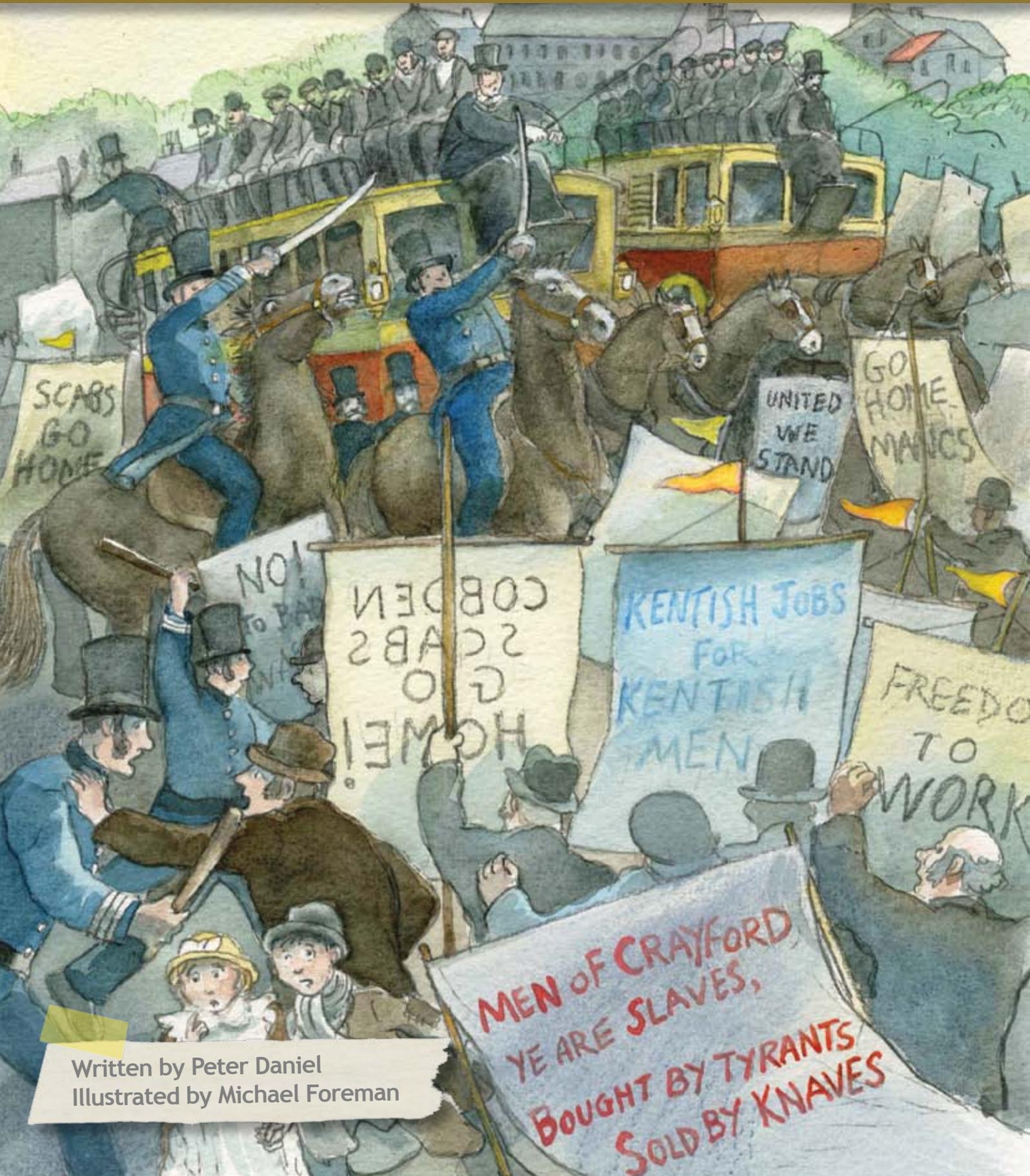


The Fabric of Our Town



Written by Peter Daniel
Illustrated by Michael Foreman



The Swaisland bi-centenary mural design created by pupils at Crayford Primary Schools and artist, Jonathan Boast

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Foreword

The Fabric of Our Town is a project which marks two hundred years since Charles Swaisland began his calico and silk printing business at Crayford in 1814. Swaisland's co-existed in the town with David Evans, the latter being the last of the London silk printers when they closed down in 2001, thus ending London's involvement in this trade which can be traced back to Elizabethan times. As a group which has been in existence for over fifty years, Crayford Manor House Historical Society is delighted to be the lead partner in this Heritage Lottery Funded project. As well as providing the opportunity for students at Camberwell College to conserve historically valuable pattern books, thus making them available for research and study, we will, with our partners, be able to bring to light disappearing aspects of Crayford's importance to industrial heritage.

Swaisland's won a gold medal at the Great Exhibition of 1851, and became known as the 'Mecca of Calico Printing'. All the leading British designers were trained at a free school at Swaisland's, men such as George Haité and William Hubbard. Hubbard also produced water colour pictures of the factory and surrounding area which are a window into a forgotten world. The print works site was taken over by G.P. & J. Baker (1893-1963), which was to provide printed fabrics for elite shops like Liberty, and later to receive a Royal Warrant. The Historical Society were particularly interested to discover the role which the workforce of Crayford's textile industry played in the Chartist movement, a part of our rich history which has been hitherto largely unnoticed, and which it is intended to bring to wider attention.

Working with Manchester Metropolitan University, G.P.&J. Baker and the Royal College of Art, we plan to develop a Fabric of Our Town website, and organise a portable exhibition created by the local community, which can be displayed at a number of local venues. Children from all four of Crayford's schools will experience the art of block printing, will be involved with making an animated film for the project website, and will take part in drama workshops for an end-of-project performance. Crayford Manor House Historical Society are excited to be involved with the many aspects of this project, and look forward to working with partners over the coming months.

Janet Hearn-Gillham
Secretary Crayford Manor House
Historical Society

The Fabric of Our Town has been put together after extensive research at the British Newspaper Library. Although there is no direct evidence of his involvement in the Chartist movement, Richard Roberts, as someone who lived through this whole dramatic period, has been used as the character to narrate the story of the dramatic years when the men of Crayford fought for the vote. Roberts was one of the original Swaisland's children interviewed by Lord Ashley's (Shaftesbury) investigators into child labour. With the exception of 1861, Roberts remained a Swaisland's employee on every census of Crayford between 1841 and 1901 until old age forced him into the Dartford Union Workhouse in August 1904 where, sadly, he died a few months later at the age of 80.

Peter Daniel
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