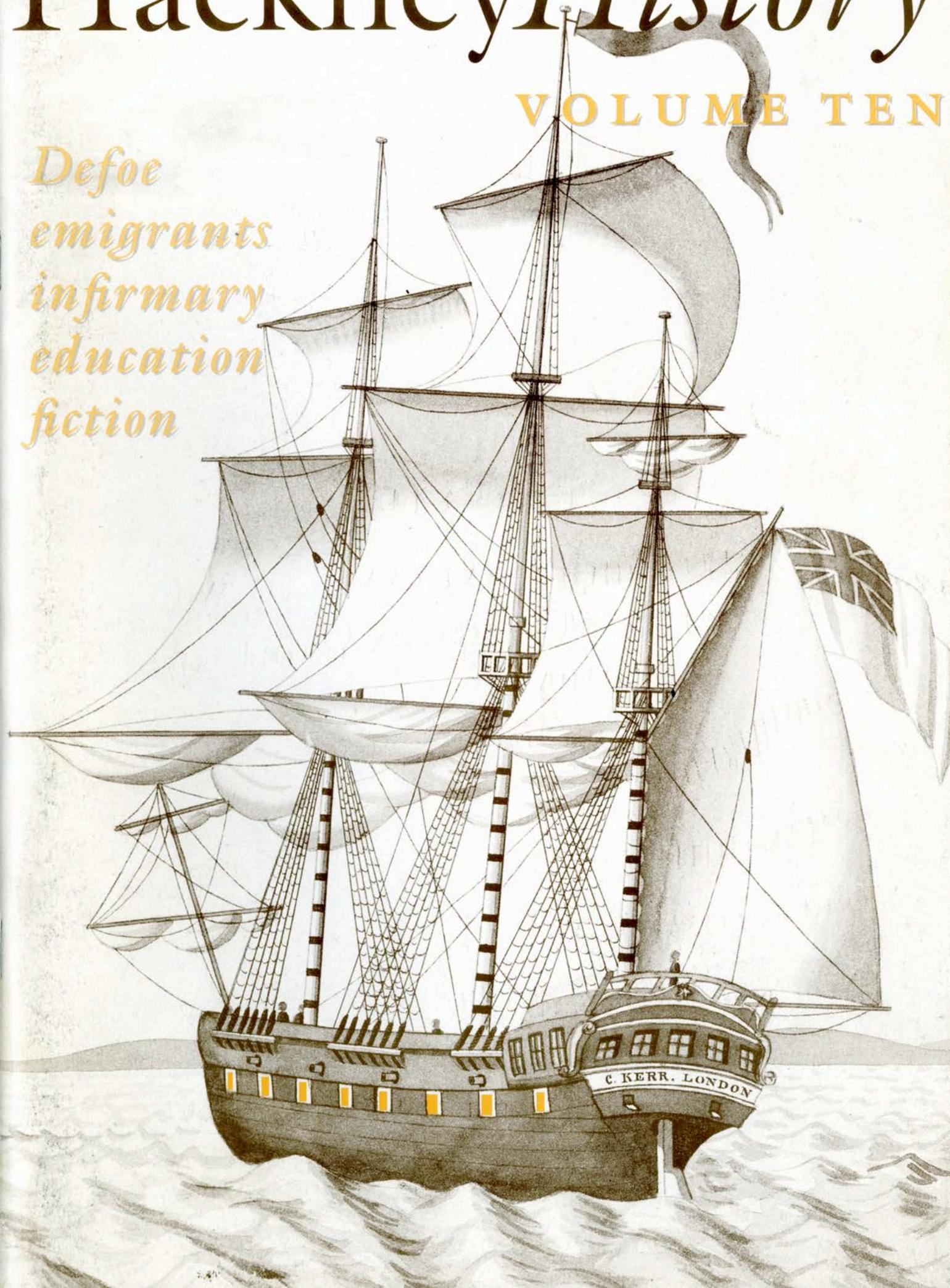


# HackneyHistory

VOLUME TEN

*Defoe  
emigrants  
infirmary  
education  
fiction*



# HackneyHistory

*In this issue -*

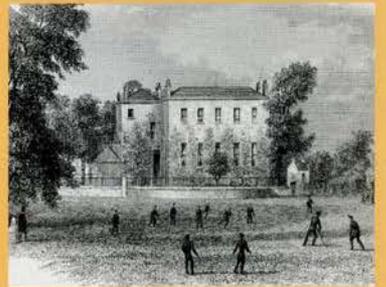
- Daniel Defoe in the local book collection
- female emigration to Australia in the early 19th century
- patients in the Hackney workhouse infirmary
- an innovative educator of the 1890s
- Hackney, Shoreditch and Stoke Newington in fiction



ISSN 1360 3795

£4.00  
free to subscribers

THE FRIENDS OF HACKNEY ARCHIVES



---

# HACKNEY *History*

---

*volume ten*

<i>Abbreviations</i>	2
<b>The Defoe collection</b>	<i>Sally England</i> 3
<b>The Refuge for the Destitute and female emigration to Australia</b>	<i>Liz Rusben</i> 11
<b>Patients in Hackney Workhouse Infirmary 1880-1885</b>	<i>Hermione Pool</i> 19
<b>School Field: an educational experiment</b>	<i>Geoff Taylor</i> 28
<b>'Terra incognita': a gazetteer to local fiction</b>	<i>Isobel Watson</i> 39
<i>About 'Hackney History'</i>	38
<i>Contributors to this issue</i>	51
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	51
<i>The Friends of Hackney Archives</i>	52

Published by the Friends of Hackney Archives  
(charity no. 1074493)  
c/o Hackney Archives Department  
43 De Beauvoir Road  
London N1 5SQ

Edited by Isobel Watson

Cover design by Jacqueline Bradshaw-Price

Printed by Instant Print West One

ISSN 1370 3795

© Friends of Hackney Archives and contributors, 2004

#### ABBREVIATIONS USED

BL The British Library  
HAD Hackney Archives Department  
LMA London Metropolitan Archives  
TNA The National Archives

Publications cited are published in London unless otherwise indicated.

## THE DEFOE COLLECTION

---

*Sally England*

---

#### **Introduction**

The Hackney Archives Department Webcat Project, made possible by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, was launched in the summer of 2003 with the aim of creating an on-line catalogue of the local studies collection, including the recataloguing and assimilation of items from the public library at Stoke Newington in 1985. The Stoke Newington items are of particular interest, as they include material relating to a number of authors with local connections who achieved national - and in some cases international - prominence. Most notable are Mrs Laetitia Barbauld, Isaac Watts, Edgar Allan Poe and Daniel Defoe.

Some way into cataloguing the Defoe section of the Stoke Newington collection - after grappling with works by Defoe (including 68 different Robinson Crusoes), works about Defoe, works attributed to Defoe, works once thought to be by Defoe but since discredited, and works with little or no obvious Defoe connection at all - I came across an article in the *Boston Public Library Quarterly* from 1955 entitled 'Problems of a Defoe cataloguer'. I knew, then, with a sigh of relief, that I was not alone.

Despite his being - as experience has shown -

one of the most prolific of English authors, producing several hundred pamphlets and tracts, to the general public Defoe remains known almost solely for *Robinson Crusoe*.



He remains almost untouched by popular historical biography - Puritanism and pamphleteering possibly not providing the colour and romanticism to attract a large readership. So it is perhaps worthwhile to outline Defoe's connections with Stoke Newington (and therefore the reasons why so much material relating to him had come to be held there) before examining the problems and puzzles relating to the collection.

#### *Defoe and Stoke Newington*

Defoe was born in Cripplegate, probably in the autumn of 1660. The births of his sisters Mary and Elizabeth are recorded in the registers of St. Giles' church for 1657 and 1659 respectively, but Defoe himself does not appear, and his birth date has to be assumed from other references to his age in datable documents. Perhaps Defoe's birthday and the date of Crusoe's shipwreck - 30th September - were the same.

Defoe's association with Stoke Newington began when he was sent to school at Charles Morton's dissenting academy at Newington Green, although the dates of his attendance remain undecided. From *The present state of the Parties*, in which he gives a short description of the academy, it is known that Defoe's fellow pupils included Samuel Wesley - father of Charles and John - and Timothy Cruso (later pastor at Crutched Friars in the City) who must have influenced the naming of Defoe's most famous hero.

Defoe's education was geared towards a career in the nonconformist ministry, but instead he chose to set himself up as a tradesman, probably partly funded by the £3,700 dowry brought to him by his marriage in 1684 to Mary Tuffley. Although his varied mercantile experiences provided the basis for one of his most interesting works, the *Complete English Tradesman*, Defoe was not a successful businessman, perhaps already turning towards letters rather than concentrating on figures. He was often faced with litigation and - his description in the *Tradesman* probably being based on personal experience - ultimately faced bankruptcy. It may have been that

Defoe had his fingers in too many pies to be successful, as from the limited records that survive it is known that he had dealings in hosiery, tobacco, lumber, horses, oysters, cheese, brick manufacture, commercial fishing, marine insurance, and the development of a diving-engine.

In 1692 one particularly unsuccessful venture brought Defoe back into connection with Stoke Newington when in April he agreed to purchase a local civet cat farm (an excretion scraped from the civet's perianal glands was used as a stabilising agent for perfume). Although he was already in debt to his former business partners James and Samuel Stancliffe, Defoe borrowed further funds from them to complete the transaction, and also borrowed from his mother-in-law Joan Tuffley.

He appears to have spent the money elsewhere, for no further payment for the farm or repayments to his backers were made, and when the civets were seized by the Sheriffs of London they were appraised at less than half the value originally placed on them.

Joan Tuffley sued her son-in-law for fraud, claiming that he had misrepresented the value of the civets. Soon afterwards he was faced with a Chancery suit for non-payment of a bill for £40. From his admittance that he had insufficient funds, it is clear that by now he was bankrupt. The breach with the Tuffleys cannot have been final, as Defoe later moved into the family home, but it is obvious that he misused Joan Tuffley's money and it may be that the family



*Defoe's house, as envisaged by Ernest Grisct*

only accepted Defoe into the house for the sake of his wife and children. The whole affair illustrates Defoe's lack of skill or success as a businessman, and has as unpleasant an odour about it as the civets presumably did.

Defoe can not have felt that Stoke Newington held bad associations for him. Living first with the Tuffleys and then at Kingsland in a house he had first inhabited during the 1690s, he made this his permanent residence, and it was here he wrote many of his most famous works, including *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders* and *Memoirs of a Cavalier*. The last title was possibly a retelling of the composite adventures of the three Fleetwood brothers, William, George and Charles. The latter - a renowned Cromwellian soldier - lived in Church Street during Defoe's school years.

#### *Two Stoke Newington houses*

Where exactly did Defoe live? Detailed examination during the 1940s and '50s of parish registers, vestry minutes and manorial court rolls by the American scholar Arthur Secord revealed new information about exactly which Stoke Newington houses - for there were two - Defoe called home. The first, on the north side of Church Street, was owned by Nicholas Clarke and adjoined what later became no. 106. It was here that Defoe moved from Hackney in 1708: a fairly new brick house, described in Clarke's will as having stables, out-buildings, gardens, orchards and yards.

Considering that in earlier years Defoe had been unable to pay a £40 bill, and appears to have been forced to live with his in-laws, this seems an extravagant property to take on. But Defoe had begun to make a successful living, as a gifted writer rather than as a bad businessman, and could now afford this large house with four acres of land which could be shaped into the garden of a fashionable English gentleman. The property remained in Defoe's name until February 1716/17, when it was taken over by a weaver. Defoe had by then already moved across the road and was living in a house belonging to a widow, Anne Sutton. It is here, at no. 95, that

a blue plaque now records his former home.

This house was later the home of Sophia Elizabeth Frend, who was to marry the brilliant mathematician Augustus de Morgan. Writing in the 1880s, she remembered her childhood home during the 1820s:

We were living at Stoke Newington, in one of those old houses with wooded grounds, of which so few remain near London... In my father's time it was the scene of many a pleasant gathering of men and women of all degrees of intellectual ability, and of every shade of political and religious opinion. The spot where the old house stood has become the center of a district of streets and shops, built where the tall trees grew, and nothing now remains to commemorate its existence but the name of Defoe Street.<sup>1</sup>

Surely Defoe would be pleased that the spirits of intellectual and religious toleration and enquiry lived on in the house after his death.

#### *Robert Drury and Robinson Crusoe*

Apart from the Fleetwood family, another local connection which may have impacted upon Defoe's work was the presence of the Drury family who, although they moved away soon after Defoe arrived in Stoke Newington, continued to own property in the area until 1764.

It is often believed that the events described in Defoe's best known work, *The life and strange surprising adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719), were based solely upon the adventures of the Scottish sailor Alexander Selkirk, who spent five years from 1704 on the uninhabited island of Juan Fernandez, off the Chilean coast, eventually arriving home in 1711. There is no doubt that Defoe knew of Selkirk's story. He states in *The compleat English gentleman* that he studied the writings of William Dampier, commander of Selkirk's first ship, and of Woodes Rogers, captain of the ship which rescued and returned him.

A second edition of Woodes Rogers' *A cruising voyage round the world*, which included his account of Selkirk's defection, was published in 1718, just a year before *Robinson Crusoe*, and this has led to a number of erroneous assumptions concerning Defoe and Selkirk. These include the accusation that Defoe had stolen Selkirk's manuscript from him after an encounter in



A late 18th century *Crusoe*:  
from an edition by Harrison and Co., 1781

Bristol and then claimed credit for it as his own work. Defoe scholar Maximillian Novak<sup>2</sup> has suggested that the probability of such a story being believed was increased by the general unfamiliarity with the extent of Defoe's writings, a situation which has changed little in nearly 300 years.

Defoe must have to some extent been influenced by the tale of Selkirk, but *Robinson Crusoe* is certainly not a fictionalised account of what happened on Juan Fernandez. For example, although Defoe may have borrowed some details from Selkirk, the locations and geography of his and Crusoe's islands are very different. This was not a result of ignorance, as Defoe had considerable geographic knowledge, his expertise on the Spanish Main having led to involvement in the production of an early atlas.<sup>3</sup> Also, Selkirk quarrelled with Dampier, and requested to be put ashore on Juan Fernandez. He was not shipwrecked at all - unlike the unfortunate sailor

Robert Drury. Drury's story may have come to Defoe from a source closer to home, and a year earlier than the supposedly influential second edition of Woodes Rogers' *Cruising voyage*.

*Madagascar, or, Robert Drury's journal* first appeared in 1729, and thus the published version could not have influenced Defoe's writing of *Robinson Crusoe*. However, the possibility remains that Defoe had heard of Drury's shipwreck from his family, or from mutual acquaintances, at a much earlier date. The name of John Drury appears in connection with Stoke Newington from 1701<sup>4</sup> until his move in 1708 to Loughborough, where he died in 1716. John left Stoke Newington property to various members of his family. His house, now 163-167 Church Street, was bequeathed to his wife Elizabeth, but was to revert to his son Robert should he return safely home: for 16 year old Robert had disappeared at sea in 1703. His ship had been wrecked off the coast of Madagascar, and all but four of the surviving crew massacred by natives. It was not until 1717 - after his father's death - that Robert was rescued and returned home to find himself heir to the Stoke Newington property.<sup>5</sup>

Whether or not Defoe and Robert Drury ever met, or the shipwreck became familiar village gossip because of the Drury family's local association, there are a number of other intriguing connections by which Defoe may have gained knowledge of Robert's adventures. That of John Curryer is perhaps incidental though still of interest, for Curryer was the scrivener to whom Robert Drury surrendered the rights to his Church Street house in 1721, and whose name also appears as a witness on the 1727 lease of a house to Defoe. More substantial is the connection found through George Virgoe, John Drury's close friend and fellow vestryman at St Olave Jewry in the City, and tenant of Defoe's Stoke Newington house between 1727 and 1729.

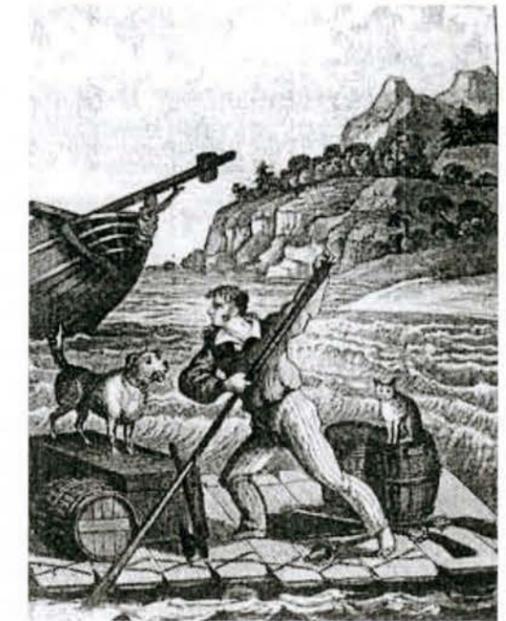
A third tantalizing thread twines around another of Defoe's works, *A true relation of the apparition of one Mrs Veal, the next day after her death, to one Mrs Bargrave at Canterbury, the eighth of September 1705*. That this account was long held

to be fictional but appears in fact to be true - at least Mrs Bargrave did exist, and did claim to have been visited by the spirit of Mrs Veal - is not of importance here. What is of interest is that William Young, father-in-law of Mrs Veal's brother William, was captain of the *Degrave*, the ship on which Robert Drury sailed and which was wrecked off Madagascar.

#### *Defoe in the Stoke Newington collection*

The accession books and card catalogue, inherited by Hackney Archives Department along with the Stoke Newington local collection, give very little information regarding a strategy for building and developing the Defoe collection. As it was catalogued, each item was given an individual accession number which was recorded in an accession book, but then as now items were accessioned retrospectively, so the date of entry into the catalogue does not necessarily indicate the date the item came into the collection. Thus no clear picture can be gained of how or when the collection was made. Nor do the accession books or the card catalogue detail the provenance of items, whether they were purchased or donated, where the donation came from or - if bought - the purchase price. Because of this paucity of information, the only evidence for the history of the collection is provided by the actual books, pamphlets and other Defoe-related items.

