another violent repeat offender was James Diplock, living at 69 Baildon Street. In 1892, he did six months of hard labour for a 'brutal and savage attack' on his mother-in-law Mary, after she tried to prevent him assaulting his wife Sarah, and in 1896 he did one month of hard labour for assaulting his wife.[56] Finally, Baildon Street was resident to John and James Lynch who, between them, appeared in court four times between May 1893 and April 1895. Two of those appearances related to charges of assault, one against two women and another against two police constables, and also two charges of theft, one of which also involved assault.[57]

Although this might make Baildon Street look like a violent place, it must be noted that residents were also the victims of violence perpetrated by outsiders: Elizabeth Ball of 8 Baildon Street was assaulted by John Goggin of Queen Street; Nellie South of 4 Baildon Street was assaulted by Kate Moyniham of 34 Railway Grove; Margaret Dowse of 19 Baildon Street was assaulted by Thomas George, aged 13, of Esplanade Terrace; and Mary Ireland of 51 Baildon Street was assaulted by William Folkland of 25 Giffin Street, to name but a few.[58] Residents were also victims of other crimes: in 1880, Ambrose Hone of Baildon Street had his silver watch stolen by three youths; in October 1883, Lydia Day of 13 Baildon Street had her purse containing 30s stolen by Jeremiah Johnson of Mill Lane; in May 1888, Adolphus Jeal of 35 Baildon Street had 19s and 6d stolen from him while in the Princess Royal public house; and in 1898, Emma Dorton of 29 Baildon Street had quilts and sheets valued at 8s stolen from her property.[59] As with previous examples, these incidents illustrate that many residents of Baildon Street were far from being poor and destitute, unlike the impression Arkell gave, and they suggest that a classification of 'Mixed. Some comfortable, others poor' would have been more appropriate.

It is fair to conclude that Baildon Street, in the years preceding Arkell's visit, certainly had a handful of residents who were well known in the criminal courts. The behaviour of those individuals meant Baildon Street, overall, earned an unwarranted reputation for criminality. In the period 1887–1890, 30% of the cases being heard in the courts in which a resident of Baildon Street was charged with a crime, were repeat offenders. Elizabeth Smith alone was responsible for almost 10% of all cases in that period. Likewise for the period 1892–1898, 27% were repeat offenders, with Taylor, Diplock, and Lynch collectively responsible for 13% of cases. Baildon Street undoubtedly had its share of criminals, but it was not the unmitigated and hopeless den of criminality that Arkell condemned it as.

The final issue to address is Arkell's description of the children of Baildon Street, 'some shoeless, all dirty and ragged, playing in street'. Through this description, Arkell insinuated that those children were neglected and, consequently, another indication that the street should remain classified as black. In 1901, shortly after Arkell's visit, a photograph was taken in Baildon Street that is most revealing. A group of children feature in the foreground and, in total, eighteen children, probably between the ages of about 2 and 15 are visible. As might be expected for 1901, the photograph is grainy and not entirely sharp, but it is clear to see that all the children, bar one, are wearing shoes. Furthermore, it would be fair to say the children are relatively well dressed, and certainly do not appear 'ragged' (Figure 1).

The circumstances of the photograph are unknown, and the children are posing for the camera, which may have influenced their choice of apparel. That said, their clothing appears more workaday than 'Sunday Best', suggesting the photograph was not overly staged.[60] It could also be argued that these children may not have been residents of Baildon Street and had just collected there to be photographed. This is possible but, again, the photograph looks more like a snapshot of everyday life, rather than something staged or manipulated. The photograph shows a group of working-class children in a working-class street, but they are clearly not the shoeless, dirty, and ragged children that Arkell claimed were prevalent in Baildon Street. This is not to say that there were no instances of child neglect in Baildon Street, but they were relatively few and far between. In the period 1878–1921, only seven cases were reported as coming to court and, from those, two stand out as particularly alarming.

