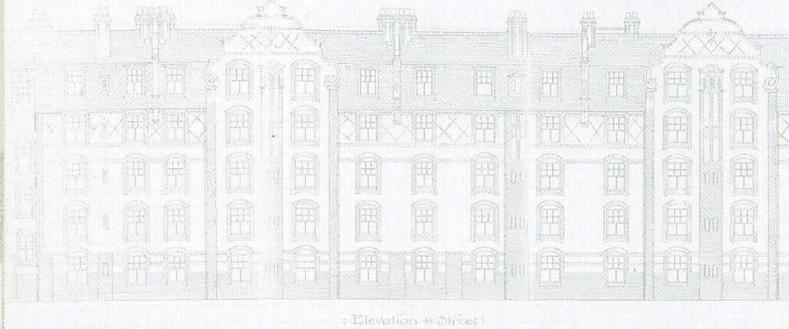


# HackneyHistory

VOLUME THREE

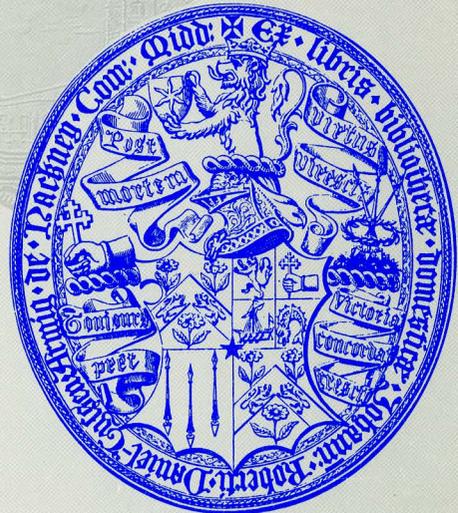
*housing*



Elevation - Street



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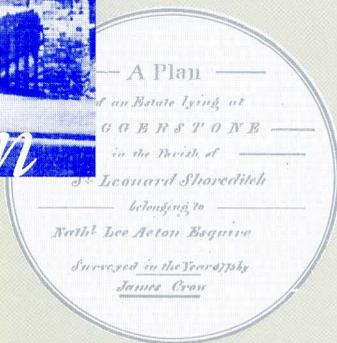
*sermons*

places

PEOPLE



*haggerston*



A Plan  
of an Estate lying at  
GERRSTONE  
in the Parish of  
St Leonard Shoreditch  
belonging to  
Nathl Lee Esq. Esquire  
Surveyed in the Year 1794  
James Cran

# HackneyHistory

## *In this issue*

- **the Tyssen collection of sermons** as a historical source
- **an 18th century Jewish resident** of Hackney, and his remarkable place in the history of British coins and tokens
- **the development of the Middleton estate**, on the Hackney and Shoreditch boundary
- how the Shoreditch vestry came unstuck in its pioneering implementation of **the 1890 Housing Act**.

Hackney History is the annual volume of the Friends of Hackney Archives, founded in 1985 to Act as a focus for local history in Hackney, and to support the work of the council's Archives Department. Friends receive the annual volume, and the Department's regular newsletter, the Hackney Terrier. Subscriptions are £6.00 (sterling) for a calendar year.

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# HACKNEY *History*

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#### ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used -

HAD	Hackney Archives Department
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives (formerly the Greater London Record Office)
PRO	Public Record Office
SRO	Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich
VCH	<i>Victoria County History of Middlesex</i>

All publications cited are published in London unless otherwise indicated.

## HISTORY IN SERMONS: THE TYSSEN COLLECTION

*Philip W. Plumb*

### *The Years of Turmoil and Regicide*

Today, few sermons, after they have been given in church or chapel, appear in print, whether 'at the request of the congregation' or for any other reason. In earlier centuries, however, it was very much the practice to publish these orations for the wider edification of the people. The Tyssen Collection in Hackney Archives Department consists of over 1,000 printed sermons and other theological works, mostly in single volumes but some either bound up with other sermons or published as collections.

The Collection was originally formed by John Robert Daniel-Tyssen, FSA (1805-82), a solicitor and steward of the Manor of Hackney. He was a member of the family that had held the Lordship for many years and the brother of the then Lord of the Manor. He was a most assiduous collector of books, prints, documents, maps and drawings concerning Hackney and its history as well as acquiring many general historical and antiquarian books and journals. Many of the books were inscribed to him by their authors: others were tracked down through the booksellers of the day and a few volumes were even duplicates from the British Museum according to labels inside their covers.

