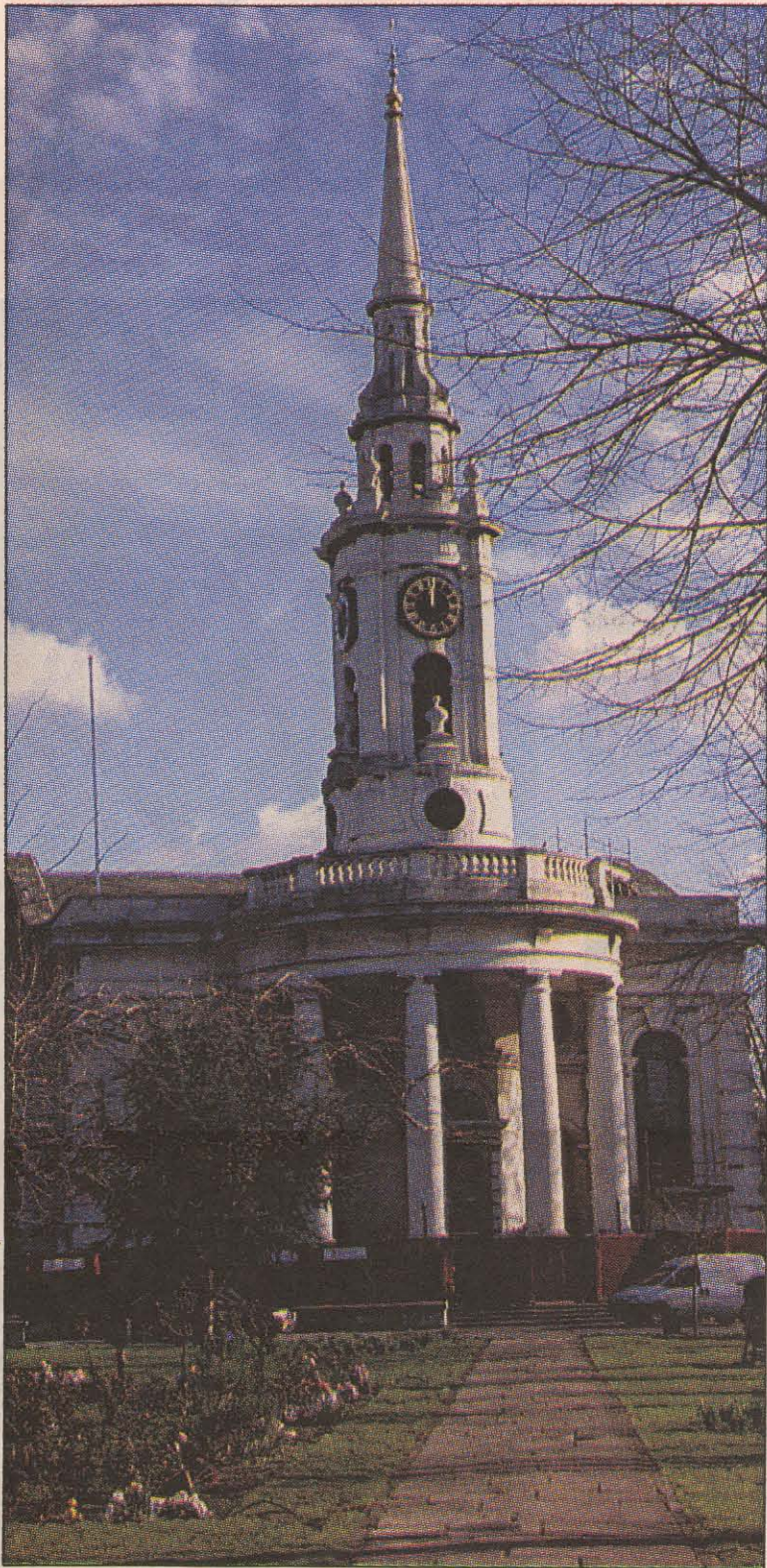


Deptford

An area 10 minutes from the City and a new favourite of commuters is fighting to save its naval architecture, says Jane Hughes



Gem: known as "the pearl of Deptford", St Paul's church is an impressive local landmark

FEW people are aware of the architectural treasures to be found along the waterfront at Deptford, south-east London — surviving evidence of the area's enormously rich maritime and industrial past.