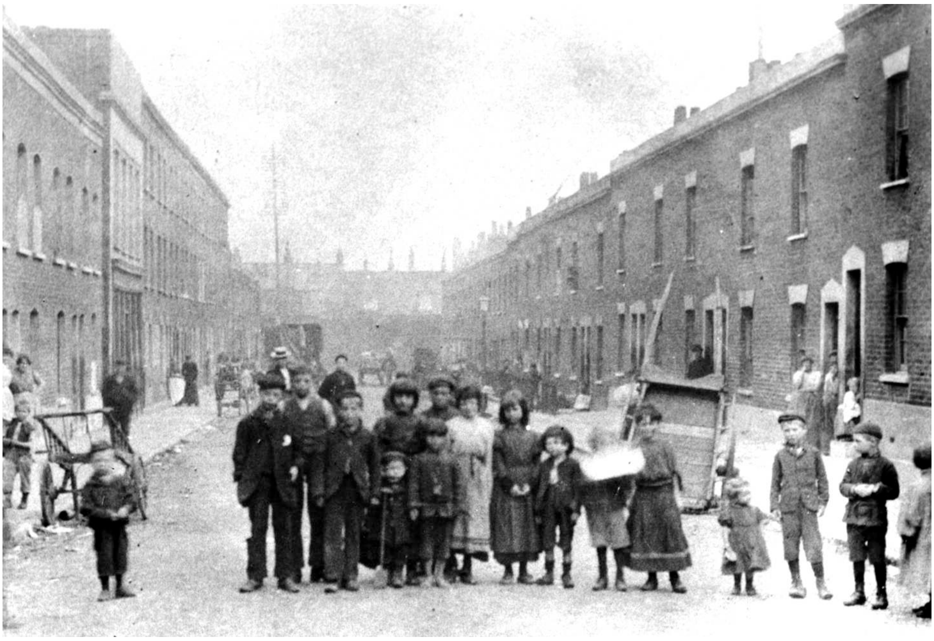

FIGURE 1 Baildon Street, Deptford (1901). © Lewisham Heritage, Lewisham Council, LEW PH79/9781.

On 5 January 1898, George Hooper appeared charged with neglecting his three children, Ernest (10), Frank (8), and Elizabeth (6).[61] National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Inspector Chown found the children naked and alone at 32 Baildon Street and 'the children presented a most deplorable and pitiable condition and looked half-starved'.[62] A school board visitor reported that Ernest and Frank were filthy with rags tied together with string for clothing, and Elizabeth had only a dirty chemise to wear.[63] A porter at the Greenwich workhouse said 'the children were in as bad a state as he had ever seen children. They were covered with vermin and their rags had to be burnt'.[64] Hooper, living in Kender Street and working as a barber's assistant, said his wife had died two years earlier and he was unable to look after the children. He left them money every week for food, and wood for the fire, and 'had always endeavoured to do the best for the children', but admitted they were neglected as he had nobody to care for them. The magistrate concluded there had been no active cruelty, but rather sheer neglect, and he sentenced Hooper to three weeks of hard labour.[65]

A similar case was tried on 24 August 1901, when Alfred and Elizabeth Alder, residents of 2 Baildon Street, appeared on charges of neglecting their three children, Rose (15), Mary (12), and Richard, (10).[66] Again, it was Inspector Chown who reported, 'the bed consisted of a heap of steaming, rotten feathers', that there were two buckets of rotting excrement, that two of the three children were blistered from vermin, and that 'the stench was so bad that [he] was ill for the rest the day'.[67] Chown ordered Elizabeth to clean the house and children, but when he returned a few days later, things were no better. Alfred was a seaman working on the Yarmouth Belle and he only came home twice a week. The Warrant Officer reported he had known the defendants for ten years: 'the house was always dirty, the woman was a habitual drunkard, and there had been frequent School Board summonses, the fines being always paid be the male defendant'.[68] Sentencing Elizabeth to four months of hard labour and Alfred bound over on condition of good behaviour, the magistrate, rather unhelpfully, highlighted that if the owners of the Yarmouth Belle discovered how Alfred lived, he would surely lose his position.[69] The magistrate also, somewhat callously, remarked that 'the man should have the fire hose turned on his house so that it might be thoroughly cleansed'.[70]

