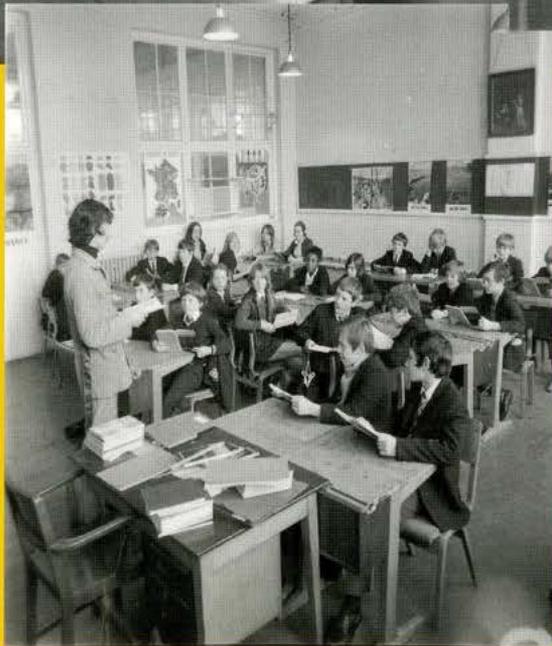


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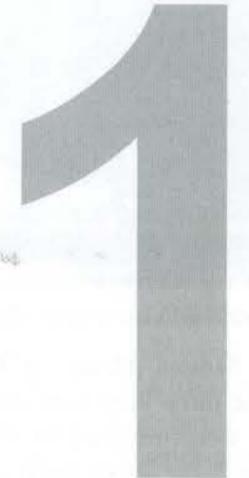
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‘Next of kin to a prison’: prison reform and the Refuge for the Destitute



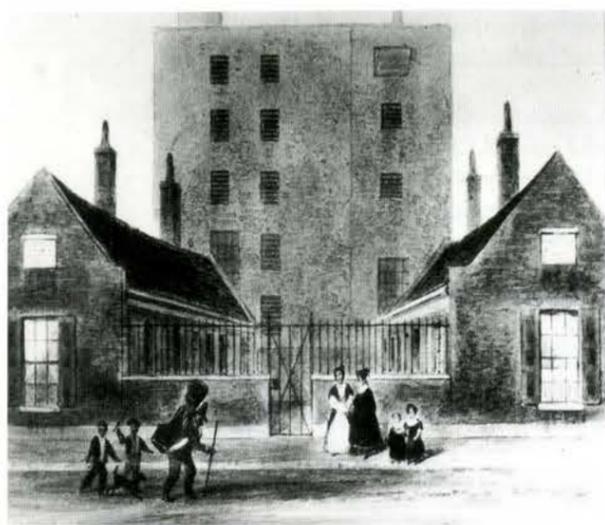
Megan Webber

Origins

In the mid-19th century the artist Thomas Hosmer Shepherd painted the south-east end of Hoxton Street (pictured overleaf). The subject of his watercolour was Badger’s almshouses, the residence of six poor widows. The almshouses are home-like, with their large windows and puffing chimneys. But looming in the background of Shepherd’s painting is an altogether different charitable institution. This drab brick building has bars on its windows and a high perimeter wall topped with broken glass. During the first half of the 19th century it housed the male inmates of the Refuge for the Destitute, a reformatory for juvenile delinquents.¹ A second site nearby on Hackney Road, which was similarly fortified, accommodated female inmates. The title ‘Refuge’ suggests protection, yet the Refuge for the Destitute was primarily a place of confinement and correction. As Refuge official Samuel Hoare declared, the institution was ‘next of kin to a prison’.²

The governors of the Refuge were at the forefront of the prison reform movement. They applied innovations in gaol management and discipline to the Refuge in the hope of transforming antisocial youths into honest hardworking citizens. This article will show that the experiment was only partially successful. The difficult legal and financial situation of the charity prevented the governors from fully implementing their theories, and the young inmates took full advantage of defects in the system, resisting reformatory measures. Despite the Refuge’s failings, however, the institution was a prototype for successive juvenile reformatories.

Edward Whitaker, a clergyman and magistrate, founded the Refuge for the Destitute in 1804 to address the crime and destitution which were rife in the metropolis. The charity was funded by public donations and a government grant, and it was managed by a board of governors. Many of the Refuge officials were involved in campaigns for prison reform. They included silk merchant Peter Bedford, businessman William Crawford,



Badger's Almshouses and the Male Refuge, in the early 1840s

and Samuel Hoare, a banker and magistrate. These three men were among the many Quakers who were involved in the Refuge. They moved in the same social circle as the 'angel of prisons' Elizabeth Fry and, like her, they devoted much of their time to visiting prisoners in London gaols.³ Prison reformers in the early 19th century argued that English prisons were unsanitary and overcrowded. They believed that criminals could be rehabilitated, but that prisons did not provide adequate conditions to accomplish this. Indeed, prison reformers insisted that prisons facilitated the spread of bad morals, exacerbating the problem of crime. Refuge officials pushed for prisons to be reformed while testifying before parliamentary committees and they were key actors in the Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline, an organisation established in 1816 to promote the cause.

During its early years the Refuge 'provide[d] places of refuge for persons discharged from prison, or the hulks, unfortunate and deserted females' - a euphemism for prostitutes - 'and others, who from loss of character, or extreme indigence, cannot procure an honest maintenance'.⁴ However, as historian Peter King has shown, the Refuge gradually narrowed its focus. By the early 1820s it had become the first reformatory to specialise in juvenile delinquents between the ages of 12 and 20.⁵ The Refuge was an alternative to penal

punishments like transportation and execution, which were increasingly viewed as too harsh for adolescents. The governors of the Refuge claimed that in prison hardened adult offenders corrupted the juveniles with whom they were incarcerated; a specialist institution for juveniles protected adolescents from adult corruption and was thus a better option for them.

King has demonstrated how the Refuge was an informal sentencing option in the courts.⁶ Rather than sentence young offenders to penal punishment, magistrates and judges frequently sent them to the Refuge. In some cases juveniles who had been convicted of offences were pardoned, on the condition that they enter the institution. While many youths came to the Refuge via the courts, others volunteered for admission or were brought by parents and employers. Almost without exception Refuge youths had committed property crimes. The Secretary of the Refuge recorded biographical details about each person whom the governors considered for admission in large leather-bound ledgers (now housed in Hackney Archives). Poverty, unemployment, family conflict, illness, abuse, and prostitution were common themes in the lives of Refuge inmates. Mary Ann Strange is one of hundreds of individuals whose history is captured in the minute books:

Mary Ann Strange —17 years of age. Her parents Live No. 1 Long walk, Chapel Street Greek street; Father a Carman. She has lived servant at Mr. Vinson's, the Union Flag Public House, Union street Whitechapel for nine months, which place she left about a year since in order to nurse her mother who was sick and is since dead. She has repeatedly robbed her Father. She lately ran away from home, carrying with her a Cloak. She was apprehended and committed by the Lord Mayor to Bridewell for one month. She has since been on the Town.⁷

The Refuge was initially located at Cuper's Bridge in Lambeth. When the lease on this site expired in 1811 the institution moved to Middlesex House on Hackney Road.⁸ In 1815 the males moved to a new residence at Hoxton Street, leaving the females at Middlesex House. These semi-rural locations were a good fit for the institution; they were at a slight remove from London's worst criminal lairs and it gave the Refuge room for expansion.

Many almshouses, asylums, and madhouses could be found in Hackney and Shoreditch.⁹ It is also perhaps no coincidence that the Refuge, which had such close ties to the Society of Friends, was near Stoke Newington, where many prominent Quakers lived. Although the number of inmates in the Refuge fluctuated with the charity's income, at peak capacity there were approximately 100 youths of each sex in the reformatories.¹⁰

Education

Prison reformers believed that idleness lay at the root of much crime. They claimed that juveniles who lacked employment took up bad habits like drinking and gambling which led them down the slippery slope to crime. Elizabeth Fry recommended constant employment to keep prisoners from harmful pursuits. The Refuge governors, too, made work a central component of their reformatory regimen. They hoped to keep inmates too occupied to make trouble, and also to equip them to make an honest living when they left the Refuge. Refuge boys performed hard labour (usually chopping wood) for two to three months before training for a trade such as shoe-making, tailoring, or basket making. The girls practised household skills. Boys worked for approximately ten hours each day. The girls laboured from six in the morning until six at night, although the demands of the institution's commercial laundry occasionally required them to rise at two o' clock.¹¹ Females were expected to remain in the institution for one to two years. Boys, whose occupational training was more involved, might stay for up to four years. If the governors deemed them sufficiently reformed at the end of this period, males were found apprenticeships or employment outside the institution and females were placed out as servants.

Prison reformers claimed that ignorance was as pernicious as idleness. Fry observed that two-thirds of the female prisoners she encountered in Newgate Prison were not proficient readers. Their religious knowledge was no better, with 'many hav[ing] scarcely ever attended a place of public worship, or heard, or read, any part of the Holy Scriptures'.¹² Discovering that the gaol

provided little in the way of instruction, Fry opened a school in the prison and encouraged lady visitors to befriend inmates. The Refuge governors similarly believed that education was key to reformation. If inmates were to avoid crime in future, they not only required honest employment, but religious instruction to teach them right from wrong. Evenings after work were devoted to classes. A team of visitors - much like prison visitors - distributed moral tracts amongst the Refuge inmates and conversed with them on religious subjects. On Sunday, a day of rest from work, Refuge youths attended church services.

Some Refuge youths embraced the regimen of work and education. Peter Bedford, one of the charity's visitors, described how the Refuge reformed John Wand from a 'bad boy' into a master shoemaker with 'a dozen hands employed under him'.¹³ The Refuge annual reports, issued to attract donations, are filled with cases of juveniles who are restored to a 'life of usefulness and virtue'.¹⁴ However, significant numbers of Refuge youths did not



Peter Bedford conversing with two juvenile thieves

to maintain discipline and prevent corruption. In theory, prisoners regulated their own conduct when they knew they were under observation. Refuge staff attempted to monitor inmates closely. Boys sat in circles around the master tradesmen who taught them; this positioning allowed the instructors to overhear conversations.³² Yet there were inevitable problems. The Refuge could not afford to hire enough staff for constant supervision and inmates vastly outnumbered the adults who watched over them.³³ The governors used some inmates as monitors to make up for the shortage in paid staff, but these monitors frequently proved untrustworthy. When Jane Keith was put in charge of the storerooms, she allowed a fellow inmate to steal some soap.³⁴

Refuge inmates took advantage of defects in classification and supervision. They found opportunities to communicate with one another, snatching time alone to plan and effect escapes.³⁵ Fights broke out when staff stepped out of the room.³⁶ The minute books reveal that some juveniles had a bad influence of their peers. For example, Edward Besbeech 'excite[d] the boys to insubordination'.³⁷ Peter King has suggested that sexual relationships developed among the girls, despite the governors' efforts to create spatial distance between inmates.³⁸ Margaret Hanley was admitted into the Refuge aged 14 and became a prostitute after leaving the institution. She reportedly stated that she had been 'completely depraved by her female companions' in the Refuge. She 'consider[ed] her confinement to have laid the foundation of her future infamy' and believed that reformatories like the Refuge were 'nurseries of vice'.³⁹ An institution designed to reduce crime may have unwittingly facilitated it.

Rewards and punishments

Elizabeth Fry insisted on treating prisoners with 'nothing but kindness'.⁴⁰ The founders of the Refuge similarly held that compassionate treatment made criminals more receptive to moral instruction. Refuge staff initially employed 'lenient, persuasive, and encouraging measures only' to effect reformation.⁴¹ Corporal punishment

was thought to produce outward compliance, but leave the conscience untouched. The Refuge doled out rewards rather than whippings. The governors granted better food, clothing, and holidays to obedient inmates and withheld these privileges from troublemakers. The Refuge governors also kept aside a portion of inmates' earnings; if they discharged youths with good characters, they released this money to them in instalments.⁴² Refuge officials anticipated that juveniles would at first behave well in expectation of reward, before eventually internalising moral virtues. The Refuge governors never abandoned the reward system but, discovering this to be inadequate, they supplemented it with harsher punishments in the 1820s. Some prison reformers were in favour of solitary confinement. They argued that solitary confinement achieved several aims at once: isolating prisoners from fellow inmates (and opportunities for corruption), rendering them docile, and compelling them to reflect seriously on their misdeeds.⁴³ The Male Refuge acquired three solitary cells, which they nicknamed 'black holes'. Miscreants were held in the cells for up to eight days in total darkness, leaving only to wash in the mornings.⁴⁴ Girls were locked up in the lobby of the Female Refuge for as long as a week.

James Ross, the Superintendent of the Male Refuge, proclaimed that he had 'never found any punishment more effectual' than solitary confinement.⁴⁵ Even so, moments after making this declaration, he admitted that the technique could 'fail completely'.⁴⁶ The black holes were so close together that boys confined in the separate cells could communicate with one another, ruining the atmosphere of quiet contemplation.⁴⁷ Whether because of this defect or another reason, solitary confinement did not always result in permanent improvements in conduct. Many youths emerged from solitary confinement professing their penitence, only to be back in trouble within weeks or even days. Far from making juveniles more tractable, the punishment occasionally provoked rage. 16-year-old Caroline Mallison broke down the door of the lobby when she was confined for impertinence.⁴⁸ The early results of solitary

confinement in the Refuge were not promising. As evidence of the effects of the solitary confinement accumulated over the course of the 19th century, prison reformers increasingly viewed it as an ineffective - and potentially harmful - punishment for juveniles.⁴⁹

The Refuge legacy

Despite the failings of the Refuge, the governors did not abandon theories derived from prison reform campaigns. Indeed they insisted that, with a few modifications, the Refuge plan could be applied to other reformatories for juvenile offenders. In 1817 Samuel Hoare, a Refuge visitor and Chairman of the Prison Discipline Society, submitted a plan for a state penitentiary to a House of Commons select committee.⁵⁰ The proposed penitentiary for criminal boys would be run on similar lines as the Refuge, with 'labour, inspection, instruction, and classification'.⁵¹ However, it would also have the improvements which the Refuge governors could only dream of in their charitable establishment. The penitentiary building, purpose-designed by James Bevens, was a Panopticon with solitary cells arranged to enable constant inspection. Unlike the Refuge, the penitentiary would possess legal authority to detain inmates. Although the proposed penitentiary was never constructed, the Refuge model attracted attention on both sides of the Atlantic. The printed reports of the Refuge were widely circulated and philanthropists toured the Refuge to observe the institution in action. John Griscom, a Quaker professor from America, visited the Refuge in 1818. He was impressed by what he saw. He returned to New York and in 1825 established a House of Refuge for juvenile delinquents in the city.⁵² Similar establishments followed in Boston (est. 1825), Philadelphia (1828), and Glasgow (1839). The founders of later reformatories embraced the Refuge's programme of occupational and religious instruction. Learning from the experiences of the Refuge governors, they avoided replicating the faults of the Refuge system. The House of Refuge in Philadelphia had separate cells for its inmates, while the reformatory

in New York acquired the legal authority to keep youths under their care until they reached the age of majority.⁵³

The success of the Refuge as a prototype reformatory contributed to its own decline. By the 1840s, there were multiple institutions for juvenile delinquents in England. The Refuge could not compete. The charity's relationship with the courts weakened and in 1849 Parliament withdrew its yearly grant from the Refuge. The Refuge governors decided to concentrate on criminal girls, for whom there was less institutional provision. The Male Refuge was closed and the females moved to Manor House in Dalston. The Refuge continued at this site until 1922, when it merged with the Elizabeth Fry Refuge, a similar institution for female criminals. The Refuge for the Destitute was a crucial testing ground for reformatory techniques. As with many experiments, there were faults. However, the essential plan trialled in the Refuge institutions in Hackney and Shoreditch was exported across the globe.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Elizabeth Green at Hackney Archives for her assistance, particularly for alerting me to the existence of Shepherd's watercolour. I would also like to thank Claudia Jessop for sharing her stories of Refuge girls in the mid-19th century. The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission has generously supported me during my doctoral studies in Britain.

Notes

1. Shepherd's original painting is in the Crace Collection of the British Museum. However, Hackney Archives holds a print made by John R. Freeman and Co. Shepherd also depicted the Refuge for the Destitute in his watercolour of the Weavers' Almshouses.
2. *Report from the Select Committee on Criminal Commitments and Convictions* (1828), 89.
3. Samuel Hoare was Fry's brother-in-law.
4. *A Short Account of the Institution Called the Refuge for the Destitute, Cuper's Bridge, Lambeth...* (1806), iii.
5. The Philanthropic Society, a precursor to the Refuge, was established in London in 1788. It was a charitable institution for children who had committed crimes or who were the offspring of offenders, and focused on younger children than the Refuge, admitting boys and girls under 12 years old. P. King, *Crime and Law in England, 1750-1840: Remaking Justice from the Margins* (Cambridge, 2006), 148-150.