Because of the sheer volume of his output, it was beyond the capabilities of the Stoke Newington library - as it still is beyond Hackney Archives Department - to attempt a complete collection of all Defoe's works. It is clear, however, that the library made an effort to acquire copies of the more important editions of collected works, many including significant notes and essays. These include Hazlitt's *Memoir of the life and writings* in the 1850 John Clements edition, the first major Defoe biography by George Chalmers from 1790 reprinted in the 1871 Nimmo edition, and prefaces and notes attributed to Walter Scott in Bohn's *British Classics* of 1854-5. There are also smart limited editions, such as the 1895 Dent *Romances and narratives*



From the early 19th century Noble edition, after Stotbard

(limited to 500 copies) with an important introduction by George Aitken, and the 1907 Jenson Society of New York *Collected works* (number 868 of 1000), both of 16 volumes.

Anthologies of Defoe's more obscure works were also added to the collection, including the 3 volume adulatory *Life and recently discovered writings 1716-1720*, edited by William Lee in 1869. This, despite a poor critical handling of the new material it offers, is significant in that it fixed the Defoe bibliography until the work of John Robert Moore and James Sutherland in the 20th century. More recent works include George Aitken's *Later Stuart tracts* (Constable, 1903), William Payne's *The best of Defoe's 'Review': an anthology* (Columbia University, 1951) - the 'Review' being the radical newspaper published by Defoe between 1704 and 1713 - and Laura Ann Curtis's *The versatile Defoe: an anthology of uncollected writings* (George Prior, 1979).

What of different editions of individual titles? There are, inevitably, more copies of *Robinson Crusoe* in the collection than any other of Defoe's works, and although there is no first edition from 1719, there are copies of the second and third editions of the same year, and many various examples from subsequent years until 1981. Examples of the title pages and illustrations from

some of these are shown within the pages of this article. As well as various English editions, including one from Rivington's *British Novelists* series of 1820 edited by fellow Stoke Newington author Laetitia Barbould, and one from 1921 'carefully edited so as to bring it within the comprehension of young children' by another local literary figure, Joseph Shaylor. There are editions in Hungarian, German, Swiss-German, French, French translated from Latin, Latin, Welsh and one in Persian translated from Urdu.

Other Crusoe-related items include an extract from the *Harleian miscellany* relating the tale of Alexander Selkirk; J. N. L. Baker's 'The geography of Daniel Defoe' from the *Scottish Geographical Magazine* (1931), confirming Defoe's knowledge and skills as a geographer; the Swede Gustaf L:son Lannert's *An investigation into the language of Robinson Crusoe as compared with that of other 18th century works* (Heffer, 1910), and F.W. Boreham's rather strange *The gospel of Robinson Crusoe* (Epworth, 1955). This sees the novel as a spiritual pilgrimage, but makes no reference to the last part of the Crusoe trilogy, *Serious reflection during the life and surprising adventures of Robinson Crusoe and his vision of the angelic world*.<sup>6</sup>

Were library staff actively seeking out more unusual or obscure Crusoe items, or were they found, purchased or donated at random? It is now almost impossible to tell, but the result is certainly an impressively varied and unusual collection.

The notes and essays included in different editions brought early Defoe scholarship into the collection, and this was continued with the addition of important monographs and reprinted articles. Of local interest are E. Forbes Robinson's *Defoe in Stoke Newington* (Prewer, 1889), Arthur Secord's article of the same name from the *Modern Language Association of America* (1951), and A. J. Shirren's *Daniel Defoe in Stoke Newington* (1960).<sup>7</sup> Self-explanatory is the pamphlet *A brief account of the interesting ceremony of unveiling the monument erected by the boys and girls of England to the memory of Daniel Defoe, author of 'Robinson Crusoe', in Bunhill Fields cemetery, September 16 1870*. An annotation

inside the item describes how Defoe's lost original tombstone was later found and installed in the entrance to Stoke Newington library, along with a portrait bust. Both are now housed in the Hackney Museum in Reading Lane.

There are also articles focusing on obscure aspects of Defoe's life, such as F. M. Theodore Newton's 'The civet-cats of Newington Green' from the *Review of English Studies* (1937); George Day's undated 'Daniel Defoe, the tile-maker of Tilbury, Essex' from the *Essex Review*; and Spiro Peterson's 'Defoe's Yorkshire quarrel' from the *Huntingdon Library Quarterly* (1955). Peterson's articles, signed and dated 1981, appear to be donations, while John Robert Moore's hand-annotated 'The canon of Defoe's writings' of 1956 states that it was presented - presumably to the Stoke Newington library - in 1958. Were these authors acknowledging use of the collection or did the donations come via another route? These are among the puzzles of the collection which will no doubt continue to tease.

Two works of fiction are held which were inspired by Defoe: Neil Bell's Stoke Newington-set ghost story *Mystery at Mr Defoe's*, in the anthology *Argosy* of July 1952, and Robert Leighton's novel *The splendid stranger: a story of the Monmouth rebellion* (Sunday School Union, 1898) places Defoe at the Battle of Sedgemoor (where some critics believe he may have fought).

Among the monographs are *A catalog of the Defoe collection in the Boston Public Library* (1966), and two editions of one of the most important bibliographies, John Robert Moore's *A checklist of the writings of Daniel Defoe* (Indiana University, 1960 and 1971).

Since the reorganisation of local libraries, the relocation of the collection to Hackney Archives and lack of a dedicated local studies librarian, there have been few new additions to the collection. With constrictions of space and budget combined with the explosion of publishing in all sorts of media, it is not intended to acquire any further titles by Defoe himself, but to focus on scholarship about his life and works. In the light of this policy, recent acquisitions have included Richard West's *The life and strange sur-*

*prising adventures of Daniel Defoe* (Flamingo, 1998), Maximillian Novak's *Daniel Defoe: master of fictions* (Oxford, 2001) and a copy of Novak's bibliography from the *New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* of 1971.

To bring bibliographic holdings up to date, two recent works by Furbank and Owens have been purchased: *The canonisation of Daniel Defoe* (Yale, 1988) and *A critical bibliography of Daniel Defoe* (Pickering & Chatto, 1998). Contact has been made with Professor Novak at the University of California at Los Angeles in order to discuss various problems of attribution, and with the inclusion of critical works by himself as well as Furbank and Owens it has been necessary to record, within the new electronic catalogue, the fact that their respective bibliographies follow diverging schools of thought. Furbank and Owens prefer to remove many items from the Defoe canon established by Moore, to which Novak tends to remain faithful.

One problem in recataloguing the collection is the number of original anonymous pamphlets and tracts whose authorship, when acquired, was probably assumed to be, almost certainly, by Defoe. Most have had Defoe's name inscribed upon the spine. Many also have pencil notes on the title page, giving him as author. Subsequent changes in scholarship have in some cases confirmed works as being by Defoe; in others, as definitely not by him. In other cases still the waters have muddied, rather than cleared, around them.

The majority of 'difficult' items were originally held by Rochdale Public Library, although when and how they came to Stoke Newington is unknown: perhaps a library sale of stock, perhaps a donation. Possibly they were a job-lot which happened to include several Defoe items, with the remainder added to the Stoke Newington collection purely on the basis that they were contemporaneous with Defoe, and, once acquired, it was a shame to part with original 17th and 18th century material.

But this is pure speculation. Because the accession books and card catalogue give no details as to why the items were kept, and because Defoe

authorship is such a tangled and confusing area, considerable research is required into whether the titles have ever been linked to Defoe in any way, and, if so, whether that connection still merits their inclusion in the collection. For the cataloguer, gathering information to determine whether or not a particular item is by Defoe is somewhat easier today than for previous librarians, with on-line access to authoritative academic information, in addition to a variety of printed critical and bibliographic works.

A visit to the British Library to consult the English Short Title Catalogue database garnered information which allows some of the 'difficult' items to be definitely excluded from the collection, as they have no Defoe connection, and in some cases have positively identifiable authors.



'After a design by Grandville' from an edition of 1859

An example is *The female advocate...written by a lady* (1686), and known to be by Sarah Fyge Egerton. Others are sometimes attributed to Defoe, and so will be retained, as attribution remains unsettled, for there is always the possibility that future opinions will change, and Defoe will once more be brought back into the picture.

This is a danger which must be carefully considered before an item is disposed of, as it must always be remembered that collections are as much for the benefit of future users as they are for those of today.

Titles not by Defoe, but which have a definite connection with him will also be retained. One such is the anonymously published *A short history of the parliament*, of 1713, now known to be by Defoe's patron Robert Walpole. Further information from the British Library's catalogue and from COPAC (an online union catalogue of British university and national libraries) will be used in conjunction with the various bibliographic aids now held in the collection to make decisions on the 'difficult' items.

#### **The future of the collection**

As has already been mentioned, it is not intended to expand the collection by acquiring each and every edition of works by Defoe which is published in the future. However, the varied and valuable items already held are doubtless of interest and use to Defoe researchers, both amateur and academic. The electronic catalogue records created as part of the Webcat project will, from 2005, be available on the internet, and will thus draw attention to the items held by Hackney Archives, so encouraging use of an important, if not unique, collection. The number of items specifically relating to Defoe's Stoke Newington connections will be of particular interest to local users, and the continued acquisition of critical academic material can only complement the collection.

The tercentenary of Defoe's birth was celebrated in 1960 by an exhibition at Stoke Newington library of books, pamphlets, illustrative and other material - copies of the

exhibition catalogue are now held within the collection.

Sadly, there is no approaching Defoe anniversary which could be utilised to promote the collection and the new catalogue. What kind of exhibition, with what sort of media on display, might there be in 2031 to mark the tercentenary of his death? It must be hoped that by then the collection remains actively managed and used, and that the work of the Webcat project will have not been in vain.

#### **Notes**

1. That is, Defoe Road. Sophie Elizabeth de Morgan, *Memoir of Augustus de Morgan* (1882), 20.
2. Maximillian Novak, *Daniel Defoe: master of fictions* (2001), 540.
3. See, for example, J.N.L. Baker's 'The geography of Daniel Defoe' in *Scottish Geographical Magazine* (1931).
4. Drury had purchased a house in the village in 1701 but was not able to move in until 1702. In the meantime he had located what he thought was the pew in St Mary's church which went with possession of the house, and put a lock on its door. The church vestry removed the lock and sent it to Drury, the incident being duly noted in the vestry minute book of February 1701. (A. J. Shirren, *Daniel Defoe in Stoke Newington* (1960), 12.)
5. It was not until 1721 that he established his rights to the house through the manorial court, and then almost immediately surrendered them to another party.
6. Defoe wrote three books about Crusoe, the second being *The farther adventures...*, originally subtitled *the ...second and last part...*
7. Shirren was Deputy Town Clerk of Stoke Newington. The booklet was published by the Stoke Newington Public Libraries Committee.

#### **Other sources**

- Arthur Secord, 'Defoe in Stoke Newington', *PMLA Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. LXVI no.2 March 1951.
- Richard West, *The life and strange adventures of Daniel Defoe*, 1998.

## THE REFUGE FOR THE DESTITUTE AND FEMALE EMIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA

---

*Liz Rushen*

---

#### **Introduction**

The Refuge for the Destitute was a London-based charity which operated between the years 1804-1922 as a reformatory for convicted prisoners on their release from prison. The Refuge was primarily concerned with rehabilitating former prisoners, and through an extension of this work it became involved in the first scheme for large numbers of single women to migrate to the Australian colonies.

The emigration sub-committee of the Refuge (which evolved into the London Emigration Committee) supervised the despatch of 14 female emigration ships to the Australian colonies during the years 1833-1837. The records of the Refuge, held in Hackney Archives, hold details regarding the 1833 despatch of the first two ships, the *Bussorah Merchant* and the *Layton* (on which only 33 of the combined 451 passengers were from the Refuge).

After this date, and under the name of the London Emigration Committee, the emigration scheme was mainly handled through the committee's agent, John Marshall, and the details

are contained in the Colonial Office documentation deposited with the National Archives at Kew.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Origins**

The Refuge for the Destitute was founded in 1804, when the Revd. E. W. Whitaker and another gentleman were walking along a street and came across a boy crying. On questioning him, they discovered that as he had just been released from prison he was destitute and totally alone. Moved by this experience, Whitaker established a society to assist former prisoners with clothing, shelter and work training, in order to help them avoid the degradation of destitution.

The Refuge was established on two acres at Cupar's Bridge, Lambeth, and in 1811, due to work on the bridge, moved to Hackney Road, Shoreditch. By 1815 the Refuge catered for 100 men and 60 women on separate sites. At this stage, its operations were funded through donations by subscribers, bequests and large public dinners. Support was consolidated in 1813 when Lord Sidmouth (an influential vice-president)

REFUGE FOR THE DESTITUTE IN HACKNEY ROAD. *Jan. 13. 1818*

A General Meeting of the Governors of this highly laudable Institution met on Thursday at the City of London Tavern. The Report of the Committee of Superintendance was read, from which it appeared that fifty-two females have been admitted within the last year, while forty-nine have been discharged, and placed in occupations, in which they evince a disposition to recover moral character and pursue useful industry. The instances of failure on the part of those recommended to the Society, have, according to the Report, been much less than in any preceding year, and less also than might be reasonably calculated upon at any time among those who have been familiar with vice and depravity; for such familiarity must naturally render their reformation more difficult.

The females admitted to this Institution are employed in the laundry, in washing for other Public Institutions, as well as for private families, by which they have earned no less than 1300l.

As to males, the Society have admitted 48 from the prisons and from the hulks, while they have discharged 51, the greater part of whom are known to be comfortably provided for. But the Committee have also made provision for several persons discharged from the hulks, without admission into, or any incumbrance upon the funds of the Institution.

The men admitted are usually employed in shoemaking, tailors' work, carpenters' work, and in cutting fire-wood, the demand for which is very considerable from every part of the Metropolis, as well as in various other occupations suitable to their several circumstances and capabilities.

The peculiar cases of several men and women admitted into and effectually redeemed by the Society are speedily to be published.

For the last year the Income of the Society has been £5220 12 10  
The Expenses 6265 9 4  
So that the Committee have advanced 1000l. more than their receipt.

The Society has now under its protection no less than 65 females and 45 males; and the Report concludes with an impressive appeal to the Public, and an earnest entreaty for aid, to enable the Society to pursue its endeavours to relieve the most destitute.

## A newspaper report about the Refuge, 1818

facilitated a government grant, which continued until 1848. When this grant ceased, the male branch closed, and the female branch moved to the Manor House, Dalston Lane, where it continued to operate until 1922.<sup>2</sup>

The establishment of the Refuge was a typical expression of 19th century philanthropy. As stated in its first advertisement,

The object of this Society is to provide a place in which discharged criminals, destitute females, and all those poor who from absolute want of parish, settlements or employments, are little less than compelled to resort to robbery for support, and yet are desirous of acquiring in future an honest subsistence by labor, maybe employed until weaned from evil courses, and having gained habits of honesty, sobriety and diligence, they are capable of supporting themselves as useful members of society.

As the first reformatory in London for training former prisoners, the Refuge emphasised the personal responsibility of the former prisoners for their own rehabilitation. A resounding theme, expressed throughout the records, is concern for the women in particular. As ex-prisoners, they were doubly condemned by the society of the time: through their conviction, they were labelled as having 'lost their character', and were seen by respectable society as being of degraded morality.

## Inmates

This concern can be seen in the casebooks which were kept for each year, recording the details of the individual women; and in the minute books, which are full of accounts of interviews. The matron's comments include such remarks as:

Kate Christmas - a strange girl; always obedient and attentive; good-tempered; but she seems to be idle and lethargic and her habits are dirty.

Jane Eliz. Watson - a good tempered cheerful girl; greatly improved in steadiness and always obedient and willing to receive advice.

Matilda Todd - has been reported for very passionate outbursts [sic] on two or three occasions; but I have found her willing to listen to advice; she seems honest, outspoken and clearly wishes to do well.<sup>3</sup>

Applicants to the Refuge were interviewed each Saturday, and to be admitted had to express their own commitment to their rehabilitation. The records contain many details of these interviews, and provide an insight into who was admitted or rejected. For example, on 15th April 1812 there were seven applicants for admission, both male and female. Four were admitted as meeting the criteria, and three were rejected as 'not destitute' or 'parish able to support her' or 'age is wrong'.<sup>4</sup>

Typical of the admissions was Mary Anne Rickastone, aged 19, who stated in her interview that her parents were dead, and that she had been on the streets. She had been confined seven days in the House of Correction for stealing 4 shillings out of a till in a linen draper's house,

where she was in service, 'that in consequence lost her character and is desirous to be admitted into the establishment - admitted'.<sup>5</sup>

The aim of the Refuge was to reform the inmates, returning them to their family or friends or to secure appropriate employment. Over the years, the Refuge became known for its training of domestic servants, and in 1814 it was noted that 'no difficulty was experienced in placing out the females, when discharged, in respectable service'.<sup>6</sup>

## Emigration

What really set the Refuge apart from countless other 19th century charities was the innovation of its committee in emigration work. The archives reveal that the committee had a philanthropic enthusiasm for emigration as a life-enhancing option for some of Britain's destitute men and women. Emigration was first seen as offering possibilities for the inmates in 1817, when eleven boys were sent out as apprentices to a wine-grower in South Africa. In the next decade several inmates also went to Canada and the Australian colonies.

In January 1831 the first reference to collective female emigration is made in the Refuge archives, when it was minuted that the committee and the Government discussed the details of 'an arrangement to send large numbers of females to Australia as servants under the care of a matron'.<sup>7</sup> The Government was not ready for such a proposal, and this plan did not come off. However the overwhelming numbers of paupers in Britain forced the Government to re-consider emigration as an option. They needed to find more effective ways of relieving the poor than the assistance offered by parishes. During 1831, the Government began to see emigration as having many benefits, especially when it was realised that it could be funded from the sale of colonial lands.

