

HackneyHistory

VOLUME ONE



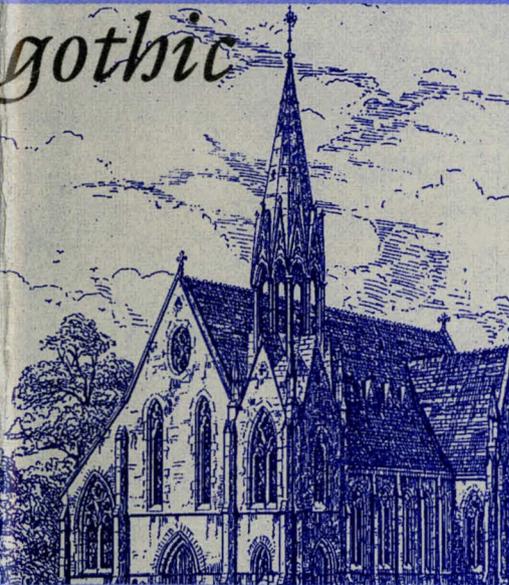
Tyssen



Pepys



people



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HackneyHistory

In this issue - **Pepys and Hackney**: how Samuel and Elisabeth Pepys visited Hackney for rest and recreation - two (or one and the same?) **Homerton gardens** visited by Pepys and Evelyn – **The Tyssen family**, Lords of the manor in Hackney since the 17th century – how **Victorian nonconformists** went shopping for ‘off the peg’ church architecture – **silk manufacturers**, the mentally afflicted, and Victorian orphans at **Hackney Wick** – the post-war development of **high-rise housing** across the borough...

Hackney History is the new annual volume of **the Friends of Hackney Archives**. The Friends were founded in 1985 to act as a focus for local history in Hackney, and to support the work of Hackney Archives Department. As well as the annual volume they receive the Department's regular newsletter, *The Hackney Terrier*, and are invited to participate in visits, walks and an annual lecture. **Hackney History** is issued free of charge to subscribers to the Friends. In 1995 membership is £6 for the calendar year. For further details, please telephone 0171 241 2886.

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HACKNEY *History*

volume one

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About this publication

Hackney History is published by the Friends of Hackney Archives. This is the first in what is intended to be an annual series dedicated to publishing original research into the history of the area comprised in the London borough of Hackney (the former metropolitan boroughs of Hackney, Stoke Newington and Shoreditch).

The Friends of Hackney Archives were formed in 1985 to act as a focus for local history and to support the work of Hackney Borough Council's Archives Department. Membership is open to all.

Members receive the Archives Department's newsletter, *The Hackney Terrier*, three times a year, and *Hackney History* annually. In 1995 the subscription is £6 for the calendar year (£12 for mailing to an overseas address).

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in the Notes -

HAD	Hackney Archives Department
GH MS	Guildhall Library (Manuscripts section)
GLRO	Greater London Record Office
PRO	Public Record Office.

All publications cited are published in London unless otherwise indicated.

PEPYS AND HACKNEY

Richard Lockett

A childhood acquaintance

25th April 1664... the young ladies going out to visit, I took my wife by coach out through the City, discoursing how to spend the afternoon - and conquered, with much ado, a desire of going to a play. But took her out at White-chapel and to Bednell-green; so to Hackny, where I have not been many a year, since a little child I boarded there. Thence to Kingsland by my nurse's house, Goody Lawrence, where my brother Tom and I were kept when young. Then to Newington-green and saw the outside of Mrs Herbert's house where she lived, and my aunt Ellen with her. But Lord, how in every point I find myself to over-value things when a child. Thence to Islington, and so to St John's to the Red bull and there saw the latter part of a rude Prize fight - but with good pleasure enough.

It is a striking thought that if, on the 1st February 1664, Samuel Pepys had not made a vow that he would refrain from going to the theatre more than once a month, he might never have renewed his childhood acquaintance with Hackney, a renewal from which was to blossom an intimate friendship (but that can't be quite the right word, and I'm not sure the English language has one. A neighbourliness?).

But first of all that childhood acquaintance. One of the fascinations and frustrations of the diary is Pepys's rediscovery, from time to time, of an earlier self, a rediscovery that is almost invariably prompted by place: he visits

somewhere - Ashstead in Surrey, Horseferry near Deptford - and suddenly, with him, we see the boy that he knew but whom, however intimately we know the man, we can never know. In this instance we get the merest glimpse. Hackney was one of a group of three roughly contiguous places, along with Kingsland, where he remembered playing 'rovers' with bows and arrows in the fields, and Newington Green, where his aunt Ellen Kite was in service with Mrs Herbert at the big house, to which he had at various times been sent for the sake of his health. As a child this was poor; he suffered from an uncomfortable prickly rash in summer and from distressing symptoms - a swollen nose and suppression of urine - of what would later emerge as a serious kidney stone disorder, in winter. He came from a weakly family of his eleven brothers and sisters only three, besides himself, survived into adulthood. At the age of seven he was the oldest. It was natural for his father, a tailor in Salisbury Court off Fleet Street, to look eastward to Hackney, notable for good soil and good air (there were famous girls' schools there) as a place to board a sickly child.

11th June 1664... after dinner by coach with my wife, only to take the ayre, it being very warm and pleasant, to Bowe and old Ford and thence to Hackny; there light and played at shuffleboard, eat cream and good cherries; and so with good refreshment home.

This paper was given as the annual Sutton House lecture in November 1994.

11th July 1664 [with his boy Will Hewer] .. to see the [Barnet] Wells... and there I drunk three glasses and went and walked, and came back and drunk two more. The woman would have had me drink three more; but I could not, my belly being full - but this wrought very well; and so we rode home by Kingsland, Hackny and Mile end, till we were quite weary - and my water working at least seven or eight time upon the road, which pleased me well. And so home weary...¹

I think you can see, as Pepys returns twice within two and a half months, the old associations of salubrioness at work; you can also detect what I can only describe as the origins, for Pepys, of the Hackney habit. This becomes clearer on 5th April 1665. Pepys has been to Woolwich and Deptford, where he -

Did a very great deal of business. And then home, and there by promise find Creed, and he and my wife, Mercer and I, buy coach to take the ayre; and where we have formerly been, at Hackny, did there eat some pullets we carried with us and some other things of the house; and after a game or two at shuffleboard home... and to sleep - being the first time I have been so much at my ease and taken so much fresh ayre these many weeks or months.

There you have the voice of the Clerk of the Acts to the Navy Board, a month after war had been declared on the Dutch; he had been involved in Herculean labours to get a fleet, on



Samuel Pepys, by John Hayls

which the outcome would depend, to sea. What had originally been almost a whim, a decision to keep his vow about playhouses, perhaps allied to the reflection that the eight shillings he would thereby save (two seats in a box) would give him the five shillings he would spend on coach-hire and something over, has directed him to a discovery, small enough in its way, but one that signified in his pattern of life; which is what we learn from -

11th May 1666. After dinner to the setting some things in order in my dining-room; and by and by comes my wife home, and Mrs Pierce with her, so I lost most of this afternoon with them; and in the evening abroad with them, our long tour by coach to Hackney, so to Kingsland, and then to Islington, there entertaining them by candle-light very well.

'Our long tour'

So now it has become what it remains until the diary closes, 'our long tour', 'our Tour' In that year, 1666, Pepys and Elisabeth and friends, Elisabeth usually taking her maid, went six times. Why? Partly of course because a walk or a drive which one invents and repeats is a marvellous shared possession, unencumbered by the usual problems of possessions, something intimate and private and wholly individual. But there were other things, as we find on the 25th June, when Margaret Penn, daughter of Pepys's colleague Sir William, and 'as ugly as heart could wish' Pepys thought (but it didn't stop him caressing her), in her father's coach -

carried us to two gardens at Hackeny (which I every day grow more and more in love with) - Mr Drakes one, where the garden is good, and house and the prospect admirable - the other, my Lord Brookes's, where the gardens are much better, but the house not so good, nor the prospect good at all - but the gardens are excellent; and here I first saw oranges grow, some green, some half, some a quarter, and some full ripe on the same tree... I pulled off a little one by stealth (the man being mighty curious of them) and eat it; and it was just as other green small oranges are; as big as half the end of my little finger. Here were also great variety of other exoticque plants, and several Labarinths and a pretty Aviary. Having done there with very great pleasure, we away back again, and called at the Taverne in Hackny by the church and there drank and eat¹; and so in the cool of the evening, home - this being the first day of my putting on my black stuff Bombazin suit, and I hope to feel no inconvenience by it, the weather being extremely hot.

So gardens were a feature of Hackney; they were not specifically why Pepys 'loved' the place; indeed, he is apparently going into a Hackney garden for the first time. But they must have been an essential part of the feel of the village even if you never went inside one; and they were a part of its fame.

Other eyes, but eyes well-known to Pepys, had seen and reported on the Brookes' twelve years earlier -

8th May 1654. I went to Hackny to see my Lady Brooks Gardens, which was one of the neatest, & most celebrated in England: The House also well furnish'd, but a despicable building; returning visited one Mr Tombs's Garden, it has large noble Walks, some modern statues; but what was prettiest was the Vine-yard planted in Strawberry-borders, staked at 10 foote distance: Also the Banquetting house of Cedar, where the Couch seates were carv'd a l'antique.²

(A banquet, I should say, in 17th century English, was a collation of fruit and wine. We should call this house a summer-house.)

That was John Evelyn, of whom Pepys at this time was seeing a good deal, since Evelyn was a commissioner for the sick and wounded in the Navy. The friendship they forged was to last all their lives, deepening as they grew older; but they probably never knew about each other's diaries. They unwittingly agreed about the Brookes' House, which stood on the west side of Upper Clapton Road, between Brooke and Kenninghall Roads. It survived, altered, until 1952, when there was still a bit of garden with ancient mulberry trees - a very Restoration taste, because bound up with the attempt to introduce a silk industry, as well as being a favourite colour. What Evelyn noted, and Pepys would never have done - the distance between the vines - reminds us that Evelyn was the author, amongst so many influential books about a civilised existence, of the *Calendarium Hortense*, whilst Pepys remained, in matters pertaining to gardens, irremediably urban. But there were things that Pepys would notice and Evelyn not.

Church and schools

4th April 1667 Maundy Thursday... took up Mrs Anne Jones at her mother's door; and so to take the ayre to Hackny, where good neat's tongue and things to eat and drink, and very merry, the weather being mighty pleasant; and here I was told that at their church they have a fair pair of Organs, which plays while the people sing; which I am mighty

glad of, wishing the like at our church at London, and would give £50 towards it. So, very pleasant and hugging of Mercer in our going home, we home.

Pepys's own church, St Olave's Hart Street, had had its organ destroyed or removed in 1644, and would not get another for a hundred and fifty years, Pepys's intentions notwithstanding. St Augustine's, Hackney, which must also have lost its organ, if it had one, in the Civil War, in 1664 acquired an instrument by 'Dallams and Schmidt'³ 'Schmidt' was presumably 'Father' Smith, a builder who had come to England from the Netherlands at the Restoration, 'Dallams' one of the Dallam family, who during the Civil War had gone to work in Brittany, returning in 1660. If this really was a collaboration, rather than work by the two different makers on the same instrument but at different times, it would be of great historical interest: but we shall never know, because the instrument was removed and replaced early in the 19th century

St Augustine's must have been a rich parish, or have had rich patrons, to acquire an organ so soon after the Restoration. That this was so is confirmed by Pepys on his next visit, two and a half weeks later, and, of course, on



Elisabeth Pepys, from a portrait by Hayls

the 'Lordsday', 21st April 1667, when he also investigated another thing which was more his interest that Evelyn's. Pepys and Elisabeth had dinner with Mercer -

... with design to go to Hackney to church in the afternoon... then took coach to Hackney church, where very full; and found much difficulty to get pews, I offering the sexton money and he could not help me - so my wife and Mercer ventured into a pew, and I into another. A knight and his lady very civil to me when they came, and the like to my wife in hers, being Sir George Viner's; and his lady rich in Jewells, but most in beauty; almost the finest woman that I ever saw That which we went chiefly to see was the young ladies of the schools, whereof there is great store, very pretty; and also the organ, which is handsome and tunes the psalms and plays with the people; which is mighty pretty and makes me mighty earnest to have a pair at our church, I having almost a mind to give them a pair if they would settle a maintenance on them for it - I am mightily taken with them. So church done, we to coach and away to Kingsland and Islington and there eat and drank at the old house [the King's Head].

Young ladies of the schools

It had been such an outing that Pepys, on his return, made a vow of diligence. But it should not be assumed that there was any particular self-indulgence in going to quiz the schoolgirls, even if Pepys, with characteristic thoroughness, went next Sunday by water 'as high as Barne Elmes; and there took one turn alone and then back to Putny church, where I saw the girls of the schools, few of which pretty' In 1693 F. Colsoni, an Italian teacher of English, French and Italian who also kept a chocolate house and had 'two Good Billiard Tables', published, in French, a succinct *Guide de Londres*, addressed to 'noble and worthy travellers' Hackney is commended as one of the 'beaux villages' around; and 'A Hackney', we are told, 'Les bonnes ecoles sont fournies de quantite de pensionnaires, qu'on exerce noblement', and adds encouragingly 'Il n'y a que trois milles de Londres' ⁴ That's all. The schools were the thing to see, the particular attraction of Hackney

In 1661 an Englishman with more serious intentions than Colsoni had been using the wonder of foreign visitors as proof of the importance of Mrs Perwich's school for young ladies at Hackney In seventeen years eight hundred girls passed through. Subjects taught were scripture-reading, cooking, housewifery, dancing and music: in these last two there were sixteen tutors. Mrs Perwich's daughter, Susanna, led a consort chosen from among the

girls, and was such a prodigy that she learned accounting. John Batchiler's summary of Susanna's life, to which we owe our knowledge of her mother's academy, is professedly an exemplary work, but there is no doubt that in its essentials his description is correct.⁵ Another celebrated Hackney establishment was that of Mrs Salmon, whom John Aubrey described as 'a famous schoolmistress, Presbyterian', and it was there that, between 1640 and 1647, Katherine Philips, 'the most applauded Poetess of our Nation', was educated.