6. King, *Crime and Law*, 142-164.
7. 'On the town' is a euphemism for prostitution. HA, D/S/4/6, 28 September 1822 (minute book of the Female Refuge).
8. *The Philanthropist: or Repository for Hints and Suggestions Calculated to Promote the Comfort and Happiness of Man* (1811), 246.
9. The Male Refuge on Hoxton Street was surrounded by three almshouses, while Middlesex House was on the same road as the London Orphan Asylum.
10. This number does not include inmates of the 'Temporary Refuge' established in 1818 on the Hoxton Street site. This provided temporary housing, rather than a reformatory programme, and so is not the focus of this article.
11. There were meal breaks during the working day. *Report from the Committee on the State of the Police of the Metropolis* (1816), 169.
12. E. Fry, *on the Visiting, Superintendence, and Government of Female Prisoners* (1827), 41.
13. W. Tallack, *Peter Bedford, the Spitalfields Philanthropist* (1865), 34.
14. HA, D/S/58/2, 30 (Annual Report for the Year 1824).
15. For a more detailed discussion on the mixed success of the Refuge's occupational and moral training, see M. Webber, 'Honest and Useful?: The Post-Institutional Lives of Refuge for the Destitute Beneficiaries,' *Journal of Social History* 48, no. 4 (2015); *Criminal Commitments and Convictions* (1828), 89.
16. *Report from the Select Committee on the State of Gaols* (1819), 154.
17. King, *Crime and Law*, 159.
18. King, *Crime and Law*, 159.
19. *State of Gaols* (1819), 166.
20. *Report from the Select Committee on the Police of the Metropolis* (1828), 181; King, *Crime and Law*, 160.
21. The two girls did not get far. When the Superintendent of the Female Refuge learned that the girls were absent, he caught Mary in the neighbour's yard and Susannah on the street. The girls were tried for stealing clothing from the Refuge and were sentenced to transportation. OBP, February 1819, trial of Susannah Feasey and Mary Knight, t18190217-50.
22. While two of the boys managed to escape, the others were caught and sentenced to transportation for stealing clothing and tools. OBP, June 1838, trial of Joseph Timbrell, John Shelton, William Cormack, and William Davis, t18380618-1537.
23. King, *Crime and Law*, 160.
24. *Second Report from the Committee on the State of the Police of the Metropolis* (1817), 132.
25. Thomas Wilbraham claimed that he was innocent of the theft for which he had been tried. The Refuge governors initially refused to discharge Thomas but, when the boy repeatedly attempted to run away, they eventually allowed him his freedom. HA, D/S/4/23, 4 April 1822 (minute book of the Male Refuge).
26. *Police of the Metropolis* (1828), 184.
27. *Report from the Committee on the Prisons within the City of London and Borough of Southwark* (1819), 70.
28. *Police of the Metropolis* (1828), 184.
29. Boys were regularly put on trial at the Temporary Refuge from the 1820s; however, many girls were admitted directly into the Female Refuge without first undergoing a probationary period in the Temporary Refuge.
30. *Police of the Metropolis* (1816), 169.
31. *State of Gaols* (1819), 155.
32. *State of Gaols* (1819), 150; *Police of the Metropolis* (1828), 186.
33. In 1825 there were seven employees who were responsible for the daily management of 90 female inmates and nine employees for 118 male inmates.
34. HA D/S/4/6, 15 March 1823.
35. HA, D/S/4/24 (minute book of the Male Refuge), 23 May 1823; OBP, February 1829, trial of Julia King, t18290219-15.
36. OBP, April 1817, trial of John Greathead, t18170416-104.
37. HA D/S/4/24, 5 September 1823.
38. P. King, ed., *Narratives of the Poor in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, vol. 4 (2006), 124-125, 126.
39. H. Revell, *An Extraordinary but Authentic Narrative of the Penitence and Death of the Notorious Mrs. D***...* (1832), 104-105.
40. *Prisons within the City of London* (1819), 35.
41. A Short Account of the Institution, iv.
42. Inmates who absconded, were expelled, or who left the institution with a bad character did not receive their earnings.
43. H. Shore, *Artful Dodgers: Youth and Crime in Early Nineteenth-Century London* (Woodbridge, 1999), 105.
44. *Police of the Metropolis* (1828), 183.
45. *Police of the Metropolis* (1828), 183.
46. *Police of the Metropolis* (1828), 183.
47. The Refuge had no other rooms which were fitted up for solitary confinement.
48. HA D/S/4/6, 21 June 1823.
49. Shore, *Artful Dodgers*, 105-106.
50. *Police of the Metropolis* (1817), 524-528.
51. *State of Gaols* (1819), 159.
52. *Report of William Crawford, Esq., on the Penitentiaries of the United States* (1834), 42.
53. N.C. Hart, *Documents Relative to the House of Refuge, Instituted by the Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents in the City of New-York* (New York, 1832), 187.

Building and buying to let: the Moneyers' Land in Hoxton New Town

Isobel Watson

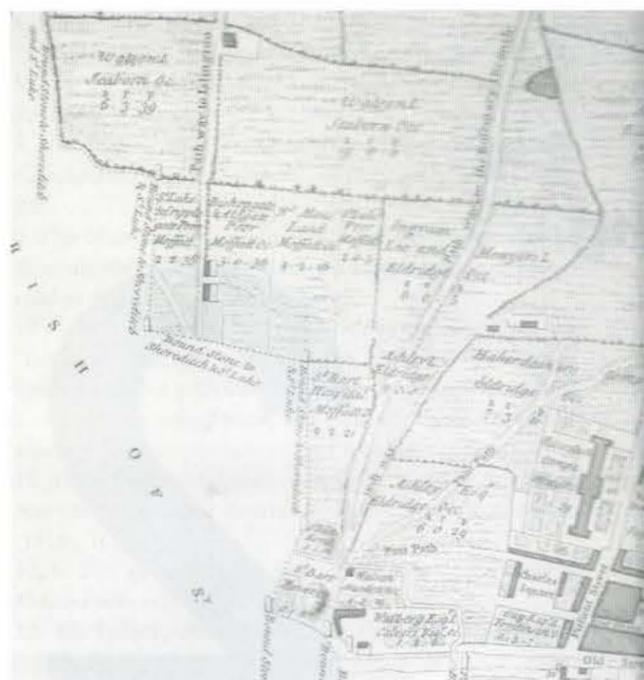


Where it was

This article concerns the development and use, in the first half of the 19th century, of what was known as the Moneyers' Land at Hoxton. Consisting of a bit more than four acres, lying mostly north of the track which became Nile Street, it stretched from Provost Street in the west as far as the centre of Custance Street; most of it now lies beneath Hackney Council's Provost Estate. Beyond it on the north was a 19-acre field owned ultimately, through the prebendary of Wenlock's Barn, by the cathedral of St Paul. This field, called the Long Field in 1796 when there was still a farm on its north west,¹ and recorded as belonging to Watson and occupied by Seaborn on Chassereau's map (*overleaf*), was used during the first half of the 19th century as a drill ground for the East India Company's militia, and was then developed with Murray Street (now Grove) along its southern edge. Around 1800 these all still formed part of the unbuilt 'common fields' of Hoxton.²

The Moneyers' field, broadly rectangular, was about half of the one marked on Chassereau as occupied by Eldridge and owned as 'Ingram, Lee and Moneyers Land'. It formed at least part of what was once known as 'Blood Field'.³ Though the map does not differentiate between the holdings, the Moneyers' part lay west of the 'path way to the Rosemary Branch', mostly north of the path running roughly west to east which ultimately became Nile Street, and wholly south of a ditch bounding the St Paul's field. On its west side was a part of 'the Mow Meads' belonging to the neighbouring parish of St Luke under the 16th century will of Edward Bleyton.⁴

The Moneyers' field was laid out in the early 19th century as two complete streets, Provost Street and Moneyer Street, plus the western side of Union (later Custance) Street. Its particular interest, in addition



Detail from Chassereau's map of Shoreditch, 1745

to being typical of the 19th century character of this part of Hoxton, derives from the availability of two relatively uncommon record sources for its building development and early occupation: the building agreement and consequent leases, together with a number of underleases;⁵ and a range of fire insurance policies relating to some of the houses.⁶ In the absence of reliable censuses for the early 19th century, this is strong information about the creation and use in those years of modest houses typical of their time and place.

Early history

It is worth briefly mentioning some pre-history. There was substantial land elsewhere in Hoxton belonging to the family named variously as Heryong, Haryong or Hary Young, traceable to a Robert of that name who in 1500 bequeathed the 'grete place' where he lived, probably near the later site of Myrtle Walk, between Hoxton Street and St John's Church.⁷ Robert, and Richard his son, both of whom were given a handsome memorial in the old parish church in Shoreditch,⁸ were Provosts of the Company of Moneyers in the Mint in the Tower of London: but the nature of the connection between them and the later

corporate ownership of the field in question remains conjectural. The 'common fields' of Hoxton (famous for the duel that put Ben Jonson in flight for his life) are discussed by the *Survey of London* for Shoreditch parish in general terms.⁹ Of the three identified holdings within the field, Ingram's part, the most easterly, was sold in 1783 to Michael Pearson, an apothecary and surgeon of Spital Square who was amassing substantial landholdings, especially in Hoxton but also at Mile End.¹⁰ Under his ownership, building in the neighbourhood of East Road (extending northwards the 'Drift way' on the Chassereau map) appeared sporadically towards the end of the century.¹¹ Two acres in the middle were an outlying part of the Middlesex property of the large Suffolk landowner Baptist Lee, who also had land in Bethnal Green and a substantial estate at Haggerston.¹² The map, which shows the field divided by the 'pathway to the Rosemary Branch' and land to the south owned by Ashley, also shows this area and several others as occupied by Eldridge, evidently a considerable farmer in the area in the mid-18th century.¹³

Common occupation obscures boundaries, and the *Survey of London* is silent about the Moneyers. Though land in this area belonged at one time to various generations of a family called Marow, one of whom married Richard Hary Young's daughter Alice,¹⁴ it is a leap from that to ownership by the Moneyers as a company, and they have left no records or other evidence of how they acquired the land.

Surrounding development

Giving locations of the streets, which (as is typical) absorb ancient routes and are in part determined by field boundaries, is complicated by the creation of the New North Road following an Act of Parliament in 1812.¹⁵ As built, this traced the curved field boundary formerly between Richard Eldridge's grazing fields, which Chassereau implies had been lined with hedges. The old footpath north across the field became Union (Custance) Street, but appears to have extended at the time of



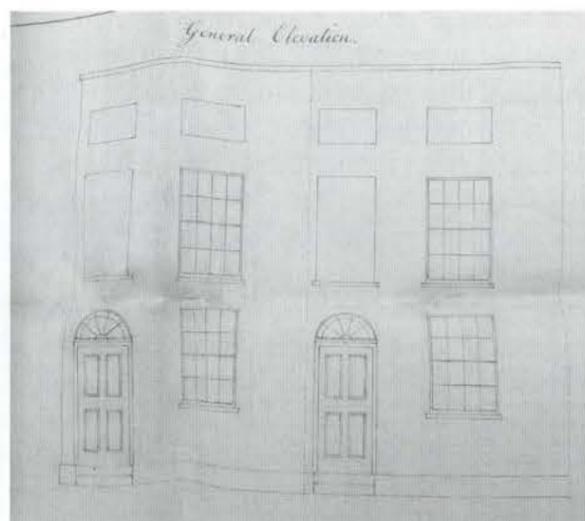
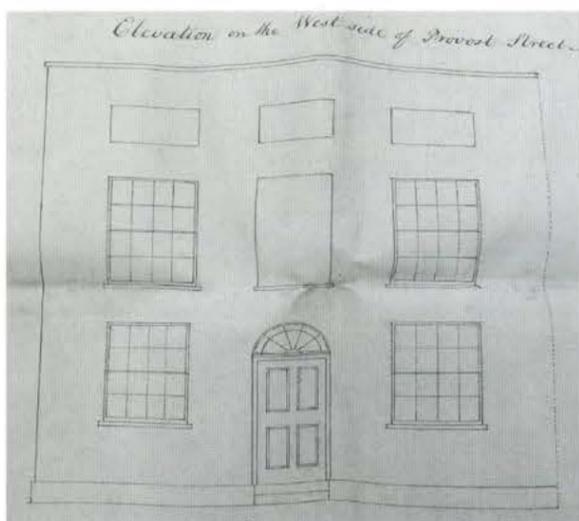
The Moneyers' Land and surrounding development: the 1819 edition of Horwood's survey

development no further than the line of the later Murray Street (now Grove).

By the time the legislation was enacted, development in this corner of Hoxton was well under way, doubtless given a fillip by the proposal for the new thoroughfare. A comparison of the map of 1745 with Horwood's various surveys around 1800¹⁶ shows Hoxton busily expanding. A suburb which had been little more than a line of houses along Old Street in the late 17th century was fast being developed, and the existence at its western end of the City Road, conceived in the latter 18th century as a link between the Angel and Old Street, was a natural stimulus both north and south of the thoroughfare, as was the Regent's Canal to the north from the early years of the new century. Hoxton's fields were gradually given over to small houses.¹⁷ That said, the Moneyers were far from the

first developers. Chassereau shows four rectangles of land to the west of the Moneyers' field, all north of the line of what ultimately became Nile Street. At the time of Horwood's survey in the 1790s there were a range of newish developments (apart from the new St Luke's workhouse of 1782, later the site of St Luke's vestry hall on the west side of Shepherdess Walk, the 'pathway to Islington'). These consisted of a row of cottages around the Shepherd and Shepherdess (later, as now, the 'Eagle') public house; Moffatt Street, developed by a local landowner, Ratcliffe Moffatt; and on the easternmost rectangle, held under William Bleyton's will, 'Chatham Gardens'. This, developed on lease by one Pitt, seems to have had a semi-rural character: cottages, with genuine and generous gardens in front.¹⁸

As was noted in 1814 -



Left, the agreement's elevation for houses on the west side of Provost Street; above, for the rest of the estate

On the north side of Old Street ... and in the vicinity of the City Road the augmentation has been very extensive; especially within the last five or six years, during which time Windsor Place and Terrace, Nelson Street, Providence Street, Trafalgar Street &c have been built, and several others, such as Moffatt Street and Terrace, Union Street and Allerton Street are now building.¹⁹

Plumber Street and Trafalgar Street (the stretch nearest the City Road of the old road to the Rosemary Branch, the names now subsumed into Provost Street) were being lined with speculative, building from 1807.²⁰ The main mover in the creation of Trafalgar Street,²¹ connecting this enclave with the City Road, was William Broggref, also one of the principal contractors for early building leases granted by Baptist Lee's heir, Nathaniel Lee Acton, on the latter's Haggerston estate.²² One of Acton's principal contractors under an agreement of 1811 for Allerton and part of Union Streets was Jonathan Wakefield, who also built at least part of Windsor Terrace to the north of City Road.²³ By 1815 the area was ceasing to be referred to as Hoxton Fields; its new name, Hoxton New Town, was already in currency.

Moneyers

The Company of Moneyers in the Mint were an anomalous body, evolved from medieval origins into something early 19th century contemporaries thought of as like a livery company, though it

lacked full corporate status, had a very narrow membership base, and performed a national, not a London, function.²⁴ Though far from a sinecure, admission seems to have had a strong element of family connection (of seven in the company in 1809, two were called Atkinson and two Nicoll) as well as requiring purchase to secure admission to an apprenticeship.²⁵ It was the job of the company, each of whose members received an annual salary, to produce the national coinage securely as and when necessary, though the metal was melted, and dies produced, by others. Throughout the early 19th century there were only a handful of moneyers, each admitted on payment of the astounding sum of £1,000: the seven in 1809 had reduced to five by the time the system was brought to an end in 1851.²⁶ Their financial records, apart from the Government contract, were closely guarded during their existence, but it is clear that their income (which they treated as a private matter) was substantial and that part of it came from property investment, for example land near Finsbury Square.²⁷ By what route they came by the field in Hoxton is not known for certain: but they went about its development no earlier than land in that area became extremely marketable as housing, and in exactly the way such land was usually developed at the time.

The building agreement

In November 1809, the seven gentlemen of the Moneyers' company – 'the Provost and Company and Fellowship of Moneyers in His Majesty's Mint in the Tower of London', as they described themselves – entered into articles of agreement for building on their four acres and 15 perches of land. The land was then in the possession of a local carman, William Marsom, for the purposes of cattle grazing. Little is known about Marsom save that he lived locally and owned other land in Hoxton; in 1802 he insured £100 worth of household goods and £400 worth of stock and utensils associated with his business, which were kept in a brick stable near his home in Hoxton Fields – which he is presumed not to have owned, as no contemporary policy was taken out on the buildings.²⁸

In the 1809 agreement Marsom undertook to build, within four years, 199 dwelling-houses, according to plans forming part of the agreement for the layout of Provost Street and Moneyer Street and two streets running across them from east to west. There were also prescribed elevations (*left*). The specifications were laid down –

'the foundations two bricks in length (1 foot 5 1/2") to the top of the footing (1 brick long) ... to the top of the party walls; the cills to the back windows and coping stones 13" wide and steps to the doors of Yorkshire stone ... the gardens or yard to be enclosed by 9" brick walls – the same thickness 7' high.

The houses were envisaged as 'fourth-rate' houses within the meaning of the London Building Acts, that is to say worth up to £150 and less than 350 square feet in area.²⁹ Marsom was to be entitled to formal leases of the houses within three months of their 'covering in' (the roof being put on); this would give him 99 years' use of the land, at an annual rent (from the third year) of £300 for the whole estate.

The development was very much conceived of as an entirety set within its local context, and though the degree of participation in the process by whoever were the Moneyers' professional advisers

is unclear, there must have been co-operation with Acton on the layout. It was to consist of both sides of Provost Street and Moneyers Street and the west side of the proposed Union Street, with the western boundary a seven foot brick wall between the Provost Street back gardens and Chatham Gardens, and the boundaries at north and south existing 'ditches'. There were also to be pavements of York or Purbeck stone 3 and a half feet wide, 'gun barrel' drains 2 feet in diameter along the centre of the streets, and to it a 'common sewer' with 'proper drains' from the houses.³⁰ At the time this would have been intended for running off waste water, not sewerage of solid waste as now understood.³¹

The main thrust of building, sufficient for Marsom to be granted his leases, was completed within the first three years.³² As built, there were variations in some elevations and the main streets contained slightly fewer houses than originally contemplated, but others were squeezed in by building across the back gardens of what otherwise would have been the end houses of main streets, creating addresses in the part of Nile Street originally known as Cross Street, and Marsom Street running parallel to the north. Some of the latter premises were used as workshops; two 'cottages' had names (East India Cottage; Rose Cottage) rather than numbers. As built, the estate also had two public houses: on the corner of Provost and Marsom Streets, and at the south-eastern corner (where a 20th century public house still stands).³³

Nothing in the documents expressly contemplated shops, and conversion required the freeholders' licence, but it seems that the southernmost extension of Provost Street, leading into the City Road, apparently just outside the Moneyers' property, contained retail premises.³⁴ The building agreement founding the ultimate leases, conventionally for a coherent housing development, prohibited a number of noxious trades (brewing, distilling, tripe, tallow, soap and sugar preparation, and smiths' work). Though these trades aren't found amongst known tradesmen who moved

in, it cannot be assumed that others did not use their houses as workshops. We do know that in practice several of the building tradesmen, at the very least, operated from these addresses, and that a bakehouse was also built on a corner of Moneyer Street and Cross Street.³⁵ The elevations set out in the building agreement formed the basis of what was built, but the photographs (pages 18 and 19) show the actuality. Indeed the building agreement gave the owners some control over when the buildings might be sufficient to found the granting of a lease, and to control the use of property once built; it is not clear that they retained much if any concern with other aspects.