These incidents are deplorable, and the neglectful actions of those involved should not be overlooked. However, for assessing the character of Baildon Street, these crimes are less indicative than they appear. George Hooper was born in Somerset in 1851 and married Elizabeth Ann Down in Sussex in 1881.[71] By 1887, the family was living at 49 Charles Street, Deptford, and from 1891 at 4 Tanners Hill, Deptford, where George had a hairdressers.[72] Up until 1896, the Hoopers were a reasonably prosperous artisan-class family. Tanners Hill was a good upper-working-class area, and the children were enrolled at Lucas Street School. Elizabeth died, aged 35, in 1896 and that was when the family collapsed and they eventually moved to Baildon Street.[73] By December 1897, the children had been in and out of the Greenwich Union Workhouse before, in 1898, coming to the wider attention of the authorities.[74] Yes, the children were found neglected in a property in Baildon Street, but the family had not been there for long, and their destitution was a symptom of their situation, rather than a product of a life lived in the street. With the Alder case, there was a longer history of issues, with workhouse admissions in 1895–1897 and Elizabeth previously serving one month of hard labour in 1896 for neglecting her infant son.[75] However, at that time the family were reported as living at 133 Church Street, rather than Baildon Street, and both convictions for child neglect appear to involve longstanding issues with alcohol. As with the Hooper case, there is substantial evidence that the neglectful treatment of the Alder children was part of a longer history of family problems separate from Baildon Street, rather than being directly a product of that environment. It might be argued that Baildon Street represented somewhere that attracted or gave refuge to those who fell on hard times, and that may well have been the case. But in these cases, the most serious incidents of reported child neglect, it is clear that circumstances unconnected with the street itself were at the root of that neglect.

All the evidence suggests that, contrary to Arkell's assessment, Baildon Street was not especially a chaotic place of social transience, nor was it a place systemically rife with prostitution, crime, violence, and child neglect. So if Arkell was mistaken, what was the reality of life in Baildon Street? Looking at the period 1891 to 1911, a general sense of everyday life in Baildon Street can be surmised. In terms of nationality, 98% of residents were English, with Irish, Scottish, and Welsh making up the majority of the remainder. Residents were also predominantly local, with 67% recorded as being born in Deptford, and 80% born within three or four miles of Baildon Street.[76]

Baildon Street was a street of workers. For men of working age (16 and over) in 1891, 92% were listed as employed, which fell to 81% in 1901, but was back up to 98% in 1911. Even allowing for differences between census returns, this demonstrates that most men living in Baildon Street were working men. Furthermore, a significant percentage of working-age women living in Baildon Street were working women: 36% in 1891, 32% in 1901, and 54% in 1911. Married women and widows, rather than single women, made up the majority of working women: 73% in 1891, 67% in 1901, and 60% in 1911.[77] Setting aside the well-known issues of under recording of female employment in census returns, these figures reveal something interesting. The culture of work routinely extended to women, and for between a third and half of households in Baildon Street, additional income from a female worker was being earned. As Thomas Gibson-Brydon has highlighted, 'Booth concluded that, in fact, most working people in London were respectable', with only 9% being 'loafers' and 1% 'criminals'.[78] Even allowing for seasonal or irregular employment, a household with the capacity for two incomes should place Baildon Street, at the very least, into Booth's light-blue classification of 'poor. 18s-21s a week for a moderate family'. However, given that some residents conspicuously displayed wealth, and others reportedly had costly items stolen from them, a more accurate classification could arguably have been purple, 'Mixed. Some comfortable, others poor'. In terms of work and income, there was little justification for classifying Baildon Street as a black street.

Some local clergymen spoke of Baildon Street as an irreligious or godless place that was unapproachable or indifferent to Church and charity. However, not all religious visitors had this experience. In May 1900, Captain Joslin of the Salvation Army took Ernest Aves to Baildon Street and commented that 'they were always well received here, and that the collections were larger than in many better-off parts'.[79] In December 1897, the Deptford Broadway Christian Defence Crusade reported on their 'Christmas Waits', one of which took place in Baildon Street:

> After concluding their first piece, word was brought that a young woman of 24 years of age had passed away an hour previously, and at the request of her friends a young lady of the party (which numbered about 50 young men and women) sang *Sleep on, beloved*.[80]

In January 1898, the New Cross and Brockley YMCA visited Hazeldon's Lodging-House in Baildon Street and, 'gave the inmates a substantial tea, which was followed by an enjoyable evening'.[81] Similar charitable provision was undertaken in August 1905 when 90 children attending the Zion Baptist Chapel Mission Hall in Baildon Street were taken on an outing to Ashtead Woods where 'dinner and tea were provided, and a very enjoyable time was spent'.[82] These events, and Josling's comments, suggest that Baildon Street was socially and morally more mixed than Arkell and Booth's classification. Furthermore, it demonstrates an acceptance, or at least a tolerance, of religion and religious charity by its residents.

