

An aerial photograph of a London street scene. In the foreground, a large, multi-colored inflatable obstacle course (orange and blue) is set up on the road. A large crowd of people is gathered around it, some standing on the sidewalks and others on the inflatable. Two vintage cars, a dark blue one and a red one, are parked on the street. In the background, there are several buildings, including a tall, modern glass skyscraper and older, multi-story brick buildings. The sky is clear and blue.

TOLMERS

IN COLOUR

MEMORIES OF A LONDON SQUATTER COMMUNITY

Nick Wates

with Mae Dewsbery and Caroline Lwin



Cover photo:

5219 Bouncy cushion in Tolmers Square at a Tolmers Carnival in the mid 1970s

Frontis:

5631 Flyposting in the alley between Tolmers Square and North Gower Street

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Nick Wates Associates
Creative Media Centre
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www.nickwates.co.uk

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Photos by Nick Wates and Caroline Lwin
Design by Mae Dewsbery
www.maedewsbery.com

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It is now an imprint of Nick Wates Associates Limited.

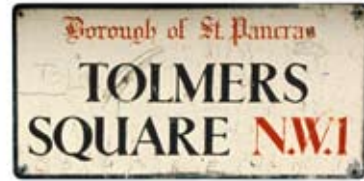
TOLMERS IN COLOUR

MEMORIES OF A LONDON SQUATTER COMMUNITY

Nick Wates
with Mae Dewsbery and Caroline Lwin

 Bay Leaf Books

INTRODUCTION



This book is a memory of Tolmers Square in central London where a group of squatters carried out a novel experiment in community living and resisted, for six years, the destruction of a once-charming London square.

In the early 1970s, London was still feeling the effects of the Blitz with large areas still unreconstructed. As property was relatively cheap, frantic redevelopment was taking place across the capital by keen developers aware of potential huge returns.

Local planning and architecture students were aware of the growing public criticism of 1960s comprehensive redevelopment whereby vast areas of Victorian shops and housing were replaced with soulless estates. They became the first squatters in Tolmers Square – determined to fight the developers and prevent them buying empty and derelict homes in the Square in order to build speculative offices.

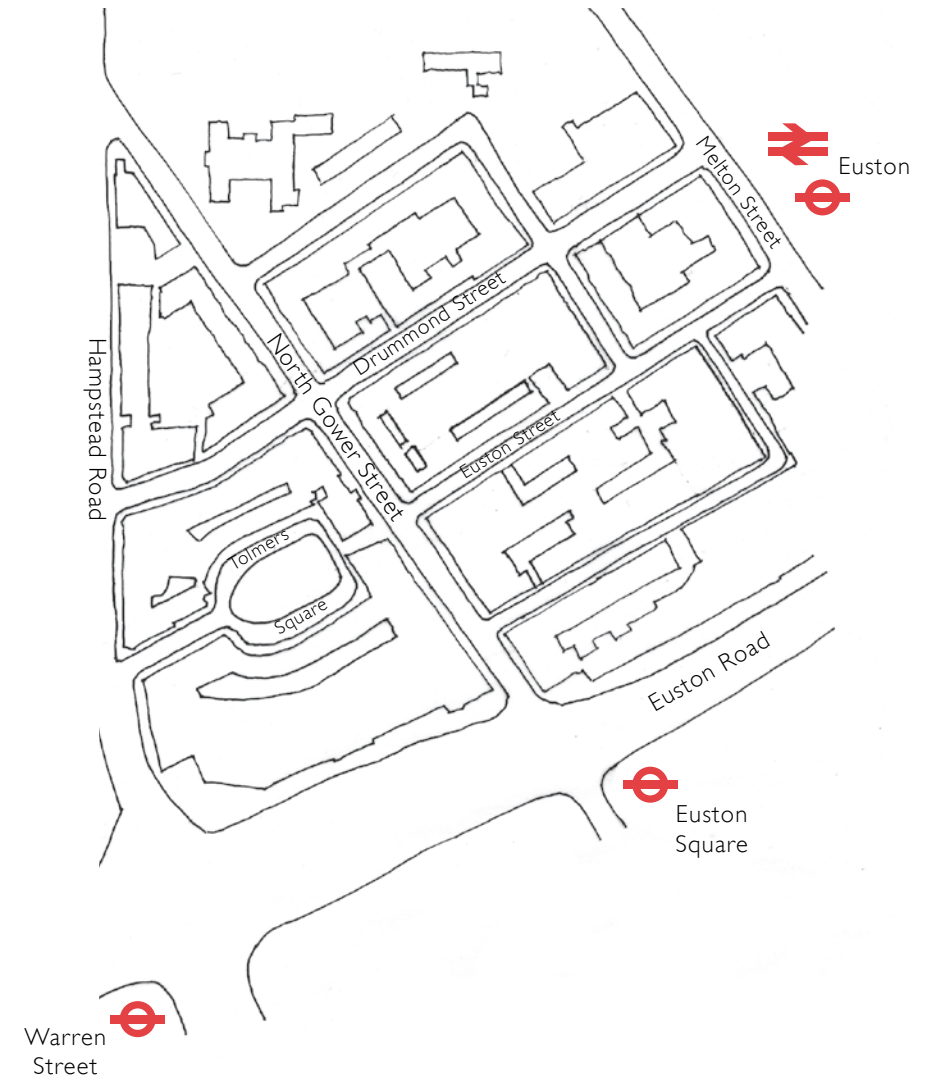
The full story of this development saga can be found in my book, *The Battle for Tolmers Square* (RKP 1976), which I wrote at the time I was squatting in Tolmers Square. *Tolmers in Colour* contains a selection of my archive photos and is published to coincide with an exhibition in Berlin and Dresden called *Goodbye London: Radical Art & Politics in the 1970s* – which also includes images of the Tolmers squatting community.