Interiors

Although the contemporary street map implies more or less uniformity in the houses, and most frontages were a little less than 14' wide, there were broadly two sizes of plot, approximately 24' or 38' deep; the shallower ones (intended to have double-fronted elevations) were mostly on the west side of Provost Street. The building agreement had nothing to say about the interiors, but there will have been little room for more than two rooms, at most, on each floor, and the footprint of plans if accurate indicates a rectangular building with no back addition, as was standard at the time. Nor, typically, was anything said about sanitary arrangements, and none of the plans show anything resembling privy accommodation outdoors.³⁶

The builders

Over four years, having become head lessee of the land in 1812, well within the intended time frame, Marsom underleased it to some 32 different parties, both builders and others. A handful of builders (Jonathan Wakefield, Stephen Tanner, George Richard Pound and William and Thomas Reeves) took leases of five or six houses at a time; most however leased houses singly or in pairs. The rent varied, but was usually around £3 3s per house built, or £2 10s for the shallower plots. Marsom himself was in the process for the longer term, and did not step out of the picture once leases came

to be granted: rather than directing disposal to his contractors, all the head leases were taken by him before subletting.

The project was bookended at its start and at its end by two of the largest underleases, atypically around a dozen house plots in each: in 1811, to Wakefield, who had previously built in Windsor Terrace and Trafalgar Street, and who was at the time active on the Lee Acton land to the east; and in 1816 to George Richard Pound, of Plumber Street. Mainly the takers, like these two, were bricklayers or carpenters by trade, though Pound was earlier described as a plasterer, and plumbers are not unknown.³⁷ It is apparent that there was a network of cross- and sub-contracting between builders.³⁸

Though the surviving records are not such as can prove this one way or the other, it is possible that some of the building tradesmen held on to their leases in order to sub-let for a higher periodic rental. In several cases however sub-contractors chose immediately to step out of the chain and pass on their interest directly to a third party. The bricklayers Robert and James Woodcock (who though based in Allerton Street retained a workshop on the corner of Provost and Marsom Streets) were themselves principal contractors from Marsom in some cases, but in others chose instead to instruct their principal to dispose of their interest elsewhere. For example bricklayer James Torry granted, at their choice, the interest the Woodcocks would have been entitled to instead to a private investor, William Bannister, a calenderer, of Charing Cross.³⁹

The investors

Even if they retained day to day practical control over occupation and use of the property, enabling them to let houses on short leases, most of Marsom's underlessees and their sub-underlessees have disappeared from the records. In the same way, it is not known how many houses were rented out on a weekly, monthly or other basis.⁴⁰ An ultimate investor is however likely to have come from outside the building world. There were



Hoxton New Town and neighbourhood in 1832

a handful of early 'civilian' investors high in the 'pyramid' of ownership - a wine porter, more than one victualler, a schoolmaster, a gardener, another cowkeeper: all took early underleases directly from Marsom.⁴¹ Indeed he or his contractor may have chosen this means to raise ready cash to continue with the project. Occasionally there is the indirect involvement of an 'eminence grise': Wakefield, for example, in 1812 took two prominent sites, with the involvement as intermediary of Christopher Holmes, a distiller, who like a similar participant in Lee Acton building did not himself take any formal interest, but had presumably provided finance in some form. In 1816, Thomas Holloway, described as 'gentleman', paid another non-builder intermediary £300 on his taking a direct underlease of a site commensurate with five houses.⁴² Pound took underleases and sub-underleases, then himself sublet, or assigned, to non-resident investors. James Congdon, for example, a hairdresser of the City Road (where his own home was valued at the high figure of £500) took at least four houses in Provost Street on a sub-underlease from Pound,

for which he presumably paid a premium.⁴³ Pound as the builder retained merely the right to £2 10s of ground rent for the remainder of his term. Five houses were sub-underleased by Pound to James Burrough, a Shoreditch haberdasher.⁴⁴ Burrough, alternatively called Burroughs, eventually built up a portfolio of at least a dozen houses on the estate, and was still investing there in 1830.⁴⁵ Indeed, as time went on, inevitably more investors came to be non-builders; there is no evidence that any of the original outside investors went into residence on the estate.

More unusually the ultimate investor might himself be in the building trade, or even an owner-occupier - a rare creature indeed. One direct underlessee from Marsom was both. A carpenter, Thomas Comerford, in transactions in 1813 and 1817, acquired at least five houses in Moneyer Street. Not only did at least three of these remain in his family; they ran a workshop on the site, and can be traced to a residence in one of the houses until 1838.⁴⁶



Houses in Moneyer Street, 1931, before demolition

At the head of the pyramid of underleases and sub-underleases, Marsom seems to have seen himself as a property developer. His will, made in 1818 and proved ten years later, contemplated his heirs holding property inherited from him and having power to grant leases.⁴⁷ This is likely to mean however that he went on to, or intended, further building elsewhere: in 1817, following completion of the Moneyers' estate and his taking up the rest of the leases, he sold his entire interest for the sum of £3170, the purchaser (his friend John Simmons, an auctioneer of Old Street) thereby acquiring the right to receive the improved ground rent generated by the underleases, in excess of £150 p.a. more than was owed to the Moneyers in pursuance of the head lease, and heading for 5 per cent of the premium paid.⁴⁸

Ownership and occupation

It was a requirement of the building agreement that the houses were insured against fire. During the first three decades the fabric of some 50 houses was insured at one time or another with the Sun Fire Office, the online index to whose policy registers covers the period of the estate's existence up to 1841.⁴⁹ Early insurances were for the sum of £300 per house; this did not long survive completion

of the estate, however, and indeed is double the assumed value of what the Building Act regarded as a fourth-rate house.⁵⁰ It did not take long for the upper limit to fall in practice to £150, and £100 or less was common in Provost Street, where on the west side plots were shallower and houses smaller.

Most of the insured leaseholders are described in the policy documents as 'gentlemen', with a few exceptions, including, as well as others already mentioned, a baker and broker, a linen draper and a ribbon manufacturer. Apart from Comerford, only three of the insured, two 'gentlemen' and

a bedstead maker, were occupiers as well as long leaseholders, and the 'gentlemen' both insured for more than was common. One was William Everett of 4 Moneyer Street, who insured his house for £160 and its contents for £140 (it cannot be coincidence that values in Sun fire policies invariably added up to a multiple of £50).⁵¹ William Broady, the other, occupied 'East India Cottage' in Provost Street, which, uniquely, he insured for £400 and its contents for £300.⁵² Judging by the usual practice of the insurers, the description 'gentleman' does not necessarily mean the absence of a trade or business;⁵³ it does however imply that if there was one, it was not ostensibly exercised at home.

The same goes for most male residents who, not being long leaseholders, had only their household goods to insure. 15 of the 30 insured occupiers whose occupation or status is given were described simply as 'gentlemen', indicating simply it was a private residence. As well as four building tradesmen and a brushmaker, others included several retailers (chandlers, a butcher, a baker, a greengrocer, a watchmaker and a 'dealer in trusses') who insured stock on the premises and therefore presumably worked (at least in part) from there.

The insurances are not a precise measure of an occupant's wealth (again, the policies usually operate in tranches of £50). The commonest figure is £100 for all household goods without differentiation, though it might be as little as £40, and there are a handful at £300. With unusual precision, one gentleman, evidently a lodger, who insured his possessions, John Benson at 74 Moneyer Street, added to that sum £40 for wearing apparel, £5 for printed books, £3 for plate and £2 for china and glass (indeed the usual figure for clothing, if given separately, was between £40 and £60). This contrasts with Thomas Prickett, gentleman, the

householder at 6 Provost Street, who specified £10 for books, £30 for clothes, £10 for plate and £20 for china and glass; William Houseman, another, at 23 Provost Street, increased these figures to £20 for books, clothing to £60 and china and glass £20. Occasional nuances give a glimpse into a lifestyle: Robert Tweed, gentleman, of 50 Moneyer Street, who with £300 worth of contents was at the uppermost end of the local range, had a special valuation for his musical instruments, insured at £20. Likewise Thomas Reeve, of 77 Provost Street, alone specified pictures and prints, at £15. That said, an occupier might hold his wealth in other forms: John Booker, a cabinet maker of 2 Provost Street, had merely £50 worth of contents insured on the premises, but owned £750 worth of house property, none of it on the Moneyers' estate.⁵⁴ Like most 'inward' investors with a portfolio of property, however, his other holdings were local; in his case, off the City Road.

Decline and fall

It is not possible to gauge from the insurances how far the estate was multi-occupied from the beginning, though to some extent it is likely to have been.⁵⁵ The 1841 census, which appears to be incomplete and does not always clearly distinguish between houses, nevertheless makes it



Houses in Provost Street, 1931, before demolition

clear that by this date subdivision was commonplace, and indeed several houses held more than two households.⁵⁶ 'Gentlemen', not in any event a term much used in a London census, are absent; most of the few residents with an independent income were elderly, and most householders were exercising a trade, ranging from clerk, engineer, coal dealer, dressmaker and cabinet maker to porter or labourer (there is also a lace-maker with seven resident teenage apprentices in Rose Cottage). It is hard to draw firm inferences, from this evidence, about what was happening in the preceding 30 years of the estate.

It is also hard to pinpoint a specific time of change in the census evidence, not least as some of it is missing, though it gives the impression of a gradual decline. Multi-occupation continued, and probably increased, especially in Moneyer Street, and the impression is that there was a decline in the number of clerical workers and affluent tradespeople and an increase in labouring occupations, though the presence of some clerks and artisan tradespeople remains constant, and the inference from the first Ordnance Survey is that at some time sanitary accommodation was added.⁵⁷ Newer (and probably more marketable) houses were built on the ecclesiastical property to the

north in the 1840s, when Provost Street alone was connected northwards.⁵⁸

A subjective late-century portrait can be found in the 'police notebooks' compiled for the 1898 revision of Charles Booth's famous poverty maps, which had showed the estate flanked east and west by much worse property. The revision concluded that there had been a decline in the subsequent decade. In the interim the windows in Moneyer Street had become broken and patched, the street a mess and the houses overcrowded, and Provost Street now housed 'a streak of criminals, but not very pronounced' (though the local police officer described the 'sturdy-looking' male clientele of the Moneyers' Arms as 'every one a thief or burglar').⁵⁹

By this time the local vestry's improvements round Nile Street had begun raising local housing conditions south of the area; this was not confined to clearance, street-widening and rebuilding, but included opening up entrances from the north.⁶⁰ Tellingly, the Booth research draws attention to a feature of the leasehold system: to the west of the Moneyers' estate, the falling-in of leases produced improvement, as re-letting directly by the landowners led to more conscientious tenancing.

The houses of Moneyer Street, Provost Street and the rest, as William Marsom would have known them, finally disappeared through clearance in the 1930s.⁶¹ The Moneyers (and Marsom) have not been completely forgotten, however, still being commemorated in streets, estates or block dwellings on the Provost Estate. Even Sir Jasper Atkinson, the last ever Provost of the Moneyers, must be the inspiration for a new name associated with more recent up-market redevelopment of the west side of Provost Street. This may not actually be on Moneyers' land but closer to the earlier, narrow passage of Chatham Gardens – but it is called Jasper Walk.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Sean Gubbins for useful comments on an earlier draft, and to Dr C. E. Challis for first introducing me to the Moneyers in the Mint.

Notes

1. Survey by Thomas Pride, LMA SC/GL/PR/LA/012.
2. Discussed in *Survey of London*, VIII (1922), 85ff.
3. Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives, TH 2339 (lease, 1758, to Richard Eldridge, farmer); HA D/F/PEB/3/2/2 and 2/11 (agreement of 1783).
4. *The History of all the charities, donations, gifts etc belonging to the parish of St Giles without Cripplegate* (1830), 63-64.
5. HA M4717/3.
6. Policy registers in the Royal and Sun Alliance collection at LMA (Ms 11936).
7. *Survey*, VIII, 81-83, citing 'deed preserved in the Shoreditch Public Library'.
8. *Survey*, VIII, 98 and plate 7. See C. Challis, 'Hackney, Shoreditch and Moneyers in the Mint', 16 *Hackney History* (2010), 4.
9. *Survey*, VIII, 85 ff.
10. HA D/F/PEB/2/11; Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives, TH 6702.
11. HA D/F/PEB/3.
12. I. Watson. 'The last harvest of Haggerston farm', 3 *Hackney History* (1997), 24; Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives, TH 2339.
13. See the online list compiled from the Burney collection of newspapers by John Hearfield, www.johnhearfield.com, 8 February 2016; also lease from Lee, TH 2339 above.
14. *Survey*, VIII, 81.
15. 52 Geo. III c. clxiv.
16. There are several editions: the most accessible is 1813, published as *The A to Z of Regency London* (London Topographical Society, 1985).
17. For Hoxton generally, see C. Miele, *Hoxton: architecture and history over five centuries* (1993).
18. *Cripplegate Charities*, above, 63.
19. E. W. Brayley and J. Britton, *The Beauties of England and Wales* (1814), 101.
20. LMA District Surveyors' returns, MR/B/C/1807. St Luke's vestry issued new assessments for rates including Windsor Terrace in 1804: Islington Local History centre, vestry minutes 19 April 1804.
21. HA M4717/4.
22. See for example LMA MDR 1818/1/712; re Haggerston estate, Watson, 'Haggerston Farm'.
23. LMA MDR 1812/3/241; 1814/6/122; LCC/CL/GEN/08/C/91/21. See also Building Act surveyors' affidavits, LMA MR/B/C, 1803-1812.

24. Though they were occasionally referred to as the 'Worshipful Company' of Moneyers – as for example in an insurance policy memorialised at LMA Ms 11936/526/1105895 (1830) – this was never recognised as a City of London status.
25. HA M 4417/3/3; the seven were Joseph Sage, William Atkinson, Reuben Fletcher, John Nicoll, Richard Franklyn (d. 1856), Joseph Nicoll and Jasper Atkinson (c1790-1856). The Nicolls, for example, appear to follow Joseph Nicoll, d. 1773 (TNA PROB 11/986).
26. Discussed by G. P. Dyer and P. P. Gaspar in *A New History of the Royal Mint* (C. E. Challis, ed., 1992).
27. Evidence of Sir Jasper Atkinson to the Royal Commission on the Royal Mint, HL Papers XLVI (1849), 139. The freehold reversion of the Hoxton property was transferred to the Nicoll interest in 1851: LMA 1851/MDR/12/74.
28. Schedule to the Act of 52 Geo. 3 c. clxiv (land on the Sturt estate); LMA Ms 11936/423/730403, 424/727040.
29. The Act then applicable was 14 Geo. III c. lxxviii (1774 Building Act). See generally, J. Summerson, *Georgian London* (1978), 125ff; D. Cruickshank and N. Burton, *Life in the Georgian City* (1990), 101ff.
30. 'A brick wall the same thickness 7 feet high to be made along the north west side against the ground 703' demised ... to the rector and churchwardens of St Luke': HA M4717/3/1. The lease (of 1804, of which Marsom was to be granted the reversion) was for a small parcel of land additional to Chatham Gardens.
31. See Cruickshank and Burton, *Life in the Georgian City* (1990), 91, 250.
32. HA M 4717/3.
33. E.g. by Robert and James Woodcock of Allerton Street, bricklayers and carpenters: LMA Ms 11936/467/906045.
34. E.g. 1851 census (TNA HO 107/1535 f. 213 ff).
35. LMA MDR 1812/8/127.
36. This remains the case down to 1851: LMA MDR 1851/12/74.
37. HA M4714/4; LMA MDR 1817/2/127 (Union Street).
38. Broggref, for example, in 1807 leased part of the site of Trafalgar Street for 60 years to Wakefield, the rent reserved being a peppercorn throughout the term: this was almost certainly part of a more complex financial relationship: LMA MDR 1807 3/532.
39. LMA MDR/1812/7/381; 1816/2/564.
40. Unless a lease survives in a public archive, or a party had it recorded in the Middlesex Deeds Register (often if there is a mortgage), it can become untraceable.
41. LMA MDR 1812 4/83, 84 and 85; 1816/4/80; 1818/6/382.
42. LMA MDR 1812/2/335; evidence of the premium derives from HA M4717/3/9, as the MDR does not generally record this detail.

43. E.g. LMA MDR 1818/2/678.
44. Burrough's first known insurance was earlier: LMA Ms 11936/468/909003; LMA MDR 1816/7/570.
45. LMA Ms 111936/1826/505/1051582; 1830/523/1109208.
46. LMA MDR 1817/8/31; HA M4717/3/12; eg LMA Ms 11936/562/1273703 (1838).
47. TNA PROB 11/668.
48. HA M4717/3/12; TNA PROB 11/668..
49. Key information for policies issued from 1785 to 1841 is searchable on the LMA online catalogue at www.cityoflondon.gov.uk and (in part) on the A2A database of the National Archives, www.nationalarchives.gov.uk. Union Street (not a unique name, and now Custance Street) was only partly on Moneyers' land and is omitted from this survey.
50. LMA Ms 11936/452/838332 and 455/871233.
51. LMA Ms 11936/491/489450.
52. LMA Ms 11936/485/981720.
53. The policy registers occasionally (though not in this location) include consecutive policies issued to the same individual, described as 'gentleman' at his residence in one and by reference to his occupation at a place of work.
54. LMA Ms 11936 466/919758; 468/909004, 915658; 519/1099943.
55. See P. Guillery, *The Small House in 18th Century London* (2004), 294.
56. TNA HO 107/707. The only name that clearly persists is Richard Pine: a cabinet maker not securely identifiable with the Richard Pine, linen draper, who insured contents at 3 Provost Street in 1818.
57. See Ordnance Survey 60" map (London VII sheet 37, 1872). This must have involved the long leaseholders for the time being.
58. LMA SC/GL/PR/LA/012.
59. London School of Economics, Booth police notebooks B352, 155-157 (at www.lse.ac.uk/booth).
60. See P. Foyne, 'The 1890 Housing Act: A Shoreditch case study', 3 *Hackney History* (1997) 32; Booth notebook B352, 155.
61. LMA GLC/MA/SC/1/411.

Rhodes Town: how Lamb Farm became Hackney suburbia

Sean Gubbins

3

Lamb Farm

By November 1789, Samuel Rhodes, a farmer from Hoxton, had secured the purchase of 140 acres of Lamb Farm (*see map opposite*) for £5250.¹ Within 85 years, the fields of Lamb Farm had become the house-lined streets we are familiar with today, bordered on the north by Dalston Lane and Wilton Way; on the east by Greenwood Road, London Fields West and Lansdowne Drive; by Tredewin Road, Brougham Road, Albion Drive, Malvern Road, Middleton Road on the south and, towards the west, by Kingsland Road.

Lamb Farm was sold to Rhodes by the Tyssens, Hackney's largest landowners. A Tyssen map of 1785 shows Lamb Farm as a large, compact parcel of land. Separated on the west from Kingsland Road by land belonging to St Bartholomew's Hospital and the Rector of Stoke Newington, to the south was land which had passed by marriage from the Lee through the Acton to the Middleton families. To the east was the common land of London Field and charity land endowing Spurstowe's almshouses. Along the north ran Dalston Lane (also known occasionally as Dalston Road).² As this bore north towards the hamlet of Dalston, the edge of the estate ran along the Pigwell stream, on the other side of which lay land owned by the Grahams.