### *Other Tyssen collections*

There are two other major Tyssen collections: the Guildhall Library, London, possesses the Hackney College (or Tyssen) Collection

donated by Tyssen in 1860. This consists of some 1,800 items including some pre-eighteenth century publications, about five hundred from the eighteenth century and some 1,000 works published between 1800 and 1850. Hackney College was founded in 1786 by the Unitarian Society but closed ten years later. Part of the library was sold by Sotheby, 21 July



*J. R. Daniel-Tyssen's personal bookplate*

1802, to repay debts. Many of the books were later acquired by Tyssen and were added to by others from notable dissenting libraries and other sources. The contents of this collection complement, to some extent, the HAD collection and perhaps explain some of the lacunae in the latter.

In 1857 Tyssen presented to the Library of the Society of Antiquaries of London 413 mainly topographical books and journals on London and other towns and counties. Included in this gift were the first 24 volumes of the *Annual Register*, 103 volumes of the *Gentleman's Magazine* and 45 volumes of the *Evangelical Magazine*. Some of the books are very scarce, for example John Norden's *Speculum Britannica* of 1593.

When Tyssen died, his sons gave the remainder of his collections to the vestry of the parish of Hackney. A catalogue was printed in 1888 and the Library was made available to the public in the Hackney Town Hall. Some additions were made during the ensuing years and when the Collection formed part of the Mare Street Public Library, but not with the comprehensiveness of the collection's founder. Eventually, the Tyssen Collection was transferred to Hackney Archives Department where, with the aid of a grant from the British Library, the books have been cleaned, repaired and catalogued with details fed into a computer data base.

**Sermons as a source**

Even church-and chapelgoers might wonder at the relevance today of a collection of sermons and other religious disputations, other than to record what exercised the minds and influenced the deeds of their predecessors. Yet these volumes reveal much not only about the religious life of Hackney but about politics, morals, customs, social conditions, family life, crime, economics, agriculture, trade, health, leisure, learning: in short just about everything of importance to our forebears. Because of Hackney's importance in the history of Dissent, the Collection has a much wider import than the purely local scene.

The existence in the Collection of an item assumes a Hackney connection. In many cases this is obvious from the title page detailing that the sermon was preached in a local church, chapel or meeting house, or by a contemporary or previous incumbent. Or was a sermon preached at the funeral of a local person or to a local organisation. Sometimes the local connection was only noted in pencil by Tyssen, such as that the author lived in Hackney or

attended a local school. Other items needed much investigation to establish the right to be in the Collection, and a few remain elusive despite every effort. In one instance the clue was only found tucked away in the text of the sermon (but it is not claimed that every sermon was read right through!)

It was hardly possible to exaggerate the importance of the sermon in the 17th century world in the opinion of the *Oxford History of English Literature*. 'The Religion of England', wrote Evelyn in his satirical tract of 1659, 'is Preaching and sitting still on Sundaies'. The sermons and other religious and political works collected by Tyssen fill out the picture of the state of the country in general, and Hackney in particular, which we already have from existing sources.

**Nicholas Ridley and Samuel Harsnett**

The oldest work in the Collection is a posthumous work of Nicholas Ridley, successively bishop of Rochester and London, who worked hard to improve the lot of the poor but made the mistake of declaring both the princesses Mary and Elizabeth illegitimate and was burnt at the stake in 1555 (and for other reasons, of course). The book was *A Piteous Lamentation of the Miserable Estate of the Church...* published in 1566. The Hackney link is presumably that Ridley was, as bishop of London, Lord of the manors of Stepney and Hackney until 1550; and that his great-niece married into the Tyssen family. The link is not obvious



Bishop Nicholas Ridley

with Samuel Harsnett's *A Declaration of egregious Popish Impostures...* (1603). Harsnett was Archbishop of York and his book is chiefly interesting today for the fact that Shakespeare took from it the names of the fiends invoked by Edgar in *King Lear*, Act IV scene 1.

**Edward Misselden**

Edward Misselden, of Hackney, was an important figure in England's overseas trade history. He was deputy-governor of the Merchant Adventurers' Company at Delft, 1623-33. Later he was commissioner at Amsterdam for the East India Company to negotiate a Dutch treaty. He tried to 'thrust the Prayer Book on the Merchant Adventurers at Delft' in 1633 (which may explain why he left Delft). In 1622 he published a small book on *Free Trade or the Means to make Trade flourish*. Tyssen's copy lacks the title page.