The number of such schools for girls around London is often forgotten. Pepys tells us in passing of instances at Hackney and Putney, and there were others at Tottenham, Bow, Clerkenwell (to which Margaret Penn went), and at Chelsea, which in some ways was to the City of Westminster what Hackney was to London: a village conveniently reached by coach, distinguished by large but not grand houses often owned by gentlemen with mercantile connections (Sir George Viner in Hackney church would be a case in point: a baronet from a goldsmith's family) and having large gardens. Here plants could be grown that would not survive on city soil or under the pall, which John Evelyn so detested, of city smoke, close to meadows where good pasturage gave good clean milk, and hence ideal for girls' schools.

We should not dismiss what these schools could accomplish. Josiah Priest's, at Chelsea, put on John Blow's *Venus and Adonis* and what was probably the premiere of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*.⁶ But it was Hackney that was the place *par excellence* for this kind of establishment, where the daughters of country gentlemen and city merchants who desired them to be finished, if not educated, but could not afford domestic tutors or felt them undesirable, could, for something like twenty pounds a year, be boarded and taught. There were plenty of jokes about them, and even a whole play, *Love for Money, or the Boarding School*, Thomas d'Urfey's revenge after he had quarrelled with Priest. In 1669 Pepys's friends and distant relatives, John and Jane Turner, moved from London to Yorkshire, since John, a lawyer, was Recorder of York. Pepys took a characteristic interest in their children, particularly as the Turners were neighbours of his parents in Salisbury Court. The youngest was a girl, Betty -

7th April 1669. This day I do hear that Betty Turner is to be left at school at Hackny; which I am mightily pleased with, for then I shall now and then see

her. She is pretty, and a girl for that, and her relation, which I love.

It is clear that Pepys envisaged that Betty could be taken in as part of the 'Tour', and equally clear that he felt that a Hackney school was a suitable place for a girl whom he liked and to whose parents he was attached.

'Abroad with our coach'

In the meantime the tour itself acquired a new dimension -

7th May 1669. Thence with my wife abroad with our coach, most pleasant weather, and to Hackny and into the marshes, where I never was before, and thence round about to Old ford and Bow.

I should underline the opening of that entry: 'Thence with my wife abroad with our coach' Pepys had acquired a coach, so it is 'our Tour' in 'our coach', with the additional freedom that possession of a private vehicle conferred. Hence the detour of exploration to Hackney Marshes.

It is a common experience for readers of Pepys to return to what they had imagined familiar, and then notice something, find it staring them in the face in fact, that they had never seen before. I had not realised, until I

was asked to give this talk, that Pepys's acquisition of a coach was intimately bound up with his visits to Hackney The first mention of the project occurs on 21st April 1667, the day of the visit to Hackney church. That morning he had got John, a hackney coachman - more about this in a moment - who had previously worked for Sir William Penn and who indeed might have driven Margaret Penn and the Pepyses to Hackney the previous June, to look at a plot of land near Pepys's house at the Navy Office, and advise as to whether it would do for a coach-house, 'for I have had it much in my thoughts lately that it is not too much for me now, in degree or cost, to keep a coach; but contrarily, that I am almost ashamed to be seen in a hackney' (It has been hotly contended whether 'hackney' in the sense of a hired horse or coach has anything to do with Hackney the place. A respectable body of opinion believes that it does - see the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*; and suggests that the place provides the original of the word: but the whole business is as speculative as to argue whether there was some sub-conscious association in Pepys's mind.)

Five days later: 'My mind is mightily of late upon a coach' But Pepys decided to put off the matter until the next year, though determining to act then.



Even so, it was not until 31st July 1668 that he and Elisabeth being 'mightily taken' with a little chariot that they saw in the street, were 'resolved to have ours like it' Then they make the 'Tour' on 3rd August, and on Sunday the 9th, once more: 'after dinner, I took wife and Deb round by Hackny up and down to take the ayre' But still Pepys fails to match thought with deed, and it was not until 20th October that he finally bought one, for £50, which proved not to serve at all. Nevertheless, by the end of November a custom-built vehicle was in the coach-house, even the coachman's livery had arrived, and Pepys's friend Sir William Warren, a contractor for naval supplies 'tells me, as soon as he saw my coach yesterday, he wished that the owner might not contract envy by it' Pepys replied that 'after employments like mine for eight years, it were hard if I could not be justly thought to be able to [keep a coach]' What Warren feared, I regret to say, was that people might think that Pepys's affluence stemmed from contracts in which they were mutually involved. In part, it did.

But that takes us away from Hackney, to which I must now return. I hope that I have shown it to have played an important part in his life: but for him it is purely a place of recreation. He does not seem to have known any residents, and when he heard a story -

which much amused him - about one of the most notable of them, he was unaware of the connection. What he heard was that the Dean of Lichfield, having been publicly excommunicated by his bishop in the course of a service, had carried on taking part in it as though this dire event had not occurred.⁷ The Dean was Thomas Wood, and despite this fracas he was made Bishop in 1670. Wood frequently found himself at variance with life. He courted his wife for thirty years; having at last achieved his goal he threatened to 'lie alone because she puts her arms out of bed, & lets the cold into it' He was a native of Hackney, which he preferred to Lichfield, and at his house in Hackney he spent most of his time sawing logs, since this saved money. When Archbishop Sancroft ordered him, in July 1681, to visit his neglected diocese, he said he would go 'when the weather was somewhat cooler' Consequently the Archbishop suspended him, so Wood was able to reside and saw logs undisturbed in his favourite spot until his death in 1693.

When Pepys himself was old he chose to live for the summer months in a place of big houses and gardens, though they were new houses where those of Hackney were old. This place was Clapham. He did so because Will Hewer, once his 'boy' and companion on the



Brooke House from the south-east: a view of 1750, by Chatelain, which would have been recognisable to Pepys

Hackney 'tour' (the occasion of Barnet Wells and the diuretic waters), now a man of eminence, wealth and taste and Pepys's very close friend, had acquired a house there - the house, in fact, where Pepys died. So I think it is legitimate to wonder, given what we know of his feeling for the place, whether, had Hewer not been established at Clapham, Pepys might, as a place for retirement, have chosen Hackney?

But I want to conclude with the diary for the way it closes. On 31st May 1669 Pepys wrote the very affecting final entry, which begins -

And thus ends all that I doubt I shall ever be able to do with my own eyes in the keeping of my journall, I being not able to do it any longer, having done now so long as to undo my eyes almost every time that I take a pen in my hand...

The recent weeks have been dark not only in the obvious sense, but because of Elisabeth's discovery of Pepys's *amours* (his word) with Deb Willet, her fury and misery, his guilt, and also his sense of loss. But just eight days before his record ends we have this entry:

23rd May, Lords Day ... In the afternoon, carried [Roger Pepys and his son] to Westminster and myself to St James; where not finding the Duke of York, back home and with my wife spent the evening taking the ayre about Hackny with great pleasure, and places we had never seen before.

Notes

All quotations from Pepys are from Robert Latham and William Matthews (ed.) *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, XI vols, 1970-83.

1. I take this tavern to be the (Old) Mermaid.
2. E. S. de Beer (ed.) *The Diary of John Evelyn*, VI vols., London 1955, III, 96.
3. J. H. Sperling MSS, Royal College of Organists, II, 18.
4. W. H. Godfrey (ed.) *Le Guide de Londres (1693)* by F Colsoni, Cambridge 1951, 19.
5. John Batchiler, *The Virgin's Pattern*, London 1661, 1-2.
6. R. Lockett, 'A New Source for Venus and Adonis', *The Musical Times*, February 1980, 76-9.
7. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, IX, 45. Thomas Wood was the benefactor of Bishop Wood's almshouses at Clapton Pond.

THE MYSTERY OF TWO HACKNEY GARDENS

Mike Gray

Mr Tombes's garden

In the year of the Great Fire of London, 1666, Samuel Pepys visited two gardens in Hackney. Richard Lockett, in this journal, has shown that Hackney featured prominently in Pepys's life during the decade recorded in his diary. He visited the Church, where he admired the organ and the schoolgirls. He ate neat's tongue and played shuffleboard in the Old Mermaid inn, and even went to view the Hackney marshes in his new carriage. But it is his description of the Hackney gardens where, for instance, he surreptitiously plucked and ate a little unripe orange, that perhaps best evokes the Hackney of the 17th century.

Two gardens are mentioned, Lady Brooke's and 'Drakes'. There is no doubt about the location of Lady Brooke's garden. Brooke House, dating back to the 15th century, survived until 1954 when, sadly, it was demolished, to make way for a school. Hackney Community College stands on the site today, near the Lea Bridge Road roundabout in Clapton. Where, however, was 'Drakes' garden? The purpose of this article is to review what evidence is available to establish the whereabouts of this other Hackney garden.

In May 1655, eleven years before Pepys's visit to the pleasant Hackney gardens, John Evelyn, Pepys's good friend, also visited -

my Lady Brookes garden, which was one of the neatest & most celebrated in England; [and on] returning visited one Mr Tombs garden, it has

large & noble walks, some modern statues, but what was pretiest was the vineyard planted in Strawberry-borders, staked at 10 foote distance: also the Banqueting house of Cedar, where the Couch & seates were carv'd a l'antique: Some good Pictures in the House, especially one of Van dykes being a Man in his Shirt, also some of Steenewich.¹

Is it possible that the two gardens are the same, and that Drake took over Tombes's house and garden some time after May 1655?

The editor of Evelyn's diary, E. S. de Beer, suggests that the Tombes mentioned was in fact a William Tombes of Hackney, referred to in Robinson's *History*², although it must be said that Evelyn does not specifically say that Tombes's garden was in Hackney. However, other documents clearly establish that a William Tombes lived in the parish, indeed in Homerton, at the time of Evelyn's visit. It does seem reasonable to assume that the location of the house and garden was Homerton, the hamlet to the east of Hackney churchyard, stretching out to Hackney marshes, along what was then called Humberton or Homberton Street.

What do we know about Mr William Tombes?

Perhaps the name that he was born with encouraged in him a certain morbid disposition: whether or not, it is very clear from the *State Papers*³ that Tombes was a *felo de se* - in other words, he committed suicide. In the 17th century, when life seemed so perilous anyway, what with revolution and plague, suicide seems a pretty desperate measure. What drove him to

make 'himself away', in July 1655, just a month or so after Evelyn's visit to his house?⁴

The implications of Evelyn's diary are that Tombes was a wealthy and educated man with a good collection of paintings, a well-laid out garden and a banqueting house (in those days, the equivalent of a summer house) where guests would gather to eat sweetmeats after dinner. We also know from a document in the Hackney Archives⁵ that he was from 1649 to 1654 the owner of the ancient Temple Mills on Hackney marshes. In 1649 a John Trafford

did demise grant bargaine and sell unto William Toomes of London Esq... all those two watermills called Rockholt Mills ['Temple Mills' is added over in the original] being under one rooffe in the parishes of Leyton and Hackney upon a river called the Sheare.

It is possible, therefore, that the garden was out at what is now called Temple Mills Lane, where the M11 link road, against much opposition, is being built today. However, a manuscript in the Guildhall Library⁶ describes the sale, in 1644, of a lease by Sir John Rulls to a Mr Peter Calfe of

all that capitall message or tenement of brick with th'appertences sytuat and being in Homberton Streete in Hackney...now in the occupation of William Tombs or his assignees and of all tenements and buildings thereunto belonging...

It does seem very likely that this was the house with the garden that so impressed Evelyn.

Robinson's material suggests that the house was on the north side of Homerton High Street, where part of a farm called Scotland Farm abutted "on the south Mr Toorns [sic: clearly an error of transcription] dwelling house and brick wall and upon the lands of the said Mr Toorns west and north."⁷ Toombes's house was a little to the west of a lane from Homerton Street to Millfield Lane (presumably what is now called Brooksby's Walk). Rocque's map, drawn, admittedly, about 90 years later, shows, in the appropriate area, a substantial garden that indeed appears to have 'large and noble walks'.

Pindar's legacy

William Tombes's name appears frequently in the State Papers between the time of his death in 1655 up till 1672, when his estate was granted to Lord Buckhurst. The reason for this was that his property was confiscated by

the Crown after his suicide, and many people petitioned the King for what they felt was due to them. A good example of this is to be found in a 19th century copy of a Public Record Office document in the Tyssen collection:

The humble petition of Elizabeth Dowager Countesse of Arrundell and Surrey... William Tombes of Hackney in the County of Midd. Esq. dyed deodant and felon whereby his whole estate became confiscate to your M'yte [Majesty] and a part thereof doth still remaine in the hands of diverse persons unaccompted for... Shee most humbly prayeth your Ma'tie will be graciously pleased to grant unto her the remayning part of the Estate of the said W Tombes... whereby shee might relieve herselfe of those incumbrances that the malignity of these times has brought upon her.⁸

Other references in the State papers⁹ link Tombes with a certain Sir Paul Pindar. It is Pindar's entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* which succinctly explains the circumstances of Tombes's drastic action.