The map shows the land divided into three fields. The largest, with 101 acres, was of 'brick earth dug and divided'. There were few buildings on the land. To the west was the site of the former Lamb Public House, adjoining 5 houses, stables, yards and garden. It was approached along a track from Kingsland Road (now forming the western end of Richmond Road). In the south-east corner, at the bottom of today's Lansdowne Drive, was London Field farm.³

'Rhodes Town'

The Rhodes family

Although the purchase of Lamb Farm made the family the second largest landowners in Hackney, the Rhodes family were not established London landowners. They were 'enterprising lessees',⁴ 'a family of London brick makers and speculators'.⁵ The first of the family to come to London, around 1720, was William Rhodes, from Cheshire. In his will, of 1767, William referred to himself as a farmer, of St Pancras. It was his son, Thomas, who first associated the family with Hackney. By 1773, he occupied most of Balmes House farm, north of Hoxton, owned by the de Beauvoir family. In 1775 his son, Samuel, extended the family's presence in the area by leasing a further 97 acres of arable, pasture and meadow land on the other side of the parish, towards Homerton.⁶ Samuel also diversified into brickmaking, dying a wealthy man in 1794. He left for each of his two daughters £10,000 in bank annuities. As well as all his freehold and copyhold land, he left to each of his three sons a further £10,000,⁷ equivalent today to more than £560,000.⁸

Any aspiration to develop Lamb Farm for building would have been held back by war with France, which broke out in 1793. Instead, the estate was returned to cultivation. Three years after inheriting the property, the Rhodes brothers commissioned a plan of their 'farm situate near Kingsland' which shows the estate divided into thirteen fields. The largest, the 32 acres of 'Great Field', was leased in 1806 to James Grange, a fruiterer of Piccadilly and Covent Garden. Here Grange established a market garden, which continued to be cultivated into the 1840s. The house he built developed into Richmond Lodge, remembered by Benjamin Clarke from his youth in the 1830s as 'a most retired mansion, situated in its own grounds, walled

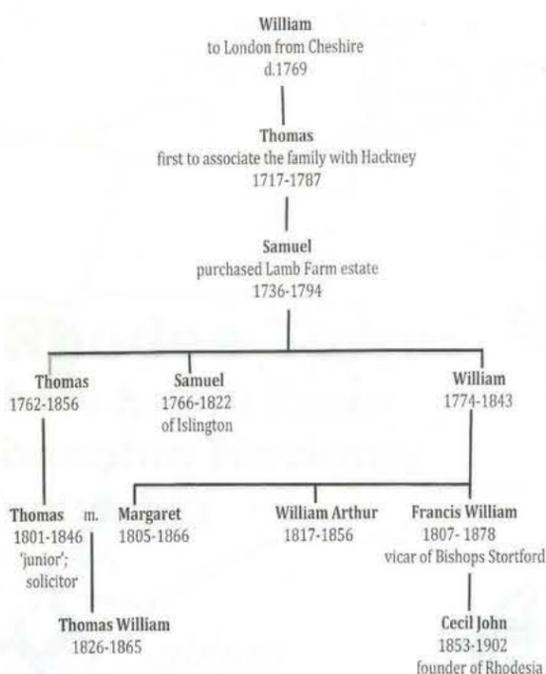


Greenwood's map, 1827, with Lamb Farm outlined

around.⁹ The only other turning-over of fields to house-building, at this time, was the leasing of land in 1806 to William Wilman on the eastern fringes of Lamb Farm. This was for an isolated development overlooking the common land of London Field, to be built on a road to be called London Terrace.

From fields to streets

It was along Dalston Lane that building began in earnest, a classic example of ribbon development. From 1807 Robert Sheldrick was building there, completing Dalston Terrace.¹⁰ Sheldrick had been 'active in numerous local speculations'. He had been involved in the development of the east side of Kingsland Road between 1802 and 1808,¹¹ a continuation of the building which had been creeping up Kingsland Road for the previous 50 years. Sheldrick's completion, by 1812, of 15 houses along Dalston Lane further extended this ribbon development towards Hackney.¹²



Rhodes family tree

The move from ribbon to estate development, encroaching into the open land of the estate, occurred when the first streets were laid out, from 1821. As can be seen in Greenwood's 1827 map of London (page 23), these streets were Roseberry Place, Mayfield Street, Beechwood Road and Woodland Street, all running south from Dalston Lane. Further east, heading south, where Dalston Road turned north towards Hackney, Park (Parkholme) Road was being built on by 1823. By 1828, Forest Row, the beginning of later Forest Road, was also being built up, crossing the ends of Roseberry Place, Mayfield and Woodland Streets as it led eastwards from Kingsland Road. Typically, for suburban London estates built on farmland, these streets reflected the former field boundaries, shown on the 1797 map.

Richmond Road, on the line of an old footpath, was the first street to cross the whole estate, running directly across it from west to east, suggesting plans for future development. The only housing along it, as seen in Greenwood's map, was at its western end, the old Lamb pub buildings. Other buildings on the estate were the earlier London Terrace and the buildings around Grange's house,

amidst his nursery, with the cartway leading to it from the west starting to be built up as Grange (Lenthall) Road. Just to the north of where the building of London Field farm had been, in the south-east of the estate, the terrace of Lansdowne Place had been built.

Development of the estate continued in this block format in the 1830s, spreading out southwards and eastwards from the north-west corner. Forest Road and Grange Road were taken further east and Holly Street, running southwards, following an old cartway, was being built on by 1835. In 1839, a new road – Queens (Queensbridge) Road – was laid out, running due north to give access from the Regent's Canal to Middleton land and up through Rhodes land to Dalston Lane. In anticipation of this, Rhodes leases were granted along its route in 1838.

The 1843 parish tithe map shows the north-west of the estate completely built up between Dalston Lane and Richmond Road. Only four years after being laid out, Queen's Road had houses built on both sides from Shrubland Grove north to Dalston Lane. Holly Street, on the west side of, and parallel to, Queen's Road, had been extended south, right through the estate, from Dalston Lane to Middleton land.

Into the 1850s, the land was betwixt open fields and street. In 1848, a valuation of the Lamb Farm estate noted that 742 houses had been built on 60 per cent of the land. The other 40 per cent, on the eastern side of Queen's Road, remained as 60 acres of 'garden ground'.¹³ In 1841 nurseryman William Dulley was leasing the market garden land, once worked by Grange, where he was employing four female agricultural labourers.¹⁴ Holly Street in 1843 still had arable fields at its northern and southern ends, as well as land set aside for building.¹⁵ In 1858 Edward Wood still occupied Lamb Farm Cottage, Richmond Road, cultivating 24 acres of market garden, where he employed four men in agricultural work.¹⁶

What remained of open space was soon to disappear. From the early 1850s, the south-eastern part of the estate began to be built upon, adjoining Middleton development to the south. Ten years later the development of Lamb Farm spread north of Richmond Road to build up the area in the north-east of the estate. By the mid 1870s, the estate had been completely covered with a network of house-lined streets. The change from fields to streets, after a faltering start, had taken almost seven decades to complete.

The building process

Like the transformation of other parts of London from field to street, the building of Lamb Farm was achieved through speculative building, carried out by a chain of often many interests, each of which benefited from this way of building.¹⁷ By leasing his land to a developer, a landowner, without making any financial outlay, saw new houses increase the value of his estate, securing for him and his heirs a steady stream of income from ground rents. A developer, without having to find the capital to acquire land, could undertake large-scale development and make a profit, from sub-letting at increased ground rents or selling leases to the builders who put up the houses. Given the opportunity to work together, small builders could profit from an enterprise, which they could not have afforded to undertake alone.¹⁸

First street name	Present street name
Albert Road	Middleton Road (east of Queensbridge Road)
Albion Road	Albion Drive
Forest Row	Forest Road
Grange Road	Lenthall Road
Lansdowne Road	Lansdowne Drive
London Terrace	London Fields West
Mayfield Street	Beechwood Road
Park Road	Parkholme Road
Queen's Road	Queensbridge Road
Salisbury Road	Elrington Road
Shrubland Grove	Mapledene Road (east of Queensbridge Road)
Wilton Road	Wilton Way

Typical of speculative landlords, the Rhodes brothers controlled the development of their land by entering into an agreement with a developer. Building was to be in accordance with the London Building Acts and completed 'under the direction and to the satisfaction of Thomas Rhodes and William Rhodes or their surveyor'. All plans, elevations and sections were to be approved by the surveyor prior to the work beginning, with no addition nor alteration to be made without the licence in writing of the lessors. The developer was obliged to share with fellow lessees responsibility in making drains and sewers.

The building agreement specified the number and type of houses to be erected, as defined by the legislation of the previous century. The estate's control laid down the type of bricks to be used in constructing the houses. Because these agreements were transient, and superseded by formal leases, very few tend to survive. The only one to come to light so far for the development of Lamb Farm dates from 1842. In this agreement, William Darbey agreed to build 'two good and substantial messuages or dwelling houses' in Holly Street with 'sound malm bricks'. Malm bricks were the best type of London stock, made from the purest brickearth.¹⁹ The developer had to comply with a timetable laying down when the houses should be 'carcassed', being just the outer shell, floors and

roof. This was, typically, within three months. The houses were to be completely fit for habitation six months later.²⁰

Once the houses were completed, under the agreement with the developer, the owners would grant one or more leases, prepared by their own solicitor but at the developer's expense. Towards the beginning of the period, the leases were mostly for 75 years or less; by the 1850s they extended to 90 years. For the

first year, as in other developments, a nominal rent of a peppercorn applied, allowing the builder time to complete the building before paying the full cash ground rent. On the strength of leases issued, lessees would use their property to secure mortgages to raise capital to complete the building or embark on other developments.

Lessees usually sub-let their houses by means of a separate lease or disposed of their interest in a head lease by which, at their direction, the property was 'demised' to a third party. An example of the first of these is the development of Richmond Terrace (*right*) on the east side of Queen's (Queensbridge) Road south from today's 'Richmond' Restaurant at the corner with Richmond Road. In January 1839 Louis England, an Islington timber merchant, took an agreement to lease this land, north of Grange Road for the building of a row of six houses, on a 90 year term. The rent was set at a peppercorn for the first two years, rising to £1 per house.²¹ Within the month, England had started to sublet this same property, divided into six discrete plots as 1-6 Richmond Terrace. Later that year more land was leased to England to extend Richmond Terrace down Queen's Road, on the south side of Grange Road, for the same 90 year term.²² These properties too were sub-leased. The new underlessees, taking a single house or two together, were mostly small-scale investors rather than occupiers, who would use their investments to earn income by renting out the property. They included a pocketbook maker from Clerkenwell and a widow from Kent Road, a carpenter, a cement manufacturer and a feather merchant.²³ These leases were for the same term, but the ground rent was raised to £8, allowing England to make a profit.



Richmond Terrace

Estate management

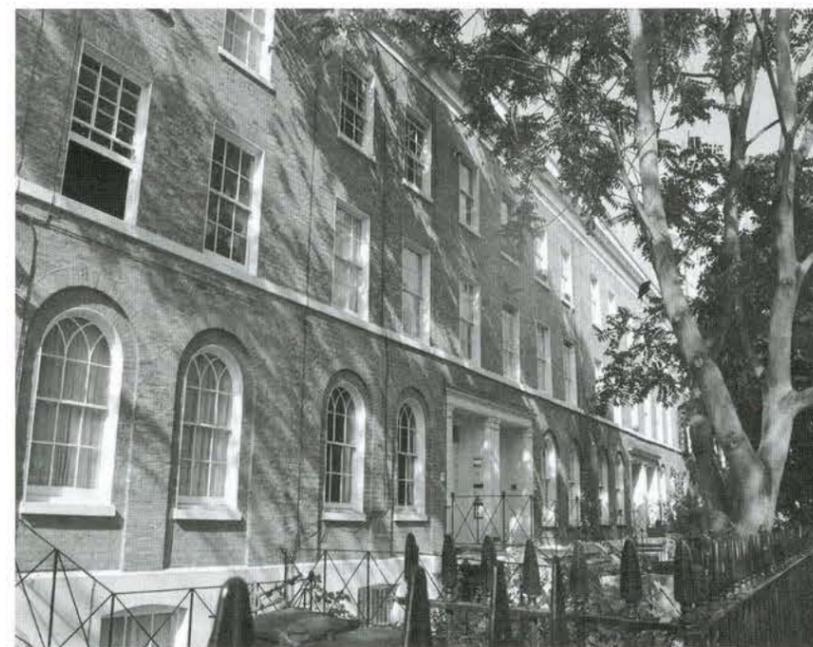
The fact that the development of their estate was not piecemeal, resulting in architecturally coherent streets, reflects a degree of planning and co-ordination on the part of the Rhodes family. There is no evidence that any of them lived on Lamb Farm, which they came later to call their Dalston estate. The family had continued to live at Balmes, but had left the area by the 1830s. There is no mention in any documentation of a person with the title of surveyor employed to oversee the Lamb Farm development, as there was for the neighbouring Middleton development²⁴ and on the Nichols estate in Shoreditch.²⁵

Absentee landlords, though, with other businesses to run, would have needed assistance on the ground to manage the estate. By 1850, there was an estate office just off Malvern Road,²⁶ at the end of Grange Road, situated in the house Grange had leased in 1806. A number of the early leases had James Kebble, builder, of Mayfield Street, witnessing Rhodes signatures, which would suggest he had a significance for their business. Later leases mentioned a Peter Hadrill of the estate office in Malvern Road. If not a surveyor by trade or title, he had a responsibility for managing the estate. In the

1851 census he is listed as 'brickmaker's managing clerk' and twenty years later the census refers to him as a 'steward or agent to an estate.'²⁷

The builders

London's speculative builders ranged from individual master craftsmen to master builders. The master craftsman, a carpenter or a bricklayer for example, would employ labour from his own trade and contract with other types of craftsmen for their particular skills to complete construction. The master builder would employ a permanent workforce, encompassing all the crafts of the building trade needed to build a house.²⁸ The developer, though, was not necessarily a master craftsman. He could be an architect or from outside the building trade, investing his money in contract with a builder. Most of those leasing from the Rhodes estate were recorded as builders, but they also included a carpenter, plumber, excavator, bricklayer and labourer, as well as timber and leather merchants, a victualler, a paper stainer and a draper. Only one, John Humphrey Jones, building on the estate in the 1850s in Malvern Road, was referred to in leases as an architect.



Lansdowne Place

47 different builders were among the lessees sampled for this study: most of them were, typically, local men. 77 per cent gave their addresses in streets on the estate. A few of them changed their addresses within the estate a number of times. This reflected the fact that they were living where they were building, and moved to live at the next site they were working on. Most of the rest were builders living elsewhere in Hackney or in neighbouring Islington or Shoreditch. The builders from furthest away were J. Burford and Sons, of St Neot's, Huntingdonshire, building three fourth-rate houses in Malvern Road in 1852.²⁹ Some builders concentrated their activity in streets in a particular part of the estate. This suggests agreements, which have not survived, between the builders and the landowners for the construction of a number of houses on an acreage of the estate.

Speculative building was a precarious business, reflecting economic cycles. The Rhodes family took steps to protect themselves against defaulting builders by obliging them to put their buildings up as security for any money due for bricks sold or money lent. Should the builder become bankrupt, or not complete the work, his agreement would be voided.³⁰ Builder William Honeysett of Dalston, who leased land in Woodland Street and the east side of Park Road, went bankrupt in 1824.³¹ It was agreed that he complete the house he had started to build, but he was required to surrender part of his leased land. John Hendre, a plumber, ran into financial difficulties in 1843.³² In 1859 the 'plant and stock in trade' of builder J. R. Vialon, an employer of 16, was auctioned off on-site in Richmond Road.³³

Some of the builders were also involved in the development of other parts of today's



Elizabeth House, Forest Road

borough. John Hendre was building on Middleton land. William Barlow, who took over Hendre's Middleton land when Hendre became financially stretched, was leasing from the Rhodes brothers in 1850 and 1851. Edward Paget Nunn was building, and living, on the Lamb Farm estate in the 1850s and 1860s, before moving on to build in north Stoke Newington.³⁴ Islip Odell leased the small area of the Rhodes estate adjoining Albion Square, which he had developed for the Middletons. These builders were part of a network which stretched beyond the confines of Rhodes land, allowing them exchange of styles, labour and assistance.

Architecture

The process of speculative building was largely unplanned. Most houses were erected by the builder using the 'assistance of one of his own order'³⁵ and various pattern books, some of which were inherited from the builders' Georgian antecedents.³⁶ What was built reflected the builders' taste and judgment as to what would sell.

The earliest surviving building is Lansdowne Place (page 27), at the bottom of Lansdowne Drive. Slightly later are buildings in Forest Road. Elizabeth House (above), named after his wife by surgical

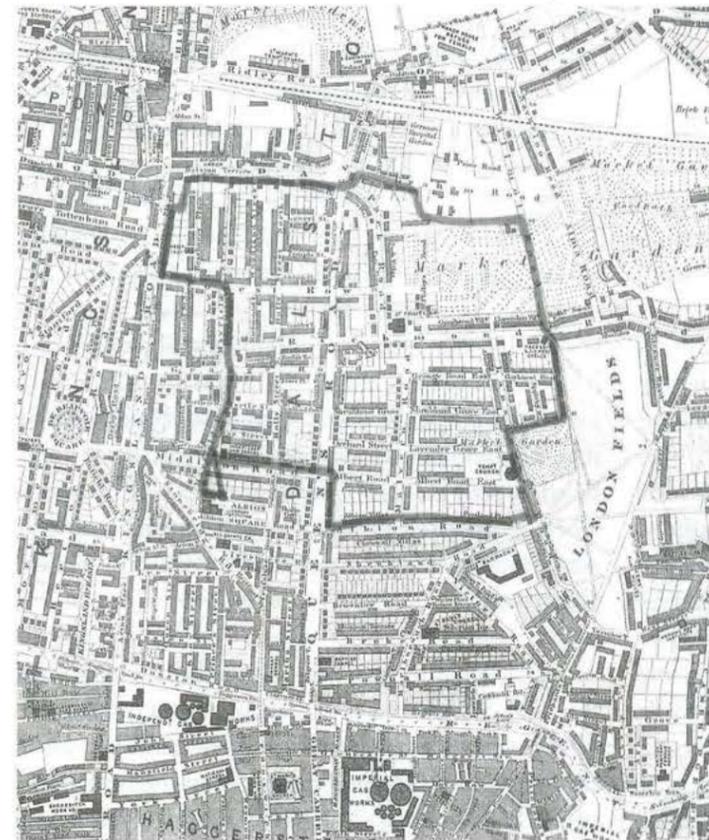
instrument maker Henry Williams, who took a lease³⁷ in June 1834, is one of the estate's few detached villas. Opposite and beside Elizabeth House there remain a few other larger villas. Together they form what could have been an attempt to give the estate a more socially exclusive centre, located beside St Philip's Church, which faced the end of a driveway leading to Richmond Lodge, the largest house on the estate and Grange's home of 1806, later the estate office.