Arkell suggested that Baildon Street was home to a noticeable population of Costermongers, and that is supported by the data. On average, across the period 1891–1911, 18% of employed men and 21% of employed women resident in Baildon Street can be classified as a Costermonger. Booth provided brief insights into the activities of Costermongers, but it was mostly concerning their businesses rather than their personal lives. Booth was relatively sympathetic towards Costermongers:

> The Coster has no easy lot … in addition to the risks of the trade, the Coster, in pursuit of its profits, must be on his legs all day; exposed to all weathers, at all hours … it is plain that he needs a stout heart to meet the incidents of his daily life. Great are the virtues demanded: good judgment, promptitude, energy, prudence, a knowledge of mankind, a ready wit.[83]

On the other hand, Booth also remarked, ‘The business seems especially attractive to a harum-scarum, reckless, random, happy-go-lucky class, and the result is a severe and constant struggle for existence.’[84] Booth reported that:

> hawkers of fish or fruit make from 20s to £3 a week, but this would not apply to vendors of shell-fish, whose profit, even with a good stand outside some music-hall, is only put at 18s a week, and it is the same with the seller of baked potatoes compared to the hawker of fresh vegetables.[85]

Even by his lowest estimate, the income for a Costermonger places it into Booth’s light-blue classification, and that is before any other household income is considered.

Although dating from the 1840s, the investigations of Henry Mayhew provide a more in-depth social and cultural picture of the character of the Costermongers. Mayhew describes them as ‘a distinct race, perhaps originally of Irish extraction, seldom associating with any other of the street folk, and being all known to each other’.[86] Regarding the ‘Habits and Amusements’ of Costermongers, Mayhew deduced that, ‘as his leisure is devoted to the beer-shop, the dancing-room, or the theatre, we must look for his habits to his demeanour at those places. Home has few attractions to man whose life is a street life’.[87] Drinking, dancing, sparring or boxing, and gambling appear to have been the most popular pastimes, and we see those reflected in many of Baildon Street’s residents. Drunkenness has already been discussed, but appearances in court for illegal gambling and prize-fighting were not uncommon. Mayhew ascertained that ‘the Costers have no religion at all, and very little notion of what religion is’, but ‘they respect the City Missionaries, because they read to them and because they visit the sick, and sometimes give oranges and such like to them and the children’.[88] Again, this tallies with the behaviour of many in Baildon Street, who appeared receptive to more evangelical and practical forms of religion and religious charity, rather than the traditional Church of England. Mayhew asserted that Costermongers did not steal from one another, and they tended to keep law and order themselves within their communities. Their hatred towards the police was intense, and they would go to great lengths to thwart or deny the police.[89] Once again, this behaviour had been relatively commonplace in Baildon Street, with assaults on police officers often occurring when they were trying to arrest another individual. Although Costermongers made up around 20% of the residents of Baildon Street, it would appear that much of the everyday life and character of the street was influenced by that community.

George Arkell's assessment and classification of Baildon Street was fundamentally incorrect and misjudged. Even on the day of his visit, Sergeant Goddard told Arkell, in no uncertain terms, that Baildon Street had significantly improved, and the Sergeant 'would hardly call it criminal now', yet Arkell completely disregarded that and continued to classify the street as black. How might this be explained or accounted for?