When the Government issued a notice calling for assistance with a plan for collective female emigration, the Refuge committee responded immediately. The members were well placed to assist: they philosophically supported

the Government in devising this scheme, they had gained considerable experience in housing and training destitute females throughout the first 30 years of the Refuge's operation, and had the necessary administrative resources. Their annual report for 1832 gives the committee's rationale for involvement in the scheme:

The most novel feature in the events of the past year, has been the arrangement entered into by His Majesty's Government with the Committee of the Refuge, for sending over a large number of young women as emigrants to New South Wales, under the immediate care of the Superintendent and one of the Matrons of the Female Establishment, who are authorised by Government to take charge of them, both during the voyage and on their first landing in the colony. On the pressing demand for female services in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, and the advantages likely to result from a judicious and discriminative transmission of young women to those colonies, it is needless to enlarge.<sup>8</sup>

There is strong evidence of another reason why the Refuge was interested in assisting with the scheme. By the end of the 1820s, their funds were getting very low. In 1827 the government grant was reduced from £5000 to £4000, and it was again reduced in 1830, to £3000. It was also experiencing a 'considerable falling off in subscriptions and donations'. £740 was received in 1830, compared with the large sum of £2118 in 1816;<sup>9</sup> and the purchase and renovation of the new male branch, in 1826, plus alterations to the female branch, had impacted on their financial state. Added to this, in 1829 they had discovered that the clerk and the superintendent of the male branch had been defrauding the charity. By the end of 1831, £2683 was owed to the treasurer, Edward Forster.<sup>10</sup>

The Government accepted the committee's offer to assist with the emigration scheme. It was agreed that their role included selecting the women from recommendations from clergy and magistrates, delivering the women on board ship, selecting and inspecting equipment and provisions, liaising with the shipping agent regarding the details of shipping, and supervising the finances. The despatch of emigrant ships was a huge undertaking, and the processes the committee developed became the basis for the procedures adopted by future emigration schemes.

staunchly advocated the immigration of Scottish families. He was extremely hostile to any scheme involving unaccompanied single women, and conducted a vindictive campaign through his newspaper, *The Colonist*. Other contemporary newspaper proprietors and editors, supporting those colonists who objected to the financing of this scheme of immigration from the sale of Crown lands, sought to attack the women participants in the scheme as a means of attacking the policies of the imperial government.

The most vocal contemporary British critic of the scheme was the owner of *The Times*, John Walter. Walter alternatively praised and criticised the committee for its work, and his thundering attacks on the work have been linked to his attempts to destabilise the Government due to its recent amendment of the Poor Laws. By 1836, the combined attacks by colonial and British critics in Parliament and the press contributed significantly to the Government's decision to replace female emigration with family emigration.<sup>14</sup>

Although several inmates of the Refuge emigrated to the colonies on subsequent emigration committee ships, (e.g. seven Refuge women emigrated on the *Strathsfieldsaye* in April 1833), in July 1836 the emigration committee resolved to cease operation. This decision allowed those members of the committee who were also on the committee of the Refuge to concentrate on their first priority, destitute former prisoners.

There was still much work for them to do. Admissions to the Refuge continued to grow, and the Queen herself became its patron in 1838. The Refuge continued to receive public support, and before its closure in 1922 several individuals were assisted to emigrate, but the Refuge did not become involved in any further scheme for collective emigration.

### *The emigrants*

And what of the Refuge women who had been assisted to emigrate under the scheme? The women who emigrated on the London Emigration Committee's ships voyaged to the Australian colonies with nothing more than the expect-



*The 'Charles Kerr' (1826), an emigration ship*

tation of a job and the prospect of marrying. There was no promise of a network of support; no government assistance beyond a place to stay on first arrival and assistance in finding a first job. Under these difficult conditions many of the women thrived, as shown in the following three examples of Refuge women.

**Isabella Atkinson** was the daughter of a wine and spirit merchant of Rotherham in Yorkshire, apprenticed to a dressmaker in Sheffield where, according to her interview, she committed 'various acts of dishonesty'. Isabella wanted to make a fresh start in life and was admitted to the temporary branch of the Refuge in 1832. Recommended for emigration by Mr Hoskins, the Refuge superintendent, she joined the women on the first ship, the *Bussorah Merchant*, and was employed as a dressmaker by Captain Dumaresque of Port Stephens. Within a year, she married the convict George Cornice in Maitland and embraced the challenges of colonial life, petitioning the governor when she experienced financial difficulties through her marriage to Cornice.<sup>15</sup>

In January 1833, **Harriet Baldwin** was recommended for admission to the Permanent Branch

of the Refuge by a clergyman. As the Permanent Branch was full, she was admitted to the Temporary Branch and in March, when the opportunity arose, she elected to emigrate. She was approved and joined the women on the *Bussorah Merchant*. Soon after arrival, she married settler Daniel Wells and they had four daughters. Harriet died in 1860.<sup>16</sup>

**Emma Wallington** was the literate daughter of a cow-keeper in New Road, Regent Street, with four brothers and no mother. In December 1832, 22 year-old Emma was admitted to the Refuge following her two-month sentence in the Old Bailey for stealing an umbrella from her employer, for whom she made shirts. Though her father at first consented to her emigration on the *Bussorah Merchant*, he rescinded his approval. It is apparent that he again changed his mind, and Emma emigrated on the second ship, the *Layton*. On arrival, Emma was employed in Sydney by Mrs Kerr as a needlewoman, at £10 per annum. Three months later she married the convict Charles Job, who followed various occupations including shoemaker, clerk, storekeeper and teacher. They settled in northern New South Wales and raised two daughters, both of whom became publicans.<sup>17</sup>

What remains from the scheme, emerging from the women's stories, is a clear picture of enterprising women; women who embraced the opportunity to create a new future for themselves in the frontier life of the colonies. While a quarter had spent time in British charitable institutions prior to emigration, these women were not the 'sweepings of the workhouses' as they have been so commonly portrayed. They made a voluntary decision to emigrate and were carefully selected for their fitness. They proved to be adventurous and courageous women who embraced the challenges of colonial life.

For the vast majority of these women, their expatriation had improved the quality of their lives and placed them in a position of comfort and security denied to their sisters who remained in Great Britain and Ireland. To understand why these women came to the Australian colonies,

the processes by which they were able to emigrate, the reception they received and the decisions they made once in the colonies, is to understand an essential element in the development of Australian society in the early years of free settlement.

### Notes

For further details on the emigration scheme and the women who emigrated, see Elizabeth Rushen, *Single & Free, Female migration to Australia 1833-1837* (Victoria, Australia, 2003), and her website, [www.rushen.com.au](http://www.rushen.com.au).

1. HAD D/S/58; TNA, Colonial Office (CO) papers.
2. Information based on historical notes compiled by the Refuge Chaplain, Revd. H.M. Baker, in 1888, D/S/58/2.
3. These comments are hand-written on a copy of the 1856 Annual Report, D/S/58/2/18.
4. General Committee, Minute Book 3, D/S/3.
5. HAD D/S/4/9/165, 9 June, 1832.
6. Baker, HAD D/S/58/2/42.
7. General Court of Governors, Minute Book 4, HAD D/S/4/1/3-4, 7-8.
8. 1832 Annual Report, HAD D/S/58/2/15.
9. HAD D/S/4/1/3-4, 7-8.
10. HAD D/S/58/2/9-10, 1832 Annual Report.
11. HAD D/S/4/9, 2 February 1833.
12. HAD D/S/4/9, 25 August 1832.
13. Buckinghamshire Record Office, D/X 685/2/15-19.
14. Letter Forster to Grey, 6 December 1836, TNA CO 384/41.
15. HAD D/S/4/9/196, 11 August 1832, State Records of New South Wales (hereafter SR NSW) 4/2439.2, New South Wales Births, Deaths, Marriages Registration (hereafter NSW BDM) 1834 1415 18; SR NSW 4/2414, 38/9776.
16. HAD D/S/4/9/262, 20 January 1833; D/S/4/9/291-3, 9 March 1833; NSW BDM 1833 2676 74A; NSW BDM 1860 8797 122B.
17. HAD D/S/4/9/243, 29 December 1832; D/S/4/9/279-80, 23 February 1833; D/S/4/9/285-7, 2 March 1833; D/S/4/9/375, 13 July 1833; D/S/4/9/385-7, 17 August 1833; SR NSW 4/2226.4; NSW BDM 1834 1158 18; information supplied by Ron Wallace, Queensland, and Colin Goodwin, New South Wales.

# PATIENTS IN HACKNEY WORKHOUSE INFIRMARY 1880-1885

---

*Hermione Pool*

---

## *Introduction*

I was first prompted to examine the life and activities of the workhouse infirmary of the parish of St. John at Hackney when I started working in the area in 1985. At this time it had long been known as Hackney Hospital, but the shadow of its origins seemed to live on in the collective mind of the local community. I discovered that some patients declined to attend appointments at this hospital. They told me that it was the old workhouse, and that they'd never come out, if they had the misfortune to be admitted.

Similarly a patient who had failed to attend an appointment at the newly-opened Homerton University Hospital explained that, since it was built on the site of 'the old fever hospital', one never knew what foul disease might come up from the ground beneath.<sup>1</sup>

Ironically, the only two groups of patients left in Hackney Hospital's wards, in its final years before closure in 1995, were the mentally ill and the elderly, perhaps the very groups with most reason to have bad associations with the institution's former life.

This article concentrates on 1880-85, because this is the only period before the end of the 19th century for which separate infirmary records survive. The records of the infirmary committee, which reported to the Board of Guardians, provide, for 1879/80, a level of detail not replicated in the Guardians' minutes. As such they offer, though for less than the period of a year, the basis for an exploration of the nature of health care both in the infirmary and in the wider community.

Although this article concentrates on the life of the infirmary, it is difficult to separate this entirely from that of the workhouse. Not only was the infirmary an integral part of the workhouse until the mid-19th century, but it continued to be located in the workhouse grounds, and eventually overtook the latter in numbers of inmates. Similarly, it is difficult to look at the work of the infirmary at this time, and the ill health of the local population that used it, without looking also at the other hospitals to which paupers were sent from the infirmary. Those without the means to pay for a doctor would

## *Workhouse Infirmary*

---

have little alternative but to present themselves at the workhouse. Such patients were usually admitted to the infirmary first, and then transferred to another hospital if appropriate. Even by 1880, although germ theory and its relation to infectious disease was well established, it was not fully understood, and there was limited understanding of psychiatric illness, to say nothing of treatments or cures. The Hackney workhouse infirmary made extensive use of the fever and smallpox hospitals at Homerton (on the site of the present Homerton Hospital), and the Middlesex county lunatic asylums at Banstead, Colney Hatch and Hanwell. Similarly the London Hospital, as the nearest big voluntary hospital at the time, was used if specialist medical care was deemed necessary and a good case for admitting a pauper patient could be made to the London's governors. This happened relatively infrequently. Occasionally the London Hospital would treat such pauper patients from local workhouse infirmaries free of charge; otherwise, the parish had to pay.<sup>2</sup>

A surprising number of patients were fortunate enough to be discharged, both from the lunatic asylums and the smallpox and fever hospitals. In such cases, it was often the Hackney workhouse infirmary to which they returned.

## *The early years*

Parish poor relief originated in the 16th century; each parish had its own system of rate collection and distribution, according to local custom. It was not until the beginning of the 18th century that the workhouse system began. The Poor Relief Act 1722 enabled a parish or group of parishes to rent or buy premises where they could look after their sick and infirm, while offering relief only to such others as were prepared to be admitted and to work to support their upkeep. Management was by unpaid trustees, supervised by overseers of the poor (prominent local property-owners), and the churchwardens. The wardens, overseers and trustees of St John at Hackney started to think about constructing their own workhouse premises, and eventually



*The south side of Homerton High Street, about 1880. The workhouse is to the right of the picture.*

in 1741 the parish leased a gabled house on the south side of Homerton High Street. Around this time it held between 41 and 74 people.<sup>3</sup> Within its first decade a room within the workhouse was reserved for sick paupers, to be cared for separately from the other paupers. A matron and one nurse were employed, and were quickly charged with the care of the insane as well as the sick. This was in effect the workhouse infirmary, and though it increased in size dramatically over the next two centuries (especially between 1830 and 1900), and also changed its name more than once, it remained on the site of the original workhouse throughout its existence.

During much of the 18th century, as London grew in size, so did the population of Hackney and so did the number of its paupers and workhouse inmates. In 1775 there were 220 workhouse inmates; by 1813 this figure had risen to 280.<sup>4</sup> As well as taking more inpatients, the infirmary also provided an outdoor medical serv-

ice for those paupers who could not afford a visit from the doctor.

**The 1834 Act**

Because of the increasing cost to parishes of supporting their poor populations, there was a demand for reform of the Tudor poor law. The result, the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834, has been widely discussed.<sup>5</sup> The emphasis came to be primarily on deterring idleness. Gradually, after the Act, workhouses were populated increasingly by the sick and feeble-minded rather than the able-bodied.

The Metropolitan Poor Act 1867 made the first explicit acknowledgement of state responsibility for the destitute sick. It obliged Boards of Guardians (in charge of workhouses after the 1834 Act) to establish workhouse infirmaries in London, to be run separately from the workhouses. The Metropolitan Asylums Board established by the Act had increasing responsibility for asylums, hospitals for infectious diseases,



The Homerton High Street entrance to the Infirmary, about 1900

orphans' homes and workhouse infirmaries.<sup>6</sup> Hackney workhouse and infirmary continued to expand throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century; by 1885 there were 997 able-bodied paupers in the workhouse and 382 infirm in the infirmary.<sup>7</sup> The expansion necessitated new infirmary buildings to accommodate the increase. These were the subject of protracted discussion, and arguments with the architects as to the cost and design.

**Births and deaths**

Between April 1880 and the end of September 1881, the only period for which detailed 19th century records exist, the infirmary itself had a minimum of 346 patients and a maximum of 380. There were between 40 and 60 deaths every quarter (an average of 3 to 5 a week) throughout this time, and live births ranged from a minimum of 12 to a maximum of 28 in a quarter, an average of one to two births a week. Every week one or two women were admitted, usually when already in labour. Those admitted to the workhouse while pregnant were transferred to the infirmary when they went into labour. After delivery, they were then 're-admitted' to the workhouse with the baby, whose name was separately entered as an admission.

Many of these mothers, while not shockingly young, were probably unmarried. From the middle of 1885 onwards the quarterly numbers of births were recorded in a register with a breakdown showing not only males and females, and stillbirths, but also whether each child was legitimate or not. In a typical quarter, April to June 1885, of the 28 births in the infirmary 20 were illegitimate.

**Adult patients**

The turnover of the infirmary alone was considerable, with approximately 200 admissions and the same number of discharges every quarter; an average of about 16 to 17 a week.

At this time (as with the diagnostic categories for lunatic paupers discussed later) the kinds of illnesses resulting in admission to the infirmary were sometimes vague, and sometimes surprisingly specific.

There was a small but consistent number of patients admitted with sexually-transmitted diseases like syphilis and gonorrhoea. George Pope, a thirty year old labourer was admitted via the workhouse on 7th August 1880 with gonorrhoea. He stayed for two weeks, after which he was discharged at his own request. However, exactly a week later he was re-admitted with orchitis.<sup>8</sup> A week earlier, a 30-year-old female machinist was admitted via the workhouse with gonorrhoea, and a 25-year old called William Ling came in to the infirmary with syphilis. In January 1881 a 30 year old called Frederick Drake was one of several patients admitted with rupia, a diagnosis of ulceration in the secondary stages of syphilis. Another 31-year old male was admitted with the diagnosis 'ulceration of the scrotum'.

The infirmary was a regular 'port of call' for the local constabulary, who brought in prisoners whom they usually removed the same day to the police court at Worship Street. Unfortunately, unlike other admissions, the reasons for bringing these prisoners to the infirmary were seldom recorded. An exception is an entry for 24th August 1880, when Mary Winterbourne aged 30 was brought in by two police constables as having 'attempted suicide'. The following day she was removed again to Worship Street.

Very occasionally there were remarks under the 'discharge' section of the registers which recorded that the prisoner/patient was removed by a detective or by order of a magistrate as being suspected of a serious crime, such as attempted murder.

**Children in the infirmary**

Children were frequently listed as admissions to the infirmary and were sometimes brought in by the police. On Thursday April 8th 1880, one was 13-month-old Annie Tail, brought from Worship Street where her mother had been charged with being drunk and disorderly.

Children were often admitted to the workhouse when their family situation appeared to have broken down completely - both parents either ill, in custody or simply absent. During the last week of March 1880 a 30-year old mother



*The Godsalve brothers on the infirmary roof during summer; early 20th century*

was admitted to the workhouse with four children under ten years old, including five-month old Alice, as having been 'deserted' by her husband. The following week two other children were 'taken to mother in (the) infirmary', where they were recorded as admissions. In May, six year old Caroline Plummer was admitted to the infirmary, having entered the workhouse the previous week with her eight and ten year old brother and sister. Their mother had deserted them and their father was in custody. More commonly, children were admitted because of the illnesses of childhood such as croup,<sup>9</sup> whooping cough, smallpox, and 'diarrhoea'. Two-year-old Elizabeth Sutton was admitted on 8th April 1880 with croup, and by the following day she was dead. In January 1881 six year old Wilfred and three year old Alfred Gresham were both admitted with whooping cough. Often such infectious cases were transferred on to the Fever Hospital, conveniently virtually across the road from the infirmary.

#### **Other patients**

Many of the other diseases listed as reasons

for admission to the infirmary were the chronic diseases of old age including rheumatism, paralysis, hemiplegia<sup>10</sup> and apoplexy (stroke), dementia, 'senile decay' and even 'general decay'. Interestingly a 60-year old was admitted with a 'severe bedsore'. There were also numerous admissions with diagnoses of 'bad legs' or more specifically 'ulcers of the legs', the scourge of many a nurse in the 21st century and presumably also the 19th.

Chest conditions were common, diagnoses like 'bronchitis' frequently being cited. John Sullivan aged 54 was admitted with 'haemoptisis',<sup>11</sup> and though tuberculosis is not listed as a discrete disease at this time, there were many admissions for phthisis, a general wasting or atrophy later associated with tuberculosis of the lungs.