Sir Paul Pindar was a wealthy city merchant and diplomat with a magnificent timber-framed house in Bishopsgate. Among other generous acts he gave £10,000 to repair the old St Paul's Cathedral. Pindar died in August 1650 leaving legacies of £9,500 to various London hospitals and prisons. Despite the fact that his assets amounted to £236,000 in 1639, it was found at his death that he had little left, having, as it turned out, unwisely lent, before the civil war, large sums of money to King Charles I. His cashier and executor was Hackney's William Tombes, who for five years tried vainly to recover the estate, but eventually committed suicide having paid off none of the debts or legacies. This circumstance left William's cousin and heir, Richard Tombes, in an unenviable position., "being heir and sued at law for great sums."¹⁰ 13 years later he published a pamphlet to explain the "true State of the case between R. Toomes, administrator of W Toomes (executor of Sir P Pindar) and R. Etherington." Reverberations of the affair continued for at least twenty years after William Tombes's death. Another publication, of 1675, to be found in the British Library, is entitled "To the Knights, Citizens and Burgesses in Parliament... The humble petition of G. Carew, administrator of the goods ... of Sir P Pyndar unadministred by W. Toomes."¹¹

Returning now to the question of Drake's garden, we encounter a much greater problem of identification.

Drake or Drax?

We are told by *Burke's Landed Gentry* (1952) that a Sir James Drax was living in Hackney in 1697. He was the son of Sir James Drax of Barbados, who had won fame by improving the quality of Barbados sugars. The name Drax, in the uncertain spelling of the day, might well signify the man Pepys called Drake(s).

There was also a Roger Drake who had Hackney connections. He was described as a "Doctor of Phisicke" who had studied at Leyden University. A doctor of physic, of course, might well have had a garden, at a time when herbal remedies predominated. However, in 1646 he gave up medicine to enter the ministry. He was a rigid presbyterian, and was arrested in 1651, accused of involvement in what was called 'Love's Plot' against the Commonwealth. He married his cousin Susanna, who came from Dalston, and died there in 1679. Roger himself had died ten years earlier, but would still have been alive at the time of Pepys's visit to Hackney in 1666. It is said, however, that towards the close of his life he lived in Stepney.¹²

Only one other clue to the whereabouts of the Drake garden has so far been found. That is in the record of hearth-tax payments made in Hackney in 1674.¹³ Here at the end of the list of tax payers in Greater Homerton is the following sequence:

John Leigh	2 hearths
- Drake	9
Widow Cox	1
Widow Cavill	4
John Roades	2
— Wheeler	2
Henry Chitty	13
Sarah Freeman	24
William Jameson	9
Symon Middleton	14
Mr Dawson	8
Richard Deane	5

We know from research into the history of Sutton House that Mrs Freeman (who kept a school in the House) and Middleton lived near each other at the corner of what is now Urswick Road and Homerton High Street, and on the south side.¹⁴ The usual practice of tax collectors of the period was to list the occupiers in sequence along one side and then back again along the other side. If that is the case here, then Drake's house with its nine fireplaces is likely to have been somewhere in the region of Bridge Street (now Ponsford Street) on the south side of Homerton High Street; possibly the house with the garden, shown on Rocque's

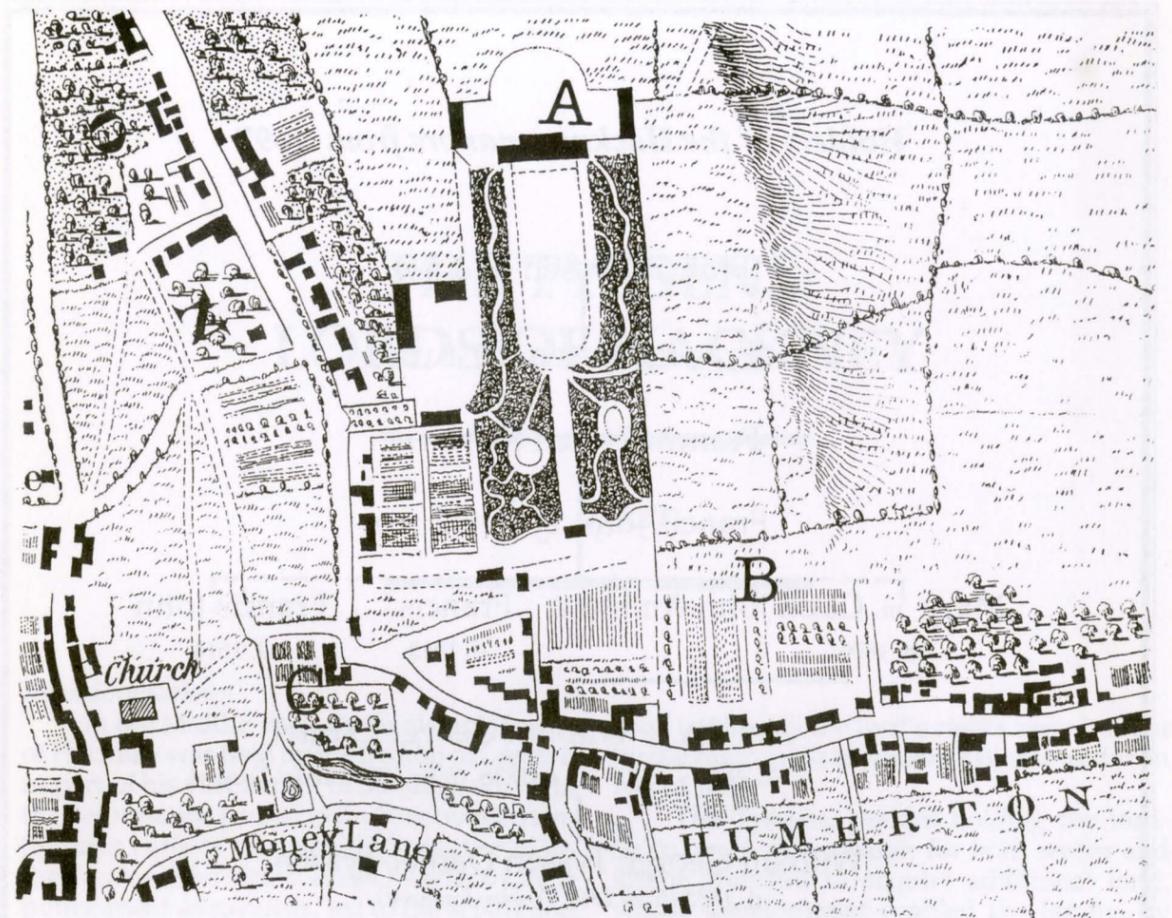
later map, just to the east of Bridge Street. However, the fact that the hearth tax collector entered only Drake's surname suggests that there was some doubt about his or her Christian name, or title. This in turn suggests that he/she was a new occupier, and therefore unlikely to have been there in 1666 at the time of Pepys's visit.

It is however possible that there is some other reason for the omission of Drake's title, and that the tax-collectors zig-zagged across the road between groups of houses in 1674. It certainly seems an extraordinary coincidence that the name Drake should appear in Homerton, apparently close to Tombes's garden, just eight years after Pepys's visit to "Drakes garden" in Hackney. Perhaps after all the gardens were the same, and either Sir James Drax or Dr Roger Drake had taken over Tombes's house and garden.

In the end, however, it must be admitted that the verdict is 'not (yet) proven'. Let's hope that further research will elucidate the matter!

Postscript

Subsequent research has found a 'Mr Drake' in a hearth tax record for 1671.¹⁵ Here the order of names varies from the 1674 record, suggesting a rather random method of collecting. These two facts tend to support the notion that the garden visited by Pepys and known as Drakes was indeed in Homerton, and could have been the garden earlier in the possession of William Tombes.



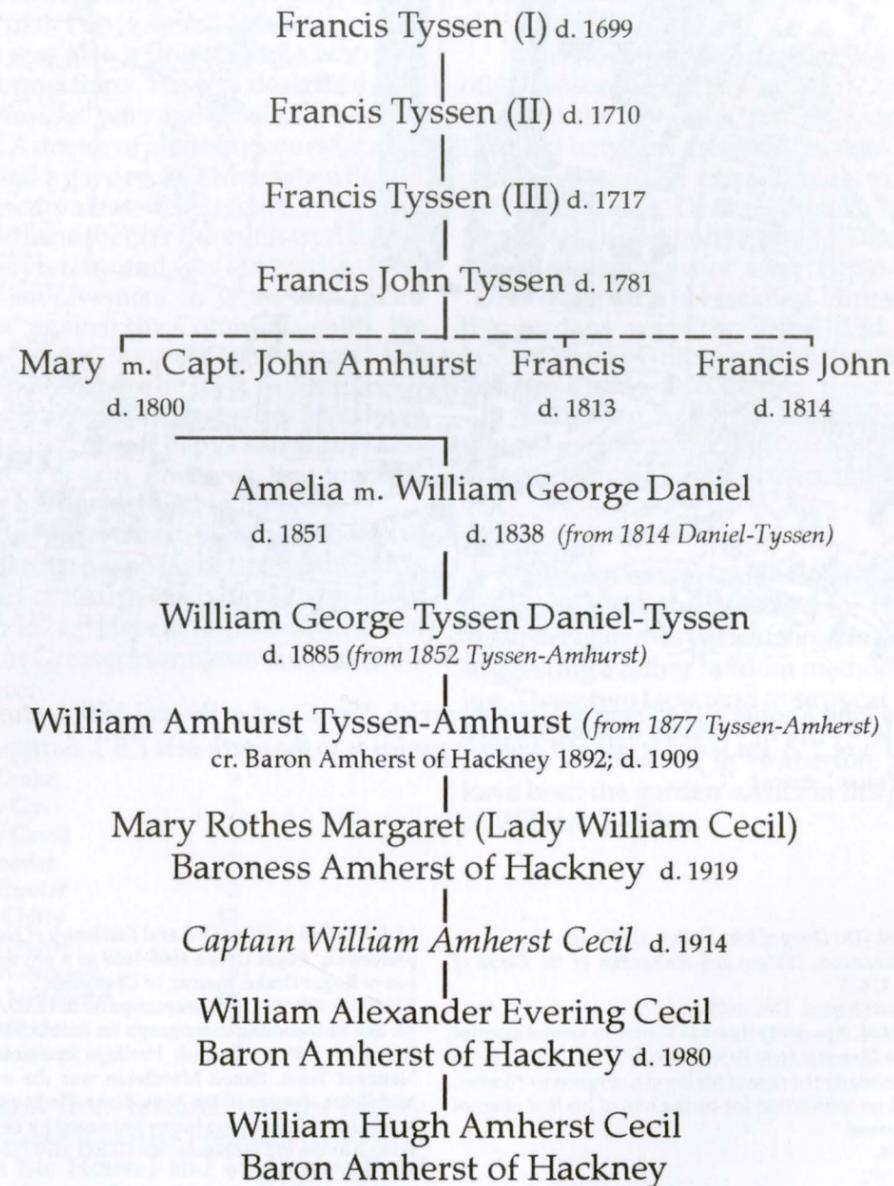
Detail from John Rocque's 1745 map of Hackney parish. Prominent is the mid-18th century garden of Hackney House ('A'); a possible site of Tombes's garden is to the south-east ('B'). Sutton House and the 'Tan House' are at 'C'.

Notes

1. de Beers, (ed.) *The Diary of John Evelyn* (1955) III, 96.
2. William Robinson, *History and Antiquities of the Parish of Hackney*, I, 414, 433.
3. *Domestic State Papers*, Dec. 1672.
4. *ib.* Jan 22, 1656. Apparently this was Tombes's second attempt at suicide: see *Domestic State Papers* 1656-58, Feb. 25 no. 16, "to consider particularly the case of Mr Boone, surgeon to Toomes, who received no satisfaction for curing him of his first attempt to destroy himself."
5. HAD M.796.
6. GH MS 20,572.
7. Robinson, *op. cit.*, I, 414. Tombes is also mentioned as owner of this estate in HAD M. 1279 and 3675 (1696).
8. HAD D/F/TYS/15.
9. e.g. *Domestic State papers*, June 30, 1653 (Tombes's petition as Pindar's executor).
10. *Domestic State papers* Jan. 27, 1657. One claimant on Tombes's estate, a Mr Peter Speght, claimed that Tombes had deprived him of an estate valued at £2,000, left him by Pindar "by accusing him to Cromwell as being of the King's Party": *ib.*, addendum, 1660-1670, 729.
11. British Library Catalogue. Sir Paul Pindar's house in Bishopsgate (near the present pub 'The Sir Paul Pindar') was demolished to make way for Liverpool Street Station, and the front elevation re-erected in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

12. GLRO BRA 329/1/1-8 and *Dictionary of National Biography* (describing Roger Drake 1608-1669 as a physician and divine, son of Roger Drake, mercer, of Cheapside.)
13. PRO E 179/143/370 (transcription in HAD, D/F/TYS).
14. See forthcoming monograph on Sutton House, to be published in 1996 by English Heritage in association with the National Trust. Simon Middleton was the son of Sir Hugh Middleton, creator of the New River. He lived near Mrs Freeman's school in a house formerly owned by Sir Thomas Sutton known as the old tanhouse. See GLRO M79/LH/46, 1680, 1681.
15. GLRO X1/152.

HOLDERS OF THE HACKNEY MANORS FROM 1697



During the lifetime of Francis John Tyssen's illegitimate children, between 1781 and 1814, manorial courts were held in the name of the Revd. Peter de Beauvoir.