There was an element of pre-judgment on Arkell's part. Knowing that a street had previously been classified as black predisposed him to view its inhabitants in a particular way, regardless of evidence to the contrary. Only five other places in Deptford were marked as black on Booth's map: Mill Lane in St. John Parish, and Giffin Street, Regent Street, Stanhope Street, and Hales Street, all clustered together in Christchurch Parish. All of these streets were visited by Arkell in July 1899 and, in all cases, Arkell judged that the location should remain classified as black. He noted that Mill Lane was occupied by 'prostitutes and bullies' and Regent Street had 'some street sellers and well-known prostitutes'.[90] In Stanhope Street, he perceived 'some costers and prostitutes, shoeless children running about and frowzy women gaping at the doors', which is very similar to his description of Baildon Street.[91] Giffin Street was also similarly described: 'Slatternly women standing about, some shoeless children. Low class, some prostitutes, hawkers, etc.'. As with Baildon Street, despite Police Inspector Gummer telling Arkell that 'Not many charges come to the police, it has improved in that respect', Arkell once again dismissed that and kept the previous black classification.[92] Likewise with Hales Street, where Arkell himself remarked that there 'was not much crime', he still judged the street as black.[93] It is telling that Arkell's descriptions of black-classified streets all seem to share similar descriptions, which suggests he had already made his mind up before arriving and, to some extent, saw only what he expected to see. However, there is evidence that something more complex and sinister also informed Arkell's perceptions and judgements.

Regarding the residents of Baildon Street, Arkell commented, 'If any men and women have the criminal brand on their faces, these seem … unmistakenly to bear it.' This comment bears the hallmarks of someone influenced by the pseudoscientific practice of physiognomy. This practice of assessing or judging an individual's character from their outward biological appearance, especially their face, was a popular concept in Britain throughout the nineteenth century.[94] Literature ranged from lengthy and detailed studies, such as Joseph Simms's *Nature's Revelations of Character or, Physiognomy Illustrated*, through to more practical handbooks, such as *Physiognomy Made Easy* by Annie Oppenheim, and *How to Read Faces or, Practical Physiognomy Made Easy* by James Coates.[95] With this concept in mind, Arkell's seemingly offhand comments about Sergeant Goddard's mottled complexion probably being a product of his heavy drinking also become much more telling. Arkell does appear to be someone who judged the character of an individual from their physical features. Furthermore, given Arkell's primary objective was attempting to judge, characterise, and classify communities based largely on what he could glean from viewing the people within them, a concept such as physiognomy would surely have been interesting him.

A leading proponent of physiognomy was the English polymath Francis Galton, whose work on composite portraiture sought to establish physiognomic characteristics such as health, disease, character, and criminality.[96] Galton was also 'the most innovative and significant statistician of the nineteenth century', utilising Booth's work as a basis for his own attempts to assimilate social categories into natural categories.[97] Moving in similar circles, Arkell would undoubtedly have been aware of Galton's theories through his association with Booth, but also through his work with Beatrice Webb. In her autobiography, *My Apprenticeship*, Webb explains that Herbert Spencer brought Galton into her 'circle of acquaintances', which would have included Arkell, and her admiration for Galton was clear, describing him as 'the ideal man of science' and recollecting her 'rapt attention' when he spoke.[98]

Galton was an important and influential figure in physiognomy in the latter part of the nineteenth century, especially in relation to using physiognomy for identifying and characterising communities of people. As Sharrona Pearl has identified, 'For anthropologists such as Sir Francis Galton, Physiognomy was an ideal way to explore what separated one group of people from another.'[99] When considering the extent to which Arkell was an advocate for, and practitioner of, physiognomy, it is interesting that Pearl highlights, 'Physiognomy offered a way to categorise humanity and to assign and visualise difference. This form of taxonomy had many values, particularly the infusion of visuality into classification.'[100] Infusing visuality into classification was undoubtedly one of the key purposes of Booth's maps, something that Arkell was very familiar with. Pearl also highlights that as Irish, Catholic, and Jewish communities in England gained greater rights during the nineteenth century, their visual 'invisibility' among English people came to be seen as a potential threat.[101] Physiognomy offered an answer to that: 'making Irish and Jewish physiognomy uniform, and distinct from other groups, made the invisible foreigner visible, visualisable, and reducible to the lowest common denominator'.[102] This element of physiognomy, in making immigrant communities visible, identifiable, and reducible, can also be seen in an influential map created in 1899.