Built over seven decades, the houses reflect gradually changing architectural styles. Lansdowne Place is an example of a Georgian terrace, with its

horizontal uniformity, emphasized by the string course running along the whole terrace. Louis England's Richmond Terrace, Queen's Road (page 26) started to break away from Georgian uniformity, emphasising the vertical to distinguish the individuality of each house, with larger floor-to-ceiling first floor windows with balconettes.

The Victorian suburban ideal was the detached house, with the semi-detached as a compromise.³⁸ By 1850, further down Queen's Road, four-storeyed semi-detached houses broke the terraced pattern, with the porched door distinguishing each house. Added decoration of stuccoed first- and second-floor window-surrounds reflected the Italianate influence which had percolated its way down to suburban building, echoing details found on the facade of Sir Charles Barry's 'Travellers' Club in Pall Mall.

The influence of the Italianate style gradually added more decorative features. Roofs were fully revealed, with cornices and decorated brackets under the eaves, keystones above the windows, porticos with foliate capitals to the columns. Another feature, distinguishing the Victorian house, was the bay window, reflecting the house's internal layout in its external facade. It first appeared in the area in



Stanford's map, 1862. The Lamb Farm estate is outlined.

the early 1850s on the ground floor. Into the late 1850s and beyond, when most of the surviving stock was built, the houses were more usually set out in small terraces of four houses, making greater use of the building space. It is this format which now typifies the area.

Street naming

Most of the names chosen for the streets laid out across the Lamb Farm estate conjure up a rustic ideal, typical of early to mid Victorian suburban developments of this class and type. None bore any connection to the area's own agricultural past. There is no Pigwell Lane to remember the stream that once bordered the land. The only exception is Richmond Road's Lamb Farm Villas, built in 1910, on the site of Edward Wood's cottage, beside the market garden he had worked in the 1840s and '50s.

The nationalistic names of Albion and Queen's Roads were not the Rhodes's idea, but taken up from streets initiated on the neighbouring Middleton estate. It was down to the builders to give patriotic names to the pubs and houses they erected: Arthur, Albert, Havelock. The Rhodes family dropped their neighbour's name from Middleton Road as it crossed Queen's Road into their land, changing it to Albert Road: the Rhodes's only doffing to royalty. (Officialdom later decided in favour of Middleton.) Unlike other Hackney landowners, no Rhodes ever named a street after themselves or a family association.³⁹ Personalisation was left to the builders to name clusters of houses after their wives and daughters or themselves. Builder Richard Liscombe gave us Liscombe's Cottages in Queen's Road, and Richard's Villas in Lavender Grove behind Liscombe's Villas in Shrubland Grove. One category used on Rhodes land was the names of public men: Lansdowne and Salisbury. Holly, Park, Forest, Grove, Lavender and other rural associations were appropriate for suburban aspirations.

The first residents

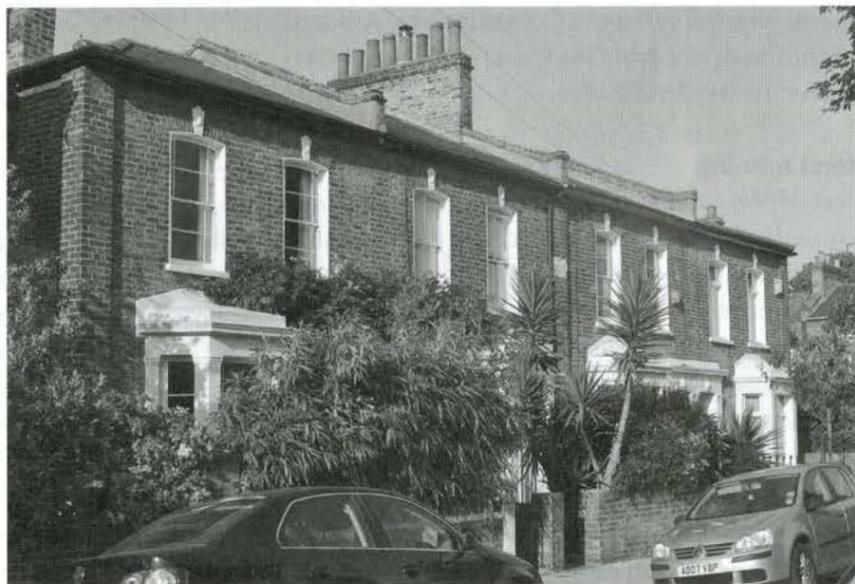
It could be argued that Hackney had in some sense always been a suburb of London, attracting since the 16th century wealthy Londoners away from the bustle of city life to quieter rural surroundings. This same lure of a quieter life, along with growing accommodation needs of an increasing population, improved, affordable transportation, availability of land and the accessibility of capital,⁴⁰ lay behind the development of Hackney and other areas into suburbs of London in the 19th century.

The first residents of Louis England's Richmond Terrace included a newspaper editor, a bricklayer, a warehouseman, a governess, four merchants and a 'gentleman chorister' of St James's Chapel Royal, all of whom would have been renting their homes

from those who had sub-leased the houses from the developer, Louis England. Most of these first families, but by no means all, were sufficiently well-off to employ at least one servant; a very few could afford two. Even if they could not engage domestic help, none of the wives were recorded as working. Female heads of household, if not widows, tended to be teachers.⁴¹

Prior to the emergence of building societies as major agents of home ownership, the housing market was based on leasehold tenure.⁴² Of Richmond Terrace families listed in the 1841 census, only three were still living there two years later. None were still there in 1851.⁴³ About half the heads of household were born outside London, evidence that London's growing population was fuelled by immigration. The majority of these were British-born, apart from a number of Germans, reflecting the attraction of this part of London, served by Dalston's German Hospital, to German settlers.

The size of the household ranged from three to 12, but the average was about six. By 1871, a quarter of the houses sampled in Richmond Terrace were in multiple-occupancy. This did not mean that they had become overcrowded. The sharing households were small and the total number of occupants per house did not exceed the largest single occupancy. The multiple-occupancy, though, did reflect a slight downturn in the social mix of the terrace, with more manual-worker residents. These residents set what was to remain the social tone of the area: never more than lower middle-class and aspiring lower-class.



Acacia Villas, Grange Road East

Life in the suburb

There were only a few non-domestic buildings erected on the Lamb Farm estate. No factories or other places of work were amongst the first buildings constructed. The eastern part of the estate was in the parish of St John-at-Hackney, but the church was over half a mile away. More convenient was the small medieval chapel of the closed St Bartholomew's leper hospital at the corner of Kingsland and Balls Pond Roads, but its low attendance suggests it was not attractive. Local people were given their own church when the Rhodes family donated land on Richmond Road, north-east of its junction with Park Road. The church, to seat 1000, was constructed amongst surrounding market gardens in 1841 by Henry Duesbury.

The Rhodes interests, unlike their fellow-Anglican Sir John Middleton, were willing to accommodate non-conformist churches on their land. In 1847 Congregationalists built a church on the north side of Middleton Road. There still stands on the south side of Shrubland Road an iron church, built there in 1858 by a Presbyterian congregation.⁴⁴ Both were just inside the Rhodes estate.

As well as a church, another indispensable amenity was a public house. The Rhodes family were generous in their supply of pubs. A pub was often the first building a builder would construct, not only as a place of refreshment for those working on his sites, but also as a 'counting house', where he could pay his labourers and do business.⁴⁵ Public houses were built as distinct, usually corner buildings, larger than the other houses in the street and with more elaborate decorative details.

Including a school in an area for suburban living was seen by some developers as something which might 'injuriously affect their houses',⁴⁶ threatening any pretensions the development might have for social exclusivity. The only school the Rhodes family involved themselves with was in the north-east corner of the estate in Woodland Street, where they leased land in 1851 for 100 boys and girls of the Holy Trinity Church of England School.⁴⁷ Otherwise, local children could be schooled in establishments set up by residents in private houses on the estate, such as the Misses Mackenzie's 'ladies' school' at 8 Richmond Terrace, Queen's Road.⁴⁸

The only other non-domestic building on the estate was a militia barracks for the 1st Royal Tower Hamlets Militia, along with an armoury and staff sergeant quarters.⁴⁹ Built in the south-east corner of the estate, just off Shrubland Road behind Lansdowne Road, the barracks would have been relatively unobtrusive on the suburban surroundings.

No theatres or other facilities were built on Lamb Farm to fill the leisure time of its new occupants. Amateur dramatic clubs were available close by: 'The Blackstone', at Luxembourg Hall, the other side of Dalston Lane, in 1869, and 'The Dalston', at Albion Hall in 1860 and 1870.⁵⁰ Albion Hall had been built by the Middleton estate on the west side of Albion Square, just south of Rhodes land. At one point it had also accommodated the 'Kingsland, Dalston and De Beauvoir Town Literary and Scientific Institutions'. A tram ride

away, down Kingsland Road into Shoreditch, were the Standard and City Theatres.⁵¹

The only local open space was the common land of London Field. Muddy in wet weather and dusty in a dry summer, the land was not laid out as a park until, along with Hackney's other common land, it came into public ownership in 1872. Further away was the recently set-out Victoria Park, open to the public from 1843. With the coming of Hackney's first railway, a local family could take an outing further afield to Hampstead Heath after 1850.

Conclusion

It took almost 20 years before the farming and brickmaking Rhodes family started to exploit their Lamb Farm estate for building. There had been development of land in Hackney for building before they arrived, but it had been piecemeal. They pioneered exploitation of land in Hackney for housing development, which had all the hallmarks of speculative building.

Under three generations of the family's management, the development gradually, over 70 years, fully transformed Lamb Farm into a network of house-lined streets. As a family, the Rhodes 'took diligent advantage of the available and commercial opportunities of their eras'.⁵² To them, Lamb Farm was no more than one of their more important business undertakings, which, managed successfully, would provide their family, and their partners speculating in its development, with a profitable return. 'Rhodes Town' is their legacy: long, wide streets, lined with good-looking houses, pleasing in their overall conformity of style, yet still distinct in their variety of detail: an area which has become amongst the most sought-after by London's aspiring middle-classes of today.

Notes

1. LMA, Middlesex Deeds Register, MDR 1789/3/361, 1790/1/57.
2. When discussing streets of the period, they will be referred to - after the first mention - solely by the names they were originally given and not by the names they bear today.
3. HA/D/F/TYS/66 (Tyssen family records).
4. T.F.T. Baker, (ed.), *Victoria History of the County of Middlesex*, X (1995), 14.
5. B. Cherry, and N. Pevsner, *Buildings of England, London 4: North* (1998), 507.
6. D. Mander, *Strength in the Tower* (1998), 23; HAD V31.
7. Samuel Rhodes's will, TNA PROB 11/1251/65.
8. apps.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/results.asp#mid, accessed 22/08/14).
9. B. Clarke, *Glimpses of Ancient Hackney and Stoke Newington*, (1986), 240.
10. Mander, *Strength*, 45.
11. P. Guillery, 'Waste and Place: late 18th-century development on Kingsland Road', *Hackney History* 6 (2000), 34.
12. HAD map series V.191.
13. HAD Rhodes family records, D/F/RHO/5/7.
14. 1841 census, TNA HO 107/698.
15. HAD St-John-at-Hackney 1843 Tithe Map.
16. 1851 census, TNA HO 107/1505; 1858 Post Office Directory.
17. See I. Watson, *Gentlemen in the building line* (1989) 42-46 for a detailed explanation of the potential complexity of the speculative building chain. The preceding article in this journal gives a detailed early 19th century example.
18. C. Thom, *Researching London's Houses* (2005), 14.
19. A Cox, 'Bricks to Build a Capital' in H. Hobhouse and A. Saunders (eds.), *Good and Proper Materials*, London Topographical Society Publication 140 (1989), 3.
20. This and preceding paragraph are based on HAD D/F/RHO/4/4.
21. LMA MDR/1839/5/732.
22. LMA MDR/1839/8/585.
23. LMA MDR/1839/5/728-731,586-587, 591.
24. The Middleton surveyor was George Pownall: I. Watson, 'The Last Harvest of Haggerston Farm', *Hackney History* 3 (1997), 26.

25. Nichols Square was built to designs of architect John Henry Taylor in 1841: A. Robey, 'Nichols Square', in L. Rigg (ed), *Hackney, Modern, Restored, Forgotten, Ignored* (2009), 107.
26. LMA LCC/AR/BA/05/86, plan 153.
27. 1851 and 1871 censuses, TNA HO/107/1502 and RG10/275.
28. J. Burnett, *A Social History of Housing, 1815-1970* (Newton Abbot, 1978), 19-20.
29. MA MBO/DS/01/H.
30. HAD D/F/RHO/4/4.
31. LMA MDR/1825/10/256, 373, 606.
32. Watson, 'The Last Harvest', 30.
33. *The Builder*, XVI (1858) 116.
34. T. F. T. Baker, C R Elrington (eds.), *Victoria History of the County of Middlesex*, VIII, 151.
35. *The Builder* XVI (1858), 630.
36. M. Hunter, *Victorian Villas of Hackney* (1981), 36.
37. LMA MDR/1842/5/67.
38. Burnett, *Social History*, 102.
39. Commemorating the Middleton's Suffolk estate by their 'Shrubland' Road caused confusion, leading to the Rhodes's Shrubland Grove, four streets north, being later renamed Mapledene Road.
40. H. J. Dyos, *Victorian Suburb: a study of the growth of Camberwell* (Leicester, 1966), 53.
41. 1841 census, TNA HO/698.
42. Burnett, *Social History*, 96.
43. 1851 census, ancestry.co.uk (accessed 08/09/14); *The Hackney Almanac and Directory for 1843; Turner's Directory for 1845*.
44. *Turner's Directory*, 1845, 142.
45. Dyos, *Victorian suburb*, 154.
46. D. Olsen, *Growth of Victorian London* (1976), 242.
47. Baker, *VCH*, 153.
48. 1858 *Post Office London Directory*, (1858).
49. Ordnance survey map, Dalston 1870, London Sheet 40 (Godfrey Edition).
50. Baker, *VCH*, 163.
51. D. Mander, *More Light, More Power* (Stroud, 1996), 95-8.
52. R. I. Rotberg, *The Founder: Cecil Rhodes and the Pursuit of Power* (New York, 1988), 17.

The Abney Park way of death: a family historian's perspective

Brenda Griffith-Williams



Introduction

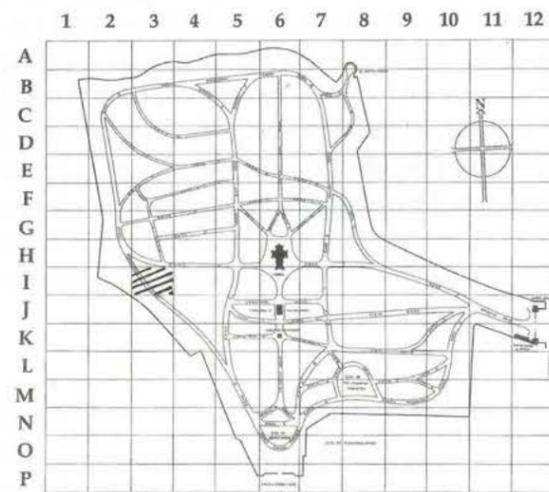
I was born and brought up in north London, and I heard about Abney Park Cemetery as a child because my father told me that his mother was buried there. Elizabeth Jane Griffith-Williams (née Pointer) died at her home in Islington on 3 January 1936. My father was still single and had not even met my mother, so I never knew my paternal grandmother. We didn't visit her grave, and I still don't know where exactly it is because the cemetery's register covering the relevant date is missing.¹ I don't think my father himself (who died in 1967) ever knew that his father and paternal grandparents, one of his paternal great-grandmothers, and two uncles, were also buried in Abney Park. I found all this out for myself many years later, and more or less by accident, in the course of helping a friend to find some family graves. Luckily, I was able to refer to Siân Mogridge's article 'The Abney Park way of death: an archivist's perspective'² for help in using the cemetery's records at Hackney Archives, and I decided to write the present article as a kind of companion piece, from a family historian's perspective. Drawing on my own experience I aim to offer some practical advice on how to locate a grave in the cemetery (not as straightforward as it looks on paper!) and to reflect on the value for family historians of the information found on headstones and in the records, based on the story of my own 19th century ancestors.

Finding an Abney Park burial

When I started doing family history research, in the early 1990s, it would have been very difficult to find the burial record for someone who died in London after about 1840, when parish churchyards became full and the proliferation of modern private and municipal cemeteries began, unless one already knew where the person in question was buried. The records of course existed, but unlike parish registers they were not conveniently gathered together at LMA, so tracking down an individual could, unless one was lucky, have involved a lot of fruitless travel and searching. Now, although there is still quite a long way to

go before we have a complete national burial index online, that situation has been changed dramatically by the internet. The largest database for UK burials and cremations is Deceased Online (www.deceasedonline.com) whose coverage is constantly expanding. It provides a quick and easy search facility for no charge, and access to individual records for a small fee (or a subscription).