**Gilbert Sheldon**

The important role played by many Hackney divines in the religious and political developments of the 17th century was due in part to its location as a pleasant village just outside the City of London where many opulent merchants had made their homes. Of the vicars in the earlier part of the century, Gilbert Sheldon, who held the living from 1633-36, is best known. He went on to become Bishop of London and eventually Archbishop of Canterbury. He was a strong Royalist and supporter of Laud's religious principles. In the highest office he was



Archbishop Gilbert Sheldon

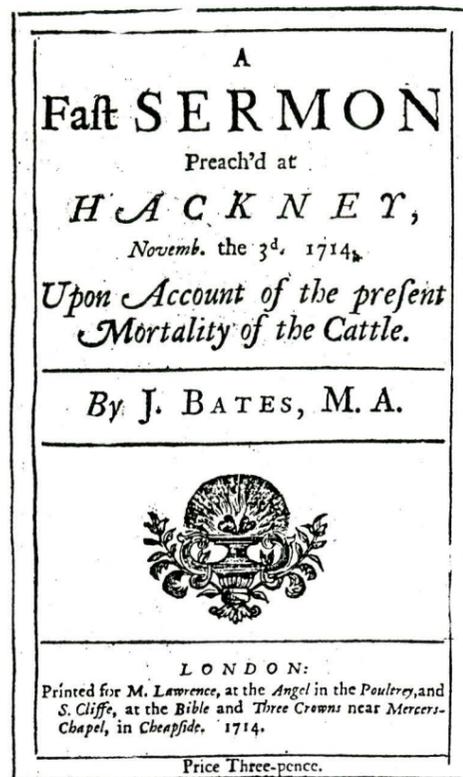
severe against Dissenters although frequently protecting them as individuals. Sheldon had been assisted by Samuel Tomlins, chosen as lecturer in 1634 according to the Vestry minutes, and who is represented in the Collection by two sermons published in 1695 in one volume. Sheldon's sermon preached before Charles II on June 28th 1660 at Whitehall, the Day of Thanksgiving for the Happy Return of his Majesty, is also present.

**Calybute Downing**

His successor in Hackney also had episcopal ambitions at one time. Calybute Downing, whose father was also Calybute, was born in Gloucestershire in 1606 to Ann, daughter of Edmund Hoogan of Hackney. The son was said by Anthony Wood, author of *Athenae Oxonienses*, to be anxious to become a bishop in his earlier days. He became Vicar of Hackney in 1637. However he changed his mind about episcopacy because in September, 1640, he was set to 'feel the pulse of the City' (in the words of a contemporary tract) by the puritan leaders. Preaching before the assembled brethren of the Artillery Garden, he maintained that, for the defence of religion and reformation of the church, it was lawful to take up arms against the King. After this inflammatory sermon, as it was not yet lawful to preach treason, he retired rapidly to the Earl of Warwick's house in Essex, 'the common rendezvous of all schismatical preachers'. This sermon entitled *A Sermon preached to the Renowned Company of the Artillery, 1 September, 1640* and published the following year by John Rothwell in the City of London, together with six other sermons by Downing, can be found in the Tyssen Collection, illustrating the part played by Hackney's revolutionary vicar in the events leading up to the overthrow of Charles I. He was appointed by Parliament in 1643 as one of the licensers of books of divinity, became one of the Westminster Assembly of Divines after taking the covenant but then left and sided with the Independents. He resigned from Hackney in 1643 and died suddenly the following year.

**Anabaptists**

Anabaptists were those who refused to have their children baptized, holding that only believers should receive baptism. This belief seems largely to have been confined in England to refugees from the Low Countries although this creed did have an influence on Independents. *The Booke of Common Prayer... Vindicated from the Aspersion of all Schismatikes, Anabaptists, Brownists, and Separatists* (1641)



A 'fast' sermon on the cattle plague, 1714: text from Jonah

contains a fascinating account of 'The discovery of a base sect of people called Rebaptists, lately found out in Hackney Mash (sic) neere London'. It continues -

About a Fortnight since a great multitude of people were met going towards the river in Hackney Marsh, and were followed to the water side, where they all were Baptized againe, themselves doing it to one another, some of which persons, were so feeble and aged, that they were fayne to Ride on Horsebacke thithere this was well observed by many of the Inhabitants living there abours (sic), and afterwards one of them Christened his owne Child, and another tooke upon him to Church his owne wife, an Abominable Act, and full of grosse Impiety.