Scrofula and erysipelas<sup>12</sup> were also regular diagnoses during this period. But one or two additional admissions in this period deserve attention. 63 year old Samuel Cole was admitted with diabetes on 9th December 1880, and died three days before Christmas.<sup>13</sup> It is the only such diagnosis made in the entire register. In February 1881 Mary Deshot, aged 30, was admitted with

'lead poisoning'. Her listed occupation was 'charwoman', and one might speculate that, with the regular lead polishing of so many fireplaces in the Victorian period, this was a case of an occupational disease.

Finally a 68-year old woman was admitted in January 1881 with peritonitis.<sup>14</sup> This serious condition, often caused by (for example) a perforated appendix or stomach ulcer, is usually acute and puts the patient in a lot of pain. However, in this poor woman's case, the records show that it took her two months to die in the infirmary.

#### ***The mentally ill and the mentally impaired***

From Hackney workhouse's 18th century records, it seems that it always had a few resident lunatics and imbeciles. These were quite often harmless, and either wandered about the workhouse freely, or remained in the infirmary. However, the Lunacy Act 1845 recommended that lunatics be transferred to asylums and not be kept at infirmaries and workhouses, which was considered 'unhealthy'. In addition, it was cheaper to send lunatic paupers to asylums as, by reason of their insanity, they were usually unable to work to support their care in the workhouse.

Some continued to be sent to the various private mad-houses e.g. Warburton's asylum in Bethnal Green, or Hoxton House, used by Hackney before the Act.<sup>15</sup> Other private asylums with Hackney paupers were Camberwell House, and Peckham House in south London, where 6 Hackney lunatics were kept from 1880-5. Fisherton House in Salisbury had 11 lunatics in 1880-5, of which one recovered, seven were transferred to Banstead and three died, one within nine days of admission. Several other county asylums (Kent, Essex, Sussex) and the City of London Asylum all had charge of Hackney lunatics. It seems that they were sent wherever there was space for them.

The private asylums also continued to be used by Hackney until nearly the end of the century, when the registers show many patients being transferred from several of them to Banstead. The reasons for transfer are not given, but the

cost of keeping a pauper in a private asylum was greater than for any of the county asylums. In 1880 Colney Hatch, Hanwell and Banstead cost approximately 9 shillings per week per inmate, whereas the private asylums of Bethnal Green, Hoxton and Camberwell cost 17 to 19 shillings per week.

Unfortunately there are no diagnoses listed in the early registers relating to lunatics. However it may be possible to gain some idea of the reasons for these paupers' admissions to asylums by looking at the sorts of 'psychiatric' conditions listed in the admission registers for the Hackney infirmary. This was frequently the first place where people were brought when suffering from mental illness, before transfer to an asylum. The admission registers for the infirmary for 1880-5 list such patients as suffering from 'nervous debility' or 'imbecility' or 'of unsound mind' or simply 'lunacy'.

Occasionally there are more detailed entries when paupers were admitted to the workhouse before being sent through to the infirmary and 'discharged', i.e. transferred to an asylum. 35-year old shoemaker Edward Carey was admitted to Hackney Union Infirmary as a 'lunatic' on 4th April 1880, and was transferred to Hoxton House private lunatic asylum on 8th April. 41-year old Maria Sturgeon was admitted to the infirmary on 18th April, and by the 23rd had been transferred to Camberwell House Asylum. 21-year old James Holmes was admitted on 3rd May 1880 with 'nervous debility' and the day before 24-year old Lucy Hughes came in to the infirmary suffering from an 'unsound mind'. Both were transferred to Colney Hatch Asylum within three days, in a party of five, presumably making travel and escort arrangements more efficient and cheaper.

While the diagnoses of these patients are frustratingly vague, there are occasionally some surprisingly specific and - to the modern ear - more recognisable diagnoses. Eliza Buckland for example was admitted to the infirmary on Saturday 8th May 1880 with a diagnosis of 'mania', and likewise 43-year-old Mary Higgs was admitted exactly two weeks later with a diagno-

sis of 'monomania'. Neither was transferred to Colney Hatch until the Wednesday following admission. One wonders whether these admissions, both over a weekend, made quick transfer less easy to arrange, or whether Wednesdays were the day patients were routinely transferred to Colney Hatch. Either way, it must have been difficult to manage such seriously ill patients on the infirmary wards for even a few days.

17-year old Walter Trollope was admitted in April 1881 with 'mental despondency', although interestingly he was not sent off to an asylum, but kept at Hackney for five weeks, after which he was discharged at his own request. One other patient was recorded as having 'depression', but otherwise there was no mention of this as a specific disease category.

The other glimpse of possible reasons for admission to the lunatic asylums comes from careful recording of whether patients were considered a suicide risk, or a risk to others, at the time of their admission. For example a 58-year old gardener, admitted to Colney Hatch from Hackney in January 1880, was 'believed to be' suicidal, and also dangerous to other people. In April 1880, only 4 months after admission to Colney Hatch, his death was recorded (though not the cause). In 1882, a 16-year old girl was admitted to Colney Hatch and observed on admission to have 'been strange for 12 months' and to 'talk of jumping out of the window'. In 1881 a 25 year-old man from the Salvation Army was admitted having 'attempted to throw himself out of the window' and a 38-year old female domestic servant was admitted with a three-year history of threatening her mother.

There are one or two other unusual 'psychiatric' diagnoses (or mis-diagnoses) recorded in the admission registers for the period. The first involves a 22-year old servant called Mary Ann Harkshome. She was admitted on Boxing Day 1880 with a familiar 'psychiatric' diagnosis of the time, 'nervous debility'. However, only three days later she was transferred to Homerton Fever Hospital, not to a lunatic asylum. It raises interesting questions about her presenting symptoms at admission. These are unfortunately not on record.

A young man aged 18 called Arthur Archer was admitted from the workhouse to the infirmary on 31st July 1880 with a diagnosis of 'onanism', a term used for masturbation. During the last week of that July and the first week of August three other paupers were admitted from the workhouse to the infirmary, two with gonorrhoea and the third with syphilis. At this point it might seem reasonable to wonder about the sexual activities of the workhouse! But six months later, on January 14th 1881, Arthur Archer was recorded in the infirmary's discharge register as having been transferred to the Metropolitan Asylum for Imbeciles at Leavesden. With this information, a slightly different light is thrown upon his original 'diagnosis', and also the way in which inappropriate behaviour was understood and managed.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, Hackney had two men from the parish who had been committed to Broadmoor asylum for the criminal insane. One un-named man had been admitted in July 1870 aged 25, and remained listed in Hackney Union's register of lunatics until October 1884, when his maintenance (14 shillings per week) was taken over by central government under the Criminal Lunacy Act 1884. He presumably remained in Broadmoor, but Hackney ceased to be responsible for him, and he therefore disappears from the records. The other recorded Hackney inmate at Broadmoor was Frederick Hunt, age unknown. The register does not list the reason for either admission.

#### **Smallpox and fever**

Hackney did not escape the various epidemics of cholera and smallpox. The 1860s in particular were a decade of epidemics in London, and it was an outbreak of 'relapsing fever' (caused by bacteria transmitted by ticks and lice) that led to the building of the fever hospital and smallpox hospital in Homerton, just up the road from the Hackney workhouse and infirmary. The fever hospital opened in December 1870 with a total of 200 beds, immediately occupied by Hackney paupers. The adjacent but separate smallpox hospital was opened in February 1871



*The infirmary buildings, early 20th century*

to deal with the increase of cases following an epidemic of smallpox in London. Recorded admissions to the fever hospital for 1885 seem to include paupers suffering from smallpox, although in one or two cases they appear to have subsequently been transferred 'to the smallpox side'.

#### **Smallpox hospital admissions**

The Smallpox Hospital's admissions register for 1880 shows a total of 38 Hackney paupers, predominantly with the main type of smallpox, although five patients had other variants of the disease.<sup>17</sup> Only four of these patients were more than 30 years old. 13 were 12 years or younger, the youngest being Archibald Keeble, aged six months, and Charles Knight, aged three weeks.

But the following year, as the epidemic grew, 80 cases - over twice as many - were admitted to the hospital, 36 in January and February alone. Once again only 12 of these patients were over 30 years old. In a two week period from the end of January 1881, three people with the same surname were admitted: 40 year old George Richardson first, followed by 18 year old George Richardson (George junior perhaps) and eight days later, 39 year old Emma Richardson.

The numbers of smallpox cases for 1882-5 were variable, with none recorded for 1882, although a four year old was admitted with 'scarlatina'. In 1883 there were twelve smallpox cases and a two year old with 'scarlatina'. There was a rise again in 1884 with 99 cases, but only 24 in 1885.

One other rather unusual admission is recorded. On 19th October 1880 the death is recorded of thirty-two year old William Staines. There is a note that a post mortem and inquest showed the cause of his death to be 'traumatic peritonitis from self-inflicted wound previous to admission'. One is left wondering why this patient was admitted to the smallpox hospital and not to the fever hospital unless he had contracted smallpox in addition to the peritonitis. For this early period of record keeping, it is also a remarkably detailed entry with the post mortem result included in the discharge column of the register. What did 'self inflicted prior to admission' mean? Attempted suicide is the most obvious conclusion to be drawn but may not be the only one.

In the parish at large, smallpox and its management took a considerable amount of the time of the medical officers, the vaccination officers and the Hackney Board of Guardians. During

the repeated epidemics of the 19th century, smallpox was a source of much ill health amongst the paupers of Hackney, resulting, as it did, at best in long periods of hospitalization, at worst - and frequently - in death.

Between July and September 1880 the Guardians, who met weekly, considered the subject of smallpox several times. In July, the public vaccinator for one of the eight districts in the parish requested that the day for smallpox vaccinations in his district be moved from Mondays to Wednesdays or Thursdays. The Board referred the matter to the District Dispensary at the workhouse for their consideration. Perhaps this was because of the logistics of supplying the vaccines to the right place at the right time. (Modern practitioners have similar problems.)

Next, the Board considered a letter written from their counterparts at St Mary Abbott's in Kensington, another metropolitan parish with a large workhouse. They urged Hackney to petition Parliament quickly to prevent the Vaccination Acts Amendment Bill being made law. The Bill proposed (amongst other things) that no parent who had been fined for failing to get his/her child vaccinated should be liable for further penalties. (The fine was 20 shillings (£1).) The Hackney Board agreed to a petition proposed by St Mary Abbott's, enabling them to respond, when Greenwich made a similar approach, that they'd already sent their petition in.

Eight weeks later, in September, the vaccination officer, Frederick Shorter, submitted a long report for the Guardians' consideration. It concerned the current state of an outbreak of smallpox in the early summer that had necessitated 'a house to house inspection of infected neighbourhoods and other localities where the disease has expected to break out'. Shorter was pleased to report that the outbreak had now nearly died out. But he went on to state that in his experience (on two previous occasions) 'smallpox is not likely to become epidemic if the above measures are set in motion as soon as cases become numerous and if vaccinations and other sanitary measures such as prompt removal of patients and disinfection of houses and clothes

(as has been recently done) were at once seen to.' In 'nearly no case' was a second smallpox patient diagnosed from the same house.

At the same meeting, Higgins the vaccination officer for the second district reported that a Mr. W. J. Chapman of No.123 High Street Stoke Newington had neglected to have his ten month old son, Frederick, vaccinated in spite of repeated requests. The Board agreed that a letter be written to Mr. Chapman saying that it was not the Guardians' wish to take out legal proceedings against him in the matter, so they urged him to get his son vaccinated immediately and send the relevant papers to the vaccination officer.<sup>18</sup>

#### Conclusion

The infirmary was a busy place during the 1880s. Its population continued to rise in the last years of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. But both medical and nursing care and its equipment and facilities gradually improved. Science in general and medicine in particular developed, medical diagnoses and treatment became more specific, and nurses gained more training.

But the infirmary, being on the same site as, and still essentially a part of, Hackney workhouse, continued to attract all the shame and stigma of poverty.

Nevertheless, its committee's minutes reveal innumerable little touches of kindness and humanity. On Christmas eve 1879, the medical officer reported that 'evergreens' had been sent in from two local dignitaries, presumably to brighten up and decorate the wards for Christmas. Just before Easter 1880, the committee requested the Guardians that the patients be given buns (presumably hot cross buns) and the baker be paid extra for working the preceding night to produce them. In May 1880 a gift from the Religious Visiting Association of a box of oranges was delivered for distribution to the patients. The Sunday visitors to the sick requested that a larger number of gentlemen visitors be permitted to come in on Sundays, as the current visitors could not get round all the wards in the

time allowed. The committee felt that there should also be some lady visitors coming in weekly 'for the purpose of conversing and cheering the patients'.

Paul Montair has suggested that Hackney workhouse in general was not as badly run as other workhouses in east London.<sup>19</sup> But as a small window into the world of 19th century medicine, the infirmary records reveal much of the day-to-day struggle of coping with the health problems of a growing but poor population, and some of the issues described show striking parallels with the concerns still being faced in today's NHS.

#### Primary sources

LMA, Hackney Board of Guardians (HA/BG series): minute books 1881-5; infirmary visiting committee reports 1879-81, registers of lunatics in asylums 1851-1889, annual returns of lunatics chargeable to Hackney 1880-2, Hackney Union workhouse admission and discharge registers 1880-5. St Bartholomew's Hospital archives: Hackney Infirmary records (admission and discharge register 1876-1924; birth register); Homerton Fever Hospital (EMR/7/1); admission and discharge register 1870-1885; Homerton Smallpox Hospital (register of deaths 1871-5).

#### Secondary sources

G. M. Ayers, *England's first state hospitals and the Metropolitan Asylums Board 1867-1930* (1971).  
M. A. Crowther *The workhouse system 1834-1929: the history of an English social institution* (1981)  
C. Dickens, *Selected journalism 1850-1870* (1997, ed. Pascoe); *Oliver Twist* (1837).  
D. Hunter, 'The poor law in Hackney a hundred years ago', *Hackney History* 9 (2003).  
D. Mander, *Strength in the tower: an illustrated history of Hackney* (1998).  
P. Montair, *Swelling grounds: a history of Hackney Workhouse 1729-1929* (1995).  
M. Rose, *The relief of poverty 1834-1914* (1986).  
D. Wright, 'Asylum nursing and institutional service, a case study of the south of England 1861-1881', *Nursing History Review* 7 (1999).

#### Notes

1. There was an 'outbreak' of MRSA (methicillin resistant staphylococcus aureus) infection at the hospital within weeks of its opening.
2. There is no mention in the relevant records of the German Hospital. The Metropolitan Hospital did not open its Hackney building until 1885.
3. Mander, *Strength in the Tower*.
4. Montair, *Swelling Grounds*.
5. For example, Rose, *The Relief of Poverty*.
6. Ayers, *England's first state hospitals*.
7. There was a corresponding rise in Hackney's general population from 31,047 in 1831 to 163,681 in 1881.
8. Inflammation of a testicle.
9. Inflammation of the throat and airway.
10. Weakness down one side of the body, often the result of a stroke.
11. Coughing up blood from the lungs.
12. Respectively, tuberculosis of the lymph nodes of the neck and a skin infection causing inflammation and blistering.
13. Insulin treatment for diabetes was not discovered until 1922, in Canada.
14. Infection and inflammation of the abdominal cavity.
15. E. Murphy, 'The madhouse keepers of Hackney', *Hackney History* 8 (2002).
16. R. Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles: a history of madness in England* (1987); Penguin (1990) 203ff.
17. Variola confluens was the commonest diagnosis. Two patients had V. haemorrhagia, and three V. maligna.
18. Vaccination against smallpox was compulsory following the Compulsory Vaccination Act 1853. A vigorous anti-vaccination movement grew up in response to the legislation (see Nadja Durbach, "'They Might as Well Brand Us': working-class resistance to compulsory vaccination in Victorian England", *Social History of Medicine* 13(1) (2000), 45-62).
19. *Swelling Grounds*, above.

#### Links

<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~peter/workhouse/index.html> (survey of workhouse sites, compiled by Peter Higginbotham).

## SCHOOL FIELD: AN EDUCATIONAL EXPERIMENT

*Geoff Taylor*

### *'Payment by results'*

Hackney was well known for its private schools in the 17th and 18th centuries, but as it developed from Middlesex village to London suburb these schools disappeared. Yet at the end of the 19th century, even as state-funded and state-managed education was being established, a private elementary school thrived for a short time in South Hackney. School Field was a not-for-profit establishment; indeed its proprietor used his own resources to support the school. His motive for this generosity was a desire to show how making government grants to schools dependent on pupils' performance in official tests and inspections had affected education for the worse. When the school closed, its proprietor collected specimens of his pupils' work and privately published them, introduced by a memoir by himself. What is probably the only extant copy of this book is in the British Library; this article is based on it.<sup>1</sup>

During the 19th century, British governments came increasingly to realise that the education of the mass of the people was vital to economic progress and could not be left, as hitherto, to religious, charitable or private enterprise schools. At first, the state simply provided funds to sup-

port schools run in the old ways. As education secretary to the Privy Council until 1849, Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth encouraged governments to take a greater interest in what went on inside the schools, nevertheless leaving the curriculum and standards broadly in the hands of the schools and their teachers. The snag with this approach was that it gave the schools little incentive to raise either attendance - which was still voluntary - or standards. In 1862, the new vice-president of the education board, Robert Lowe, introduced what he believed was the solution to this: his system became known as 'payment by results'. In order to be sure that the Government was getting full value for the money it was now putting into education, the grants were made heavily dependent on the pupils' results in nationally administered tests based on the year-by-year national syllabus. Moreover, the tests involved only what were officially regarded as the most significant subjects. At first these were reading, writing and arithmetic, with history, geography and science being added in 1875. Schools were put under additional pressure after 1870, as schooling for most children under 14 became compulsory, yet still not free. Despite poorly-trained teachers, often inadequate build-

ings, and many pupils whose parents resented compulsion or were unable to give them much practical encouragement with their school work, the schools still had to see that their pupils did well in the tests if they were to earn the grants they depended on.