Abney Park is not (yet) covered by Deceased Online, and if you know someone was buried there (or think they might have been) the best place to start looking for the grave is www.devsys.co.uk/ap (Abney Park Cemetery Index 2005). A 'basic search', using either a forename plus surname or surname only, will produce a list of people identified by their years of birth (when known) and death, followed by the location and number of the grave. Click on the number to find a list of all the people buried in that grave. The information provided for each person, which is extracted from the cemetery's burial registers, includes name, date of burial, age and year of birth (where known), and (in most cases) address. Clicking on the grave location at the bottom of the list (a grid reference to the official plan of the cemetery) will bring up the plan with the relevant grid square highlighted. All of this is completely free of charge. Using the index in this way, I found details of the graves

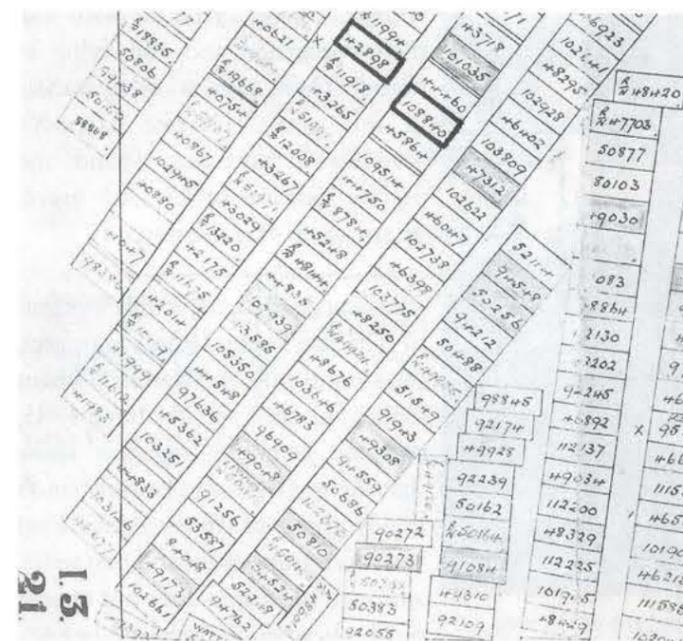


The official plan, with section I.03 highlighted

described in this article, in which eight members of my family are buried. Two of the graves are located in section I.03, which is highlighted on the plan of the cemetery shown below left.

Once you have found the entry you want on the database, and noted all the information it contains, it is not actually necessary to consult the original registers in order to find the grave, but you will need a detailed plan of the relevant part of the cemetery, as the grid reference alone is not enough to locate an individual grave. Each grave has a unique number, which will usually be engraved on the headstone (if there is one) but the number is not always easy to find. In any event, the numbering sequence bears no relation at all to the location of the grave, because the numbers were allocated in chronological order (and the grave number is actually the number allocated in the register to the first burial in that grave). As an example of the layout, the opposite page shows a detail from the plot map of section I.03, and the two graves belonging to my family (42898 and 108840) are highlighted.

The next step is to make an appointment at the Visitors' Centre, where, for a fee of £20, the staff will find the relevant plot map and help you to look for the grave. They warn that graves are very difficult to find, even when you have a plot number, and recommend searching in autumn or winter when headstones are more visible. (For more details, see www.abneypark.org/grave-search.) From my own experience, I can confirm that the ground is very uneven and overgrown, and can be slippery; even the paths can be boggy after heavy rainfall, so you would be well advised to wear old clothing, thick gloves, and sturdy shoes or boots that you don't mind getting muddy! It is also a good idea to take garden shears or secateurs, to cut away the vegetation from any headstone you are lucky enough to find.



Part of the plan for section I.03, with graves 42898 and 108840 outlined in bold

Thomas Griffith-Williams and his family in Abney Park (and elsewhere)

My great-grandfather, Thomas Griffith Williams (he didn't use the hyphen until the 1880s), was born in Holborn in 1825, the son of a coachpainter called Griffith Williams and his wife Louisa. Thomas, who became a solicitor's clerk, married Mary Ann McNeil in her home town, Wisbech, in 1848, and from the 1850s onwards they lived in north London: initially in the parish of Shoreditch (now part of the London borough of Hackney), but very close to the border with Islington, to which they soon moved. Some of their descendants were still living in Islington until the late 20th century, and the family also retained a close link with Wisbech.

Through the Abney Park index I discovered three (Griffith-)Williams graves, and two others belonging to families related to mine by marriage: the Okeys and the Galeys. I have found only two of these five graves in the cemetery: one which I shall call the main family grave, and the family grave of Thomas Witham Galey, which was very easy to find because of its conspicuous location facing a path.

The headstone on the main family grave (42898, pictured overleaf) reads:

In
Loving Memory
Of
THOMAS GRIFFITH-WILLIAMS
DIED 28. JULY 1901
AGED 76 YEARS.
ALSO OF ARTHUR,
ELDEST SON OF ABOVE,
DIED 27. JANUARY 1869
AGED 18 YEARS.
MARY ANN,
WIDOW OF THOMAS GRIFFITH-WILLIAMS,
DIED 1. JUNE 1905,
AGED 78 YEARS.
AND ALFRED MORTIMER GRIFFITH-WILLIAMS,
SON OF THE ABOVE,
DIED 1. FEBRUARY 1907,
AGED 47 YEARS.
R. I. P.

What immediately struck me about this headstone was that it was clearly not erected immediately after the first burial, with the later ones added in chronological order, but with Thomas, as head of the family, at the top. So it looks as if the inscription was made after Thomas's death, including the details about Arthur, with Mary Ann and Alfred added at the appropriate time. The cemetery's records for the burials of Mary Ann and Alfred confirm that, on each occasion, a fee of 15s. was charged for 'stones' (i.e., as Sián explains, the removal and replacement of an existing headstone). There is no record of such a charge for Thomas's burial, so perhaps there was just a smaller, temporary memorial marking the grave after Arthur's death.

From the perspective of a family historian, the discovery of Arthur's burial was of the greatest interest to me, because it tied up what had for a long time been a loose end in my research. I knew that Thomas and Mary Ann's first child, Arthur, was born in Wisbech in 1850, and he appears aged 10, with the family on their 1861 census return at 56 Arlington Street, Islington. But he is not listed on the 1871 return, when he would have been 20, or any of the later ones. So what had happened to him? There were several possible explanations



The grave of Thomas Griffith-Williams, his widow and two of his sons

for his ‘disappearance’, but tracing someone with such a common name (the family’s surname was still Williams) can be extremely difficult. The only potentially relevant evidence I found was a death certificate for an Arthur Williams who died of pneumonia and pleurisy on 27 January 1869, in the London Fever Hospital (then in Islington) aged 18. This was clearly a possible match, but the details on the certificate were inconclusive: the death was registered by a member of the hospital staff, not a relative; the ‘occupation’ column merely says ‘unknown’, and there is no indication of Arthur’s home address or family relationships. So it was the burial record that finally confirmed his identity.

The cemetery register confirms that Thomas Griffith Williams, of 19 Union Square, Islington, bought the grave in 1869, initially for the burial of 18 year old Arthur Williams of the same address. The grave was not used again until Thomas’s own burial on 29 July 1901 (he died at a nursing home in Hammersmith where he had spent his last months) but in the meantime there had been other deaths in his immediate family. First, Thomas’s mother, Louisa Williams, died on 21 September 1877, aged 83. She was buried in a separate grave in Abney Park³ some distance from the main family one. It was purchased, according to the register, by her

youngest daughter Laura (who was then unmarried and still living at home). There were no other burials in this grave. Despite extensive searches I have not found the precise location of Louisa’s grave, or any trace of a memorial.

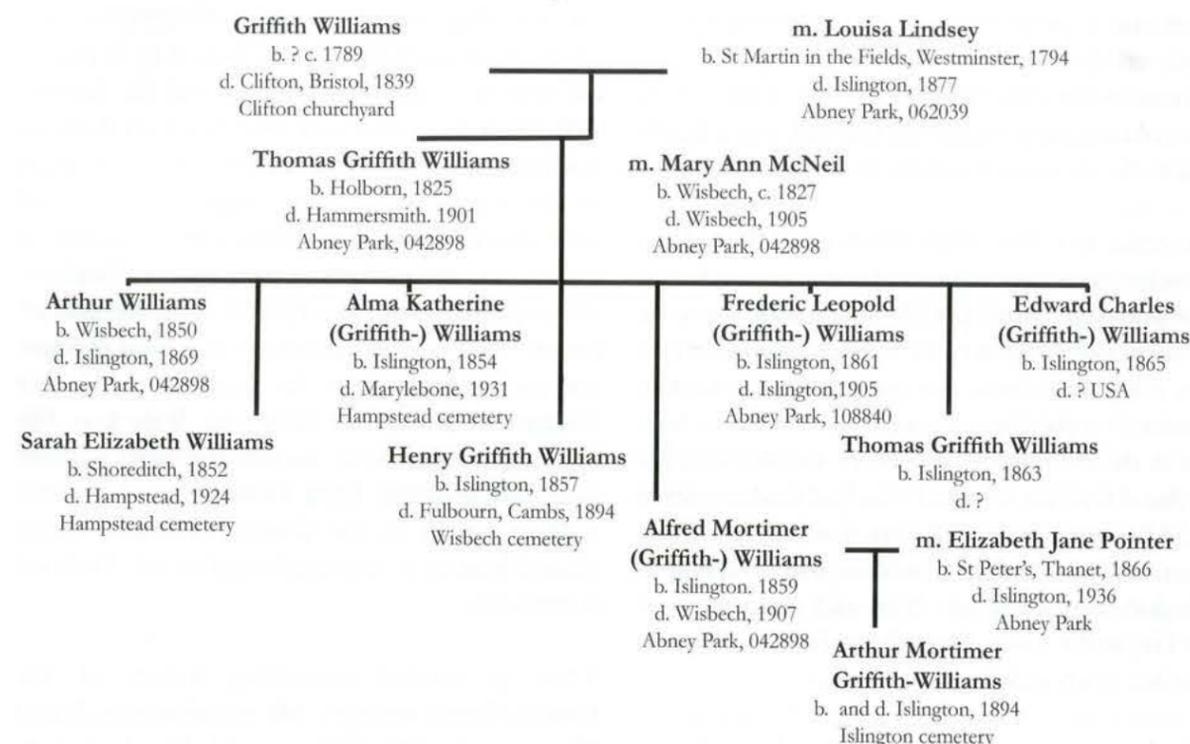
The next death in the family was that of Thomas’s sister Emma Margaret, the second wife of Thomas Witham Gale. She died on 28 March 1885, and the cemetery registers show that she was buried in her husband’s family grave⁴ in Abney Park (along with his mother, aunt and first wife), although her name does not appear on the headstone (pictured below).

Four years later, Thomas’s nephew, Percy Leopold Williams Okey – the son of Henry Okey and Mary Ann Louisa Okey, née Williams – died at the age of 25 and was buried in the Okey family grave⁵ on 10 June 1889.

Next, Thomas and Mary Ann’s second son, Henry Griffith Williams (he never used the hyphen), died on 17 February 1894, aged 36, in the county lunatic asylum in Fulbourn, Cambridgeshire, where he had been admitted ten days earlier suffering from



The Gale family grave



The family tree, showing three generations of burials

depression following influenza. He was buried in the borough cemetery in Wisbech. Another son, Frederic Leopold Griffith-Williams, died on 21 January 1905 at his home in Islington. He is buried in Abney Park, but in a separate grave⁶ which, according to the site plan, is very close to the main family one. I think it must have been located in the space behind the main Griffith-Williams family grave, but I was unable to identify the plot precisely, and there is certainly no surviving headstone, if there ever was one.

At some time after Thomas’s death his widow, Mary Ann, moved back to her family home, 3 Norfolk Street Wisbech, where she died on 1 June 1905, but her body was brought back for burial in the family grave in Abney Park. The final occupant of the grave, Alfred Mortimer Griffith-Williams (my grandfather), also died at 3 Norfolk Street Wisbech, on 1 February 1907, and his body, too, was brought back for burial in the main family grave. (He had spent the last few months of his life in Wisbech after becoming estranged from his wife, who remained at home in Islington with their children.)

A ‘burial strategy’

This pattern of family burials between 1869 and 1907, in Abney Park and Wisbech, raises a number of questions in my mind about the family’s choice of burial places, or what I have come to think of as their ‘burial strategy’. I have no private documents or other sources to supplement the information on the public record, so I can only speculate about the answers. In the first place, I assume that Thomas chose Abney Park because it was the nearest cemetery to the family home; although they never actually lived in Stoke Newington, they did live on the eastern side of Islington, and probably regarded it as ‘local’. (According to Google Maps, Abney Park is about two and a half miles from Union Square, while both Tower Hamlets and Highgate cemeteries are about four miles. The publicly owned Islington Cemetery, opened in 1854, is actually in Finchley, about six miles to the north.) Many people, no doubt, chose a particular cemetery on the recommendation of an undertaker (who, as Siân points out, would have

been paid a commission for such an introduction). And, in Thomas's case, another factor that may have influenced his choice is that one of his sisters, Mary Ann Louisa Okey, had married into a family which already owned a grave in Abney Park.

I assume, too, that when Thomas purchased the grave he intended it to be used in due course for his own and Mary Ann's burials, and at least for some of their eight children. If so, that would explain why a separate grave was bought for his mother, Louisa. Another option might have been to bury her in the churchyard at Clifton, Bristol, with her husband Griffith Williams who had died in Clifton in 1839. But Louisa had been a widow for many years, and she and her children had returned to London (where she was born and spent most of her life) in the 1840s. So perhaps the Bristol option was not given serious consideration.

I find it much more puzzling that Frederic was not buried with his parents and brothers in the main family grave. I initially assumed that there was space for only four burials in the grave, and that Alfred was given preference for some reason – although even that seemed odd, because he was nearly two years younger than Frederic, and died two years later. But there is no indication in the burial registers that the grave was full after the last burial, as I would have expected given that many other entries are stamped 'This grave is now full' in red ink. In fact, the register entry for Alfred's burial records that the grave was 'now 6 feet deep' (it had been 7 feet after Mary Ann's burial, and 8 feet after Thomas's). So the reason why Frederic was buried in a separate grave (purchased by his widow, Elizabeth) remains a mystery. One possible explanation might be that he had become estranged from the rest of the family, but that seems unlikely given that his grave is so close to the main family one. And another 'mystery' about this grave is that the cemetery records show another burial in it in 1926 – more than twenty years after Frederic's death, and of someone apparently unrelated to the family.

On the other hand, it is not at all surprising that Henry Griffith Williams was buried in Wisbech, because he (unlike his mother and his brother Alfred, whose bodies were returned from Wisbech for burial in Abney Park) was a long-term resident of the town and the surrounding area. He had moved to Wisbech after leaving school, working as a clerk at Gurney's bank (a precursor of Barclays), where he remained an employee until the end of his life. He married a daughter of a local butcher, and they made a home for themselves and their children in the nearby village of Walsoken. His funeral (attended by his mother and other relatives who had travelled from London) even merited a short report in the *Wisbech Advertiser*, which treated him as a respected member of the local community.

There is another interesting feature of the family's 'burial strategy'. My grandparents, Alfred Mortimer Griffith-Williams and Elizabeth Jane Pointer, married in September 1893, and their first child, Arthur Mortimer, was born on 14 October 1894. He died only 11 days later, on 25 October, and his death certificate gives the cause of death as 'immaturity at birth'. Arthur Mortimer Griffith-Williams was not buried in either of the existing family graves, or in Abney Park at all, but (as I found through Deceased Online) in a common grave in Islington Cemetery – and this provides an interesting link with Siân's article. As she explains, a common grave is a large grave owned by the cemetery and filled over a period of weeks or months with burials from unrelated families. A fee was charged for burial in a common grave, but this was cheaper than purchasing the plot of a private grave.

In her sample of 97 burials from the registers for September 1900, Siân found that ten were of babies under one year old, and eight of these were buried in common graves – a higher percentage than of either adults or older children. As Siân points out, it might be tempting to conclude that infant mortality at the time was higher among families with lower incomes and from lower social

backgrounds, but that is not the only possible reason for the disparity. She suggests, tentatively, that people might not have considered purchasing a new grave for an infant under a year old, so that the higher percentage of babies buried in common graves might rather reflect different attitudes to the burial of babies and adults. An isolated example, of course, proves nothing, but I think the case of Arthur Griffith-Williams does support Siân's hypothesis. My grandfather was a solicitor – relatively newly qualified in 1894, but I think he could almost certainly have afforded a private burial, with help from the wider family if necessary. He was also a devout Roman Catholic, and it seems inconceivable that he would have chosen to bury his child in a common grave if that had not been considered acceptable for someone of his religion and social class.

Just to complete the story of Thomas and Mary Ann Griffith-Williams and their children: they also had two more sons, and two daughters. Edward Charles Griffith-Williams (born 1865) emigrated to America. I think his older brother, Thomas Griffith-Williams junior (born 1863) may also have emigrated, but I have been unable to find any record of him after 1890 (when, according to the electoral register, he was living at his father's house, 51 Marquess Road Islington). The two daughters both continued to live in north London, and survived into old age. Sarah Elizabeth (Mrs Winbolt; born 1852) died at her home in Belsize Park on 8 August 1924, and Alma Katherine Griffith-Williams (born 1854) died on 6 February 1931 in the Florence Nightingale Hospital, Marylebone. As I also discovered from Deceased Online, both are buried in Hampstead Cemetery – where their grave was much easier to find than those in Abney Park because the cemetery is still in use and relatively well maintained.

Using the cemetery registers

If you have found the burials you are looking for from the Abney Park Cemetery Index, you do not actually need to look at the original registers in order to locate the grave; but they may still provide some

interesting background information, especially if you have not been successful in finding the grave. In any case it is always good practice to consult the original documents, if possible, to verify the information given in an index. And if you think someone was buried in Abney Park, but can't trace them through the index, it is probably worth looking at the register just in case of an omission or transcription error in the index. Provided you know the date of death, it is easy enough to browse. You can find the registers covering the dates of interest to you by searching Hackney Archives' online catalogue. Alternatively, they can be found through the National Archives online catalogue. In either case, entering 'Abney Park' as a search term will bring up a complete list of the cemetery's records held at Hackney Archives, including the burial registers.

As Siân explains, there are two distinct sets of registers for most of the cemetery's history: D/B/ABN/7 (1840-1978), which she calls the 'administrative registers' because they were apparently produced for internal use by the cemetery staff; and D/B/ABN/2 (1840-1927), which were clearly intended to be open for public inspection and which she calls the 'official registers'. Siân's article is the place to go for detailed help with the layout of the registers and the terminology used – especially in the 'administrative' registers, which, as she points out, contain more information than the 'official' registers but can be rather confusing in the way they present it.

Briefly, both sets of registers record every burial in chronological order and contain the kind of information you would expect to find in a parish register: name, age and address of the deceased, date of burial, name and address of the undertaker, and name of the officiating minister. Both the 'administrative' registers and the earlier registers in the 'official' series (at least up to the 1880s) also include the date of the death certificate and the name and district of the registrar. (This is potentially useful, but by the time you have reached the stage of looking for a burial you will

probably already have found the death certificate! Only the 'administrative' registers give information about the cost of each burial, and indicate whether the burial was in a common grave. They also give the name of the person who purchased a private grave (which may be amended if ownership was transferred after the original purchaser's death) and entries are annotated to show when a grave is full.