But now SE8, for years considered a decaying backwater and one of London's least glamorous postcodes, is enjoying a property renaissance that local people are determined should not spoil Deptford's Thameside heritage.

William Richards and Chris Mazeika, two residents who are spearheading a campaign called the Seven Wonders of the Waterfront, say they welcome the

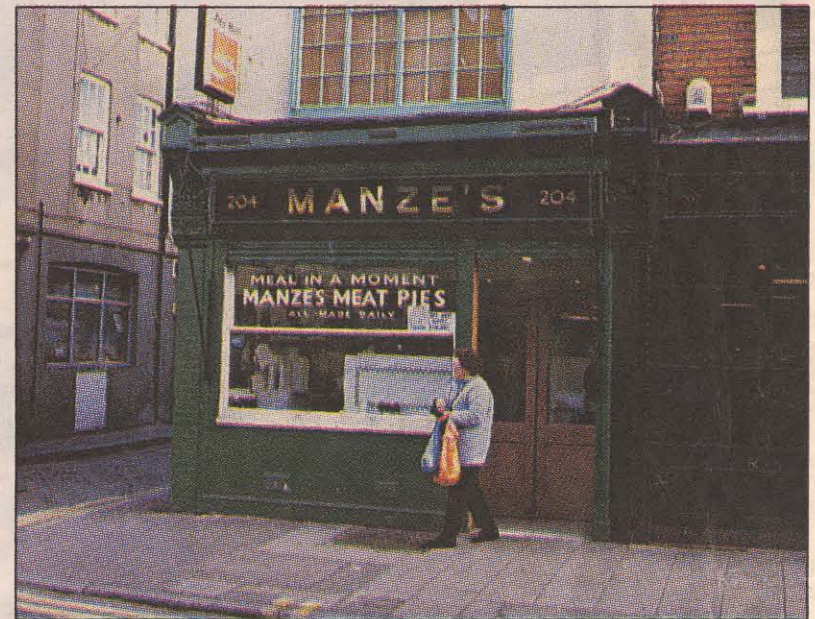
Wapping shows how well things can work out

new investment now pouring into the area, but they also want to save the area's finest buildings from being overwhelmed by Docklands-style housing copied on the south bank of the river.

"Deptford's old wharfs, warehouses and dry docks should be woven into the fabric of redevelopment to enrich the urban landscape for everyone," says Mazeika, 41, who has spent the past five years researching the history of the docks.

"Parts of docklands regeneration on the north bank have become characterised by bland design, but the success of Wapping shows how well things can work when old buildings are mixed with high-quality new architecture."

Richards and Mazeika live in, and are restoring, the Master Shipwright's House — a magnificent Queen Anne



Pie 'n' mash: Deptford still offers a taste of traditional south-east London

building that is the oldest remaining structure in what was Henry VIII's London naval dockyard.

The couple bought the dilapidated building after falling in love with it five years ago when they glimpsed it over a wall. The house has since become a venue for arts events and has featured in the film *Sylvia*, as well as the television series *Tipping the Velvet*.

The pair have also succeeded in getting the 19th century Paynes Wharf — a former engineering works with six elegant Italianate arches — listed to protect it from demolition. There are now imaginative proposals to turn it into housing and an art gallery.

However, the 1930s meat storehouse next door at Borthwick Wharf, designed by RIBA gold medallist Sir Edwin Cooper, remains under threat. Despite the support of the Twentieth Century Society and other conservation groups, an appeal to list the imposing brick structure was turned down by English Heritage. Plans to replace it with an 18- to 22-storey housing block have already been on public display.

English Heritage agrees that the docks are "an exceptionally historic area", but a spokeswoman says that although Borthwick had seemed to be

of interest initially, further investigation showed it to be of "less historical interest and more altered than thought".

Local campaigners, who now intend to lobby the Department of Media, Culture and Sport, could not disagree more. "People here see Borthwick Wharf as an important link with the past and something of a jewel box

architecturally. It's both classical and Modernist and has been dubbed Deptford's Tate Modern," says Richards, also 41, and a personal communications coach for politicians and business people.

"We want to see it come alive again: the scheme for Paynes Wharf shows how creative developers can be when they work with an old building."