THE TYSENS: LORDS OF HACKNEY

Tim Baker

Founding fathers

In the Middle Ages the lordship of most of Hackney was held by the Bishop of London as part of his vast manor of Stepney, which at the Reformation passed to the Wentworth family, later earls of Cleveland.¹ From the 1630s the Wentworths' debts, made heavier by their punishment as royalists, led to the separation of Hackney (which had long had its own courts) and the dispersal of their property. After decades of litigation some of the lands, with jurisdictions apparently covering the whole of Hackney, passed to a few wealthy Londoners, who in 1697 completed their transfer to a single family. The jurisdictions were the main manor, soon to be called Lordshold, with which went the right to present to the rectory, which had its own manor called the Rectory or Grumbolds, and the smaller medieval manor of Kingshold. The purchaser, on behalf of his son and namesake, was the 73-year old Francis Tyssen.

The lord of the manor's authority was by then giving way to that of the parish vestry. Manorial courts, however, continued to meet for transactions of copyhold property (giving historians an invaluable means of tracing ownership before enfranchisement), frequently until the mid 19th century and thereafter more erratically until the 1920s.² Fines for enfranchisements themselves proved lucrative, as building spread; between 1836 and 1877 they yielded over £23,000, of which over £7,000 was paid by railway companies in 1872-3.³ Manorial agents, moreover, could still provoke riots by excavating and inclosing com-

mon land, until the lord's rights were bought by the Metropolitan Board of Works under an Act of 1881.⁴

The Tyssens, besides holding the lordships, were rich enough for both senior and junior branches to acquire additional land, whose development enabled the family, by then the Tyssen-Amhursts, to leave a lasting mark on Hackney. It is not intended here to trace the accumulation and disposal of their property, a task which has yet to be attempted in detail. Theirs was Hackney's largest estate c. 1830, mainly in the north-western part of the parish, around Hackney Downs and Shacklewell Lane, along Kingsland High Street and its continuations to Stamford Hill, and also across much of Upper Clapton to the Lea. It would take long to identify all the places of worship, schools, public houses, halls, and shopping parades which owe their location to agreements with the Tyssens, or even to identify all the avenues which are named after their East Anglian estates or the Amhursts' Kentish connections. The present concern is the descent of the Hackney manors and the checkered history of the holders, a story complicated by their changes of name.

Francis Tyssen (I) was a naturalised merchant from Flushing in Zeeland, one of the United Provinces, who had married at London's Dutch church at Austin Friars in 1649.⁵ His will of 1690,⁶ nine years before his death, made bequests to that church, of which he was an elder, and to a church and several relatives in Flushing. When granted

arms in 1687 he had paid a fine to be excused from office as sheriff or lord mayor of London.⁷ His fortune is unexplained, but may have had American origins, in that he advanced money for French protestant emigrants to Carolina in 1679⁸ and was later described as an agent for the Carolina proprietors; he left land in Antigua to his surviving son,⁹ together with property in London, where his house was in Philpot Lane, and in Middlesex and other counties. There was capital to risk: in 1691 he was associated with a proposed Company of the Royal Corporation, to set the poor to work, and over the next three years with companies to mine copper, recover wrecks, and facilitate bills of exchange.¹⁰

Tyssen first appeared in Hackney in 1685 as purchaser of the Shacklewell estate of the Rowes, a distinguished London family which had so declined that some twenty years later one of its last representatives was to seek relief as a pauper. Could the newcomer have known of a tenuous link with Hackney in that his mother Appolonia had been the daughter of Baldwin Ridley of Flushing, a nephew of Nicholas Ridley, the last bishop to hold the manor? Probably it was his son who went on to become a vestryman, and, in 1690, to take over the Rowes' pew in church. Apparently he lived, like his successor, at the Rowes' old seat on the north-west side of Shacklewell green, which thereby came to be known as the Manor House. It already had, or was soon given, a pair of Dutch gables.

Francis (I) was buried at Austin Friars. Francis (II), also an elder, was buried in 1710 at Hackney, having left all his property there to his eldest surviving son Francis (III). This youngest Francis married Rachel, daughter of Richard de Beauvoir of the neighbouring estate of Balmes, beginning a long association between their two families. Baby sons, both named Francis, were buried in 1715 and 1716. Their father, having languished from 'irregular drinking', was only 27 when he died on 7th November 1717.¹¹ The corpse was carried from Shacklewell to lie in state at the Goldsmiths' Hall in London,¹² before proceeding through crowded streets, as if the centrepiece of a lord mayor's procession, for burial next to his father. Such ostentatious mourning, at a cost of at least £2,000, was criticised as unfitting for a commoner. The Tyssens' motto translated as 'Our virtue flourished after death'¹³ On 14th November a posthumous son, Francis John, was born.

The infant inheritor of the Hackney manors never married, although he left children by

four mothers. He made his will in 1781 as of Shacklewell, but was probably the last lord to live in Hackney, the Manor House being partly demolished in the 1740s. Special provision was made for his later mistress Elizabeth Preston of Gloucester Street, Bloomsbury, and for Eleanor Deane of Newington 'now living with me'. The Hackney manors were left in trust to the Revd. Peter de Beauvoir and others for the testator's eldest son Francis Tyssen, whose mother Mary Dickenson had died in 1756. If Francis should marry without the trustees' consent or, no better than his father, leave only children born out of wedlock, the manors were to pass on similar terms to Elizabeth Preston's son Francis John Tyssen, with remainder to Francis's sister Mary, wife of Captain John Amhurst of East Farleigh, Kent.¹⁴ Francis died unmarried in 1813 and his half-brother Francis John, leaving an illegitimate son, in 1814. Mary Amhurst having predeceased them, the manors passed to her daughter Amelia, wife of William George Daniel of Westbrook House (Upwey, Dorset), who immediately took the surname Daniel-Tyssen.

Tyssens and Amhersts

W G. Daniel-Tyssen was succeeded in 1838 by his eldest son William George Tyssen Daniel-Tyssen, who in 1852 took the surname Tyssen-Amhurst. Presumably he did so to stress a remote kinship with the Kent Amhersts who in 1776 had acquired a barony and in 1826 an earldom.¹⁵ His son William Amhurst Tyssen-Amhurst took a step further in 1877 by changing the spelling to Tyssen-Amherst. He succeeded his father in 1885, and was created Baron Amherst of Hackney, with special remainder to Mary Rothes Margaret, the eldest of his seven daughters and wife of Lord William Cecil, in 1892.

The creation was recommended by the outgoing prime minister Lord Salisbury, whom Tyssen-Amherst had supported as a Conservative M.P. It earned a vindictive footnote in the *Complete Peerage*: Lord Amherst of Hackney was reported to be very rich and had long voted for his party without making any mark, his claim to the exceptional favour of a special remainder was impossible to determine, and, not being an Amherst by male descent, he ought not to have been allowed to choose a name already enjoyed by a family which had rendered really eminent public service; he could 'perfectly well have taken the simple title of 'Hackney', where much of his property was situated'¹⁶

While the spread of building had multi-

plied the Tyssen-Amhersts' wealth, the commentator must have guessed that the new peer would hardly wish to be known solely in connection with an increasingly working-class suburb. Francis Tyssen (I) had acquired land at Foulden in western Norfolk, south-east of Downham Market. W G. T Daniel-Tyssen lived mainly at Foulden Hall; he married Mary Fountaine of Narford Hall, near Swaffham, the birthplace of his son, whose own seat was still closer at the newly purchased Didlington Hall.¹⁷ Narborough Hall, near Swaffham, was the seat of Samuel Tyssen (d.1800), another son of Francis John by Elizabeth Preston, and Northwold Lodge near Foulden was also a family home. It was in Norfolk, where he owned over 10,000 acres¹⁸ and employed over 300 labourers, that the first Lord Amherst of Hackney was most prominent. Possibly the peerage owed something to royal favour, since there were social advantages in being close to Sandringham: Didlington Hall contained a suite fitted up for the Prince of Wales. A description of Lord Amherst as a benevolent landowner and pillar of local Conservatism makes no mention of any income derived from Hackney.¹⁹

Cadets of the family retained links with Hackney until the mid-19th century. All three brothers of Francis Tyssen (III), John Tyssen of Shacklewell,²⁰ William, and Samuel, while inheriting property elsewhere, were buried in the parish, as were some of Samuel's descendants even after the rebuilding of the church in the 1790s. Samuel's daughter Sarah having married Richard Boddicott of Homerton, their daughter Sarah married Samuel Tyssen of Narborough Hall, whose son Samuel additionally held a large estate near Clapton common probably until his death in 1845. John Robert Daniel-Tyssen, an attorney and Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London²¹ acted as manorial steward for his elder brother W G. T Daniel-Tyssen from 1829 until 1852. The early 19th-century Manor House in Church Street (now no. 387 Mare Street) was so called as John Robert's residence from 1845 until his move to Brighton in 1858. It was his executor's gift to the parish of manorial records, known for years as the Tyssen Library, which formed the basis of Hackney's local history collection.

John Robert was almost the last representative of any substantial landowning family to have a close personal knowledge of Hackney.²² It remained a source of profit for ground landlords, who stipulated the type of housing to be put up, and the needs of its growing population might still constitute a claim, which

they could meet as patrons of worthy causes or as donors of sites for institutions. It was no longer, however, a suitable place of residence for people of the Tyssen-Amhersts' standing. Some landed families, including the Benyons (the de Beauvoirs' successors), the Middletons in southern Dalston, and the Glyns of Homerton, never lived locally, while by the mid 19th century the Grahams' heirs had left Dalston and the Norrises of South Hackney and the Powells of Clapton were moving away

The connoisseur and his steward

Such detachment, if inevitable, was the Tyssen-Amhersts' undoing. The family had already produced a noted collector in Samuel Tyssen (d. 1800), whose books, prints and coins had been sold over several days in 1802.²³ The first Lord Amherst, in addition to performing his conventional role, was a connoisseur, most notably a bibliophile, whose estimated income of £100,000 a year in 1892²⁴ allowed him to stock a purpose-built museum of Egyptian and other antiquities²⁵ and a magnificent library at Didlington. 'The Amherst Papyri', both Egyptian and Greek, were the subject of publications, as, when they came to be sold, were 'The Amherst [Babylonian] Tablets', a



The first Lord Amherst

sumptuous library catalogue was planned in 1905, only to be turned into a sales handlist.²⁶ Lack of time nonetheless forced Lord Amherst to decline the honour of serving on the council of the Society of Antiquaries.²⁷ He had his country estate, his residence in Mayfair, his yacht 'The Dream', and eventually a new villa near St. Raphael in the south of France.²⁸

Management of affairs at Hackney was left to Chester Cheston, a City solicitor who in 1845 had a house in Clapton Square and who succeeded John Robert as manorial steward. His son Ernest Constantine became steward in 1885, and another son, Charles, also a solicitor, later acted as deputy steward and receiver for the manors. Charles Cheston, although latterly living in style in Knightsbridge, bought or obtained leases of many new houses at Stamford Hill and Upper Clapton, as did two other brothers, Chester and Horace.²⁹

The early 19th century had furnished one instance of a lawyer acting as steward who, with his son, had tried to take advantage of an absentee landowner. The loser then would have been the Revd. Peter de Beauvoir's heir, who with difficulty had thwarted plans to develop the Balmes estate after the old man had granted a lease on the advice of the steward Thomas Tebbutt, who was also acting for the speculators.³⁰ Charles Cheston's behaviour proved far more damaging.



John Robert Daniel Tyssen

J. R. D. Tyssen, manor steward and Hackney's benefactor

On Cheston's death in 1906 he was found to have misappropriated funds costing Lord Amherst £1/4 million, besides further sums for which his indulgent client was liable as a trustee. Lord Amherst, who already had mortgaged much property in order to meet family settlements, was forced to disperse his treasures, including what may have been the country's finest private collection of manuscripts and early printed books. He died in London in 1909, his end probably hastened by the sales which he had recently attended at Sothebys and those which were proceeding at Didlington. There was widespread disappointment that seventeen works by Caxton, eleven of them perfect, had been bought beforehand by J. Pierpont Morgan and so, through the defalcations of a Hackney agent, found their way to the financier's library in New York.³¹

The Hackney manors passed with Lord Amherst's peerage to his eldest daughter.³² In 1908 the Court of Appeal had upheld a limitation of his liability against claims by his mother's family, the Fountaines.³³ Having sold both Didlington and Foulden,³⁴ the Tyssen-Amhersts retained some property in Hackney, chiefly at Stamford Hill, Upper Clapton and Shacklewell, which was presented in 1920 as having been settled by Lady William Cecil on her son and his male heirs.³⁵ Manorial courts, which since the 1880s had dwindled to meetings in lawyers' chambers, petered out with compensation agreements between the lord and former copyholders after the extinguishment of his rights by the Law of Property Act 1922. Agents for the estate, alarmed at social changes and falling values, continued to treat with the local authorities before and after the Second World War,³⁶ although almost all the sites had been sold by 1990.

Lady Amherst, whose eldest son had been killed in 1914, was succeeded in 1919 by her grandson William Alexander Evering Cecil as third Baron Amherst of Hackney. His son William Hugh Amherst Cecil, who succeeded in 1980, is the present lord of the Hackney manors, by virtue of which he is also patron of the parish church of St John, and of the daughter rectories of South and West Hackney.