Conclusion

In view of the challenging conditions in Abney Park, locating a grave will almost certainly require considerable time and effort, and the chances of success are probably not all that high. And in most cases, finding a grave or even just the burial record will probably not add much to what one already knew about one's family's history in terms of genealogical detail. (My experience of finding the 'lost' Arthur Williams was, I think unusual). So, is it worth it? It is certainly worth consulting the registers if you are interested in background information such as who purchased a grave or the name of the undertaker who conducted a funeral.

For me – and this was quite unexpected – by far the best aspect of the Abney Park experience was the sheer emotional satisfaction of seeing the 'main family grave' for myself, and reading the headstone that records the burials of four of my 19th century ancestors.

Notes

1. According to a note in the Hackney Archives online catalogue, the register in question (D/B/ABN/7/100) is one of three that were 'destroyed by cemetery staff prior to the handover to the London Borough of Hackney in 1978'.
2. *Hackney History* 17 (2013), 29-37.
3. D4 62039.
4. G4 31936.
5. D4 17529.
6. I3 108840.

Equality or opportunity: South Hackney School in the 1970s



Geoff Taylor

The Comprehensive revolution

In February 1975, the teacher appointed to the newly created post of Director of Studies at South Hackney School received a letter from five young colleagues concerned that the education on offer at this comprehensive school needed drastic reorganisation if its pupils were to fulfil their potential. I was one of the letter-writers.¹ When I had joined the school fresh from college less than four years earlier Hackney had meant nothing to me. The borough had yet to be saddled with its later reputation for particularly poor secondary schools,² so when the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) had told me to report to South Hackney School's Cassland Road building in early September 1971, I had had no reason to be apprehensive or disappointed about the place where I was to hold my first teaching appointment.

This was the era of secondary school comprehensivisation. Across the country, at the behest of the educational establishment and the insistence of the Government, ancient grammar schools and more recently established non-selective secondary schools were increasingly accepting pupils from across the whole range of ability. In London, an idealistic ILEA enthusiastically embraced the policy. A better education was to be provided in newly comprehensivised schools, not least for those who in the past would have not have done well enough in the 11-plus examination previously taken in the last year of primary school to win places in selective schools. For them especially standards were to be raised, and the opportunities hitherto offered exclusively to those clever, precocious or middle class enough to do well in the exam were to be thrown open to plodders, late developers and the working class.

About this development I had no strong views one way or the other. I had not attended a grammar school myself, and my family, if not strictly working class, was poorly educated and had limited horizons. Yet I had gone to a university and was entering upon a professional career. My postgraduate teacher training



The former South Hackney upper school in Cassland Road, in 2016

course had emphasised the theoretical benefits to be expected from the comprehensive ideal, and my teaching practice in a comprehensive in rural Wales had not alerted me to any marked difficulties in its implementation.

Expectations

I naturally brought expectations derived from my own educational experiences, and I did not imagine that what went on in inner London was going to be much different from what I had experienced in Birmingham at my own suburban boys-only secondary school from 1960 to 1967. It had been a newly built and very well equipped technical school; although it was selective and in theory distinguished from the grammar schools only by its subject focus, it was certainly not generally regarded as of equal rank with the grammar schools because in practice it mostly took those who had not done well enough in the 11-plus exam to merit a grammar school place. The demand for high standards was exemplified and perhaps facilitated by the insistence on the wearing of school uniform

throughout the school. Everything was calculated to encourage an orderly approach to work; there was a standard layout to be used in exercise books, whose covers were strictly colour coded by subject. Each pupil was required to carry a general exercise book for preparatory work; it could not be called a rough book lest anyone imagine that his work in it could be anything other than neat. Because ballpoint pens were said to encourage careless handwriting, fountain pens were mandatory. Homework was set every day and promptly marked.

The school day began with a non-denominational but uncompromisingly Christian service which included the unifying singing of a hymn. This assembly was presided over by the headmaster wearing his gown, and attended by the teachers, most of them similarly robed; some continued to wear their gowns in the classroom. It was a very masculine school, for all the teachers were men, and the boys were addressed by their surnames; there was nevertheless no corporal punishment. At an annual Speech Day prizes were given to pupils

who had done well or shown marked improvement in exams, sports or other activities.

I took a particular interest in music and drama, and the school provided many opportunities in these areas. There were after-school classes in which I was taught to play the recorder and the violin. Each year the school put on a full-blown theatrical production in association with the neighbouring girls' school; I took part in Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*, G&S's *The Pirates of Penzance* and an English version of Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. The schools also co-operated in choral productions such as Stanford's *The Revenge*. Some of the older choir members took part in an annual city-wide schools concert in Birmingham Town Hall, accompanied by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra; in my year, we sang Kodaly's *Psalmus Hungaricus* and Haydn's *Te Deum*. Many pupils did not take advantage of such opportunities, but the point is that they were genuinely available to us all.

Practically every pupil stayed at the school for a full five years, and many did sufficiently well in the 16-plus exams to be allowed to enter the sixth form. Although most pupils took the grammar school leaving exam, the General Certificate of Education at the ordinary level, the school also used the less demanding Certificate of Secondary Education. On the technical side, many pupils eventually left to take apprenticeships or to follow 'sandwich courses' which combined advanced engineering theory and practical experience. There was also a steady trickle to university of pupils who preferred the more traditional academic subjects, and no doubt most of their parents were as astonished as mine to be told by the school that their son had university potential – this after all was a time when less than 15 per cent of young people went into higher education.³

The culture of high expectations and high standards affected other schools too. On the same site was a non-selective 'secondary modern'⁴ school, a little older than mine, for children who had done even less well in the 11-plus exam. It had had a

specialist art block added and aimed to attract pupils who, while not exam-passers, had artistic interests. My impression of the school was that it too had high standards; certainly I was impressed by the production of *White Horse Inn* that I saw there. On the music side, the secondary modern had an excellent brass band. Any pupils of the secondary modern school who did particularly well in exams could transfer to selective schools for their sixth form education. I don't say that I and my schoolfellows didn't feel we were a cut above the secondary modern pupils, but neither that nor the fact that the grammar school children presumably felt the same about us seemed the crucial issue; what seemed to matter was that all the schools I knew about, including the local grammar schools, provided an education that could give pupils a confident start in life even if the nature of that life was heavily influenced by the type of secondary school attended. It was not clear to me then that the essential problem with the selective system was not the quality of the schools but the fact of selection and labelling at age 11.

Such were the schools that shaped my expectations as I looked forward to Hackney. I was not coming from a private school or even a state grammar school background, expecting to find in Hackney comprehensive schools lower standards than I was used to, and wanting perhaps to raise them. I expected to find, in London, schools much like the one I had known in Birmingham: up-to-date, well-equipped schools, where pupils were stretched, offered a variety of opportunities to broaden their horizons, encouraged to enjoy and profit from education, and sent out well-qualified to tackle life's challenges.

Educational shortcomings

Then I arrived in Hackney. South Hackney School, I discovered, was on two sites, a state of affairs I had never met before and which had been forced on the school by the need to accommodate a comprehensive-sized intake in the buildings that were available. The lower school was in the 80-year-old Lauriston Road elementary school, while



The photographs of school activities on this and the following pages were taken on site at South Hackney School in 1970 by the studio of R. A. Gibson. Here, Vernon Forbes is taking a Religious Education lesson in the lower school.

in Islington. Had I known this at the time, and known of Risinghill's record, I might have been a touch concerned. Risinghill had been headed by the charismatic Michael Duane, an educationist of progressive views. Depending on which version you believe, Duane's Risinghill heralded a social revolution in which the powers that be would be dispossessed, and the hitherto down-trodden masses would take over. Either that or Duane had given up on trying to educate children for life in the London that everyone else inhabited and was wasting the precious learning

years of his young charges in social experiments. At any event, in 1965, after a very public row, the authorities closed the school, either out of fear of revolution or because of concern for children's education. South Hackney inherited both its deputy head and much of its educational ethos.⁵

the upper school enjoyed the ornate 1902 buildings of a girls' secondary school in Cassland Road. Both these attractive and well-crafted buildings had been designed on the three-decker system, having on each of three floors a hall surrounded by classrooms, an arrangement that had no doubt served the educational needs of its day very well but was now thoroughly outdated. This too was new to me. The facilities available in the schools struck me as shockingly inadequate. Not only were the Lauriston Road toilets in a shed in the playground, but there was no proscenium stage, no purpose-built gym, no showers and no playing field, and the art, craft and science provision was rudimentary compared with what I had been used to. It is clear, looking back, that in Hackney education was being done on the cheap and that the change to comprehensive education was being carried out in an underfunded rush. At the time, I was just shocked. Having come from Birmingham to London, I seemed to be in a different country.

Caldwell believed in the comprehensive ideal with almost fundamentalist fervour. His chief enemy was divisiveness; since the objective was an inclusive school community, anything that distinguished one pupil from another was rigorously suppressed. To avoid divisiveness, all subjects were taught in mixed ability classes, with any special help for those struggling or extra work for those streaking ahead given (if at all) in the context of whole class teaching; the only exception was some remedial reading work. To avoid divisiveness, pupils could not be required to do homework, since they did not all have the facilities at home to do it. To avoid divisiveness, the pupils were given no practice in taking exams until the run-up to the school leaving exam in their fifth year at the school. To avoid divisiveness, only one of the two school leaving, 16-plus exams was permitted in the school: the CSE, originally intended for those whose attainments

were insufficient to give them a chance in the grammar school exam, the GCE 'O' level. To avoid divisiveness, there was no limit to entry to what was called the sixth form, where the curriculum was necessarily relatively undemanding. To avoid divisiveness, there could be no prize-giving event at which pupils' disturbingly different achievements could be celebrated.

Maybe this approach to education could have been made to work. That would have demanded as a minimum a rigorous approach to curriculum, course and lesson planning, together with a culture of high expectations. With a few notable exceptions, these were lacking. I don't for a moment suppose that I was the only one not to have used lesson plans and to have had no termly plan of work for my classes. And no-one cared! There was no inspection of my records or of my pupils' exercise books; I was never supervised by an experienced teacher, never told to buck my ideas up, never sent on courses to help me learn to be a truly professional teacher. The school seemed to be wholly amateur; the teachers enjoyed the children and wanted the best for them, but on the whole they – we – were unable to provide them with a good education, least of all within the constraints that the head teacher's uncompromising comprehensive faith imposed upon us.

The pattern of daily life at the school was unfamiliar to me at first. Despite the law's requirements, there was no religious assembly and often no assembly at all; neither half of the school met together on a regular basis. In cold or wet weather, the pupils arrived for each lesson trailing their outdoor coats because no-one trusted their belongings in a communal cloakroom; this contributed to a sense of unsettlement. In contrast with my Birmingham school, where text books had been given to pupils to cover and keep for the whole year, the beginning of each lesson was taken up with the handing out of text books. The giving out and the collecting up took up several minutes of lesson time, more of which were lost in checking that pupils had writing instruments and giving out pencils to those who didn't.

In truth, the educational offering of what was supposed to be a comprehensive school was just that of a rather poor secondary modern school, but the staff found it hard to see this, not least because we were being dazzled by the ideal we thought we were implementing. Many of us nevertheless became aware of the poverty of the educational offering at the school, of the damage that was being done to pupils' prospects, and of the betrayal of human potential. My first attempt to address this in a minor way was to suggest that all teachers in the lower school should require their pupils to use the kind of standard exercise book layout I'd known in Birmingham, with a ruled margin, fully written out date, a heading and a ruling off at the end; this innocuous proposal proved unacceptable, since, I was told, it would have imposed an unnecessary restriction on pupils' freedom to express themselves.

It was against this background that I and my four colleagues wrote our 1975 letter pleading for changes in the way the comprehensive ideal was being implemented in our school. We were particularly concerned about the way the South Hackney approach was affecting our post-16 sixth form students. A proposal to close the sixth forms attached to the local comprehensives and to establish instead a sixth form college had been rejected, partly on the grounds that secondary school teachers valued the opportunity to do some sixth form teaching. It was therefore imperative, we felt, that the school's sixth form be strengthened and that pupils lower down the school be better prepared for post-sixteen study. We wrote,

There are in this school students who ought to be thinking in terms of higher education in Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education. The qualifications required by these institutions are usually achieved after two years in the sixth form; in this school the student who wants good 'A' level grades must expect to spend a third year in the sixth form, so that he leaves aged 19 years. Few students are prepared or encouraged at home to undertake this extended sixth form course, with the result that the able students in this school seldom enter higher education. This is a serious matter, not only for the individual who has academic potential, but also for the community which loses his trained ability.

It made no difference; what we failed to see was that our arguments implied the abandonment of the distinctive features of comprehensive education as practised at South Hackney. It would be interesting to know whether any South Hackney pupils were ever identified to their parents as having university potential. I do not recall a single South Hackney pupil leaving to go into higher education in the whole five years I taught there, though the law of averages and the fact that some made it into higher education in their late 20s and 30s argue that a significant number would have been capable of it had they been provided with a genuinely comprehensive education.

Though my own school had not been quite monochrome or mono-cultural, the ethnic mix among the South Hackney pupils was new to me. They were mostly white British working class with a good number of West Indians and a few Africans, south Asians and Cypriots. As a new-comer myself, I wasn't immediately aware of it but most of the ethnic minority pupils were immigrants, having come to the UK with their parents in the 1960s. In a real sense, they were even less at home than I was, and those who had hitherto attended more traditional educational establishments must have found South Hackney hard to cope with. Figures about the ethnic and cultural background of the pupils are hard to come by; when it was suggested in the early 1970s that they should be collected, teacher organisations refused to assist on the grounds that to do so would be racist.⁶ It is sometimes said that schools failed this generation of ethnic minority pupils; I believe they did, but this was just one aspect of a more general failure.

The remark that crystallised it for me came from a working class parent who said she supposed that the comprehensive schools had been intended to 'keep us in our place'. What she meant was that comprehensivisation had taken from working class children the possibility

of going to a grammar school, yet had failed to provide in South Hackney an alternative that genuinely offered to those who could profit from it a route into higher education and the professions. About the intention, she was wrong of course; she was much less wrong about the result. I have since discussed all this with ex-pupils, apologising to them for what I now see to have been the impoverished education I helped give them. Some are wonderfully generous, noting that, whatever might be said about the education on offer there, it had been a happy school, and one which had not permanently put its pupils off education, even if it had failed to properly equip them for it. Of course, it was partly the fact that they had not been sorted into 'failures' and 'successes' at age 11 that had not put them off education. Others, for whom a poor secondary education turned out to be decisive, admit to finding the South Hackney educational experience disappointing. The dismal fact is that the very group of pupils who most needed rigorous, demanding education at school - those whose families, like mine, were not in a position to understand its true value, to pay for it, to demand it or to compensate for schools' failure to deliver it - were exactly those to whom we were giving a



Lower school needlework class, for girls only

third-rate education, trapping them in their families' limited expectations instead of giving them the opportunity to exceed them. It is bitterly ironical that it was precisely for the benefit of such pupils that the comprehensivisation programme had been undertaken. Had I been a pupil at South Hackney School, I am quite sure I would not have taken 'A' levels, earned a degree and embarked on a professional career aged 21.⁷

It is important to recognise how difficult it would have been to make a smooth and successful change to comprehensive education. Before the change, around a quarter of secondary schools had been selective, so around a quarter of secondary teachers knew what was to be expected of academically able pupils and how to nurture their potential. Many of them remained at the schools that changed from selective to comprehensive, which therefore retained a reputation for high academic standards, as for example did Hackney Downs School. At the comprehensive schools that had been secondary modern schools - like South Hackney - the quarter of their pupils who would previously have won places in the selective schools were being taught by teachers who had no experience of teaching such pupils. And because they were a minority in the comprehensive schools, their special needs tended to be overlooked. Some efforts were made to make and mark the needed step-change in expectations in the ex-secondary-moderns - for example, South Hackney's first comprehensive head teacher, Miss Beswick, introduced Latin into the curriculum - but much more had been needed.

On the positive side

But South Hackney was by no means a sink school. At all levels people generally got on with each other, thus powerfully modelling important social skills. There was very little violence, and disruption of classes may have been not uncommon, but it rarely had a hard edge to it. No doubt this was



Damien Davey taking a lower school French class

attributable partly to its co-educational intake, but it was also due to Caldwell's refusal to allow corporal punishment. Teachers generally dressed very informally; jeans were common on younger teachers though discouraged for pupils. No one would have thought of wearing an academic gown on any occasion. 'Miss' and 'sir' were retained as convenient forms of address but they carried no weight of deference, and the pupils were called by their given names.

Teachers were a varied group. Dr Gupta taught science with Canadian Joel Ilson, though his doctorate was in Indian archaeology. Richard Sinha from Fiji taught maths. The gentle, scholarly Mr Jafri from Pakistan offered the wealth of his learning to pupils unable to appreciate it. Vernon Forbes from Jamaica was a wonderfully calming presence as a year head. French was taught by Claudine Galley and Damien Davey, French and Irish respectively. Carmel Searle had come from Northern Ireland and Drew Burns from Scotland. One of the remedial teachers was Ralph Bharat, a Trinidad Indian. This was a stimulating mix and, whether or not the pupils were aware of it, they

were being given an enviable range of international contacts.

Among the most active department heads was Penny Harris of the English department, out of which sprang an annual pantomime. Pupils and staff equally took part in this event, which aimed less at teaching productive discipline and the varied skills needed in putting on an excellent show than at enjoyment for all concerned. The pantomimes were valuable experiences, certainly, offering to pupils of almost every aptitude and interest an opportunity to sample the delights of the stage; they could not be thought of as in any way elitist or divisive, which was no doubt why they were encouraged. But we never found out whether there were pupils in whom the flame of drama might have burnt more brightly had it been fuelled with more demanding plays such as those by Shaw, Wilde and Shakespeare that I remembered from my own schooldays. And what was true for drama was equally true for music.

The English department also took a leading part in arranging each year for the youngest children to go to Sayers Croft for a fortnight. Sayers Croft was an extensive property near Ewhurst in Surrey, owned by the education authority. It had dormitories capable of accommodating up to about two hundred children from all round London, who ate in a large dining hall decorated with a mural recalling the part the buildings had played in educating London evacuees during the Second World War. Each day found us out and about in the local countryside, on walks or study trips, with everything written up in the classrooms on our return or sometimes before breakfast next day. Other school trips were less formally educational, such as those to the education authority's mountain centre at Corris in Wales and to camp on Arran in Scotland. Relations between teachers and pupils were even better than usual on these trips. These were happy and educative expeditions for everyone involved.