Most of the photos were taken by me but some were taken by my then partner, Caroline Lwin. Our daughter Mae Dewsbery designed the book and selected the photos from an archive of more than 1,500 35mm slides, catalogued by our son Max Wates. Neither were born at the time but have found the experience a fascinating insight into 1970s radical politics: both the early lives of their parents and a generation of radical Londoners.

KEY DATES

- 1972 Tolmers Square becomes prominent in the press as a property development hotspot
- 1973 Squatters start moving into empty houses
Tolmers Village Association formed
- 1974 First Tolmers carnival
Derelict land in Drummond Street occupied
- 1975 Anti eviction campaign by squatters. High Court action by developer to evict squatters fails
- 1976 Camden Council buys land from developer
- 1977 Temporary landscaping of the centre of Tolmers Square
- 1978 Last Tolmers carnival
- 1979 Eviction of south side of Tolmers Square and all other squats in the area
Eviction of north side of Tolmers Square
- 1982 New Tolmers Square housing scheme formally opened

LOCATION



FURTHER INFORMATION



A Tolmers Gateway page can be viewed at:

www.nickwates.co.uk/tolmers

Links to other web resources, books and free downloads.



5592
HOPE

The centre of Tolmers Square about to be landscaped
by Camden Council, 1977



MURALS AND SLOGANS

- 5389 Garage at the entrance to Tolmers Square, South side
- 5779 South side of Tolmers Square during Carnival
- 5476 Declaration of the Tolmers Garden on derelict land in Drummond Street, 1974
- 5509 Drummond Street site before occupation



- 5383 Mural on a former bank building at the entrance of Tolmers Square, north side. Capital Radio offices were across the road



TOLMERS LIFE

5181, 5852, 5426 Tolmers Square

- 5188 Food stall at Carnival
- 5914 Playing guitar on the balcony, 12 Tolmers Square
- 5483 Tolmers Community Garden, Drummond Street



- Tolmers Carnival:
- 5091 Chamber music, North Gower Street, 1974
 - 5014 Stalls, North Gower Street, 1974
 - 5198 Dancing, Tolmers Square, 1975



- 5005 Punch and Judy show and Fun Art Bus, North Gower Street, 1974
- 5021 Chamber music, Tolmers passage, 1975
- 6368 Tea and sandwiches outside the Tolmers Village Association offices, 102 Drummond Street





BALCONIES

- 5635 View from front door of 12 Tolmers Square
- 5566 Potted plants at 10 Tolmers Square
- 5630 View from outside 13 Tolmers Square

- 5297 Homeless alcoholics ignore a visitor to 3 Tolmers Square
- 5638 View from outside 13 Tolmers Square
- 5684 Self sown wall flowers on 8 Tolmers Square

CAMPAIGN PHOTO

Group photo of Tolmers squatters in Tolmers Square, organised as part of the campaign against eviction, 1975





5754, 5758, 5360
PROTEST
Marching from Tolmers to the High Court in the Strand to challenge a court order for eviction, 1975.
Joseph Levy was the most well known director of Stock Conversion & Investment Trust, the company masterminding the development of Tolmers Square