Notes

1. This article expands part of the sections on 'Manors, and Local Government' in the *Victoria County History of Middlesex*, X (1995). References are given only for material not used in that account or not in W. Robinson, *History and Antiquities of the Parish of Hackney*, (1842) i. 322-3.
2. Records of all three manors in GLRO M79/LH, M79/KH, and M79/G.
3. GLRO M79/LH/42.
4. *VCH Middlesex*, X, section on 'Public Services'
5. Records of the family in Zeeland, beginning with a copy of the will of William Thys in 1611, are in HADD/F/AMH/1-5. For the career of Francis Tyssen, see Rosemary Weinstein, *The Strangers' Progress* (Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of Great Britain and Ireland, (1995) XXVI no. 2), 257
6. *Miscellanea Genealogica et Heraldica*, NS, iii. 392-3.
7. *ib.* 379-80.
8. *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial, America & West Indies, 1677-80*, 428. He claimed money from the ex-buccaneer Sir Henry Morgan in 1681. *ib.* 1681-5, 29.
9. Francis (II) left the Bridge plantation in Antigua to a younger son Samuel: PRO PROB/11/518, f. 365; Mary Dickenson, mother of Francis John Tyssen's daughter Mary Amhurst (below), came from a family with property in Philadelphia and in Jamaica: W. Berry, *County Genealogies, Pedigrees of Herts. Families* (1842), 93.
10. *Cal. State Papers Domestic, 1690-1*, 422, 459, 505, 522, 536; *ib.* 1693, 207
11. HADD/F/TYS/12/2, 192.
12. As neither he nor his father had been goldsmiths, presumably the hall had been hired.
13. J. Fairbairn, *Book of Crests*, i. (1905), pt. 2, 63.
14. PRO PROB 11/1082, f. 454. John's grandfather Nicholas Amhurst (d. 1715), of an ancient Pembury (Kent) family, had married Susannah Evering; hence Pembury and Evering roads. His pedigree, set out in Burke, *Landed Gentry* (1886), is misleadingly abbreviated in Burke, *Peerage* (1959).
15. The East Farleigh branch and the earls had a common Tudor ancestor: Burke, *Landed Gentry* (1886).
16. G.E.C., *Complete Peerage*, i. 125.
17. W. White, *History of Norfolk*, (1883), 232.
18. R. H. Mason, *History of Norfolk* (1884), 5.
19. C. A. Manning Press, *Norfolk Notabilities* (1893), 66-75.
20. Chief mourner at Francis's magnificent funeral and bankrupted by the South Sea Bubble. He married a daughter of the first Sir Caesar Child, Bt., and denied his mother-in-law any part in his own son's upbringing, the younger Sir Caesar having learnt 'lying, swearing, whoring, and drinking'. PRO PROB 11/640, f. 266.
21. *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London*, 2nd series, ix. 305. He left many books to the society and provided much information on his family, including the grant of arms of 1687 and several brass rubbings, to *Miscellanea Genealogica et Heraldica*, N.S. iii-v
22. One of his sons, Ridley Daniel Tyssen, was rector of South Hackney 1871-85.
23. Sales catalogues in British Library.
24. HAD H/LD 7/11.

25. He employed Howard Carter, later discoverer of Tutankhamun's tomb: *Who Was Who, 1929-40*, 230. Lord Amherst's wife Margaret Susan wrote *A Sketch of Egyptian History* (1904).
26. Accounts of collections by P. F. Newberry (1899), B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt (1900-1) and T. G. Pinches (1908); handlist of books and mss. by S. de Ricci (1906).
27. *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries*, 2nd series, xiv 365.
28. Post Office Directory, London, (1879, 1902); HADD/F/AMH/6-161, 303-23.
29. Chester: FRIBA, architect of St Mark's, Sandringham Road, consecrated in 1870 on land given by the future Lord Amherst, who complained about its great size. Horace: younger, and a better-known architect: RIBA, *Directory of British Architects 1834-1900* (1993). Records of the Tyssen-Amherst estate are in GLRO M79/TA.
30. HAD H/LD 7/3; cf. *ib.* D/F/TYS/59/1-3 for earlier reports on *De Beauvoir v Rhodes*.
31. *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries*, 2nd series, xxiii, 472; *The Times*, 18 January 1909, 13d; 13 February 1909, 13f; 24 March 1909, 10b; 29 March 1909 10a. Caxtons described in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 3 December 1908, 2d. Cf. *ib.* 4 December 1908, 13b; 7 December 1908, 3a.
32. Author of *Bird Notes from the Nile* (1904). Her younger sister Alicia Amherst (later Baroness Rockley) wrote a successful *History of Gardening in England* (1895) and other works on gardens and botany.
33. *The Times*, 9 December 1908, 3a; 25 June 1909, 3b.
34. *ib.* 30 November 1910, 12f; 1 August 1911, 15a. Didlington Hall was demolished in 1950: *Burke's and Savills Guide to Country Houses*, iii. (1981), 103-4.
35. GLRO M79/TA/21.
36. *ib.* AR/TP/2/419.

UNITARIAN GOTHIC: REBUILDING IN HACKNEY, 1858

Alan Ruston

What amateur or dilettante would ever think of exploring such neighbourhoods as Shoreditch, Hoxton or Plaistow in search of architectural beauty? Yet these outlying regions in the far east of London contain some of the largest and most remarkable churches which have been built during the (Gothic) Revival.¹

Sir Charles Eastlake, an early historian of the 19th century architectural gothic revival in the church building, is correctly alluding to Anglican and to a lesser extent Roman Catholic churches: there are superb examples in Hackney, for example St Chad's, Haggerston. However, he and some later historians ignored the Nonconformists and their activity in that remarkable era when structure and decoration in medieval style was considered the only appropriate architecture for churches in England.² There were numerous examples of Nonconformist and Methodist gothic revival building. Many were notable, although constructed in a more restrained manner than the often florid work of Church of England architects.³

This article is an account of the preliminaries leading to the erection of the decorated gothic church for the Unitarians in Chatham Place, Hackney in the period 1856-1858. They had worshipped in a very different building on the same site since 1810.⁴ The reasons for rebuilding were mixed, although presented as clear cut and obvious at the time, and an analysis of them shows the tensions existing within the congregation and the attitudes amongst the richer Hackney families in the 1850s. The

episode also demonstrates that the momentum to erect a certain type of ecclesiastical building brings other things in its wake.

A period of greatness

From the late 1780s to the 1840s, the New Gravel Pit Chapel was amongst the leading Nonconformist congregations in the country. Its ministers were successively Richard Price, Joseph Priestley, Thomas Belsham and Robert Aspland, all of whom achieved national repute and have entries in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. The congregation was also distinguished: it included Sir John Bowring, David Ricardo, J T Rutt, William Frend and Daniel Whittle Harvey - to name but a few.⁵

Robert Aspland, minister from 1805 until his death in 1845, was one of the leaders in the successful agitation for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1827, which gave civil rights to dissenters in general. He presented the loyal address on behalf of the dissenters to the monarch on the accession of King William IV in 1830. His death, and that of many of the leading figures in the congregation, combined with the moving away of the more prosperous families, led to congregational decline in the later 1840s.

After Aspland's long and successful ministry, the appointment of Rev John Boucher (1819-1878) as minister in 1846 had turned sour by 1852. He reported to the church committee that "he had for some time become aware that a feeling of dissatisfaction existed in the congregation as to his doctrines"⁶ He resigned after several votes which went first

one way then the other; his position was clearly untenable. Two successors were considered but both declined; in same year Rev T L. Marshall (1825-1919) was appointed without candidating for the pulpit. One of the refusals was because of the poor stipend, and Marshall was asked to come as soon as possible because of "difficulty in supplying the pulpit", which is likely to have been due to the limited nature of the remuneration. The church committee minutes record seemingly endless wrangles over the quality of music during worship services. It was against this context that the congregation decided to rebuild.

The need for a new building

To rebuild at a time of relative decline and dispute might seem an unwise thing to do, but it is likely to have been undertaken in the hope that a new building in the latest style, reflecting the latest trends in worship, would attract new, active and able members. There was a general dissatisfaction with the existing building, but this was first noted in the Committee minutes only in May 1851. Repair was needed at a cost of £900, so suggestions for something new were put in train. Arguments over the minister put these ideas into abeyance until the middle of 1853. The account of what happened was set down in the *Christian Reformer*, July 1857, although some of the details may well have been supplied in retrospect:

Ecclesiastical architecture was in the beginning of the century at its lowest point of debasement, and neither in design nor execution did the New Gravel-Pit chapel raise the standard of architectural taste and skill. Before twenty years had passed, it was found that substantial and costly repairs were necessary, which were made at a cost of £2000. During the ministry of Mr Boucher a settlement of the walls took place, and Messrs Lawford and Heneker, the architects, advised a rebuilding, rather than another attempt at repairing. The scheme was entertained, and would, had Mr Boucher continued the minister, have probably been carried into execution. Owing to the unsettled state of affairs in the society, nothing was done. In 1855, a new school-room and vestry were built at the back of the chapel, in place of those originally constructed on the same site. It was then discovered that the whole building was in a ruinous and very dangerous state. Mr Sancton Wood, the architect, was called in, and his opinion was so decided that the congregation felt that they had no alternative, but must rebuild their chapel.



The chapel before rebuilding

Choosing the architect

John E. Clennell, the church treasurer, who was the moving force behind the rebuilding⁷, lost no time once the decision had been made to rebuild, and by October 1856 had assembled no less than seventeen plans from architects. These are detailed in the Committee minutes of 9 October, and show that drawings for a gothic revival church building could be obtained "off the peg", with just minor adjustments to fit the finance available, taste, or theological and liturgical preference. The model gothic architectural plans listed below, most with a Latin brand name, show that the intense denominational differentiation and rivalry of the time did not spread to building design; all churches seemed to be content with a variety of medievalism whatever their polity or theology

1. *Veritas*. Style: Gothic. To seat 630 people, present cost £1500. Architect: F Barff
2. *Difficilia quae pulchra*. Gothic with two spires. To seat 610 persons. Present cost £2000. Architect: Darbshire.⁸
3. *Experience*. Gothic. To seat 522 people, present cost £2200. Architect: Ashpitel.⁹
4. Details as for 3 above. To seat 550 people, present cost £2300.
5. *Labor et spes*. Gothic with spire. To seat 600 people, present cost £2000. Architect: R Wright.
6. Details as for 5 above. Gothic without spire. To seat 600, present cost £1950.
7. Details as for 6 above, but cost £1900.
8. *Dum spiro, spero*. Style: Italian. To seat 360 people, present cost £2750. No architect stated.
9. *Non sine spe*. Gothic with steeple. Number of people seated not stated, present cost £2500 brick. Pencilled in against this entry and presumably for the one which follows for architect is "Green"

10. Details presumably as 9 above but present cost shown as £2580 Kentish rag.

11. *Divine Unity*. Lombardian: tower and steeple. To seat 572 people, present cost £2200. Architect: Ebbels.¹⁰

12. Details as for 11 above. Present cost £1900 by omissions.

13. *Mente et Manu*. Gothic with spire. To seat 565 people, present cost £2150. Architect: Laws.¹¹

14. Details as for 13 above. To seat 560 people, present cost £2000.

15. *Nec cupias, nec mentuas*. Gothic. To seat 636 people, present cost £2250. Architect again presumed to be Laws.

16. *Clericus*. Gothic. To seat 600 people, present cost £1850 brick. Architect: Bartleet.¹²

17. No details. To seat 600 people, present cost £1950 Stone. Architect: R Wright.

The architect appointed

The Committee sifted the number down to five, and resolved that H. A. Darbshire's plan ('*Difficilia quae pulchra*') should be accepted over 'Divine Unity' by eight votes to six. One of the main factors in the acceptance must have been that the architect chosen came from one of the most well known Unitarian families in Manchester.¹³ The choice underlines the statement by Marcus Binney that relatively few church architects seem to have crossed the denominational barriers until the 20th century, and seldom even then - an interesting comment on the operation of patronage.¹⁴ Indeed at the opening in 1858, the Rev Charles Beard, one of the most distinguished scholars and Unitarian ministers of his day, stated that the architect was one of his oldest friends, and the playmate of his childhood and a companion of his youth.¹⁵

Darbshire later became the designer of several edifices in the area, some at least of which may have sprung from his work in Chatham Place. He designed the Victoria Park Fountain, Hackney (1861), Columbia Market, (1866-68) and Columbia Square, Bethnal Green (1857-60), Peabody Trust flats in Commercial Street, Spitalfields (1862-64), and Greenham Street, Islington (1866-68).⁸

The projected cost of the building was £2000, with the addition of lighting £150, architect £150, foundations £350, front wall £100, clerk of works £100, the total with extras to come to £3000. They had £1947 towards this sum. The final bill in March 1858 came to £4939, which the congregation could only pay by taking out a loan.¹⁶ It is not just a modern feature for buildings to cost far more than estimated or for extras to be added on during building.

More changes

The prospect of a new building prompted the desire for a new minister. Marshall, who had started as minister in 1853, apparently kept up congregational numbers, and various minutes of 1854 show that they appreciated his services. On 26 May 1856, however, the committee recorded that there had been a falling off of subscriptions for the last two years, and the minister should be told that they could not continue to pay him a salary of £250 per annum. Within weeks the congregation had resolved to rebuild, knowing the high cost involved and that they were short of even the sum required at the start. Some members of the congregation had misgivings, but these were brushed aside.

It is hardly surprising that Marshall did not like this turn of events. The committee minutes of 18 July 1856 record that the Treasurer offered to resign "in consequence of the severe strictures passed upon his conduct by the minister last Sunday morning in the presence of the congregation" Marshall also complained, quite reasonably, that the committee had said nothing to him about the decision to rebuild. They immediately passed a resolution that he had no right to interfere in the secular matters of the congregation.