Whatever may have been the positive results of Lowe's 'payment by results', there were undesirable consequences only too obvious to those most closely involved in education. These will come as no surprise to contemporary readers. Teachers taught to the tests; they focused on mechanical learning rather than understanding; they neglected untested subjects; they subjected pupils to unreasonable pressure to do well; they sometimes even falsified test results.<sup>2</sup>

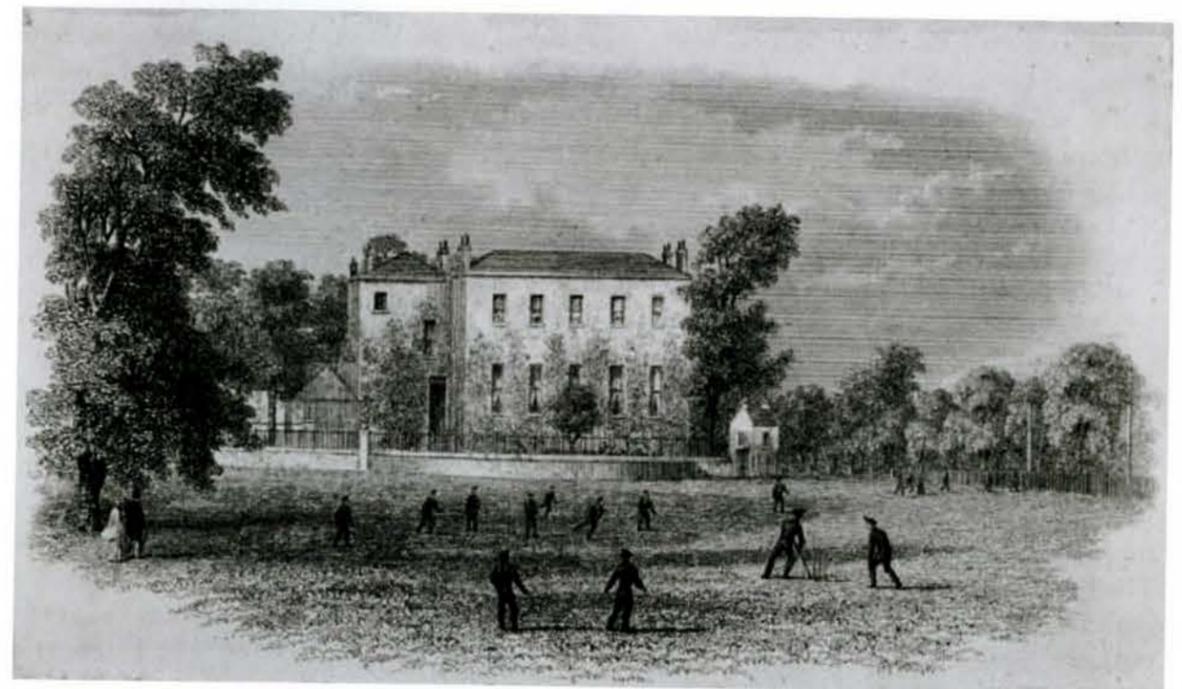
### *Sargant of School Field*

Edmund Beale Sargant (1855-1938) was among those who saw the difficulties the system was placing in the way of children's educational development.<sup>3</sup> He had studied maths and physics at Trinity College, Cambridge, graduating with high honours in 1878. He entered the civil service in 1884, working in the education department. Sargant was later to criticise the

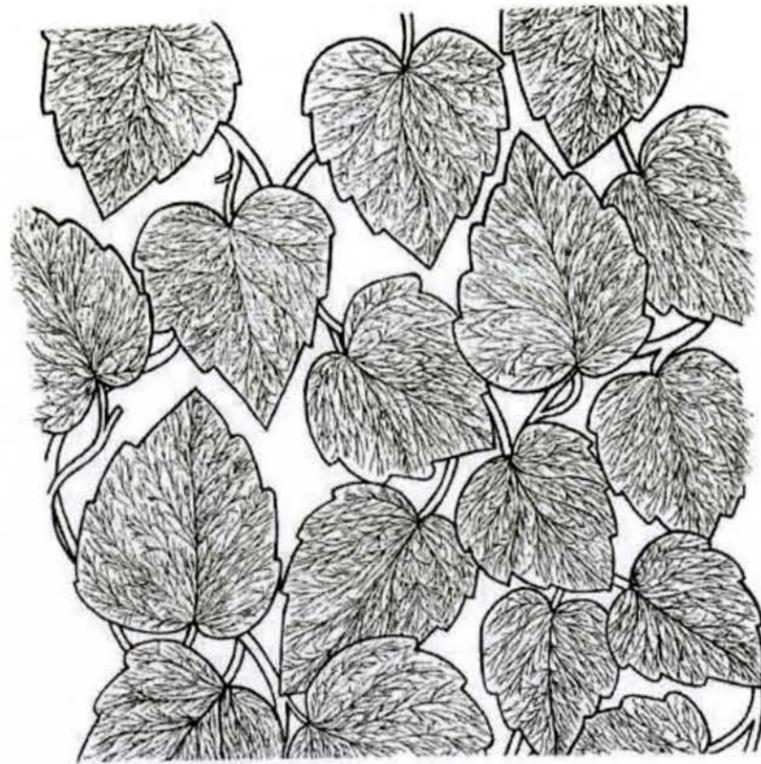
situation in elementary schools in the 1880s, and identify its cause:

The method of awarding grants of money ... on the results of the individual examination of children still formed the keystone of our system of popular education. Only the infant schools were exempt from the operation of this law, and consequently it was only in infant schools that the teaching was unconstrained and natural. Elsewhere, I speak of course generally, one witnessed the flog, flog, flog necessary to bring up the schools to the standard of that annual examination, upon which the golden food of the school depended. If, in any one year, the nourishment slackened, the school grew thin, the thin school rapidly became a starveling: no wonder that, to avoid this, teachers applied the lash - the mental lash - to lagging children to bring them into line, and that, once in line, they cared about them no more.

Sargant's response to the difficulties created by 'payment by results' was to open his own school, in South Hackney. In 1887, he took a lease on the large 18th century house that stood on the site of what is now Meynell Gardens, looking out onto Well Street Common. Meynell Crescent had yet to be built, so the old building was rather out-of-the-way. The house had been used as a school before, under the name Grove House, and already had classrooms built onto it, but there had been a fire and the building had stood empty for some time before Sargant



*The school building seen from Well Street Common, about 1850, when it was known as Grove House*



Design in chalk, from mulberry leaves, by Emmeline Letch, aged 14, a pupil at School Field, 1893

took the lease. It needed extensive renovation before it could be opened once more as a school, this time under the name School Field.

In April 1888, Sargant issued a circular to his 'neighbours of South Hackney', announcing the opening of the new school and outlining the principles upon which he intended to operate it. The sense of idealism, if of a perhaps rather patronising kind, is immediately evident, for the school is to be

for the education chiefly of the children of the poor ... but not of the poor only. It is a benefit to the young of all classes to be taught together: it breeds truer sympathies in the children of the wealthy and it refines the manners of the poor.

Not surprisingly, this desirable social comprehensiveness turned out to be difficult to achieve; a list of their occupations shows that parents were drawn practically exclusively from the working classes, mostly from manual occupations. The list incidentally bears witness to the wonderful range of manual skills that were possessed by South Hackney people in the 1890s: School Field parents included a watch-maker, shoe-maker, cabinet-maker, fringe-maker, sail-maker,

sign-writer, stone-mason, flower-maker, and carpenter, as well as an agent for the Prudential Society and a Salvation Army colonel.

Readers of Sargant's circular were left in no doubt that he saw the education of children as a co-operative effort shared between school and home. Insisting that children turn up at school on time - those who didn't were sent home - was merely the start. Sargant asked his pupils' par-

**SPRING**

*Come join us in our merry play,  
Don't stay indoors this sunny day  
Before the fire to pout.*

*Lessons are done and put away,  
Come help us pick the scented May,  
Spring calls the children out.*

Perhaps Sargant's own interest in poetry encouraged 13 year-old Grace Cherry to experiment with this less common rhyme scheme and metre in 1893.

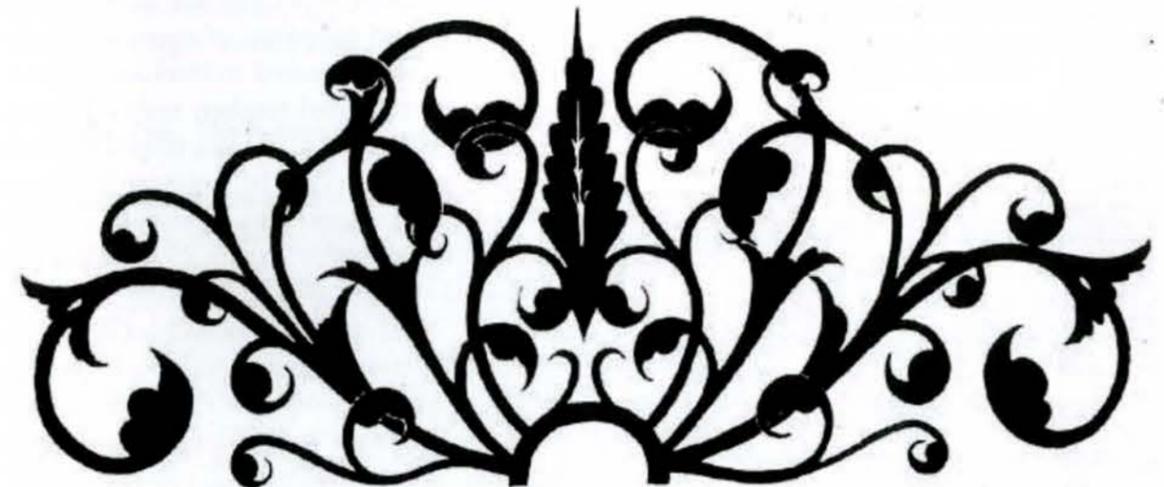
ents to 'always speak sympathetically and earnestly to your children of their school life'; he clearly expected his pupils to be asked about the school day when they returned home. Aware as he was that home and school must have different roles in a child's life, he nevertheless told prospective parents that 'the foundation upon which both home and school rest should be the same. Fear ought not to be the sanction of the school and love of the home, but love of both.' In order to keep home and school 'working in harmony' with each other, Sargant expected parents to attend meetings with teachers every month; one suspects that he intended at these meetings to try to develop what today are called parenting skills.

**The School Field curriculum**

Strikingly, the first subject mentioned in the circular was Religious Instruction, then a serious bone of contention between non-conformists and Anglicans. Sargant expressed his view, shared with most progressives of the time, in the words of Matthew Arnold: 'Religious instruction is a formative influence, an element of culture of the highest value, and more indispensable in the popular school than any other.' But he insisted that there would be 'no doctrinal

teaching whatever in this school, whether it be that of the Church of England, of the Roman Catholic Church, of the Wesleyan or any other body.' At School Field, this meant that religious instruction covered moral principles, Bible stories and the learning of some Psalms and other biblical poetry for class recitation. It is likely but not certain that collective prayers of a non-denominational nature were said.

As far as literacy was concerned, the aim was to be 'exact expression in speech' and 'clear writing.' Sargant proposed to spend little or no time on teaching grammar, spelling or 'copper-plate' hand-writing. As so often in considering the views of reformers, it is important to remember that Sargant was trying to redress a balance; he was certainly not saying that grammar, spelling and hand-writing did not matter, merely that they were neither the be-all-and-end-all of literacy education nor the truest test of its success. They were in any case best absorbed by becoming familiar with high quality literature, to plenty of which Sargant's pupils were exposed. 'Accurate pronunciation and just emphasis in reading aloud' were to get 'careful attention'. In practice, Sargant found that silent reading was more effective than reading aloud by individuals, except 'during the quiet hours of sewing in the



Design for ironwork by Charles Coombes, aged 15, 1892

afternoon.' He was particularly concerned to encourage his pupils to enlarge their vocabulary and to speak with a less marked London accent. Experience was to show that class recitation was a powerful tool in attaining these objectives; favourite recitation pieces included Robin Hood ballads, Cowper's *John Gilpin*, Lear's Nonsense Songs, Browning's *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, and extracts from Macaulay's *Lays* and from Shakespeare. The children's imagination as well as their literary style was stimulated by the works of the brothers Grimm, Andersen, Defoe, Scott and Maria Edgeworth, as well as by Greek and Norse myths.

The circular announced that 'great pains will be bestowed upon the teaching of arithmetic.' But here too the intention went beyond current practice: it was not merely to give children 'the power to work out sums faultlessly', necessary though that certainly was in the days before calculators; it was to help children to understand mathematical principles. Moreover, 'There is no other subject ... by which the reasoning faculty may be so certainly developed and strengthened.' Another subject to receive 'more than the ordinary amount of time' was music, perhaps in part for similar reasons, but no doubt also as part of Sargant's plan to 'cultivate the artistic taste' of his pupils. This was to be further encouraged

by modelling in clay, which would have been unusual in an elementary school, and by instruction in drawing. 'Even the youngest child in the school will be allowed to exercise its love of invention in design and colouring.'

Other subjects mentioned in the circular included geography, science, history and 'the simple truths of social economy.' With these as with the others, 'the central aim will always remain the same: to educate each child, so that his best powers may be developed for service in after life, not to make the greatest show at an annual examination.'

**The pupils**

About 35 pupils enrolled at first, and the number eventually reached 80, of whom almost 60 per cent were girls. On average they stayed at School Field about three years, and leavers were quickly replaced. There was one class each for the six to eight and eight to ten-year-old children, and two for the 10-to-14 age group, presumably for girls and boys separately. These four classes were taught by just two teachers, with assistance from two pupil-teachers and occasionally from Sargant himself, who continued to be a civil servant.

The head teacher, Miss Firks, was recruited by Sargant from a school in Devonshire where she had been so 'profoundly dissatisfied with the conditions under which she was working' that she had showed symptoms of stress, which disappeared after she moved to Hackney. She was at least a certificated teacher, unlike her colleague, Miss Holbrook, whose arithmetic lessons were nevertheless judged by Sargant to have been 'among the small amount of first-rate instruction in that subject to which I have listened'. The pupil-teachers were able young people who had completed the elementary school syllabus and were learning, on the job, how to pass on their knowledge. Two School Field pupils, Ethel Turner and Annie Jones, stayed on as pupil-teachers.

**Unconventional methods**

Sargant described some of the unconventional methods employed at School Field. He borrowed

from a Mr Cook, a teacher at London Fields Board School, the idea of a school magazine lithographed from the work of the children. 'Scarcely anything [he wrote] has done as much, as this magazine, to weld home- and school-life together. Not one of the numerous visitors, who flit through the classrooms, has seen this secret spring in action, or guessed its true importance.' That was because they would not have seen the editorial process. Twice a month, in the evening, many of the children met together to select or to reject work that had been put forward for inclusion. The minutes of the previous meeting were read formally before the children discussed the submissions under the chairmanship of one of the older pupils, who acted as editor. Perhaps Sargant had not been looking closely enough when he wrote that 'I have never seen a boy or girl take it ill, that his attempt has been rejected', but he did not miss 'the glow of pleasure, when a tale has been received with acclamation'. The selected work, some of which had been written or drawn at home by children keen to see their efforts reproduced in the magazine, was collected together, lithographed and bound in a specially designed leather cover. The range of powerful social experiences the children would have had during this process is obvious.

Although the school rooms were full of pictures and other items, including school pets, intended to stimulate pupils' imagination and to develop their artistic taste, Sargant wanted

his charges to experience and respond to a much wider range of stimuli than could be brought into school. A local trip - onto Well Street Common, to find and describe what might be found there (a pet monkey, on one occasion); or to marvel at an almond tree in blossom in nearby St John of Jerusalem churchyard - was cheap and easy to organise. The same could not be said for more ambitious expeditions, which included outings to the Royal Academy, the National Gallery and the South Kensington museums. A typical exercise at an art gallery would be to describe a painting carefully, and to try to imagine what emotions might be running through the minds of those depicted. At the Victoria and Albert museum, the children would study how patterns might be created from leaves and flowers before returning to try their hand at pattern-making, using as their models chrysanthemums and vines from Sargant's garden at School Field.

Sargant loved his pupils, 'their tears and laughter, their dullness and vivacity, their humility, their love of justice and self-government, their quick obedience, their impatience of restraint'. Yet the frankness of his published descriptions of his star pupils makes for uncomfortably intimate reading. For example, Charles Coombes ('or Kunz, as it should really be written') arrived at School Field aged ten 'a lubberly boy, of unprepossessing face and rolling gait ... with no decision of will, yet with many of the qualities which go to the making of the mere mob-leader'.

Design from *Oak Leaves*

Charles Coombes. Aged 19 years 1890.



**THE ALMOND TREE**

*What a fairy like tree is the Almond with its pink blossoms. The twigs are so delicate that it seems as if the flowers are growing in the air, and have been enchanted by the fairies. Even the gentle swaying of the wind causes them to fall, making a carpet fit only for Titania to rest her dainty feet on, for the old saying goes "Pink and green are fit for a Queen."*

Sargant explains this exercise: 'Composition by the First and Second Classes, aged 10-14 years, 1894. The children, after going to the churchyard close by, where an Almond Tree was then in full bloom, wrote down each his or her own impression. When they had compared their different accounts, they chose out the aptest phrases, and thus composed this in praise of the Almond Tree.'

## 'ON STRIKE'



*The picture with the above title, is being exhibited at the Royal Academy, and has been skilfully painted under the brush of Professor Herkomer, R.A. It represents, most likely, the dock strike, which happened about a year or two ago, for the man's clothes are of the dock style, with his trousers tied up at the knee. He holds a pipe in his hand, and his hat under his arm, while with the other hand, he is putting some tobacco in his pipe, pressing it in with his thumb, in true workmen style. His hair is rough and untidy, and his face has a look of firm determination on it, as he leans against the wall of his house. His wife with the baby in one arm, has the other on his shoulder, and is supporting herself by leaning on him. The baby's face has the same contracted brow as his father, and there seems to be a determination in him too, as he clutches his little hand, with a dark frown. A girl is standing behind of about eleven years old, and has the same miserable imploring look about her as her mother, and it is strange how in both cases, the same expression is seen in the faces of father and son, and mother and daughter.*

13 year old Henry Wright went on a school trip to the Royal Academy in 1891. Among the paintings he saw was one by the remarkable Hubert von Herkomer recording the desperation and determination that had recently won the 1889 strike for the 'docker's tanner'. The School Field teachers encouraged their pupils to read, rather than merely describe, the paintings they saw. Henry had 'only recently joined the school' in 1891, and his handwriting 'fell much below the usual standard' so this piece had to be copied out again before being lithographed.