What has brought new investment into the area is Deptford's location; no more than a seven-minute train journey from London Bridge, its accessibility has been boosted recently by the arrival of a DLR link with Canary Wharf and the City. New developments followed, including One SE8, an attractive and innovative St James Homes

Borthwick Wharf could be Deptford's Tate Modern



Classic and classy: Albury Street, Deptford's most prestigious address, is a fine row of Georgian houses with wonderful door carvings



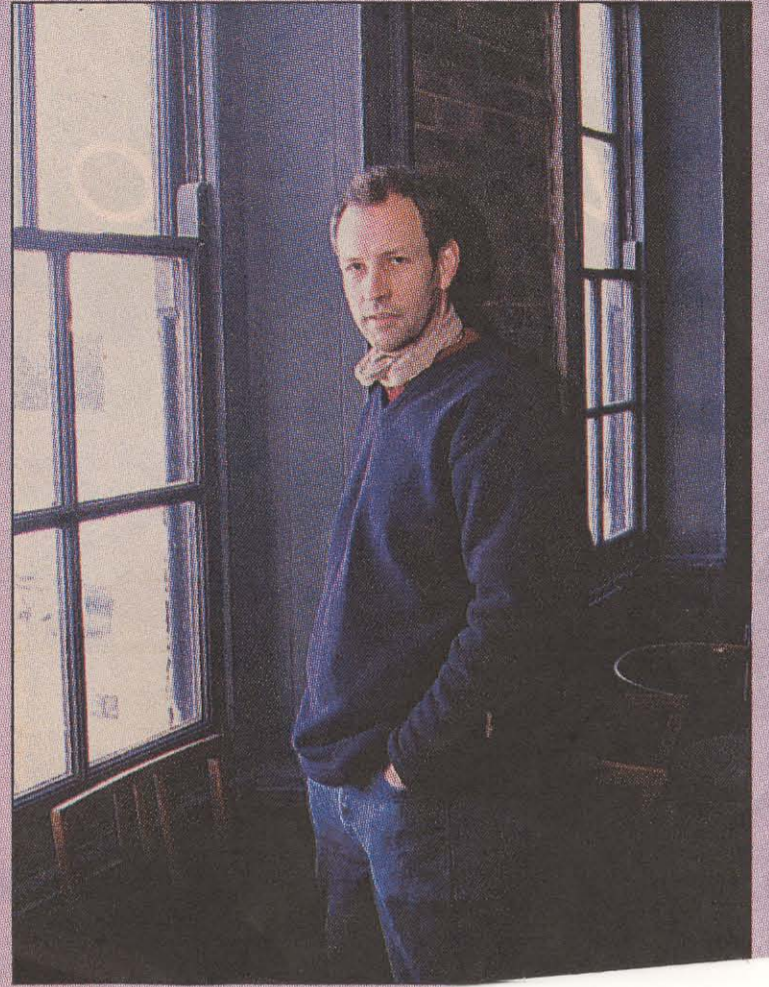
£164,000: studios at OneSE8. Two-bedroom penthouses are £430,000. Call 020 8469 0077

sunny side up

The Master Shipwright's House: restoration on the waterfront



Champions: William Richards (right) and his partner, Chris Mazeika, are restoring the Master Shipwright's House (above) as a home and performance space. Now they are defending the Seven Wonders of the Waterfront — seven historic but endangered riverside structures



scheme of several hundred flats in what will eventually be 11 blocks.

Nearby, Clerkenwell loft developer CYZ is turning the Victorian Mumford's Mill into 36 high-specification flats. On the riverfront, Berkeley Homes will soon begin the refurbishment of Aragon Tower, a former council block on the 1960s Pepys Estate with amazing river views, adding 14 penthouses to the top of the existing 26-storey building.

Deptford's longstanding artists' community has been boosted by the arrival of the new £22 million Laban Centre for Contemporary Dance. Designed by Tate Modern architects, Herzog & de Meuron, and winner of last year's Stirling Prize for architecture, Laban has confirmed Deptford as a full-blown cultural centre.

THE biggest-scale regeneration scheme in the area has yet to begin, though. A Richard Rogers masterplan for News International's 40-acre Convoys Wharf site includes commercial and residential development and an extension of Deptford's north-pointing High Street to the riverfront. It also envisages a centrepiece of cafés and creative industries and a riverboat crossing to Canary Wharf.

Richards and Mazeika have joined

community representatives from the Creekside Forum to lobby to protect two more of Deptford's "Seven Wonders" — both likely to be affected by the Rogers scheme. It looks like their suggestion to excavate a 16th century dry dock and turn it into performance

Local wonders include Nelson's victualling yard

and exhibition space is being taken on board, but an idea to return a 13th century basin, once home to the Mary Rose, to marine uses, is struggling.