Within days Marshall was forced to apologise "for want of courtesy" in his remarks the previous Sunday, and the deputy treasurer read over to him what the committee had concluded. The committee told Marshall formally about the drop in subscriptions in December, and he agreed to his salary being reduced to £200 in January 1857, while the congregation were disputing whether or not they should pay the extra for spires.

The crunch came in April 1857 when Rev R. Brook Aspland (1805-1869) was approached to be the opening preacher in the new building. This was the man they now wanted as minister, at the time serving at Dukinfield, Lancashire. He was one of leading Unitarians of the day, and most important of all the son of their former minister whom they had known since his boyhood. Marshall offered his resignation to the committee on 16th April, but realising that there might be dissent, the treasurer wanted this in writing before calling a special meeting of the congregation. The resignation letter stated that there was "dissatisfaction within my public services...after what several members of the committee had written to me, I have no other alternative but to resign."

The special meeting held on 24 May was clearly stormy as a motion asking Marshall to stay was moved, which was only defeated by

32 votes to 26. The atmosphere must have been very poor when Marshall left in September 1856. The minutes of 11 October state that he was given a testimonial of £106, his written response to this being to point out that "I cannot regard this present as in any way a compensation for wounded feelings and a deep sense of wrong and injustice."¹⁷

A temporary minister was obtained (Rev Hugh Hutton) and R. B. Aspland's appointment was secured within months at a salary of at least £300 for three years. At the same time it became clear there would be an outstanding debt on the new building. Aspland was in place for the opening services on 21 March 1858. The normal form of service was also changed to fit in with the gothic building; a liturgy was seen as essential for the morning service and this was adopted in place of the simpler open form based on hymns, prayers and readings.

The new building

The *Christian Reformer* for April 1858 describes the building in detail and at a greater length than can be included in this article. The following are the chief points, written by someone with a background in architecture:

The new chapel is cruciform in plan and accommodates 500 sittings on the ground floor, and about 50 in the gallery over the western entrance. The total external length is 81 feet 9 inches; external width across nave and aisles 43 feet; external width across transepts 65 feet 6 inches. The exterior of the building is built with Kentish rag-stone and Bath-stone dressings; and as the adopted style of architecture is geometrical Gothic, the traceries of the windows and the moulded jambs of the doors, executed in the warm-coloured freestone, contrast well with the plane surfaces of the cool grey walls. This variety in the colour of the materials contributes largely to its effect, inasmuch as it possesses little ornament or architectural enrichment; a spirelet which is 64 feet in height at the south angle of the west front being almost the only prominent feature to redeem it from mediocrity. There are some effectively carved heads, bosses and finials to the gablets, which connect the square base of the spirelet with the octagonal superstructure, and some characteristic crosses terminating the east and west gables, and the gables of the transepts, which deserve remark, as being the only decorative sculptures on the exterior of the building.

Postscript

Did the changes work and was the new building filled with worshippers, so placing the finances on a firm footing? The answer is definitely in the negative. By February 1861 the committee were complaining that they found it difficult to pay the minister but did not go as far as to suggest that Aspland's salary be reduced.¹⁸ In September the same year it was concluded that the congregation was still in decline, and the deficiency the following year was £44. In 1864 they were bemoaning the loss of subscribers but still decided to put in a stained glass window. By 1881 the treasurer was having to meet repair bills from his own pocket.

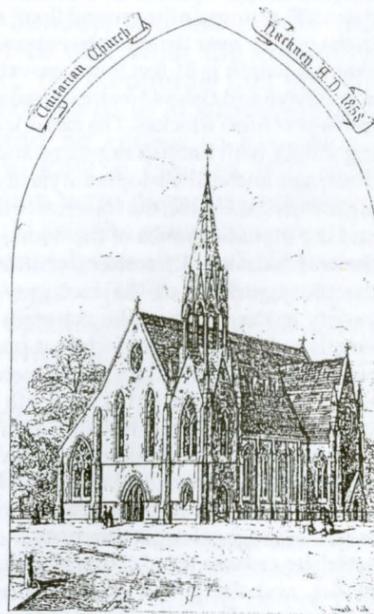
The church was rarely filled, and in the 20th century, like the majority of Nonconformist churches in Hackney, was in steep decline. A bomb fell in the burial ground in 1940 (the last interment took place in 1927), which put the building out of commission. Repairs were completed in 1953, and the small congregation used the church intermittently because of the cost of heating, preferring to meet in the Aspland Hall, erected in 1912.

The last service of worship to take place in the church was held on 2nd October 1966 to mark the 300th anniversary of the original foundation. I was present on this occasion and recall the very poor state of the leaking and unheated building, which was barely usable. A compulsory purchase order was made by the Greater London Council in 1969 on the whole site, and the buildings were pulled down the following year. With the former burial ground, the site is now an open space in front of a block of flats.

Notes

1. Charles L. Eastlake, *A History of the Gothic Revival*, 1872, 363.
2. For example see Basil Clarke, *Church Builders of the 19th century: a study of the Gothic Revival in England*, 1938.
3. Horton Davis, *Worship and Theology in England 1850 - 1900, from Newman to Martineau*, Oxford, 1962, 42-64 gives the background to the Gothic Revival covering Methodist and Nonconformist examples. R. P. Jones, *Nonconformist Church Architecture*, 1914 has a chapter on the Gothic period and concentrates on Unitarian examples, 37-42.
4. The foundation stone for the building was laid on 16 October 1809, and the completed building brought into use the following year. The architect was Edmund Aikin, and Seabrook the contractor (*Christian Reformer*, July 1857, 520-522).
5. See Alan Ruston, *Unitarianism and Early Presbyterianism in Hackney*, Watford, 1980 for a history of the Gravel Pit Chapel, its ministers and leading members.
6. Minute book, New Gravel Pit Chapel, 1846-1860, Committee Meeting 27 March 1852 (HAD D/E/257 NEW).
7. Minute book, above, Committee meeting 3 July 1864. The minutes contain a tribute to Clennell, who had just died, and confirms he was the main mover for the rebuilding. His main supporters had been V. I. Collier and Walter C. Venning, who took over as treasurer.
8. Henry Astley Darbishire (FRIBA 1856; 1825 - 1899) had an office at 4 Trafalgar Square and was "one of the most obscure, original Victorian architects...between 1857 and 1868 he designed some of the earliest and best working class tenements, [notably for the Peabody Trust]. For his principal patron Angela, Baroness Coutts he built Holly Village Hampstead, a model village of villas in formal gardens built for clerks of Coutts Bank, and the Gothic market hall of polychromatic brick, iron and glass at Columbia Market, Shoreditch." (*Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects*, 1, 402). *Directory of British Architects 1834-1900* (DBA), RIBA, 1993, 233 gives the location of his unpublished papers.
9. Arthur Ashpitel (FRIBA 1851, 1807 - 1869) had offices in Old Broad Street and Regent's Street. He was born in Hackney and buried at the parish church (St. John's): DBA, above.
10. This architect is presumably Robert Ebbles, who is known to have specialised in church building in the Wolverhampton area in the 1830s and 1840s: DBA, above.
11. Charles Laws (ARIBA 1859), died 1874, had offices in Clements Inn and Doughty Street: DBA, above.
12. William Gibbs Bartleet (ARIBA 1859; 1829 - 1906) had offices in Old Street and Herne Villa, Brentwood: DBA, above.

13. H. A. Darbishire was baptised in Cross Street Chapel (Presbyterian/ Unitarian) Manchester on 8 September 1825, the son of James and Mary. His father, and probably his grandfather, were trustees of the Chapel. See R. Wade, *Rise of Nonconformity in Manchester and sketch of the history of Cross Street Chapel*, Manchester, 1880. At the stonelaying in Chatham Place, James Aspinall Turner MP, also a member at Cross Street Chapel, stated that the architect was the son of an old friend of his, James Darbishire of Manchester (*Christian Reformer*, 1857, 521). H. A. Darbishire, DL, JP died on 4 June 1899 at Oakdene, Cowden, Kent, aged 74 (obituary, *The Inquirer*, 1899, 390.)
14. M Binney and P Burman, *Change & Decay: The Future of Our Churches*, 1977, 25. Darbishire however did design the Anglican church of St. James, Moore Park Road, Fulham.
15. *Christian Reformer*, April 1858, 249.
16. Minute Book, above, Committee meeting 21 March 1858.
17. T.L. Marshall subsequently became the editor of *The Inquirer*, the chief Unitarian newspaper, and a kindly elder statesman. By the 1880s the Hackney congregation was consulting him on contentious issues, and his advice was regularly requested in later decades. He preached on several occasions and the congregation readily forgot the shameful way they had treated him. It says much for Marshall that he was willing to do likewise.
18. Minute book 1860-1883, Committee meeting 10 February 1861 (HAD).



A HOUSE AT HACKNEY WICK

Isobel Watson

Silk and snuff

At the corner of Hassett Road and Kenworthy Road, near Hackney Wick, stands a high brick wall. Just visible, behind the wall, is an elegant stock-brick house with high, rounded Regency window-arches. This, with its outbuildings and annexes, forms the Convent of the Sacred Heart, which has been here for more than a century. But the house which is at the core of the convent complex is approaching its bi-centenary. It began as the elegant home of a successful silk manufacturer, and as such has an important place in the story of Hackney merchant-manufacturers. It also ranks among many Hackney houses which, after affluent residents have moved on to more fashionable locations, have served a wider social purpose as a refuge for one or other disadvantaged group, or as a place for education. 'Sydney House', as its builder called it (perhaps after the then late Viscount), has in its time been both.

The house was built in 1808-9 by Leny Smith, a silk manufacturer. The Smith business specialised in the production of crepe for mourning wear and the undertaking trade. In the poor rate records for 1787¹ William Smith is shown as occupying land at Hackney Wick consisting of a house and mills, formerly occupied, in succession, by Mower, Margrave and Thomas Morgan.² Before the Smiths it is not known what these mills at the Wick produced; and the succession from William to Leny Smith may be merely coincidence, as there is no established family connection between the two. From 1787 there were assessments both for the main premises, which presumably supplied

the mourning silks; and for snuff mills. Leny Smith had taken over from William by 1790, soon after which any connection with the snuff business seems to have been given up.

Smith's silk business was, at his height, claimed to be the largest in the country. His London premises, established about 1789 in Bread Street, and later transferred to Pater-noster Row, bought and sold. Apart from an establishment stated to consist in 1800 of some six or seven hundred weavers, mostly women, based in Taunton, he is said to have employed 'nearly the same' number in Hackney in throwing the silk (preparing it for the loom) and in 'craping' it after weaving, a process described as dressing it and fitting it for the wearer. Mechanisation consisted of two steam engines 'of improved construction'³ A chaise was kept in a livery stable at Coleman Street for the purpose of carrying the dressed silk from Hackney to the City warehouse.⁴

In a tax dispute Smith described his workers as 'day labourers'. It is interesting to speculate from how far afield some of them must have come. A few - who cannot have been casuals - were provided with housing. Before 1814 there were four workers' cottages along 'Silk Mill Row' on the northern side at the end of what later became Cassland Road; Baker's Row, back to back housing near the south side of Well Street Common, originally a development on leasehold land of the Well Street baker William Gigney, was rebuilt by Smith in 1822.⁵

Between 1792 and 1801 Smith was relinquishing, and acquiring, other property in

the area, but it was not until 1808 that his 'considerable manufacture in silk' had prospered sufficiently to support not only a new house large enough for his considerable household (11 males and 12 females in 1811)⁶, but extensive new building at the mills. But the Smith fortunes declined, and by 1828 conditions in the silk trade were such that the mill lay idle - 'mothballed', in the modern phrase. Smith's affairs were soon in the hands of mortgagees, the Hope Insurance Company; and the splendid house was given up. Its new occupant, who came in during 1828, was Edward Francis Tuke, M.D. From Tuke's day onwards 'Sydney House' was just as often spelled as 'Sidney House', and indeed Kenworthy Road was known until 1938 as Sidney Road.

Dr Tuke's asylum

As Starling's map tells us, in 1831, Dr Tuke ran a 'lunatic asylum' The name of Tuke is famous in the treatment of the insane: Dr E. F. Tuke's Quaker contemporary Samuel Tuke had succeeded his father Henry at the highly influential and innovative Retreat for the treatment of the insane at York. But E. F. Tuke's connection with the York family, if any, is not established, and very little personal information about him is available.

By the end of the Napoleonic wars Parliament and government were concerning themselves with the practices of the profit-making asylums engaged in the 'trade in lunacy', and the attentions of the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy were turned on Sidney House, as on other such establishments. A handful of their reports survive, for the period between July 1829 and May 1830. The house was licensed to take up to ten patients, but does not seem to have had more than five during this period, and often had fewer. It does seem as if this Dr Tuke specialised in the illness of the very rich.