6374, 6372, 6370

RESISTANCE

Barricades at 102 Drummond Street, a squatted home and office of the Tolmers Village Association, 1979



YOUNG LIFE

- 6218 Kitchen, 12 Tolmers Square
- 5277 6 Tolmers Square
- 5835 2 Tolmers Square
- 6233 Living/bathroom, 19 Tolmers Square, 1975

- 6166 10 Tolmers Square
- 5894 Party at 12 Tolmers Square
- 6134 Living room and kitchen at 10 Tolmers Square



5003

CARNIVAL

Master of ceremonies at the first carnival, North Gower Street, 1974



NEW BEGINNINGS

- 6246 Alternative food store, Alara Wholefoods, in a squat on the south side of Tolmers Square, 1979
- 6296 Workshop in a squat, North Gower Street
- 6284 Bakery in a squat, North Gower Street
- 6299 Jumble sale in the old bank building

STYLE

- 6287 Fireplace in 6 Tolmers Square





5493, 5516, 5485

ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND

Structure built by local young people on squatted land,
Drummond Street, 1974



CARNIVAL
A summer street carnival became an annual event

- 5063 Banner
- 5133 Home made bunting in Tolmers Square
- 5132 Steel band in Tolmers Square

- 5040 Knobby knees competition, Tolmers Square
- 5178 Entrance to a squat, south side of Tolmers Square

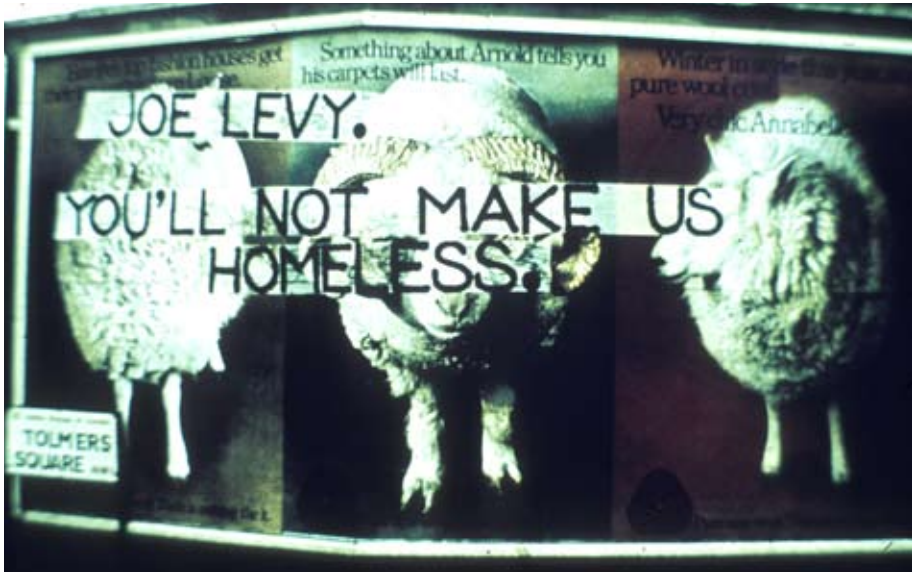


NICE SPACES

- 6169 Sunbathing and working at open French windows on the north side of Tolmers Square, 1978
- 6155 Spacious living/dining rooms at first floor level overlooking the central space, Tolmers Square



- 6231 & 6240 Living space in squat, south side of Tolmers Square, converted for commercial use before squatters moved in, 1975



POLITICAL ART

- 5418 Amending commercial billboard posters:Tolmers Square west entrance, 1975
- 5417 Ditto with a poster for the musical Tommy



- 5724 Tolmers Square east entrance from North Gower Street



STREET THEATRE

5220 Actor in a show about property speculation, Tolmers Square, 1975

5001 Bunting and stalls in North Gower Street, Tolmers Carnival, 1974



6114, 6112, 6111
HOME
Living room at 10 Tolmers Square



REVOLUTION

- 6289 Radical bookshop in a squatted shop in Drummond Street
- 5826 Guardian reader
- 6037 Struggling business in Exmouth Street
- 5787 Tolmers Square graffiti wall



- 5631 Flyposting in the alley between Tolmers Square and North Gower Street



DIVERSITY

- 6090 Asian grocery stores, Drummond Street
- 6035 The Lord Palmerston pub, Hampstead Road and Drummond Street



