

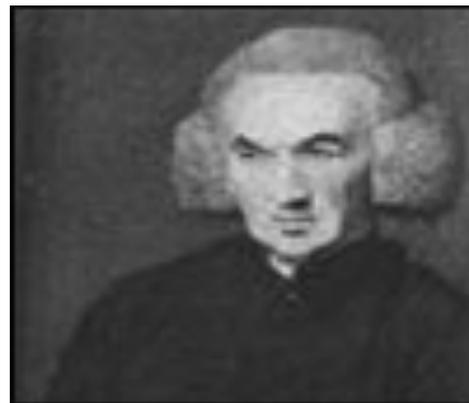
Background

Newington Green was mentioned by name in 1480, as a clearing in the middle of Middlesex Forest. By the seventeenth century it became a base for hunting by the aristocracy, and peopled by bankers and merchants who built several elegant homes. Newington Green is the site of the oldest inhabited terrace of houses in England built in the 1650s and home to Richard Price, the non-conformist chapel minister. During the 1660s Newington Green became a centre of non-conformist activities, culminating in the building of the chapel in 1708 following the Act of Toleration. During the 18th century, the chapel became a focus for influential thinkers: poet, Samuel Rogers (1763-1865) born at 52 Newington Green, Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1743-1825), Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), Daniel Defoe (1660-1730) and Richard Price (1723-1791).

In 1758 Price wrote *Review of the Principal Question of Morals*. He argued the individual conscience and reason should be used when making moral choices. Price rejected the traditional Christian ideas of original sin and eternal punishment. He and his friend Joseph Priestly, became leaders of a group called Rational Dissenters. Following the death of his friend Reverend Thomas Bayes (1702-1761) who in unpublished papers, developed the mathematical formula and reasoning of what is now known as Bayes Theorem of probability, Richard Price published the work as *An Essay Towards Solving a Problem in the Doctrine of Chances*. For this work he was appointed to the Royal Society in 1765. Richard Price made his own contribution to the theory of probability

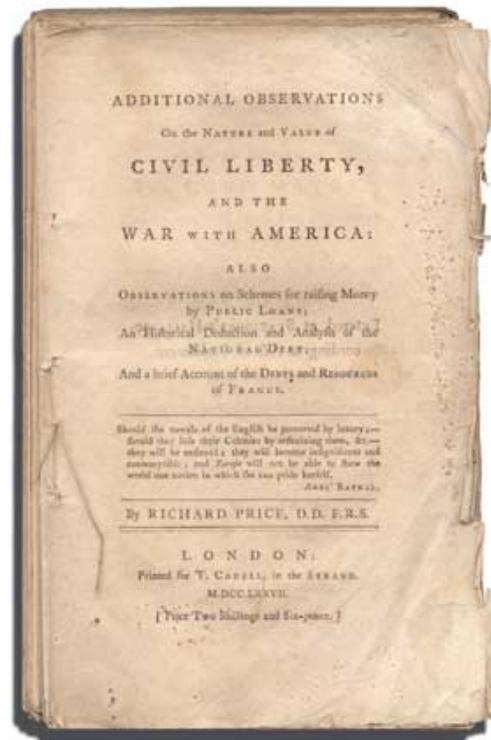


Newington Green circa 1800



Dr Richard Price

and to many other areas, including actuarial science, social insurance and government finance, in publications such as : *Observations on Revisionary Payments* (1771), *An appeal to the Public on the Subject of the National Debt* (1772). He also wrote *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, the Principles of Government and the Justice of War with America* (1776). He was a close friend of Benjamin Franklin, and his biography was included in the first English edition written originally by Franklin: *The Private Life of the Late Benjamin Franklin*. London: J. Parsons, 1793.



Civil Liberty and the War with America

Richard Price lived in 56 Newington Green, in what is said to be the oldest inhabited terrace of houses in London. Built in 1658 they are shown here behind the children's playground on Newington Green.



Mary Wollstonecraft began a school in Newington Green, and then worked as a governess before developing a literary career. In 1787, she became literary advisor to the publisher John Johnson of London. During this time she also wrote children's stories, a novel and some translations, and in 1792 Johnson published her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft's tract, written in simple and direct language, is a declaration of the rights of women to equality of education and civil opportunities, from which "they are unjustly denied a share." This stand provoked a bitter outcry, from which she escaped by going to France to observe the Revolution, and where she remained throughout the Reign of Terror. Later, she met and married the political philosopher, William Godwin, but died soon after giving birth to their daughter, Mary, who later married the poet Shelley and was the author of *Frankenstein*. Newington Green Action Group is already raising monies for a sculpture to acknowledge her impact on thought.

Anna Letitia Aikin, later Barbauld, taught at Newington Green. She was one of the most visible and respected literary figures of the late eighteenth century: poet, essayist, literary critic, and author of stories and verse for children.

Together they formed a group of radical thinkers influenced by and then made up of Warrington Academy philosophers and preachers such as Joseph Priestley (oxygen theory) who came to live nearby in Hackney for three year from 1791-94, thence to America after his continued persecution. Meetings took place in and around the Dissenters' church on

Newington Green built 1709. Mary Wollstonecraft's pew is still in the church.



Mary Wollstonecraft



Newington Green church 1880

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Newington Green church 2014