Or Ethel Turner, who, 'brought up by two maiden aunts in an old-fashioned way,' faced 'the special danger of narrowness and gentility'. Or again Emmeline Letch, who so often was absent because she was 'under the surgeon's knife', and whose 'defective utterance' was courteously dealt with by the other children. All these and others Sargant was proud to have helped rescue. Charles won a first prize as a lithographer's apprentice; Ethel lost her 'tendency to pedantry' and became a pupil-teacher; while of Emmeline, Sargant wondered 'if her happiness in her work has not had its share in keeping her alive'.

Sargant's contacts in the educational world seem to have shared his high estimation of what had been achieved at School Field. Students from the Cambridge Training College for Women Teachers and the Maria Grey Training College were among those brought to the little school by their tutors, to learn from its educational methods and to savour its atmosphere. One visitor told Sargant that what was impressive was that the children 'all manage themselves ... and there's not a wooden child among them'.

**Closure**

A number of things conspired to bring about the closure of School Field. Because Sargant felt it necessary to follow the London School Board in abolishing all school fees in 1891, the shortfall that he had covered himself increased considerably. Then in 1892, the Board opened a large three-decker elementary school in Lauriston Road,<sup>4</sup> which, though it seems not to have affected demand for places at School Field, certainly indicated locally the Board's intention to make places available for all parents who wanted for their children the wide range of facilities provided in Board schools.

In any case, the system of payment by results that Sargant had objected to was progressively abolished following the 1888 report of a Royal Commission under Sir Richard Cross. This deprived School Field of much of its *raison d'être*, though Sargant hoped to keep his relatively small school open because he regarded the 'vast ma-

chinery of Board school' as not helpful for at least some pupils.

But his lease was up, and the owners of the building received a better offer, which they accepted. The school's closure in the summer of 1894 was announced in a letter to *The Standard* which invited anyone interested in education to visit the school during its last months to see what had been achieved. It was the impending closure that suggested to Sargant that he collect some of the best of his pupil's work in a permanent record of School Field's achievements, with an introduction by himself. Unusually, not only are the children's poems, compositions and drawings lithographed from their originals, but Sargant's introduction too is reproduced in his own handwriting.

The better offer for the building had come on behalf of the East London Deaconess Community, a Church of England organisation led by Mother Alice Bannister. The building spent the last years of its existence as All Saints House and was demolished in 1934, when the site was sold to build Meynell Gardens.<sup>5</sup> Yet Grove House/School Field/All Saints House has not quite disappeared, for the rubble of the old building can still be seen in the garden walls of Meynell Gardens.

**Retirement and reflection**

As he prepared to close School Field, Sargant had two plans in mind. One was

to take Emmeline [Letch, aged 15] and Edith [Jones, aged 13], for the late summer and autumn months, away to the country, upon the edge of some breezy heath: to give them pencils and brushes, and let them write a story for children, ornamenting every page with the leaves and flowers and fruit they find in their rambles.

That no-one in Sargant's position would propose such a plan today suggests either a great change in social attitudes or a rise in prurient suspiciousness. His second idea might strike us as less questionable: he planned to open a boarding school for the orphaned children of pauper parents, whose education was normally left in the hands of workhouse-schools of indifferent quality. Whether or not he put either of these

plans into practice is not known.

Sargant finally resigned from the civil service in 1899, and after travelling in Rhodesia, Australia and Canada went to work in South Africa under Lord Milner, as Director of Education in the Transvaal and Orange River and, later, as his education adviser. But for his age - he was Milner's contemporary - he might have been regarded as a member of the 'Milner Kindergarten', the group of clever young men selected by Milner to run South Africa; perhaps, given his evident interest in the educational methods of *Kindergärten*, Sargant was the source of the phrase. As Milner's Education Adviser, he sought and received advice about the educa-

tion of the black population from Booker T. Washington, the great black American educationalist.<sup>6</sup> After leaving South Africa, Sargant contributed an article about education there to *The Empire and the Century*, an Imperialist manifesto published in 1905.

Continuing the interest in poetry he had shown during his School Field years, Sargant published a slim volume of his own poems in 1911.<sup>7</sup> Though he could hardly be counted a significant poet, his contemporaries placed him in the Georgian group, along with such notable poets as Rupert Brooke, G. K. Chesterton, D.H. Lawrence and John Masefield.<sup>8</sup>

As for the children who, Sargant believed, had

## WELLS STREET

*Wells street on Saturday night is one of the busiest thoroughfares in Hackney, go down there on Saturday afternoon, and you will see men pushing barrows along to the places where they stand, men unpacking boxes full of apples and oranges, flowers of the season, oilcloth, kettles, and pans vegetables and almost anything that anyone wants. The butchers hang up the meat in their shops chopping and sawing it into small joints then standing back on the curb, just as an artist does when he is putting the finishing touches to a picture; looking to see if it is arranged properly.*

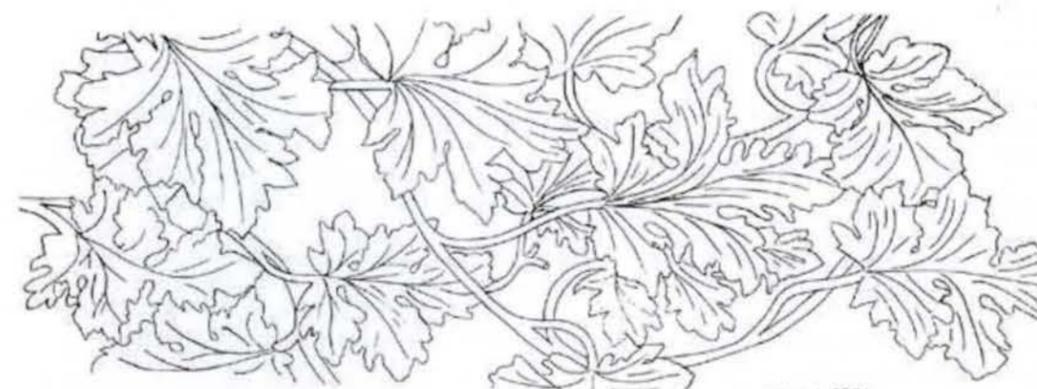
*Now the people begin to flock in greater numbers, men light their naphtha lamps and there is a fried fishy smell; caused by these lamps, the butchers and different street vendors all shouting out their different wares in discord, and there is quite a din; then sometimes a Salvation Army band comes along and helps to swell it still more.*

*People along there with perambulators and children, and the children with sweets and apples, everything being so cheap there. Ice cream Jacks are besieged with children, boys and girls clambering all over the stalls, and this busy scene keeps on till about 12 o'clock at night and then the people begin to disperse.*

*Occasionally there is a Punch and Judy show, with a swarm of open mouthed children standing around, listening to the squeaky voice's of the puppets as they jump about in the show.*

In his description of Well Street market, written in 1893, 13 year-old Willie Woodland has made several grammatical and spelling mistakes that have, boldly, not been corrected before publication. It is a good example of Sargant's emphasis on his pupils observing the world around them and recording their observations either in words or drawings. In giving us a vivid description of a Well Street market vastly different from today's, this school exercise has become an historical document by accident.

Design in Chalk upon Blackboard from the *Chrysanthemum Leaf*



Mabel Wilkes  
Aged 11 years 1895.

sparked into life at School Field, it seems, sadly, that all trace of their subsequent lives is now lost. Without knowing more about what became of these children in later life, it is difficult for us to assess whether, in the long term, this experiment was any more successful in laying the foundations of happy, productive, positive lives than many of the others that have, in effect, used Hackney children as guinea pigs. In the hope that one of them might mean something to a reader, the names of the 23 girls and 10 boys whose work was included in the book of specimens of work are noted below.<sup>9</sup>

Reflecting in 1905 on his experience in both South Hackney and South Africa, Sargant sternly criticised the 'undue influence of the Inspectorate in the details of school work' in the 1880s, details that he left in the hands of his head teachers. He believed that his School Field experiment confirmed his assumption at the outset, that 'liberty for the teacher will achieve higher results than a scheme of rewards in money'. He presciently noted that, 'Among the younger generation of school administrators, who have not witnessed the evils from which we have escaped, there are those who turn their eyes longingly towards the older methods and more bureaucratic methods of inspection. Let them take warning.'<sup>10</sup>

The tensions between trusting teachers to do their best to bring out the potential of each of their pupils, and trying to impose incentives and structures that will guarantee that they properly prepare their pupils for life after school, have not gone away. Perhaps they can never be fully resolved, leaving the education pendulum to swing constantly between the extremes. Developments during the last twenty years echo with uncanny accuracy those in which School Field played a small part a century earlier.<sup>11</sup>

### Notes

1. *School Field Magazine 1890-4*, being specimens of work in an elementary school (1894). Unreferenced quotations come from Sargant's introduction.
2. For further details see for example H. C. Barnard, *A History of English Education from 1760* (1961) chs. 12 and 19.
3. Edmund Sargant was the eldest child of a Lincoln's Inn barrister, Henry Sargant, and his wife Catherine Beale, the daughter of Derby MP Samuel Beale. His siblings all made their mark in the world. One brother, Sir Charles, followed their father into the law and rose to become a Lord Justice of Appeal; another, Walter, co-authored a maths text book and became head master of Oakham independent school. Of the sisters, Mary was a noted artist, while Ethel was a botanist, a Fellow of both Girton College, Cambridge and the Linnaean Society. Even for a well-off, upper middle class family such success is impressive.
4. The building became the lower school of South Hackney School after comprehensivisation, and was converted into flats at the turn of the century.

## HACKNEY History

5. It was a shame that the new development was not called 'School Field'; it would have avoided the confusion caused by having a Meynell Gardens off a Meynell Crescent that was a continuation of a Meynell Road.

6. The Booker T. Washington Papers (University of Illinois, 1979), vol. 8, 184. The papers are on the web. It is not clear why Sargant sought Washington's advice at the end of his time in South Africa.

7. *The Casket Songs and other Poems* (1911). *Love Inviolable*, one of Sargant's better poems, reflects on a lover's need for a degree of privacy:

Seek not that part of me  
Where access should be none;  
For if thou hadst the key,  
Then were I all undone.

Love that would all things own  
Is close akin to hate;  
God walks with each alone  
And is inviolate.

8. His work was included with theirs in *Georgian Poetry 1911-1912* (1912).

9. Emily Alexander, Samuel Alexander, Ellen Banham, Hermione Browne, Lucy Carter, Ethel Cherry, Grace Cherry, Mildred Comer, Charles Coombes or Kunz, Grace Crawley, Mina Cumming, Bertie Ellison, Caroline Johnson, Florence Johnson, Annie Jones, Edith Jones, Emmeline Letch, Janet Letch, Kate Letch, Ida Litherland, Frank Metherall, Eugenie Sawyer, Henry Steel, Charles Stevenson, Ethel Turner, Harry Wheeler, Minnie Wheeler, Dick Wilkinson, Lilla Wilkinson, Willie Woodland, Florence Wright, Henry Wright and Mabel Wykes.

10. *Transvaal and Orange River Colony: Public Education - Report of the Director of Education, November 1900 - February 1904* (1905), 39.

11. I am grateful to Naomi Sargant (Lady Mackintosh of Haringey), and to the staff of the British Library, the University of Cambridge, Trinity College, Cambridge and the Royal Academy of Arts for help in researching this article.

### HACKNEY HISTORY

is published annually by the Friends of Hackney Archives.

Some back numbers are still available, as follows -

#### Volume 2

Balmes House - Hackney highways -  
a 19th century curate - toolmakers  
Abney Park Cemetery

#### Volume 3

sermons - coins and tokens  
an 18th century Jew - Middleton  
estate - Shoreditch housing

#### Volume 4

early dissenters - Shirley Hibberd  
public health - Shoreditch Town Hall  
scientific instrument makers

#### Volume 5

Hackney parsonage - nonconformity  
Stoke Newington gardeners  
an early library - Hackney's first Labour  
council

#### Volume 6

Sadleir of Sutton House - blackmailers  
Kingsland Road - the Eton Mission  
air raid precautions

#### Volume 7

Bishop Wood - gasworks - athletics  
Bretts of Homerton - Dr Jelley

#### Volume 9

archaeology at Hoxton - Hackney poor law  
working men's clubs - the Shoreditch furniture trade  
Stoke Newington's bomber

For further details, telephone Hackney Archives (020 7241 2886),  
or e-mail [friendsofhackneyarchives@hotmail.com](mailto:friendsofhackneyarchives@hotmail.com).

## 'TERRA INCOGNITA': A GAZETTEER TO LOCAL FICTION

*Isobel Watson*

### *A place apart*

In reviewing, in *Hackney Terrier* 52, Josephine Boyle's evocative urban ghost-story *The Spirit of the Family* (1999), I suggested that fiction - even if it aims beyond the realistic - can, as in this case, be a legitimate source of evidence for contemporary topography. Readers were invited to identify other novels with a background in the modern borough as it was, or is, in the writer's own time. Not, in other words, historical fiction, but eye-witness fiction. This article results.

The subject has to be approached with a proper degree of caution. Literary licence must be allowed for. We do not rush to follow the example of Alderman Miss Dora M. Barnes, of the Stoke Newington Public Libraries Committee, who thought passages in Edgar Allan Poe's story *William Wilson* describing a school building of forbidding, romantic, 'prison-house' characteristics were 'easily identifiable' as referring to Bransby's Manor House School - a classical building bearing no clear physical resemblance to the forbidding pile in question.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, if a writer specifically invokes a place (as Poe did not), we may be entitled to ask how successfully it is represented, and go on to postulate that information may be conveyed about its incidental fea-

tures, character or inhabitants.

Bucolic Hackney - the ancient parish - appears in the pastoral balladry of the 18th century. After the creation of new suburbs in the 1830s, there is a thin layer of literary reference to mid-19th century Hackney. Of the other two former metropolitan boroughs, the urban courts and tenements of Shoreditch appear in the social reform literature of the late 19th century. Stoke Newington (despite the plethora of local *literati*, assiduously collected by its former librarians)<sup>2</sup> has an occasional walk-on part. The scene set in more recent literature across the whole of the amalgamated London borough of Hackney is, unsurprisingly, a thoroughly urban one.

Apart, however, from a handful of native writers who speak with authority, the general tone and content usually echo the words of a Victorian journalist, W. S. Clarke, writing of the ancient parish and metropolitan borough: 'People who live in the west or the south frequently speak of Hackney as a *terra incognita*...'<sup>3</sup> If there is a consistent motif, it is that of a place apart. Apart, at first, from the City. Apart from the more affluent, and fashionable, later-built western

**The Unhappy Lady of Hackney.**  
To an Excellent New Tune.



**YOU** youthful charming ladies fair,  
I pray now give attention,  
Unto this dismal tragedy,  
Of which I now shall mention,  
At Hackney liv'd a gentleman,  
Who had three comely daughters,  
And one was marry'd to a 'Squire,  
Who caus'd this sad disaster.

The youngest sister being fair,  
And of a comely feature,  
Her sister's husband night and day,  
Did tempt this lovely creature,  
Telling of her it was no sin,  
If she let him embrace her,  
Besides he'd take a special care,  
It never should disgrace her.

This innocent unto his bow,  
Indeed he quickly brought her,  
Then took her from her father's house,  
With many tears they sought her.

Crying, alas! where is the gone:  
My youthful child so tender,  
Thus in distraction night and day,  
Her parents did lament her.

In all the news both far and near,  
Her father advertis'd her,  
Yet he no tidings of her heard,  
So secret did he hide her.

At length she big with child did grow,  
While this her amorous lover,  
Did oft frequent her company,  
None knew it was her brother.

At length in travail strong she fell,  
So great it was her sorrow,  
That she could not deliver'd be,  
So sending for her brother;  
With winging hands and weeping eyes,  
In dreadful lamentation,  
O worst of men! she then did say,  
You've wrought my defolation.

reaches, where traditionally most areas perceived as east of Aldgate are treated with suspicion.

Apart, too, from such other parts of east London as constitute 'the East End'. To quote Alexander Baron (one of only a handful of literary insiders) -

'Hackney isn't the East End - that's the mark of the outsider, when you hear someone call Hackney the East End. The East End starts two miles down the road, across the border of Bethnal Green'.<sup>4</sup>

**Pastoral**

The earliest narrative writing relating to Hackney survives in printed ballads. *The Unhappy Lady of Hackney* (opposite: here 'unhappy' means 'unfortunate') dates from the early 18th century. It purports to be a cautionary tale. The story is simple and melodramatic. A young woman of a wealthy family is 'tempted' by her sister's husband, who

... overcame me once with wine  
And us'd me at his pleasure.

Whereupon she was abducted and hidden. Shortly before her death in childbirth, she summons the malefactor and reproaches him, at the same time despatching a letter to her parents naming their son-in-law as the cause of her disappearance and death. Her eldest brother, 'a hopeful youth', dies of grief; her parents exhume her body on suspicion of murder, and

Her sister raves like thunder  
To think her husband was so base  
To prove her sister's ruin.

To this tragedy, a frisson was added because the seducer was the young woman's brother in the eyes of the church and the law.

The tale may well be embellished fact rather than invented - a tabloid-type scandal of its day, presented in true style as a morality tale. The reference seems to be to Susanna Alworthy, daughter of Justice Alworthy of Clapton.<sup>5</sup> About Hackney parish of the time, it tells us no more than that it was the sort of place where self-regarding and upstanding resident gentry would consider themselves 'undone' by scandal. The

young women to whom the morality tale was ostensibly addressed would, presumably, duly take note and treat with appropriate caution all brothers-in-law attempting to ply them with strong drink.