- 6076 Italian restaurant, North Gower Street
- 6099 Simmonds second hand furniture store, North Gower Street
- 5573 The Tolmer Cinema, centre of Tolmers Square, before its demolition, 1973

MORE SQUARE LIFE

- 5589 Watching from the window of 6 Tolmers Square
- 6336 View from the north side after the eviction of the south side, 1979
- 5860 Window cleaning
- 5686 Self sown wallflowers colonise the decaying balconies



- 6204 A game of football
- 5236 Barbeque
- 6197 Balcony in use at 12 Tolmers Square
- 5376 10, 11 and 12 Tolmers Square before eviction, 1979





5038 & 5013
DECORATING
Before the Tolmers street carnival, 1975



5174
PLAY SPACE
Temporary landscaping in the centre of Tolmers Square by Camden Council



WINTER AND SUMMER
6334 North side of Tomers Square
6195 Ditto. The alarm system for warning against early morning eviction can be seen above the second floor windows of 12 Tolmers Square, 1975





MAKE DO

- 6186 10 Tolmers Square: Milk bottle crate and painted drawer forms bedside table
- 6130 Furniture from jumble sales



- 6119 Kitchen worktop made out of a door resting on a fridge with bread basket hung beneath for vegetables, mirror tiles above and a floorboard shelf, cuphooks everywhere
- 6120 Fire hearth of loose bricks, plenty of old timber for fuel





PEOPLE

- 5865 Young visitor
- 6182 Repairing ground floor window, 12 Tolmers Square
- 5869 Longstanding resident
- 5157 Squatter chatting with Asian restaurant owner



- 5256, 5254, 5260
CELEBRATING
Banquet in squatted building, Drummond Street
- 5233 Street theatre, Tolmers Square



CLEARING UP

- 6239 11 Tolmers Square
- 5518 Tolmers Community Garden, Drummond Street
- 6174 Back yard, 12 Tolmers Square

DESTRUCTION

- 5342 The north side of Tolmers Square is demolished, 1979





5420

CAMPAIGN SLOGAN

Graffiti on a squatted shop in Euston Street, 1975



6071

BOARDED UP SHOPS

Hampstead Road



GREENING

Community garden created on derelict private land in Drummond Street, 1974

- | | | | |
|------|--|------|--|
| 5501 | Management 'instructions' | 5520 | Lawn and flowerbeds on former wasteland in Drummond Street |
| 5790 | Mural and graffiti on the flank wall of 102 Drummond Street | | |
| 5514 | Composting | | |
| 5677 | Making use of the fenced off land in the middle of Tolmers Square prior to its temporary landscaping by Camden Council | | |



COMMUNITY

- 5162 Facepainting
- 5089 Event audience
- 5178 Bouncy cushion

- 5231 Dressing up
- 5023 Coloured streamers
- 5219 Bouncy cushion



6036 & 6027
MOVING OUT
Business on Hampstead Road

6063 & 6357
COMMUNITY ORGANISATION
Tolmers Village Association office at 102 Drummond Street



VISITORS

- 5854 Brass band from Paris visits Tolmers Square early one Sunday morning
- 5170 Street theatre



USING SPACE

- 5026 Steel band on stage in the centre of Tolmers Square
- 5701 Watching a football match on TV during a jumble sale on squatted land in Drummond Street, 1974



5344
ANGRY ART

Painting on a balcony of 6 Tolmers Square



5226
ON THE STREET

After the eviction of the south side of Tolmers Square



6426 & 6435
WAKE
Candle lit 'Wake' held by squatters in the north side of Tolmers Square on the night before their final eviction, 1979



PROMINENCE

- 5433 Slogan in Tolmers Square
- 5354 Massive banner hung by squatters on the back of the south side of Tolmers Square facing the busy Euston Road, 1975



WASTE

- 5333 After the eviction of the north side of Tolmers Square, 1979





6429
WAKE
Candle lit 'Wake' held by squatters in the north side of Tolmers Square on the night before their final eviction, 1979





WHO'S WHO



Nick Wates
2010



Caroline Lwin
2010



Mae Dewsbery
2010

THANKS...

To Keith Gillies, Paul Nicholson and Oliver Wates for helpful comments and suggestions. And to Tim Burnett for scanning the slides.

PEOPLE FEATURED... as far as we can remember.