The Commissioners concerned themselves principally with cleanliness and, in their eyes almost as important, godliness. They gave much less attention to treatment or activity for the patients. On all counts, nonetheless, they found no fault with what was evidently a most select establishment: "The house is commodious and the airing grounds very extensive," they commented; and again "The house and grounds are excellent and the only patient here seems to be as comfortable as she is capable of being... This is an excellent establishment and in every respect calls for the approbation of the Commissioners."⁷ Sidney House was much better-placed than many of its competitors in



Sidney House from the south-east, in the time of the Ballance family

such places as Hoxton, or in hidden corners of suburban St John's Wood, to provide the spacious grounds of which the Commissioners approved. It seems permissible to infer that Tuke was, in founding the Sidney House asylum at precisely the time of reform in the public administration of mental health, espousing aims and objects sympathetic to those of his namesakes in York. As early as 1833, however, Dr Tuke removed his business to the Manor House at Chiswick, where he was succeeded by his son, Thomas Harrington Tuke M.D., who became better-known than his father in the profession, and who married into the family of the director of the first state-run asylum at Hanwell.⁸

Smiths and Ballances

Sidney House came into the possession of Thomas Ballance. It is unlikely to be coincidence that the Ballances, like the Smiths, were silk manufacturers, also specialising in mourning silks. There appear to have been social as well as business links between the families. The Ballances also had business interests in Somerset, as well as City premises, ultimately in Spital Square and White Lion Street. The family descended from Spitalfields weavers, and Thomas's father John, who married Homerton-born Elizabeth Heudebourck, had been in business in Steward Street as a manufacturer of black silk since 1806.⁹ There is no clear evidence that the Ballances used the mill buildings at the Wick for the business; their silk was 'thrown' in Taunton. If they did, this must have ceased by 1840, when Robinson notes that the silk business had ended and the premises were used for making scarlet cloth. Other evidence suggests that Thomas and Mary Ballance may not have moved to Sidney House from their previous home at the Paragon until between 1839 and 1841.¹⁰

Thomas Ballance and his wife (and cousin) Mary Smart were Hackney born and bred, with many relatives in the area, especially at Cambridge Heath and around Shore Place. John Ballance, Thomas's father and head of the family during the great days of the Spitalfields business, lived in a house he had built for himself (Stanley House, now demolished) near Clapton Pond. They were connected through the marriage of John's daughter Eliza to the paint-making Berger (Steigenberger) family of Homerton, and later to the local architect James Edmeston. There is also evidence of social links between the Ballances and their predecessors at Sidney House, the Smiths. A Heudebourck cousin was distinguished by the

unusual Christian name of (John) Leny; and there is the teasing postscript to a business letter written by John Ballance to John Heudebourck at Taunton, in December 1814. I quote this at length because of its charmingly gossipy and sardonic tone:

If report has married you, I suppose it is true you have begun to court... News of late has abounded here as with you. Take the follg. instances. — Miss E. Williams is about to be married - to whom say you? I will tell you — to a Cheesemonger of Shoreditch about 40 — Ah! but then he is rich, and that stops our mouth — he has taken a lease in the Forest and his Carriage is on the Stocks — Hear again — *The first week in Janr. L. Smith Esqr is to be married* to a young Lady of 36 — of very Domestic habits. And I have rec'd a commission from him to make this known to you as it is too delicate a subject to talk of himself — Bashful Man. - Now forthwith for your congratulations and those of your family...¹¹ [emphasis added]

On 12th December 1814 an Archbishop's licence was granted for the marriage of Leny Smith to his second wife, Caroline Laforest.¹²

A place for children

Mary and Thomas Ballance took seven children with them to Sidney House, and another seven were born there - almost one a year over fifteen years. The grounds, to which Thomas Ballance added by a judicious purchase of surplus land from the North London Railway, contained some nine acres of garden, ideal for such a large and healthy family. Some disaster struck the family finances in the 1850s, forcing Thomas to mortgage the property; it can be no coincidence that Oriel Road began building, although sporadically, on the property before 1855. From the collapse of the silk trade following the Anglo-French Treaty of 1860 the Ballance finances never fully recovered. Thomas died at Sidney House in 1867, and the family moved to Clapham. Most of the land had to be sold off for development (as the 'Sidney Park estate') to fund the numerous family legacies. Sewers for Ballance and Hassett Roads were put in in 1870, and the 1871 census found the house itself in the occupation of the site foreman and his family. By 1873 the new development was substantially complete, and the remainder of Oriel Road built up. The principal builder-speculators were Josiah Goodman and Joseph Wilkinson, major builders in the Bow area, though a number of other builders undertook house construction. Samuel Prout

Newcome, the enterprising schoolmaster and photographer formerly of Lower Clapton (whose Priory School will be known to readers of *Hackney Terrier* 30), was a leading financier of the project.¹³

The Convent of the Sacred Heart finally took over the house, seemingly in the early 1870s.¹⁴ In 1882 it began building extensive extensions to the house (designed by C. G. Wray), for the housing and schooling of the orphans in its care.¹⁵

In 1891 there were 50 nuns (all but eight of them from Ireland) and 109 orphan girls aged between 2 and 18, all but two of their families originating in the central London parishes, most frequently Poplar or Limehouse.¹⁶

Though the Convent remains, there is no longer an orphanage, and parts of these buildings have in recent years been removed. New housing has been built on the southern part of the remaining sliver of 'Sidney Park', as last century it was built on the north and west. In the centre of it all, the silk manufacturers' house still stands.

Notes

1. HAD P/J/CW/115-117; P/J/P 156. Leny Smith (1761-1839) was the son of Christopher Smith, carpenter/shopkeeper, of Yorkshire descent. Information on the Smiths was kindly supplied by C. R. F. Potter.
2. Gaps in the tax records make it unclear whether these are the same mills as were occupied by Heneage Robinson in the 1750s. There were other mills in the neighbourhood, both then and later, and the Temple Mills receive separate mention in the records.
3. Lysons, *Environs of London*, Vol. 5 (supplement), 163 (1800).
4. HAD M.4335.
5. HAD P/J/P/167; GLRO MDR 1830/1/434: M79/LH/22 p. 178. See also Benjamin Clarke, *Glimpses of Ancient Hackney and Stoke Newington* (1894) 160.
6. HAD P/J/Misc/1/4.
7. PRO HO/44/51.
8. Munk's Roll (*Lives of the Fellows of the Royal College of Physicians of London, 1826-1925*, G H Brown 1955).
9. Parliamentary Papers XIX 474 (1831/2) (John Ballance's evidence to the Select Committee on the silk trade); Kent's directory 1809.
10. See generally D. B. Ballance, *The Ballances* (MS); copy at HAD.
11. Copy in the possession of D. B. Ballance, whose permission to publish is gratefully acknowledged.
12. Information from C. R. F. Potter.
13. GLRO MDR 1869/2/38, 1871 9/654, 21/783-4; HAD LBH/7/5.
14. 'Catholicity in Homerton', in *The Lamp*, n.d., HAD Y4096/221.
15. *The Builder*, 7 October 1882.
16. PRO RG 12/203.

THE RISE OF THE HIGH-RISE: POST-WAR HOUSING IN HACKNEY

Peter Foynes

The County Plan

No visitor to, or resident of, the London Borough of Hackney, can but be struck by the impact that local authority housing has made upon the area. This article attempts a survey of the main factors which influenced the policies that gave shape to post war housing policy and development, in particular the factors that lay behind what became known as the 'high rise boom' of the 1960s.

It would be foolish, within the limits of this article, to attempt to describe the complexities of the post war history of an area reaching from Stamford Hill in the north to Old Street in the south, bounded on the east by the River Lea and on the west by Islington. Nonetheless, in terms of local authority housing the area does share important characteristics. Since 1965 it has been the London borough of Hackney that has been responsible for public housing provision. The London borough itself was created by the amalgamation of the metropolitan boroughs of Shoreditch, Stoke Newington and Hackney, which themselves were in the county of London and came within the jurisdiction of the London County Council. The LCC and the metropolitan boroughs shared responsibility for public housing provision, but it was the LCC that set the context and shape of that housing provision. To understand post-war Hackney, and indeed, post-war London, it is necessary to understand the wider context set by the LCC.

The regulation and management of the 'Great Wen' that was London¹ was one of the primary reasons behind the establishment of the LCC. Never an easy task, the upheaval

caused by the war gave this process a new impetus; removing "property that cried aloud for redevelopment"² The blueprint for redevelopment was the County of London Plan, devised by the LCC in the later years of the war.

The Plan outlined four main problems in London: overcrowded and out of date housing; inadequate and maldistribution of open spaces; compression of houses and industry; traffic congestion. To address these problems a number of strategies were to be employed. The population of the inner London area was to be kept static or declining. A green belt was to be established around this area, to arrest urban sprawl. Surplus population, by which was meant population above a preordained density, were to be moved out, or 'decanted', as the phrase had it, beyond the green belt, to the new and expanding towns. Within the conurbation, zoning was to be employed to end the unsanitary juxtaposition of homes and schools with industry. Areas were zoned exclusively for housing, for industrial use, for recreational use etc. New roads were to be built to relieve traffic congestion, new open spaces were to be created to improve the quality of life for inner city residents. Everything was to be done to a higher standard.³

Every part of the county was included in the plan. Any divergence from the plan, even for a single address, necessitated lengthy discussion.

The plan was to be implemented by the LCC in conjunction with the metropolitan boroughs. The statutory basis for the plan envisaged the LCC as both the dominant house

builder and the major planning authority, but in practice the LCC and the boroughs acted, not always in concert, as housebuilders. Hackney, for example, agreed a division of responsibility with the LCC, the LCC taking the area south of the North London Line, Hackney taking the area north of it. Although the relationship between the LCC and the other two boroughs was more fraught the sixteen years between 1945 and 1961 saw an unprecedented rate of housing construction in the three boroughs: the metropolitan borough councils and the LCC combined built 17,827 dwellings, an average of over 1,000 dwellings per year.

In this period Hackney was particularly active, completing 5,864 permanent dwellings, the second most active borough in London. The scale of construction varied from small developments, such as four maisonettes at Adley Street, to substantial estates like the Parkside estate, which had 152 dwellings. The Mapledene, Beecholme, Summit and Beckers developments⁴ all date from this period.

Development in Shoreditch followed a different pattern, being oriented more towards

a smaller number of more substantial developments, a reflection of the greater availability of derelict space in the borough and the smaller number of owner occupiers. The Colville, Kingsland, St Mary's, Pitfield and Wenlock Barn estates all date from this period.⁵ In Stoke Newington the LCC built the Woodberry Down estate, which, when completed in 1948, had over 2,000 dwellings.

Not only was there a substantial increase in the number of dwellings being built in the post-war period, the standard of the dwellings was improving. The account in the Hackney Borough Guide of 1954-55 is typical of the period:

On all the more recent estates electricity has been employed to the utmost extent. Each dwelling is serviced for either gas or electric cooking. Gas, electricity and solid fuel appliances have been installed for space and water heating according to the circumstances of each estate. The living-rooms and bedrooms are fitted with plug points for the purpose of supplying electricity to radio sets, electric fires, irons, kettles and similar apparatus.⁶

Later developments, like the Trelawney estate in Morning Lane, had underfloor heating. Developments often included community halls and tenants' meeting rooms, communal workshops and recreation space on the larger estates, and storage space for bicycles, prams etc. Internally, the flats were, by the standards of the day, well appointed, certainly sufficiently so for the councils to trumpet their virtues in official publications.

Internal modifications in the flats being built were matched by innovations in the appearance of the buildings. The standard local authority brick, three to five storey, blocks continued to be built, with some modifications. Sash windows were replaced with 'continental style' steel window frames. Individual balconies and gallery access were frequently included as a feature.

'Vertical building'

The post-war era also saw the introduction of taller buildings, a development that was to have significant consequences for Hackney in the 1960s.

While the LCC had toyed with the idea of tall blocks of flats before the war, developing a scheme for Drysdale Street that included nine storey blocks, tall blocks of flats were not part of early post-war thinking.⁷ Hackney borough council announced in 1948 that it intended never to build above three storeys again. The four eight storey blocks that were included in



Burtonwood House, Woodberry Down (1948). A Scandinavian design, borrowed wholesale by the LCC to save time; an unprecedented eight storeys.

the LCC's Woodberry Down scheme, and the seven storey blocks that were included in the LCC developments at Frampton Park Road and Buckland Street, planned in 1947, were regarded very much as experiments: and were treated with great suspicion by both the local populace and elements within the LCC.

By 1955, however, the LCC had 91 schemes (completed, under construction or planned) which included blocks of eight storeys or more. By 1957, developments with 20 storey blocks were in preparation. In 1959 Hackney borough council opened its first estate comprising 15 storey blocks, the Trelawney Estate in Morning Lane.⁸

There were a number of factors underlying this increasing use of tall blocks.

Attitudes of architects towards tall blocks of flats, 'vertical building', as a 1952 correspondent in the *Daily Telegraph* called it. The 'High Paddington' scheme, a notional development to house 8,000 people in three blocks of over thirty storeys, published in 1952, attracted great attention, including a talk on the Third Programme. The Press release for an RIBA symposium on tall flats in February 1955, chaired by the Architect to the LCC, noted that

...the high cost of land, the encroachment of building on agricultural land and - too often - the featureless spread of housing estates beyond the confines of their cities are compelling a growing number of local authorities to consider the contribution that the building of high flats can make to their housing and reconstruction programme.

Some local authority planners began to see positive elements in the use of taller blocks of flats.

Low rise developments were thought to use up too much of the available land, leaving very little green space for the residents. They also led to the "monotony of repetitive blocks of similar height and appearance"⁹ The solution proposed was to mix the densities on any given estate, juxtaposing high rise with low rise, so that at least some residents would have the possibility of living in a house with a garden. However, the loss of accommodation involved in building low rise, two or three, or even five storeys, had to be compensated for by building other parts of the estate high-rise. The first 'mixed density estate' - as this style came to be known - with 11 storey blocks, was the Alton East estate, in Roehampton, opened in 1954. By 1966 the LCC [or its successor from 1965, the Greater London Council] had built 24 storey blocks on the Pepys Estate at Deptford.