A lengthy piece of verse written for a City audience is *A Sunday Adventure: or Walk to Hackney, being a description of an amorous Intrigue acted there*.<sup>6</sup> The author chooses this excursion, he claims, not just because Hackney was 'the most delightful place, partly for the pleasantness of the air, but much more for the sight of those admirable Beauties which resort thither'. (Here is art mirroring life, in the form of recorded excursions by Pepys, and, later, Dudley Ryder, to inspect the product of the educational establishments for young women. Ryder, indeed, himself remarked the 'strange roving eye' of Susanna Alworthy.<sup>7</sup>) After arriving at the Church, continues the Sunday adventurer, 'darting my eyes to a certain School, some amorous actions I observed in a young and tender virgin, which very well corresponded with my Youthful Fancy...' There follows a lengthy account of the resulting alleged 'Intrigue', conducted in florid, overblown language. There is little local colour, though one is left in no doubt that in the popular mind Hackney chimed as a likely location for the sort of dalliance the author describes.

A further ballad example has fewer literary pretensions but much the same aim -

One evening in hot weather  
I through a Grove did pass  
And saw two maids together  
Sit sporting on the grass...

There is nothing about the place beyond whatever is implied by rurality and by its title, *The Hackney Damsells Pastime or a Summer evening Frolick*.<sup>8</sup> Unless, as may be, Hackney raised connotations in popular culture similar to those commonly attributed to Essex in the 1990s, it seems equivalent to contemporary Islington material. This takes the form of one ballad dealing with the local daughter of a farm steward, whose chaste patience is rewarded by the hand of the right young man; and another with the

tale of a resourceful milkmaid who sleeps with a City vintner and outsmarts his attempt to cheat her out of the agreed fee. In the traditional literary opposition of town and country, these country people fare pretty well.<sup>9</sup>

The places of these encounters are understood to be rural and apart from City life. The 'unhappy lady' appears to be an exception in so far as location is largely immaterial; but the woodcuts which accompany one version of the ballad fix it, in its own terms, as part of a pastoral tradition.

### Suburban

In the early-to-mid-19th century, watercolourists were busily depicting a world that was disappearing or which had recently disappeared. At much the same time, positioned between the pastoral and the urban, is Renton Nicholson's *Cockney Adventures and Tales of London Life* (from 1837), first issued in serial form, much at the same time as Dickens' *Sketches by Boz* (which itself describes a visit to the Eagle tavern).<sup>10</sup>

For the most part the *Adventures* relate, with knowing good humour, the jolly japes perpetrated by young working men and their consorts on their days off from the City. Trips into the near countryside often involve an excess of strong drink, and sometimes a misadventure with a cowpat.

These tales also offer exactly the kind of circumstantial detail which is otherwise hard to find, and for which fiction can provide a satisfying, if accidental, source. In *The Beau, the Kiddy and their Ladies*, a journeyman tailor and his chum escort their 'ladies', tambour workers sharing accommodation in a turning off the Hackney Road, to savour the floral delights (buttercups and bachelors' buttons in particular) of Hackney Downs, only to be side-tracked to take rum-and-water in the Mermaid tea gardens.<sup>11</sup> The accompanying illustration (opposite, top left), showing the horseplay which resulted once the party were 'seated in a small box', gives, incidentally, a good idea of what this garden furniture consisted of, while the text gives an exact description of the young women's Sunday best,

what they drank, and what it cost.<sup>12</sup> (The perpetrator goes on to torment a Clapton landlady: opposite, bottom right.) In another tale, *Sam Wilkins* (a name also used by Dickens) there is a brief account of the domestic arrangements and daily routine of Sam, a 'fancy harness maker', and his mother, on a second floor in or near what is now Cremer Street. In the process, we learn that Sam slept on a 'shut-up bedstead' in the front room, and Mrs Wilkins (virtually a servant to her son) in a half-tester in the back room.

Though one of Nicholson's gallants, a builder's son, chooses a half-built house as a place for an assignation, the suburbs once built did not afford an attractive location for a fictional tradition by this time centred either on part-works or the three-volume romantic novel. There are exceptions, but they do not yield much local colour. Charlotte E. L. Riddell (writing as F. G. Trafford) in *City and Suburb* (1861) positions different branches of a family in villas in Stamford Hill and on 'the edge of the marshes' respectively, the latter in a house reminiscent of 'some of those great old places at Clapton'. The locations however merely represent the social and business aspirations of uncertainly positioned City entrepreneurs. In *Frederick Rivers, Independent Parson* (1864) the aim<sup>13</sup> is a critique of a clique of small tradesmen, who profess non-conformist adherence but behave spitefully towards a clergyman who represents a deeper understanding of Christianity than they can grasp. The work hit its mark close enough to sting a reader into the comment 'a caricature of Hackney nonconformity ... but a false caricature'.<sup>14</sup> Without this very local reaction, however, there would be little enough in the work itself to identify which 'one of the suburbs' is depicted.

Mid-19th century Shacklewel Lane, with fading boarding houses and cottage flowers (bachelors' buttons again); Southgate Road abundant with wild roses; and watercress beds between Barretts Grove and Newington Green, are gushingly evoked, apparently from personal memory, in Mary E. Shipley's *Barbara Pelham: the story of an unselfish life* (1905). In this work the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge seemingly



*Cockney adventures (1): high jinks in the Mermaid gardens*

hoped to promote female self-sacrifice and the attractions of St Matthias church, to which the heroine is almost mystically drawn.

The exploits of a neo-Pooter, 'Mr George Rugg, hero', goaded by his fiancée into foolish acts of derring-do, would contain little to suggest a local setting, had the author, W. Pett Ridge, not set the opening scene in a drawing room of 'no. 215 in a suburban road' near Stoke Newington station.<sup>15</sup> The setting appears to have been chosen for its unassailably genteel connotations.

### Slumming

The social conditions of the later 19th century city, in the wake of Dickens, drew in writers who sought to promote change. Most such writing focused on Clerkenwell, Whitechapel and St Giles rather than areas further north.<sup>16</sup> The most striking of George Gissing's rare references to our area, for example, is a short but vivid description of a shabby Italian-run pastry cook's shop in Old Street.<sup>17</sup> In Edward Willmore's *The Gofre Cakes* (1920), 'mystic parables of Shoreditch' in the early 1900s, there is another, of a larger and more exotic cake emporium, as well as a description of a contraption using donkey-power to wash carrots.

Shoreditch had become the focus of a handful of very different works making deliberate attempts to convey life observed or imagined in its streets, courts and tenements.

The first is a children's story, and a real tearjerker. In *Froggy's Little Brother* (1875), Mrs G. Castle Smith (writing as 'Brenda') presents the barely credible tale of two orphaned boys scratching a survival in a Shoreditch garret, dodging the schools officer, the workhouse authorities and the police. Meeting with both kindness and exploitation, Froggy (nicknamed because his voice suffers in the cold) is unable to save the life of little Benny. Enter the benevolent managers of a new children's shelter in Shoreditch – 'a large, clean red brick one, standing near to the church, with the words printed over the door in large letters, Suffer the little children to come unto Me' – and full of 'noisy, happy seeming children'. Froggy starts an apprenticeship as a carpenter, befriends an adoptive little brother, and the message is driven home –

Parents and little children, you especially who are rich, remember it is the Froggys and Bennys of London for whom your clergymen is pleading, when he asks you to send money and relief to the poor East End!<sup>18</sup>

It was the same Shoreditch which Walter Besant attempted to portray in *Children of Gibeon* (1886). Besant, too, had an agenda; of cultural betterment of the labouring classes *de haut en bas*. (His earlier and better-known novel *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* promoted the People's Palace project at Mile End.) The characters – two girls brought up as sisters in ignorance of their birth, one born an aristocrat, one the daughter of a Hackney Wick washerwoman – are as feeble as the plot, in which one of them



*Cockney adventures (2): incident in a Clapton lodging-house*

(aha! but guess which!) goes to bring sweetness and light into the lives of a group of Shoreditch seamstresses. There is more than a hint of a misplaced nostalgia in the opening scenes of the washerwoman's cottage. But Besant himself took his project seriously enough to go to live in Ivy Lane, west of Hoxton High Street (one of Charles Booth's 'dark blue' areas), to study the milieu he was to write about.<sup>19</sup> The result is a picture of social conditions of greater variety – and less abject misery – than might be assumed. Although the novel so patently looks from the outside in, and finds in local street life the rosy glow of optimism it is seeking, within its limits it looks honestly, and contains as near an eye-witness account of day to day life in the hinterland of late 19th century Hoxton as we are likely now to get.

#### South and east

Something of the same job is done for the south-eastern corner of the borough in a strange and uneven work, *Hagar of Homerton* (1898). The author was Alice Dudeney, wife of the mathematical puzzle expert Henry E. Dudeney. She is another clear outsider. Her connection with the area is unknown, and is likely to have been little greater than that of her protagonist, 'an unhappy plain rich widow on her way to forty', who 'knew Homerton; an acquaintance of hers had married a clergyman with a living there. She made one call after the marriage'. The plot, which lurches from attempts at social realism through melodrama to unintended farce, need not detain us, save to note that at heart it is a pre-Freudian, and female, version of the Pygmalion myth, and concerns the widow's sponsorship of Hagar, an exceptionally attractive young dressmaker maliciously accused of theft.

Alice Dudeney had obviously visited Homerton, and been struck by its otherness. As well as devastating portraits of the South Hackney *nouveaux riches* in the shape of Hagar's relatives, drapers in St Paul's Churchyard, the text contains a notable passage describing the self-presentation of the womenfolk of Homerton,

as observed by Hagar on her way to the home of the less prosperous, less ostentatious 'Aunt Bill':

The streets of shops outside the station did not revolt her; the sluttish women chaffing keenly for pieces outside the butcher's seemed for her accustomed eyes mere thrifty housewives. She belonged to the class which does not dream of making a serious toilet before the mid-day meal... These dingy Homerton dames, in shabby skirts and tightly twisted front hair, would be gorgeous in fringes and fancy aprons directly the dinner dishes were washed up; though, to be sure, this glory did not last long...

A stranger would have been struck by the unnatural, solemn quiet ... No one passed along the pavements, no one sat or stood at the windows. Not a fold of the invariable green or rep curtains was displaced: every blind was pulled exactly a third of the way down. A stranger might have thought the street dead – it was like a slice of buried suburb, swept over by some paralysing blast of silence and desertion. Hagar, not given to foolish fancy, knew that the whole thing was normal. The children were at school, the husbands at work, the women in their little back kitchens. But she knew also that directly a knocker echoed there would be noses showing round curtains, and eyes shining through the laths of the blinds. She turned into a street that widened at one end and afforded a view of Victoria Park. Homerton, shut off from the West End by the slums of Shoreditch and the traffic of the City, called it comprehensively 'The Park'.<sup>20</sup>

There follows a startling pen-portrait of Aunt Bill, and the ten-year old, maggot-infested stuffed white cat in her Homerton window.

The locality could be exactly that innocently, but disastrously, yearned for by Polly from Whitechapel, as portrayed in Margaret Harkness's novel *Out of Work* (1880).<sup>21</sup> Polly believed that 'a little house in Hackney', with Venetian blinds and a brass door-knocker, was the paradise to which all respectable people (from the East End proper) ought to aspire. The same neighbourhood may even have inspired the uncertainly-located 'Marsh Street' in Edwin Pugh's sentimental, tragi-comic tales of working people, *A Street in Suburbia* (1895).

Edgar Meredith's humorous *The Wainwrights: a novel not a saga* (1935) has a ring of authenticity. It purports to be a boy's eye view of life around the railway arches in the east of the borough at the end of the 19th century; the narrator is the son of a council 'brusher' (who keeps the rails clear for the horse trams) and a 'fur-puller's trimmer'. There is an insight into the politics of the development of the Marshes as

football pitches beyond (the narrator asserts) what can be divined from the contemporary press. Written in a slightly tortured vernacular, its account of lively schoolboys travelling the length of East London in search of entertainment chimes convincingly with the evidence of contemporary diarists.<sup>22</sup>

By coincidence, South Hackney is the 'desert of unattractiveness' in which is situated the fictional parsonage depicted in Bernard Shaw's *Candida*, published in the same year as *Hagar*. Along with much domestic detail indicated in the stage directions, the play presents (with some implausibility) a spectrum of local society, from *Candida* the parson's wife to her proto-Alfred Doolittle father.

#### Hokum

Hackney central, beginning with Mare Street and working outwards, is ostensibly part of the setting of C. G. Compton's bizarre novel of 1929, *A Princess of Hackney*. The narrative concerns deposed royalty from the Baltic region, secreted in the precinct of a mysterious factory with a large, secluded garden stretching down to a Hackney canal. One of the protagonists, to whom the tone of the narrative condescends, is a young man educated at 'the Polytechnic': he appears to represent the shock of the new to the narrator's presumed upper middle class, public school audience.

The *mise-en-scène* fits no known site, and the author contrives to suggest that pre-war Hackney was full of houses with 'sonorous romantic names' ending in 'Chase'. With lazily-depicted scenes of West End salon life, a syndicate devoted to placing nominees on vacant European thrones, and some energetic goat-worship, this work suggests either that the author had drunk too deeply of the works of Anthony Hope<sup>23</sup> or that the whole production was some sort of elaborate private joke. Or, possibly, both.

#### Post-war

The two most frequent suggestions in response to the *Terrier* appeal were Peter Ackroyd's *English Music* (1992) and Barbara Vine's *Asta's Book*

(1993). There is a difficulty with both of these. Each, in its different way, is enjoyable reading, but they are no more eye-witness evidence than the historical works of Anna King.<sup>24</sup> Both were written in the late 20th century but set roughly a century earlier. Vine is so convincing, however, both in the claustrophobic household and neighbourhood she creates, and in her careful understanding of the Dalston street layout on which the plot turns, that she almost persuades you she was there.

Ackroyd creates a faintly grotesque, curiously touching story, set in the fringe world of spiritualism. He locates it partly in Shoreditch, in what seems to be Hoxton Square, though the descriptions, including the route for getting there, don't fit. There may have been some idea of the now-vanished Nichols Square. But there is a problem. Whichever square it is, he calls it Hackney Square. Now squares in Shoreditch may have been close to the Hackney Road – the road to Hackney – but had there been a 'Hackney Square', it would undoubtedly, like Hackney Grove and Hackney Terrace, have been in Hackney. 20th century local government labels aside, neither Hoxton nor Shoreditch is Hackney, nor even particularly like Hackney. Still less in 1900. The needless label strikes a disconcertingly false note.

Paul Bailey's *Gabriel's Lament* (1986) is set in a time – the 1950s – within the author's own experience. In a novel whose themes are bleak – the deceptions practised by parents on their children, and themselves – it is the role of the gardens of St John-at-Hackney to be the place where the cruelly unparented and socially isolated Gabriel has a sort of epiphany, and decides to write an account of (mostly) charlatan evangelists, which makes his fortune. His residence in Holly Villas, 'Clapton Square Passage', comes to an end through small-minded reaction to a mild eccentricity of Gabriel's own.

#### Death, dwarfs and Dalston

In two wholly different novels based on Dalston the theme is death. First Gillian Slovo's whodunnit *Death by Analysis* (1986). This

presents a clearly recognisable scene of its time, where street life abounds, riots are feared, and 'grim-looking architecture' inhabited by gastronomically-correct health food purveyors is juxtaposed with aesthetically-correct Stoke Newington office decor, as imported by gentrifiers. (The same author's *Catnap* (1996) contains a convincing recreation of more than one sinister rendezvous near Ridley Road. *Virtual Stranger* (1998), by Emer Gillespie, inhabits similar literary territory, and the topography of Stoke Newington and Victoria Park.)

Back in Dalston, a surreal local streetscape is found in *How the Dead Live* (2000), Will Self's mordantly humorous account of the living and dying Lily Bloom. Following Lily's demise in a north London hospital she is taken by a Greek taxi-driver (toy Cerberus nodding on the back window) to the socially and ethnically diverse suburb of Dulston, blink and you'll miss it, just off the Kingsland Road. This enforced resort of newly-dead urbanites, more or less indistinguishable from the life of the living, appears to have been fixed on by the author as being 'even more characterless than other inner North East London suburbs...The overwhelming impression the place gives is of colourlessness, an indifference towards municipal airs and graces'. So much for the Bob Hoskins line on Dalston (like New York, only smaller).<sup>25</sup>

Surreal in a different way - and not funny at all - is Harold Pinter's *The Dwarfs* (1992), in which three young men verbally and mentally joust with each other as they drink coffee in bleak post-war flats and pace between Clapton and the City, while strange humanoid effigies are found in the canal. The work is clearly rooted in the author's own local past, and there is one striking topographical description, of the contents of a bookshop window opposite the police station in Lower Clapton Road. But to read this intense and cerebral novel for its topographical references, however convincing, is a little like reading *Anna Karenina* for a recipe for making jam. Something similar might be said of Brian Glanvill's short story of a footballer, *The King of Hackney Marshes* (1965), where the Marshes rep-

resent more a state of mind than an actual place.

Joseph Conrad's *Victory* (1915) is a surprising suggestion for Hackney colour, being set entirely in the South Seas. It contains two, very brief, allusions, powerful enough to evoke the area for John Gross, who recalls them in his delightful memoir *A Double Thread*.<sup>26</sup> The more striking occurs in a powerful description of a young woman, hiding in jungle foliage in fear for her life, catching sight of a waiting assailant. She is struck by the man's resemblance to her recollection of the eyeless 'cardboard faces ... in the window of a certain dim shop kept by a mysterious little man in Kingsland Road'. The tension Conrad has already set up evokes the eeriness of the shop in an instant. It seems laughably mundane to wonder whether the author is recalling the fancy goods shop kept (say the Post Office Directories) by Josiah Fiddes at no. 458.

In *Tooth and Nail* (1993), Ian Rankin, another novelist with a powerful sense of place, spirits Inspector Rebus away from his stamping ground in Edinburgh. The opening scenes, describing the discovery of a body near the river at Upper Clapton, serve plot-development by establishing a creative tension between Rebus and a well-matched sparring partner in the Met. The location is as palpably presented as any of the author's Scottish settings, though out of tune with the eye-popping, thriller-style, belief-defying development of the plot.<sup>27</sup>

#### Bohemia

Quiet, engaging, and surprisingly upbeat is Esther Freud's *Peerless Flats* (1993), the story of a rootless young woman and her bohemian family in a run-down council block in Finsbury - across the Old Street roundabout from Shoreditch but as near as makes no difference. As to whether Jilly Cooper has ever been to Hackney, I can only guess. A report suggested that *Pandora* (2001) was set in Hoxton. Well, it is set in the world of art dealing and artists. More exactly: in a world where dealers and artists with large country estates paint faultless portraits for megabucks in the space of an afternoon. If it's the art market, it must be Mayfair; if it's Brat-art, it must be Hoxton. More labradors-and-lech-

ery than sex-and-shopping, the book spirals into self-parody.