The map, entitled *Jewish East London*, was created for the book, *The Jew in London: A Study of Racial Character and Present-Day Conditions*, published in 1901.[103] The book, commissioned by Toynbee Hall, was composed of two essays, one by Charles Russell writing as an outsider, and another by Harry Samuel Lewis a member of the Jewish community. The book, with one article proposing anti-Jewish legislation and the other strongly averse to it, attempted to present a balanced argument, but as Bryars and Harper highlight, 'the map, on the other hand, is far from balanced'.[104] The map of Jewish East London was modelled very closely on Booth's poverty map, using a similar colour-coding system to identify 'the proportion of the Jewish population to other residents of East London, street by street, in 1899'. Streets with 'less than 5% of Jews' were coloured red and, at the other end of the scale, streets with '95% to 100%' were coloured dark blue.[105] Booth's poverty map was well known by 1901, and for those familiar with it, the use of dark blue in the map of Jewish East London would have implicitly conflated areas of high Jewish occupancy with areas of problematic poverty. As Laura Vaughan has summarised, 'the choice of the colour blue … gives the impression that the Jewish presence in the area was much greater, and much more problematic, than it was in reality'.[106] Bryars and Harper agree, concluding that 'using heavily nuanced colour-coding, it contrives to be alarmist without actually distorting the underlying data'.[107] This distorted use of Booth's colour coding in the map of Jewish East London might be written-off as a misjudgement or an oversight, were it not that the creator of the map was none other than George Edward Arkell.

Scholars have tended to regard Arkell's map of Jewish East London as being alarmist and intentionally misleading by creating 'an unreliable impression of the pattern of Jewish occupancy of the East End'.[108] However, knowing that Arkell was a practitioner of physiognomy, and influenced by the physiognomic ideas of Francis Galton, an additional layer to the map is revealed. As with physiognomy, the purpose of the map, for Arkell, was about making the Jewish community in the East End visible and identifiable so it, and its inhabitants, could be visibly 'known' to English Londoners. Arkell's seemingly intentional choice of dark blue to indicate streets of high Jewish occupancy suggests that he was also trying to create negative impressions of that community. This becomes more concerning given Arkell's association with Galton and the latter's well-documented disdain for Jews, as David Feldman has outlined, 'Galton was an influential pioneer of race science who held negative views about the Jewish race … he takes his place in historical accounts of modern antisemitism.'[109]

Furthermore, as one of the founders of the eugenics movement, Galton took his studies of physiognomy into a darker place, proposing 'an aggressive eugenics campaign, in which selective breeding would preserve only the best features of the British people'.[110] Ultimately, Galton's work provided 'one trajectory for the science which led to the legitimation of Nazi racial policies'.[111] There is no direct evidence that George Arkell was a eugenicist, or a supporter of the eugenics movement. However, his work, his opinions, and the circles in which he moved do suggest he shared Galton's negative views about Jews, as well as other immigrant groups in England. If Arkell was influenced by Galton's views on those issues, he may well have shared his opinions about others. Either way, Arkell's personal views do appear to have had a strong bearing on how he approached the communities he was asked to survey.

The so-called Police Notebooks kept by George Arkell and Booth's other investigators as they walked the streets of late-Victorian London are, without doubt, an extremely rich and important source.[112] Their first-hand observations and detailed, but candid, comments on what they saw are invaluable for revealing lesser-known aspects of the everyday lives of otherwise ordinary people. As with any source, the historian must take account of any bias or circumstances that might have influenced it, and this is no different when using these notebooks. With Booth's work, the tendency has been to consider class, gender, and status as potential factors that might have influenced or distorted the opinions of the investigators.[113] However, this study of Baildon Street has revealed that other factors, more personal and particular to the individual concerned, might also have had a significant bearing on how they viewed the streets, and the people, they were surveying.

To some extent, George Arkell had condemned Baildon Street and its residents before he even arrived, because he knew it had previously been classified as black. Then, upon arrival, Arkell drew upon his physiognomic ideas and practices to reinforce and confirm his incorrect presuppositions about the street, despite substantive evidence to the contrary. Consequently, Baildon Street remained black on Booth's updated *Descriptive Map of London Poverty* and it retained its incorrect and undeserved reputation. It should, by all accounts, have been reclassified to, at least, light blue and probably purple, which would have been a fairer and more accurate assessment of the working-class communities that called it home. For many, Baildon Street may not have been the most desirable place to live, but it was far from being the blackest street in Deptford.

Disclosure Statement

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