There was a wonderful innocence about it all. Although in my first week an experienced teacher,

Mrs Davy, had taken me on one side and warned me never to be alone with a girl in a classroom and suggested I punch threatening parents in the solar plexus, I was not wary of the allegations of sexual impropriety and parental violence that later generations of teachers would come to fear. It seemed unremarkable to be asked by a senior teacher to take a dozen girls, unassisted by another teacher, on the bus to see the *Cutty Sark* when I had never visited it myself, and did not know how to get there ('Don't worry, the girls will tell you'). When there was a bomb hoax one day, the senior teacher sent round to ask teachers to get children to check their classrooms to see if there was a bomb there - black, spherical, fizzing and marked 'bomb', no doubt. It seemed entirely normal for me to take four 13-year-old boys away for the weekend to go youth hostelling in Surrey.

There were other aspects to innocence. There was no drugs problem; I don't say that pupils never experimented with marijuana, but its use certainly never impacted on school life. I do not recall hearing of any girls getting pregnant, though whether this was a matter of innocence, artifice or discretion I could not say. Though we tried to address these issues, the school could take little credit for any of this; hard drugs in particular were still relatively uncommon, and I suspect few of the older girls depended on school for their education in personal matters.

I was principally an RE teacher, and as very few pupils opted to take the school-leaving exam in that subject, I was largely confined to the lower school. In the upper school various stratagems were employed to avoid the legal requirement that all pupils should have some religious education. There was, no doubt, a syllabus for RE agreed by representatives of local religious groups as required by law to be used in schools, but we did not work to it or even use it as a basis for planning.

A challenging context

One of the challenges with which the school was struggling to deal was known by its acronym



The upper school woodwork shop

RoSLA. Until 1970, pupils had been entitled to leave school when they reached their 15th birthday; only those intending to take a public exam needed to stay on. With the Raising of the School Leaving Age, we found ourselves dealing with 15-year-olds who saw absolutely no reason why they should stay in school until their 16th birthday, had no intention of studying, and just wanted to be out in the world of work, as they could have been had RoSLA been delayed by a year or two. As an inexperienced teacher, I was apparently considered just the person to help teach these disaffected pupils, and I was expected to do so with no curricular support, for this was another reform that seemed to have been given inadequate preparation and funding. It took considerable mutual restraint to keep the lid on the lessons. I remember passing the time - it was little more than that - by teaching the history of the engine, from the steam engine, through the varieties of internal combustion piston engines and on to the Wankel engine. I was of course entirely unqualified to teach anything about engineering but in the circumstances that did not matter.

In fact many teachers found themselves teaching subjects well outside the scope of any expertise they had. Teachers were hard to come by, and the school year often started without a new timetable because we were still waiting to be told by the authority what teachers were to be assigned to us and what subjects they could confidently teach. When a subject-qualified teacher failed to turn up, someone else often without an appropriate qualification had to fill in. This was unsettling all round and did nothing for the school's standards.

The comprehensive ideal as espoused at South Hackney was built at least as much on political as on educational theory, so the school tended to attract teachers who took a fairly extreme left wing view of politics. The early Seventies was an unhappy period in British politics. The failure of the Labour party to use its years in power in the previous

decade to carry out necessary reforms had resulted in a Conservative Government bent on doing so; the leftist opposition that had quietly seen off Wilson now took on Heath with acrimonious, extra-parliamentary activism. The 30 years' terror in Northern Ireland had only recently started and had not yet dented sympathy for Catholic Nationalists wanting their civil rights. The Vietnam War still rumbled on, and it was not yet clear that the Soviet and Maoist models were unsustainable. It was easy to be disaffected and there was at South Hackney no shortage of politically-conscious teachers who were. Nor was there a lack of less politically-conscious teachers ready to be lured into various oppositional activities by appeals to their reasonableness and scepticism made by left-wing activists. Looking back, I'm not sure which of the two groups was the more politically naïve. If the leftists tried to do the same with the pupils, it must have been ineffective; the pupils probably had more common sense than many of their teachers, and were less embarrassed about rejecting arguments on gut feeling without being able to rationalise their position.

Towards the end of my time at South Hackney, consideration began to be given to the issue of 'falling rolls'. On the basis of census projections and other demographic data, the population of Hackney was then believed to be still falling, though we now know that the long fall was bottoming out ready to go into reverse in subsequent decades. Schools would need to be amalgamated, in effect closed for lack of pupils. I left South Hackney in 1976, and the school remained open for another few years before its staff and remaining pupils were moved to Shacklewell Lane in central Hackney to become part of Kingsland School.⁸ The ILEA, which had been responsible for South Hackney School, was abolished by the Thatcher Government, which also embarked upon a forceful and widely resented programme to raise standards in schools.

The South Hackney School buildings continued in educational use for some years longer. Lauriston was used for further education for some years, and Cassland became for a short time the sixth form college that had been rejected in the early Seventies. By the beginning of the new century, both buildings had been cleverly converted into modernistic flats, called 'lofts', and Hackney's new directly-elected executive Mayor was looking for sites on which to build four wholly new and urgently needed secondary schools, one to be in the south of the Borough, each of which was to have a subject specialisation while continuing to take the full ability range.

Benefit and cost

Before disillusion eventually took me out of the teaching profession, I taught at several other Hackney secondary schools, each of which had its own character and values. In terms of giving pupils the skills and qualifications that come in handy in earning a living, some were more successful than South Hackney; in terms of creating an environment in which friendly relations could flourish, some were much less successful. What I am certain of, because I was there, is that in at least one school, the period of the Inner London Education Authority and radical, rapid comprehensivisation

was no golden age for pupils' education. I have no way of knowing whether it was an improvement on what went before, though if it was, what went before must have been unimaginably third-rate. Most of us, teachers and pupils, enjoyed the time we spent together at school; few of us worked hard, certainly not as hard as today's teachers and most of their pupils. But there is a lot more to education than having a pleasant time. We sacrificed opportunity for equality, academic challenge for a happy society. But these were false dichotomies; on the basis of the good relationships we enjoyed, so very much more could have been achieved for all the young people we wanted to serve.

I cannot look back on the years I spent at South Hackney School without some complicated emotions. It was a happy time for me personally, and if I were not still in touch with quite a number of people who were my pupils then, perhaps that would be my only emotion. But it is uncomfortable, over thirty years later, to know ex-pupils whose careers could have been so much more interesting and productive, and to feel the need to apologise to them for the school's educational shortcomings. That idealistic teachers could have blinded



*Bottom ball in lower school in use as a gym.
Five classrooms opened directly onto this ball.*

themselves to this waste of potential makes me angry; that I was a party to it adds regret to the mix.

But there was another victim apart from the pupils. Many years after having succeeded in imposing their preferred system across most of the country, the advocates of comprehensivisation still find themselves fighting a rear-guard action against those for whom the 11-plus exam and the selective school system continue to exercise a powerful attraction. After so long, it is easy to forget the real shortcomings of the old system. But if South Hackney School was at all typical, perhaps another reason for the spell the old system continued to cast was the way the comprehensive ideal was implemented. Like any ideal which has the luck and the misfortune to be implemented, comprehensivism is judged not on what it promised in theory but on what it delivered in practice. Had the details of its implementation been fully thought-through and properly funded, had the wide ability range of its pupils been respected and catered for, had it genuinely offered the best of the old system to all its pupils, we might now find ourselves in a vastly different social and educational landscape.

In the long term, Hackney's education system appears to have recovered from the shock of enforced, rapid comprehensivisation 40 years ago. Today's secondary schools, particularly the academies which have started from scratch since the shock, are genuinely comprehensive both in intake and provision. To that extent the comprehensive revolution may be seen as a success. But like so many other revolutions it came at a tremendous human cost.⁹

Appendix

Letter from Geoff Taylor, Marie Rourke, Mike Elvey, Marie Brant and Gill Elvey, typed on South Hackney School headed notepaper addressed to Colin RAVDEN, Director of Studies, South Hackney School, and dated 7th February 1975

Dear Colin,

We, sixth form teachers in this school, have become increasingly alarmed by the service provided by the school for its sixth formers. The matter also involves the work done in the lower forms, for sixth form work must be based on that done lower down the school. We must make it clear from the outset that we are not proponents of any particular sort of comprehensive school organization, and we are certainly not anti-comprehensive. Neither do we view examinations as the end of Education, though we do acknowledge their influence in the world outside school. We wish only to point to some causes for concern in this particular comprehensive school, and in the job it is doing in the local community.

As you know, the present sixth form timetable in some subjects is partially "à la carte"; some teachers are assigned to sixth form teaching in the timetable and when sixth formers return in September, or when examinations results are known during the year, their wishes and the teachers' sixth form periods (and their marking periods too quite often) are married up. The system often leads to unsatisfactory timetabling. For example some students attempt to cover the ground between CSE and 'A' level GCE with only four teaching periods each week; this is asking a great deal of both student and teacher. It may be that to limit the amount of teacher time devoted to the sixth form in this way is part of a deliberate effort to reduce class size lower down the school.

In this situation of short-timing the sixth form, it is inevitable that teachers turn upside down their conviction that learning and teaching should not be examination centred; faced with a sixth former who has only two unoccupied periods coinciding with his teacher's sixth form periods or marking periods, and who wants to pass 'O' level GCE, the teacher has a 'choice' between teaching properly and cramming for the examination. The choice is more apparent than real, for what teacher can afford to pay for his loyalty to his convictions in the undeserved failure of his students?

The change from real teaching to cramming which the student meets on entering the sixth form is only one of the many new things he discovers. He finds that his CSE course has not prepared him for the type of work demanded in the GCE. In most subjects, the medium for the GCE is the essay - which after all is only the literary presentation of facts and ideas in logical order on paper - which was not emphasised in 4th and 5th year work. The sixth former, then, as well as learning new facts and ideas, must also learn how to write essays, an art not easily learned.

The new sixth former has little idea of the amount of study required for 'O' and 'A' level work. He has been so

insulated from examinations lower down the school that he must naturally over- or under-estimate the work required. He will have only been examined three times in his five years with us; as well as the new work and the essay-writing, the new sixth former also has to learn how to study.

His lack of understanding of his position together with his considerable amount of free time - as much as 1½ days per week - during which he is expected to study privately contribute to the air of carnival which reigns in the sixth form common room. The uses to which the library is put preclude its use as a study room. The student has little real choice but to join in the games in the gym and the coffee drinking. Meanwhile the work which has been set by teachers to overcome the handicaps caused by "a la carte" timetabling is not done at school, and because the student is unused to homework it is not done at home either. It may be that a probationary term for the new sixth former would be an appropriate way of ensuring that he knows the standard of private study the course he has chosen demands of him.

There are in this school students who ought to be thinking in terms of higher education in Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education. The qualifications required by these institutions are usually achieved after two years in the sixth form; in this school the student who wants good 'A' level grades must expect to spend a third year in the sixth form, so that he leaves aged 19 years. Few students are prepared or encouraged at home to undertake this extended sixth form course, with the result that the able students in this school seldom enter higher education.

This is a serious matter, not only for the individual who has academic potential, but also for the community which loses his trained ability. Here in school there are only a handful of teachers brought up in East London, out of a staff of over 60, and we have often been conscious of our "foreign-ness" to the children we teach. There is of course no guarantee that students who did well in education would stay in the area to practise their valuable skills as teachers, social workers, nurses, doctors, lawyers or industrial leaders, but they ought at least to be given the opportunity.

We believe there is adequate evidence that the student in this school who has academic potential has that potential crippled by those who ought to be developing it. The idea of a local sixth form college has been set aside; the opportunities to which our young people have the right must therefore be provided in this school. To this end, we urge you to begin to make this school truly comprehensive by initiating discussions on the following topics:

- (i) The possibility of some 5th formers taking 'O' level GCE in some subjects;
- (ii) The provision of a formal and adequate sixth form timetable;
- (iii) The introduction of examinations in lower forms to acquaint pupil with them;
- (iv) Ways of introducing pupils in lower forms to the possibility of higher education and how it may be attained.

There is a question which a teacher ought to ask of himself: "Would I have been able to become a teacher had I been a pupil at this school?" We believe that the curtailment of opportunity in the sixth form at South Hackney probably demands a negative answer to this question and while this is the case we cannot be content with our school.

This is a serious matter and calls for your urgent attention.

Yours sincerely,

Notes

1. The text of the letter is reproduced as an appendix.
2. Hackney Free and Parochial School was labeled 'the worst school in England' in 1991, and Hackney Downs School was shut by the Government for its failings in 1995. I had taught at both in the early 1980s.
3. As compared with about 40 per cent 40 years later.
4. So called because they were introduced only in 1944 (modern) and replaced the later years of the all-through elementary schools (secondary).
5. See L. Berg, *Risinghill: Death of a Comprehensive* (1968).
6. In the end it was only by collecting such data that the issues faced by various groups of pupils were identified and tackled.
7. It's only fair to add that had I gone to a grammar school I might - who knows? - have gone to Oxford and completed my doctorate much earlier than I did. In that sense I suppose that I have a fellow-feeling with my South Hackney pupils. But the fact remains that my school did much better by me than South Hackney did by its pupils.
8. Kingsland School was itself closed in 2003 because of its irretrievably low standards
9. I dedicate this article to the pupils of South Hackney School who deserved better but who have enriched my life, especially SR.

Contributors to this issue

Born and brought up in North London, **Brenda Griffith-Williams** has lived for many years in Crouch End. She worked on the 'Place in the Sun' project, initially as a volunteer then as project manager. Her various publications on family and local history include contributions to *Family Tree Magazine*, *The Genealogists' Magazine* and Hornsey Historical Society's annual *Bulletin*.

Sean Gubbins started living in Hackney in 1981. Retiring from history teaching, after a career mostly in IT, Sean completed an MA in historical research in 2014. With a keen interest in Hackney's history, since 2002 he has been devising and leading a growing repertoire of local history walks, which he offers on a regular schedule (walkhackney.co.uk).

Geoff Taylor spent eight years teaching in Hackney, including five at South Hackney School in the early 1970s. After further study and research, he then worked in industry. Since 2002, he has been a Hackney borough councillor for the South Hackney area, to whose history he contributed with his book *A Parish in Perspective* (2002). He is currently Hackney's cabinet member for finance and corporate services.

Isobel Watson is one of the founders of the 'Place in the Sun' project, which has digitised more than 300,000 catalogue entries to the unindexed Sun Fire Office insurance policy registers. The date span (growing at both ends) is currently 1782-1842 and the coverage nationwide, though after 1793 it mainly concerns London. The index can be searched for people, places, businesses and occupations on London Metropolitan Archives' online catalogue.

Megan Webber is a Commonwealth Scholar from Canada who has recently completed her PhD in history at the University of Hertfordshire. Her research explores the interactions between poor Londoners and charities during the early 19th century. She is also interested in juvenile delinquency and has spent many hours poring over the minute books of the Refuge for the Destitute at Hackney Archives.

Acknowledgements

As ever, the majority of the images in this issue are to be found in Hackney Archives and are reproduced by permission of the council of the London borough of Hackney. In particular, thanks to them for the illustrations on pages 4, 14, 34 and 35, and for all the photographs of classrooms and activities at South Hackney School to be found on the front cover, on page 44 and on the following pages. These come from the remarkable collection of the Clapton studio of R. A. Gibson, which was donated to the Archives by Kevin Danks, and which is to be digitised and made accessible online with the aid of a major grant.

Thanks are also due to Historic England for permission to reproduce the image of the London Female Mission in Pentonville (page 4), and to Megan Webber for that on page 5. Those on pages 18 and 19 are reproduced by permission of London Metropolitan Archives, City of London, and come from the Collage database (items 119111 and 114078; collage.cityoflondon.gov.uk). That on page 13, also reproduced by permission of LMA, is a detail from the 1819 edition of Horwood's map of London, RM 12/E1.

Images on pages 26 to 30 are reproduced by permission of Sean Gubbins, and those on page 36 by permission of Brenda Griffith-Williams. Those not otherwise mentioned come from the collection of the editor, who is as ever grateful for the support of Robert Whytehead, and of all the staff at Hackney Archives. As always, this issue is produced with the cheerful aid of Elizabeth Green and Sally England, and this time we also owe a special debt to the Principal Archivist, Joanne Anthony. But with this issue, along with our customary thanks, we say a regretful farewell to archivist Siân Mogridge, who has not only, during more than a decade at Hackney, done a great deal for the collection and the Friends, but been both a valued contributor and a stalwart adviser. We are really sorry to see her go, and wish her well for the future.

Abbreviations used in this issue

HA	Hackney Archives
HKG	<i>Hackney and Kingsland Gazette</i>
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
OBP	www.oldbaileyonline.org
TNA	The National Archives

Publications cited are published in London unless otherwise indicated.

Hackney Archives

holds a wealth of administrative, business, institutional and family records concerning Hackney, Stoke Newington and Shoreditch. It houses the records of Hackney council and its predecessors, and much historic material about Hackney and other areas in collections with an east London focus. Its oldest document is a 14th century deed from the City of London.

The collection also holds –

- more than 700 metres of archives and local studies material
- more than 20,000 pictures, many digitised for viewing
- local newspapers back to 1857, searchable on microfilm
- burial registers for Abney Park Cemetery
- the records of more than 30 local businesses
- records and papers from more than 60 institutions and 65 families, estates and individuals
- more than 10,000 printed books and pamphlets, including special collections
- copies of local census returns, directories, and maps

The Archives are situated on the second floor of the Dalston CLR James Library, Dalston Square E8 3BQ. Further information, including the online catalogue and details of opening hours can be found at www.hackney.gov.uk; or telephone (020) 8356 8925; email archives@hackney.gov.uk.

The Friends of Hackney Archives

The Friends keep members in touch with developments in the Archives, and with new research. Donations to the Friends have sponsored conservation and purchased new material, including books, plans, manuscripts, playscripts, visual material, and two important collections of theatre posters.

Friends receive the regular newsletter *The Hackney Terrier* and the occasional journal, *Hackney History* (an outline of the contents of issues still in print is given on the next page; orders can be made as set out on the website, below). Visits and other meetings are arranged from time to time.

Membership is open to all. The subscription is £15.00 per calendar year in the UK, £30.00 overseas. For each additional member at the same address please add £3.00 (one mailing only is sent).

For details of how to join, what is on, and a list of current publications and how to order them, go to the Friends' website at www.hackneyhistory.org. Your support will help promote Hackney Archives and its wide-ranging collections; build the collections; and increase awareness of Hackney's history, peoples and places.

In earlier volumes

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The Daniel Defoe collection
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Newcome's school
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Quakers in Stoke Newington, 19th and 20th centuries
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Moneyers in the Mint from Hackney and Shoreditch
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