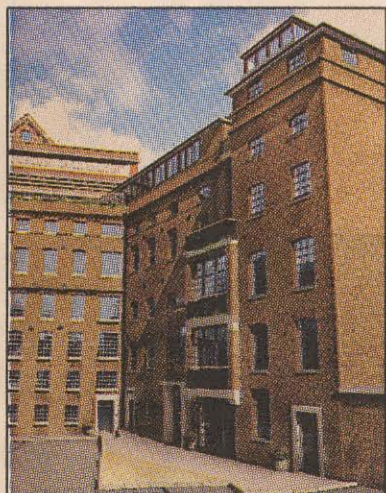
The other gems included in the Seven Wonders list are the Upper Watergate Stairs — an early Thames crossing point thought to be where

Raleigh laid down his cloak for Elizabeth I, and the 18th century Victualling Yard used by Nelson.

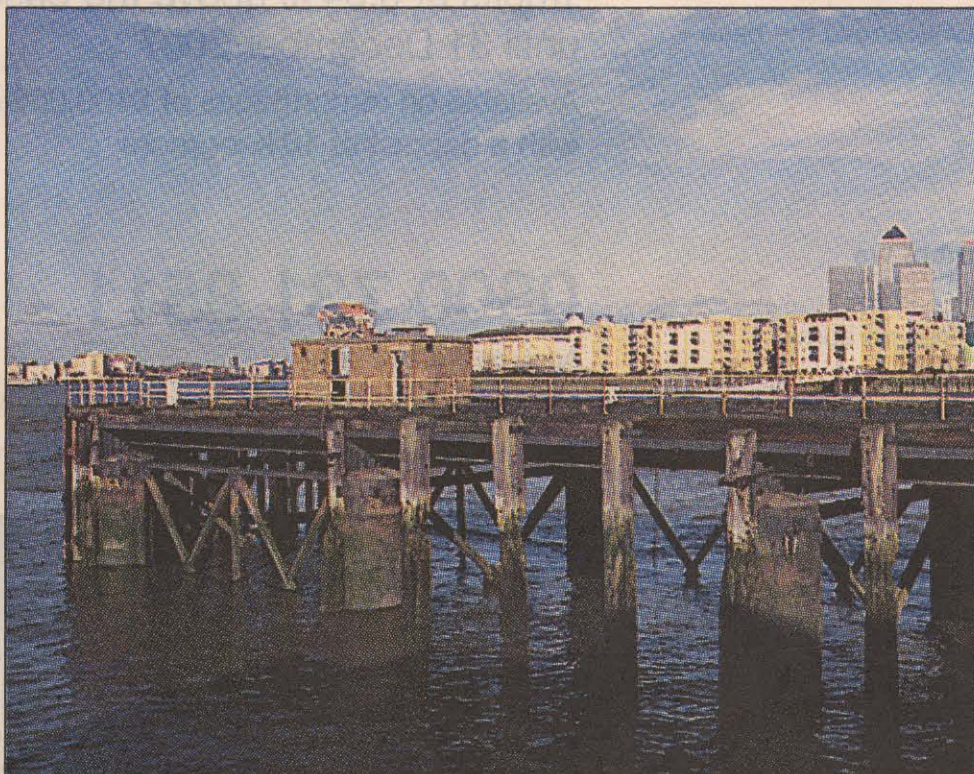
A problem for campaigners is that some of these important buildings straddle two boroughs. They claim Lewisham has supported creative industries and invested heavily in quality architecture, but the eastern part of Deptford, under the control of Greenwich council, has fared less well; this includes Borthwick and Payne's Wharfs. As Richards sees it: "Many buildings of value on the Greenwich side — including a 1720s naval storehouse and late-Victorian power station — have been demolished to make way for Docklands-style housing that has brought little to the area."

Mazeika adds: "We've lost so much already that it's vital to keep the remaining pieces of the historical jigsaw. These buildings have the potential to become central to Deptford's sense of place and identity."

Pictures by Tim France



£285,000: one-bedroom flat at Mumford's Mill. Through Hamptons (020 7824 8822)



So near: only seven minutes by train to London Bridge, the DLR has now turned Deptford into an attractive proposition for workers in Docklands and Canary Wharf, giving them the chance to own a riverside property