Left out? Or prefer not to be named? Please email info@nickwates.co.uk specifying relevant four digit photo number. Numbers on each page read clockwise starting top left.

PHOTO NO.	PAGE NO.	PEOPLE FEATURED
5001	39	Rachel Syers
5003	26	Nick Wates
5005	15	Sacha Craddock
5013	48	Christine Rieger
5014	14	Betty and Dorothy Nordon, Nick Wates, Crispin Wright, Pedro George, Rebekah Lwin
5021	15	Dominie Craddock , Joanna Rose Innes, Nick Wates, Patrick Allen
5023	61	Adrienne
5038	48	Rebekah Lwin
5040	33	Ches Chesney, Gavin
5089	60	J. D. Shah
5091	14	Dominie Craddock, ?, Patrick Allen
5133	32	Paul Collett
5157	52	Caroline Lwin, Jayant Patel
5181	10	?, ?, ?, Tim Chadwick, Patsy
5188	11	Chiara, ?, ?, Clive Spenser, ?
5198	14	Phil? , ?, Christine Rieger, Meg Rosoff, Corinne Pearlman
5220	38	Alan Fleming

5231	61	Nick Wates
5254	53	Patrick Allen, Caroline Lwin
5256	53	Martin Spring, Nick Wates, David Taylor
5260	53	?, David Taylor
5333	71	Caroline Lwin
5346	80	Adrienne
5351	18	Standing left to right: Doug Smith, ?, Christine Rieger, Ruth Ingham, Barry Shaw, ?, ?, Annette Tanham, Suzi Nelson, Rob Newman, Frances Holliss, Alan Fleming, ?, ? , Patrick Allen with camera, ?, ?, ?, Udi,, ?. Vera, Colin Ferguson, Paul Collett, ?. Sitting left to right: ?, ?, ?, Jo Ravetz, Doug, Oli, Al,, ?, ?, ?, ? with child, Caroline Lwin, Tim Wilson, ?, ?, ?, ? with two children.
5360	21	Alan Walters, Ches Chesney, Rob Newman, Caroline Lwin, Paul Nicholson, Ruth Ingham
5383	09	Mural by Peter Cross
5418	36	Joe Levy was masterminding the redevelopment of the area
5426	10	Sacha Craddock, Geoff, Rosalind Wates, Paul Nicholson, Colin Ferguson, Corinne Pearlman, ?, ?
5433	70	Adrienne
5589	46	Udi
5677	58	Tim Wilson
5701	65	Shar Reichenstein, Mike Macrae, Phil
5754	20	Rob Newman, Ches Chesney, Alan Walters, Caroline Lwin, Nick Wates
5758	20	Rob Newman, Ruth Ingham, Nick Wates, Paul Nicholson, Alan Walters, Roger Coleman, Nick Wates, Joe Ravetz, Maggie Ray, Debbie Banham carrying Ollie,
5789	12	Mural started by Kate Hepburn
5826	42	?, Robin St Claire, Atalia Avrahami
5835	24	Barry Shaw
5852	10	Inti
5854	64	Guillaume
5860	46	Tammy and Inti
5865	52	Kate Hepburn
5869	52	Mrs Daniels?
5894	25	Jamie Gough
5914	11	Merve Spragg
6099	45	Ralph Simmonds
6120	51	Nick Wates
6130	50	Nick Wates
6166	25	Caroline Lwin
6169	34	Caroline Lwin
6174	54	Nick Wates
6182	52	Jeremy Wates
6186	50	Caroline Lwin
6197	47	Doug Smith, Barry Shaw, Jamie Gough
6204	47	Barry Shaw, Merve Spragg, Nick Wates
6218	24	Nick Wates, Doug Smith, Atalia Avrahami, Barry Shaw
6233	24	Vince Hetreed. (sitting in chair, back to camera)
6239	54	Patrick Allen
6246	28	Chiara and Alex Smith
6296	28	John and Vera?
6357	63	Graphics and poster by Kate Hepburn
6368	15	Rachel Syers, Lynne Farrow, Danielle Pacaud



MOVING ON

5346 Long standing tenants finally leave the Square in front of a slogan reading 'The spirit will live on'



Between 1973 and 1979, a few streets in Central London became the heart of a squatting community fighting to safeguard the area's future while exploring new ways of living. In *Tolmers in Colour*, Nick Wates, one of the leading campaigners, shares some personal and political memories from his photo archive.

‘A brilliant series of photos...’,

Time Out, 18-24 November 2010