Jean McNeil's *Private View* (2001) is another matter. The narrator, Alex, works in advertising and moves on the fringes of the Shoreditch loft-living art scene. The theme is her slow recovery from a plane crash in central America. The novel is not topographically precise; it appears to conflate the neighbourhood of south Shoreditch with overwhelmingly Turkish-settled areas, the effect being to achieve an undifferentiated inner-city backdrop. One can (almost) forgive the description of Spitalfields houses as 'Shaker-style' on discovering that the author is from North America. But the social setting is persuasive; friendship, memory and loss are hauntingly treated.

In contrast, though touching on similar themes, is the equally readable but more plot-driven *Going East* (2003). Here Matthew d'Ancona sympathetically evokes a multi-cultural and bohemian scene around Brick Lane and Shoreditch, though not without melodrama and caricature. The author, according to his publishers' blurb, inhabits East London, and it is obvious that he enjoys it, though he has at least one foot in a distinctly West End culture, which supplies an entertaining scene at a posh reception. (His historical understanding of East London topography is questionable, but that is another matter.<sup>28</sup>)

In her ambitious short story *Hoxton Babylon* (2003) Jemima Gibbons takes the clubbing/drugs scene as the setting for a contemporary account of a personal descent into hell. The lifestyle may be accurately captured; the locations, improbably, include a block of 'mansion flats' on Old Street.<sup>29</sup>

#### East is east

The setting of Julian Barnes's novel *Talking It Over* (1991) is almost perfunctory. Nominally, the first part of the book locates the newly-married Stuart and Gillian in Stoke Newington. There is little topographical feel. The flower shop and the station, the credulous elderly neighbours could be in any inner suburb. The spareness and economy of the writing are such that place does

not matter, except to set a social context. This is, however, the first of a clutch of contemporary novels to air a recurring theme: mistrust, on the part of middle class London, of easterly London in general and the borough of Hackney in particular. Here is the voice of the third principal character, the relentlessly jocular Oliver -

So there I am in a terra incognita by the name of Stoke Newington, which Stuart assures me is the next district where house prices are due to display tumescence, but where for the moment there dwelleth men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders.<sup>30</sup>

Irving Welsh's *Porno* (2002)<sup>31</sup> makes an even more forceful point about Hackney's place on the relative scale of desirable places of residence.

For an evocation of a Hackney area (London Fields)<sup>32</sup> and contemporary social patterns, plus the by now customary comment on affluent middle-class (west) Londoners' perception of Hackney as a place of residence, turn finally to a cartoon: the inimitable Posy Simmonds' innovative 'graphic novel', *Gemma Boverly* (1999; overleaf). A conventional novelist would need hundreds of words to rival this acuity.

#### 'Street'

A crime novelist, Denise Danks, bases her narrator, detective/techno-journalist Georgina Powers, not only in East London but in the world of computers. This need not deter the technophobe. The writing is pacy, intriguing and sharp, and she is good at conveying, economically, a sense of a place, especially if it is menacing. Here is more a social comment, on a theme now becoming familiar, in a characteristic slice of dialogue:

"It wasn't public knowledge that Gecko was gay, or that he swung both ways, so why would he be a target?" I said. "The only thing he was open about was women and money. He was a flash bastard."

"He lived in Hackney, George."

"Three-storey Georgian Hackney with private walled garden overlooking a nice tidy tree-lined square, as opposed to two-room maisonette with communal shit-strewn walkway overlooking nasty one-way system. Yes, he lived in Hackney."

Gemma had visitors, as the newly married do. First her father and stepmother who were most anxious to see the new home. Of course there was much head-shaking over the house in Hackney, its dilapidation, the lack of mortgage and consumer durables. The artful unostentation of the rooms was not admired, nor were the walls Gemma had painted "in the manner of Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell."



Near London Fields: from 'Gemma Boverly'

"Hardly flash with what he earned."

"Cherry wanted to live there. He agreed because it looked street. He just knew how to slum."<sup>33</sup>

'Street' in this sense is very much Mike Ripley's take on Hackney. In his series of comic thrillers with 'Angel' in the title, Hackney resident Fitzroy Maclean Angel is a freelance jazz trumpeter with attitude and a talent for finding himself in sticky situations.<sup>34</sup> Residence in Hackney seems to be intended to establish his bohemian credentials, and to parade motley inner city types, lightly caricatured, amongst whom the strongest personality is a near-homicidal cat called Springsteen.

In the blurb of one of the mid-series titles Mr Ripley admitted (boasted?) that he had never been to Hackney. It shows. He has, it is claimed, remedied the omission since, though this may merely have confused the issue. Angel's base at 'no. 9 Stuart Street' cannot be both 'off the Kingsland Road' and somewhere near Victoria Park. A four-storey converted house in either place would not be in a 'Street' formally so called, nor likely, either side of the millennium, to have its young professional residents sharing a single, old-fashioned telephone. But let's not look

for pedantic verisimilitude: Mr Ripley means to tease. The telephone is a standing plot device, and the books are enormous fun.

Simon Nye's *Wideboy* (1991) is even less interested in place than the *Angel* series; it is a comedy of character which happens to begin by being located in Hackney, and probably for the same sort of purpose, though the setting is intended to convey an entrepreneurial rather than a diverse or bohemian culture.

#### Insiders

Perhaps the first local voice to evoke a credible place in its own time is that of 'Roland Camberton', the pseudonym of Henry Cohen. In *Rain on the Pavements* (1951), which reads like a fictionalised memoir, we have a depiction of a pre-war adolescence in a Jewish family from an area he calls Dibley, which is clearly in the middle of the old metropolitan borough of Hackney, somewhere in the vicinity of the Downs. The book is elegantly written with abundant circumstantial detail, evoking a range of assertive characters and casting oblique sidelights on family life. Locations are disguised with fictional names – such as 'Meresham Road... the most gloomy road in all Hackney', connecting

Homerton and 'Dibley' with Mare Street and the central library, from which you could 'stare out towards the goods, yards, railway lines and factories of South Hackney'.<sup>35</sup> There is a pleasing vignette of the building of the present Town Hall and the disappearance of its predecessor.

Cohen-Camberton is rooted locally, depicting a range of striking personalities within a community experiencing a generational shift; the narrator drifts into left-wing and artistic Hoxton and Soho. Alexander Baron's *The Lowlife*, narrated by misanthropic, exasperating, hilarious gambler and scrounger Harryboy Boas, is set, by contrast, in the same geographical area but in the more socially fluid postwar period. The author is acutely aware of place, time, and the social and economic effects both of continuity and change. His Hackney is recognisably the direct precursor of today's Hackney. Never mind that the plot resolution – Harry's moral redemption – does not fully convince.

Lena Kennedy writes about women who expect little of, or for, themselves, and even less of men. Her mid-20th century Hoxton heroines – such as *Nelly Kelly* (1981) or *Lizzy* (1982), endure the misery of the Blitz, the barbarity of the back street abortion, the casual cruelty of a feckless and fecund sister to a caring childless one. *Down our Street* (1986) is a post-mortem evocation of Witham Street, Hoxton. The horizon of this world is very near at hand: Mortimer Road, when someone is rehoused there, seems so distant that it is located in Highbury.

Anna King is another insider. Her novel *A Bowl of Cherries*,<sup>36</sup> about a young woman from a large Irish-descended family growing up in the Homerton area, is said to be autobiographical. Its future evidential strength will lie in the demographic value of its depiction of family and social behaviour, especially of young men and women, in the now-distant 1960s. Ostensibly the action takes place in and around Homerton High Street and Well Street, but the author relies mainly on a few street names to establish the locus. The repetition of a particular mantra, and some clichéd descriptions of market traders, are supposed to deliver a feeling of the mi-

lieu. The mantra insists – for once – that this is the 'East End', and sits uneasily, as if superimposed for some extraneous publisher's purpose, on the narrative proper.

Finally to Iain Sinclair. Whether writing fiction or non-fiction – in his case not distinct categories – he presents an invariably Gothic townscape, writhing with tortured psyches.<sup>37</sup> Largely uninterested in narrative, distrustful of historical enquiry, his mystical, fantastical, apocalyptic vision of the local and contemporary urban scene affords nonetheless a linear account of recognisable locations and material features of local life.

Sinclair has perhaps done more than any other writer to assimilate the borough, in popular consciousness, into the traditional perception of 'the East End'. At the same time, his conjuring of the strange and awful reinforces the traditional, dark, west London view of the east, rooted in Dickens and Gustave Doré, and taken up powerfully by the press from the 1880s onwards.<sup>38</sup>

With intra-family violence in a West Indian takeaway in Clapton's 'murder mile' depicted on the National Theatre stage (in Kwame Kwei Armah's play *Elmina's Kitchen*, 2003) this view has almost come to seem official.

Sinclair has recently revealed an intention to leave Hackney, citing among other horrors '... the banality of gradual dysfunction, the sense of the landscape becoming more intimidating'. A specifically Hackney novel is however on the cards.<sup>39</sup> Into darkest Hackney, indeed.

#### Acknowledgements

Thanks especially to Dr Melvyn Brooks, Mike Gray, David Mander, Joan Potter, Maureen Taylor and Sandra Unerman for bringing works to my attention. Sally England's mastery of the Hackney Archives printed books collection in connection with the Webcat project revealed further titles, and Philip Plumb suggested other useful lines of enquiry. Some references derive from material identified by G. P. Jefcoate, *London in Fiction* (1979), in manuscript in Guildhall Library (Printed Books Section), and the list was enriched by findings, post-digitisation, in the British Library catalogue.

No doubt material exists which has been overlooked in compiling this article. Information drawing attention to it would be gratefully received.

Notes

1. In a pamphlet, *Edgar Allan Poe: impressions of his life and work and his associations with Stoke Newington* (1949).
2. See pages 3-10.
3. *The Suburban Homes of London* (1881), 197.
4. *The Lowlife* (1963), 20. The same analysis is implicit in the treatment of Dalston in relation to 'the East End' in R. Camberton, *Rain on the Pavements* (1951; see below). Shoreditch is ambiguously positioned in this connection; often treated as similar to the East End, but not consistently regarded as geographically part of it. Stoke Newington has, of course, traditionally never seen itself as within the 'East End' (let alone 'Hackney') at all.
5. It ties in, in point of most detail as well as time, with her story. See D. Mander, *Strength in the Tower: an illustrated history of Hackney* (1998) 32; *The Diary of Dudley Ryder*, ed. Matthews (1939) 191. The 'unhappy lady', according to the ballad, was buried in 'Covent Garden church', but the burial registers for St Paul's survive from the 19th century only.
6. BL Huth 164 (1683).
7. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* ed. Latham and Matthews, 8/174; 9/512; *The Diary of Dudley Ryder* (above).
8. BL C39k6(14); 'printed for Charles Bates at the White Hart in West Smithfield to a pleasant new Tune, much in request'.
9. BL Roxburghe collection, Rox. II.459, III.690, IV.56; III.678.
10. See in 1838 edition: 'Characters', ch.4, 'Miss Evans and the Eagle'.
11. 'Tambour workers' made a living from embroidery (the 'tambour' being the frame). A 'kiddy' was a thief.
12. A 'green spencer and a yellow silk pelisse'; and 6d. worth of negus between them.
13. Of the author, 'Mrs Florence Williamson', a pseudonym of Revd. W. Kirkus, minister at St Thomas Square chapel.
14. A flyleaf inscription on one of the HAD copies.
15. *London Only* (1901). There is also a description of the guards at Dalston Junction on a foggy night wearing sacking as capes.
16. See P. J. Keating, *The working classes in Victorian fiction*, 1971, chs. 1-3.
17. In *The Nether World* (1889), ch. XXIX.
18. The sequel, *More About Froggy* (1914) sees Froggy become an Admiral's godson, train as a seaman, and marry to his social advantage.
19. As reported by George Duckworth in the Booth police notebooks series, 1897: London School of Economics, Booth Archive, police notebooks B 352, walk 8 ([www.lse.ac.uk/booth](http://www.lse.ac.uk/booth)). In the Booth poverty maps, 'dark blue' translates as 'very poor, casual, chronic want'.
20. pp 61/2.
21. Writing as 'John Law'; reprinted 1990. There is an echo of George Duckworth, see above, who noted a Hackney woman's remark that she would never be brought so low as to enter a public house. He commented that this showed the difference between Hackney and Bethnal Green. (LSE, Booth police notebooks, above; B 350, 137).
22. See 'Account rendered: the diary of William Evans', *Terrier* 19 (1990).
23. Anthony Hope Hawkins, chronicler of Ruritania, was the son of a Clapton schoolmaster.
24. b. 1948; author of *Palace of Tears*; *Fur Coat No Knickers* and other novels located in Hackney, and set before WW2. See also below.
25. Patrick Wright, *A journey through ruins: the last days of London* (1991), 207.
26. J. Conrad, *Victory*, Penguin ed., 1963, 278. J. Gross, *A Double Thread: a childhood in Mile End and beyond* (2002).
27. First published as *Wolfman*.
28. 'Mile End' is uncertainly located, both geographically and historically.
29. In *West Side Storeys*, ed. Dotun Adebayo.
30. Picador edition (1993) 86-7.
31. See extract in *Scotland on Sunday*, review section, 18 August 2002.
32. Martin Amis's novel of this name is, as is commonly remarked, not about Hackney. Nor is the novel of the same title by John Milne (1983), though Victoria Park does feature.
33. *Baby Love* (2001).
34. *Angel Underground*; *Lights, Camera, Angel*; *Family of Angels* (etc.)
35. I am grateful to Dr Melvyn Brooks for debating these aliases with me. Morning Lane appears to be a plausible candidate for Meresham Road.
36. 1990; also published as *Life is just a bowl of cherries*.
37. Notably, fiction: *Downriver* (1991). Non fiction: *Lights Out for the Territory* (1997).
38. See J. Eade, *Placing London: from Imperial Capital to Global City* (2000).
39. Interview with Stuart Jeffries, *Guardian* (Weekend section), 24 April 2004.

Contributors to this issue

**Sally England** joined Hackney Archives Department as Webcat Project Librarian in July 2003, having formerly been librarian at English Heritage. In a distant former life she made radio programmes for the BBC and lectured on Sieneese art history.

**Hermione Pool** is a Hackney resident and a freelance nurse. She first studied workhouse infirmary patients for the Diploma in the History of Medicine of the Society of Apothecaries.

**Dr Liz Rushen** has a PhD in history, and is an Honorary Research Associate of the School of Historical Studies, Monash University and Executive Director of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Australia.

**Dr Geoff Taylor** is a Hackney borough councillor and Speaker of Hackney - the post formerly known as mayor. He has lived in South Hackney for over thirty years, for most of that time in Meynell Gardens, and taught at South Hackney School and other local secondary schools. His grandmother, Pauline Townley, a pupil teacher in a Birmingham elementary school in the 1900s, was in his mind as he researched his article about School Field. His history of South Hackney parish, *A Parish in Perspective*, was published in 2002.

**Isobel Watson** researches and writes about the topographical history of London. She has edited and produced *Hackney History* from its first issue in 1994.

Acknowledgements

The illustration on page 16 is copyright of the National Maritime Museum, and that on page 15, from the Stradbroke collection at Suffolk Record Office, appears by kind permission of the Earl of Stradbroke. The painting on page 34 is reproduced by permission of the Royal Academy of Arts. Illustrations on pages 30, 31, 33 and 37 (all from *School Field Magazine*, 1890-4, BL shelfmark 8305.gg.29); page 40 (from the Roxburghe collection of ballads, shelfmark C.20.f9) and page 43 (from Renton Nicholson, *Cockney Adventures*, shelfmark 5792.d) appear by permission of the British Library. The extract from *Gemma Boverly* by Posy Simmonds, published by Jonathan Cape, is used by permission of the Random House Group Limited.

All other illustrations are reproduced by permission of the Archives Department of the London borough of Hackney. Thanks as ever to all the Archives staff, and especially Elizabeth Green.

The editor also wishes to thank Josephine Boyle, Jacqueline Bradshaw-Price, Sally England, Sara Joynes and Lucy Waitt for greatly valued help in producing this issue.

AA

## THE FRIENDS OF HACKNEY ARCHIVES

The Friends of Hackney Archives were established in 1985 to support the work of the borough's Archives Department, and to act as a focus for local history.

The organisation is registered as a charity and functions independently of the Department and the Council. Its officers and committee are elected by the membership. They represent users of the Archives in regular meetings with the Head of Archives and Archives staff.

The Friends administer a donations fund (named in honour of the borough's first Archivist, the late Stanley Tongue), which has been instrumental in securing valuable new material for the Archives, including two important collections of theatre posters.

### Publications

*Hackney History* appears once a year, and aims to collect and publish new and original research about all parts of the borough. A list of available back numbers is on page 38. The Friends also publish the following, which are available from Hackney Archives Department -

*Under Hackney: the archaeological story*, by Keith Sugden with Kieron Tyler (£4.95)

*Discover De Beauvoir Town* - a circular walk from Hackney Archives Department (£2.00)

*Historic Hackney* - a fold-out, full colour walk based on Hackney Central station (£1.20)

### Membership

Membership is £10 per calendar year (£20 for mailing overseas), and members receive a copy of *Hackney History* for the year and *The Hackney Terrier*, the Archives Department's regular newsletter. You can download a membership form from the Council's website, [www.hackney.gov.uk/archives](http://www.hackney.gov.uk/archives), or contact us via -

Friends of Hackney Archives  
Hackney Archives Department  
43 De Beauvoir Road  
London N1 5SQ

020 7241 2886

[friendsofhackneyarchives@hotmail.com](mailto:friendsofhackneyarchives@hotmail.com)