Where the LCC, the metropolis-wide local authority (nursery of Cabinet Ministers) led, the boroughs followed. In addition the LCC made available its designs to other local authorities, free of copyright charges, a significant incentive to their wider use.

The widespread shortage of building land was also a significant factor in the increasing use of taller blocks of flats. The *Hackney Borough Guide* of 1960 phrased the problem rather plaintively:

Housing development... is conditioned very much by the lack of building sites and the ever increasing cost of site purchase. This has left the Council with no alternative but to build higher.¹⁰

This pressure on land arose from a number of sources, but the fundamental problem was the changing structure of the population of London. Although the absolute population figures in London turned out largely as the County Plan predicted,¹¹ the number of households within the population, which is the important figure for housing provision, increased.¹²

Demographic trends

Broad trends within the general population were, in part, responsible for this change. Smaller families, longer life expectancy and increasing divorce rates meant that household numbers increased generally. Longer life expectancy, for example, meant that elderly couples would be inhabiting perhaps a four bedroom dwelling, in which they had reared their family, for decades after the family had left. Councils were, understandably, reluctant to 'relocate' such people. Increasing divorce rates meant that whereas, before the war, there would have been one household, now there were two.

In addition to these general trends, London underwent a huge expansion in white collar and service employment. Office space grew from 87 million square feet, before the war, to 132 million by the early 1960s. The authors of the County Plan, who thought of employment largely in industrial terms, did not, and could not, have anticipated this.¹³ This employment explosion attracted people into the inner London area, mostly people who were young or single, with a consequent increase in the number of households, but a reduction in their average size. Smaller households use space less efficiently than larger ones. One bathroom and one kitchen will, in the ordinary course of events, be sufficient for

a family of six. It will also be the minimum requirement for a household of two.

Although a significant majority of this immigrant population to London did not have a direct impact on local government provision of housing, increased demand for living space was to drive up the price of land.

Aspects of the County Plan exacerbated this trend. The zoning of land for the exclusive use of schools, roadways and industry reduced the amount of land available for house building. The slum clearance programme, which was one of the largest in Europe, by definition reduced the number of dwellings on a given site, assuming no change in the height of the buildings. The inclusion of better facilities, such as community halls and storage sheds, and the higher standard of accommodation on new developments, all reduced the land available for house building. *Homes for Today and Tomorrow*,¹⁴ the 1961 report of the Parker Morris Committee established to agree minimum standards for local authority housing, accelerated the trend towards increasing the size and amenities of local authority housing, recommending that floor space should be increased by a minimum of 10%. The net effect of these developments was that land for local authority building became increasingly scarce, while demands on that land increased. Councils had little choice but to build higher.

By the early 1960s, then, local authorities had accepted, more or less reluctantly, the necessity for building tall blocks of flats in a mixed density environment to meet inner city housing need. Other factors had to come into play, however, before the 'high rise boom' of the sixties could truly take hold.

The private sector

The first of these was the deterioration of conditions within the private rented sector, caused, in part, by central and local authority policies.

Successive administrations had taken a jaundiced view of this sector. Conservative governments encouraged owner occupation by tax incentives, drawing the better off out of the private rented sector and reducing the number of properties available for rent. Labour governments encouraged local authority housing and, at one period supported the 'municipalisation' of the private rented sector, that is the acquisition of properties by local authorities. Both parties restricted rent rises in rent controlled premises. There was, for example, only one rent increase in controlled premises between 1939 and 1960. The slum

clearance plans of the LCC discouraged investment in areas designated for clearance, even if that clearance was not to be for a decade. The effect was to discourage investment in the private rented sector by existing or potential landlords and to reduce the availability, while accelerating the dilapidation, of properties in that sector.

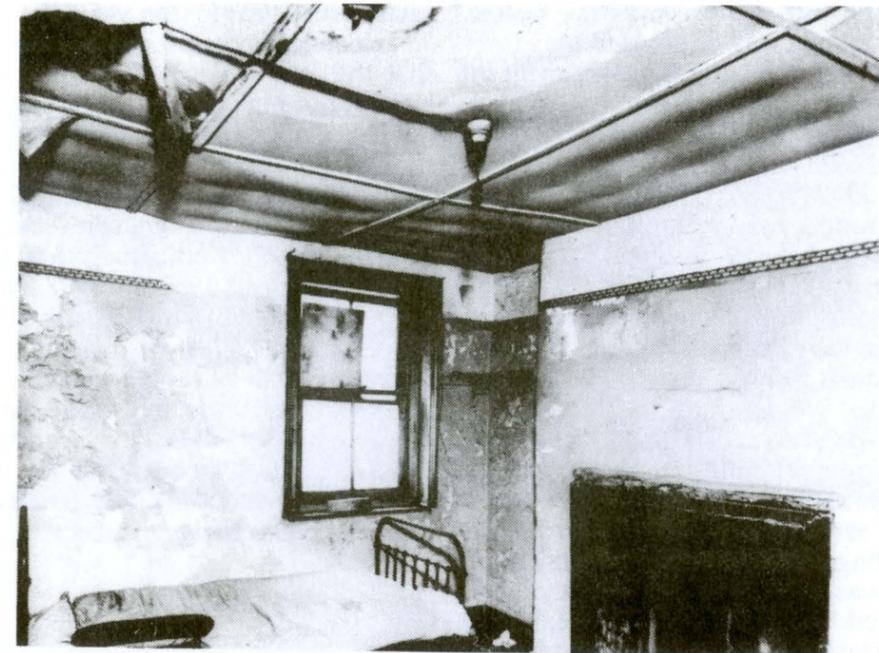
This was occurring at a time when local authorities had residence criteria for admission to their housing lists. Both Shoreditch and Hackney councils expected proof of three years' residence in the borough before even being allowed onto the housing waiting list. In Hackney no case would even be considered until twelve months after admission to the list.¹⁵

The effect of this situation on the economically weaker of those immigrants into London in the late 1950s and 1960s was predictable. They had no choice but to crowd into an increasingly deteriorating private rented sector.

A committee of enquiry set up to investigate the housing situation in London - best-known, after its chairman, as the Milner-Holland committee - portrayed a situation scarcely credible after fifteen years of the largest house-building programme the capital had ever seen.

In Hackney, the number of dwellings with fewer than six rooms, which had been divided into three or more household spaces, more than doubled between 1951 and 1961. Almost half (48%) of Hackney households of three or more persons were in such multi-occupied dwellings in 1961. More than two thirds (68%) of households lacked or shared at least one of the basic domestic facilities of hot and cold water, bath or W.C. In Shoreditch 7% of households of more than three persons were living at more than 1.5 persons per room, while 8% of households had no sink or stove. Shoreditch shared with Hackney the distinction of being among the half dozen areas within Greater London with highest housing stress, that is, areas where the extent of sharing of dwellings was highest, and physical condition poorest. Stoke Newington, though less distressed, was regarded as having a "fairly high" proportion of shared accommodation.

The publication of Milner Holland in 1965 and the revelation of the situation in London created substantial political pressure for a renewed assault on the housing problem. This coincided with the introduction of new building methods.



A Shoreditch interior of the 1950s

System building

Industrialised, or system, building techniques were imported, originally from Scandinavia, in the early 1960s.¹⁶ The principle behind industrialised building was that component parts were prefabricated, either on or off site, and the building assembled with a crane. It was neither particularly new nor cheap, but it had the advantage of not requiring the traditional building trades, which were expensive, and in short supply in the 1960s. Industrialised building was, strictly speaking, a technique, but its use had implications for the type of dwellings built. The architect to the LCC reported in 1965 -

Concrete is used exclusively because there is no other material that can be prefabricated in large units, at an acceptable cost, to give the standard of sound insulation called for between dwellings... A typical new housing scheme in the County comprises mixed development at high density. The system best suited for the construction of the multi-storey blocks must call the tune, since the performance standards for these blocks are highest... Investment in the capacity to repeat carries with it an obligation to accept a minimum level of repetition without any change in the design.

To paraphrase: if the chosen scheme of design and construction is system-built mixed density, then estate will be large, repetitive and concrete, incorporating high and low rise. The first estate constructed entirely using industrialised methods was the Morris Walk Estate in Greenwich, opened by the LCC in 1964.¹⁷

Encouragement to use system building came from all quarters. The *Evening Standard* of November 1962 trumpeted "Rapid Housing - homes put up in less time than it takes to eat lunch" The Ministry of Housing and Local Government encouraged the standardisation of components to facilitate system building. The Labour Party Manifesto of 1966 stated that "In order to combine labour saving and standardisation... we are requiring local authorities to rely increasingly on modern system building technique". In 1965 a group of art students from Hornsey College called for government-owned factories for producing prefabricated buildings.

By the early 1960s, living conditions for a significant minority of the population were deteriorating. Building land was scarce and local authorities felt they had no option but to build high to alleviate those conditions. Architectural orthodoxy favoured mixed density

estates, including high rise towers. Industrialised building, favouring large, repetitive concrete developments, was seen as the fastest and most economic way of proceeding.

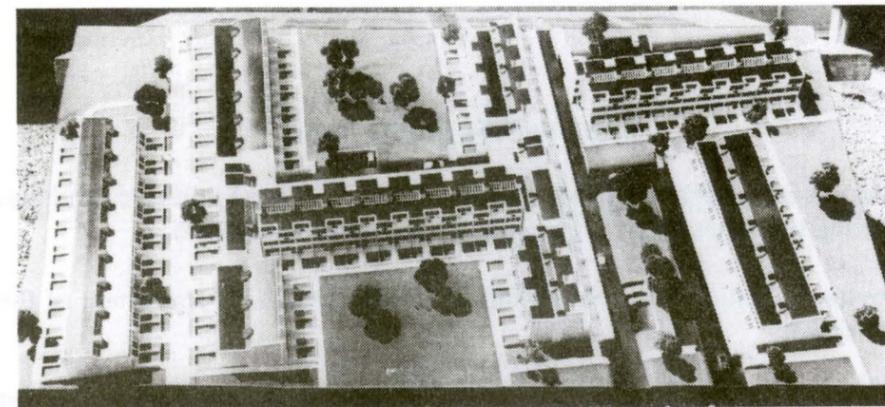
The election of a Labour government in 1964 allowed these factors to combine. Whilst it is important not to overstate the extent to which party politics affected housing development in the 1960s (there was a good deal of common ground between the parties on the housing issue and the institutional continuity of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government remained), the Labour Party saw local authorities as having a major role in the alleviation of housing stress. As the 1965 White Paper put it, "We are faced with an ever-growing shortage of accommodation within the means of poorer families and the growth of owner occupation can do very little to relieve it. The only remedy is an increase in public sector building."¹⁸ A tangible expression of this change was the plan to build 11,000 dwellings produced by the newly-created London borough of Hackney. With an annual average

construction rate of over 1,000 dwellings, this plan envisaged the building of a Holly Street estate every year for ten years.¹⁹

In these circumstances it is not surprising that the late sixties saw an upsurge in the building of high rise tower blocks which has left its mark on the landscape of Hackney. Of the 78 blocks of nine stories or higher in the borough, 35 are 16 or more storeys high. Of the 35 such blocks, 31 were completed between 1969 and 1971, indicating that they were planned between 1965 and 1967. The majority of these blocks, 22 of the 35, are on five estates, De Beauvoir, Holly Street, Nightingale, Trowbridge and Clapton Park. To put it another way, just under half of the sixteen storey or more blocks in Hackney were planned in the two years between 1965 and 1967. Two thirds of those are on only five estates. The high rise boom had arrived.



The de Beauvoir estate (1972), the last of such developments in Hackney: this view shows the varied block heights and repetitive style characteristic of mixed density estates.



Detail of the architects' model for the second phase de Beauvoir estate, 1971, marking a shift from high rise and mixed density to low rise while still using system building.

Notes

1. The LCC's own term: P Abercrombie and J. H. Forshaw, County of London Plan (1943), iii; hereafter 'County Plan'
2. *ib.*, 1.
3. County Plan; Royal Commission on Local Government in Greater London, 1959, Memoranda of Evidence from Government Departments, 119.
4. 84, 104, 103 and 148 dwellings respectively. Metropolitan Borough of Hackney (MBH), *Official Guide*, 1961, 100-101.
5. 326, 128, 324, 184 and 960 dwellings respectively. 'Metropolitan Borough of Shoreditch' in *Surveys - A publication of the Ideal Press Technical Group*, (1951), vol. 1, 3-23.
6. MBH, *Official Guide*, 1954-5, 74.
7. The account that follows of the LCC and tall blocks is based on LCC committee files, GLRO LCC/CL/HSG/1/94.
8. MBH, *Official Guide*, 1960, 93.
9. W. E. Jackson, *Achievement: a Short History of the LCC* (1965), 94-95.

10. MBH, *Official Guide*, 1960, 3.
11. The area which in 1965 became the London borough of Hackney was predicted to have a population of 280,000 in 1971. It was actually 220,000.
12. The account which follows of London housing in the late 1950s and early 1960s is taken from the *Report of the Committee on Housing in Greater London* (1965), Cmnd. 2605 (the Milner Holland Committee).
13. *London: Employment, Housing and Land* (1963), Cmnd. 1952, 2-4.
14. Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 1961.
15. MBH, *Official Guide*, 1960, 99; HAD S/H/31, 327
16. The account of system building which follows is based on LCC Committee files, GLRO LCC/CL/HSG/1/91.
17. *Home Sweet Home: a Visual History of LCC/GLC Housing*, (1975), 10.
18. Housing Programme 1965-1970.
19. HAD LBH/CA/2.

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Acknowledgements

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