In 1809, George Offor, whose place of business was Postern Row, Tower Hill, but who lived in Grove Street, Hackney, reprinted a scarce pamphlet *A Confession of Faith Of Seven Congregations or Churches of Christ in London, which are commonly (but unjustly) called Anabaptists*, originally published in 1646, and presented a copy to Tyssen.

### Fast Sermons

Presbyterians had since the late sixteenth century urged national days of fasting and humiliation against afflictions which appeared to be the result of divine wrath. In November, 1640, Parliament established a regular series of monthly fast sermons and these continued until 1649. In some instances where one of a series of sermons or lectures had local significance, Tyssen, as befitted an ardent collector, would acquire all, or as many as possible. This is made clear from the many Fast sermons preached in St Margaret's, Westminster, where the preacher was not himself connected with Hackney but others in the series were. In one of the volumes is a complete list to 1643, with a pencilled cross against those Tyssen managed to obtain. The list includes all the sermons given. Unfortunately those few not published include one given by Dr Downing on August 31st, 1642. However, William Spurstowe's sermon of the 21st July, 1643, is in the Collection, as is one by Anthony Tuckney preached on 30th August next. Tuckney later took as his third wife Spurstowe's widow.

### William Spurstowe

Downing was succeeded by William Spurstowe in May 1643. He came with good puritan qualifications. A group of sermons under the pseudonymous authorship of 'Smectymnuus' forms another important step in the religious controversy of that time. In 1640, Joseph Hall, Bishop of Exeter and later of Norwich, with the approval of Archbishop Laud, issued a defence of the established church: *The Divine Right of Episcopacy*. Five puritan divines, S. Marshall, E. Calamy, T. Young, M. Newcomen and William Spurstowe produced an answer under their combined initials. Thomas Young had been tutor to John Milton, who is believed to have written a post-script in one, and is known to be the author of the whole of another of the items in the Smectymnuus series, of which there are four altogether in the Collection including the two Milton volumes. Thomas Manton, the incumbent at Stoke Newington, wrote the preface to one. Other sermons by Spurstowe include one preached at the funeral of Lady Honor Vyner, the second wife of Sir Thomas Vyner, or Viner. Sir Thomas was immensely successful in business becoming prime warden of the Goldsmiths' Company, comptroller of the mint and, in 1653, Lord Mayor.

Spurstowe gave a sermon on the magistrate's dignity and duty in St Paul's before the new Lord Mayor on 30th October, 1653. Viner

purchased a house in Hackney in 1622, near the church, and enlarged it into a mansion known as the Black and White House. He died there in 1665 and was buried in St Mary Woolnoth. In his will dated the previous year, Viner left money for the poor of Hackney. The funeral was in Goldsmiths' Hall and was attended, along with many others, by Samuel Pepys, wearing the best suit that ever he wore in his life costing him above £24. There were such great crowds and it was so hot that Pepys immediately ordered a new suit of cooler material.

### Samuel Pepys

Pepys in the previous year had rediscovered his childhood fondness for Hackney and, on the occasion of attending church there when there was great difficulty in getting seats, had been greatly impressed by the civility of Sir Thomas's elder son, Sir George Viner (and even more impressed by the beauty of his wife). Sir George died in 1673 and the manor passed to his son, a minor, Sir Thomas, who survived his father by only ten years. He was buried at St Helen's Church, London, May 3rd 1683, Henry Hesketh, the Vicar, preaching the funeral sermon.

### Triers and Judges

After advice from the Assembly of Divines, Parliament issued directions for the electing and choosing of ruling elders in all the congregations of the kingdom in August 1645 and followed this by publishing *An Ordinance of... Parliament... concerning Suspension from the Sacrament of The Lords Supper In Cases of Ignorance and Scandall*. It was passed 20 October, 1645, and by this Spurstowe was appointed one of the triers and judges of the ability of elders within the Province of London. This was not the office of the better known triers of 1654 appointed to approve all preachers and lecturers before appointment to their benefices, but the 1645 ordinance gave the elders or presbyters of each parish the power to suspend from Holy Communion all those 'notoriously scandalous persons' listed. Then follows a catalogue of heinous behaviour including travelling upon the Lord's Day without reasonable cause, as well as murder, blasphemy, and consulting a fortune-teller. It was the duty of Spurstowe and the other triers and judges including George Clarke of Hackney, who gave money in 1668 for a protestant sermon on the anniversary of Elizabeth I's coronation, to decide on the integrity and ability of the elders.

### Simeon Ashe

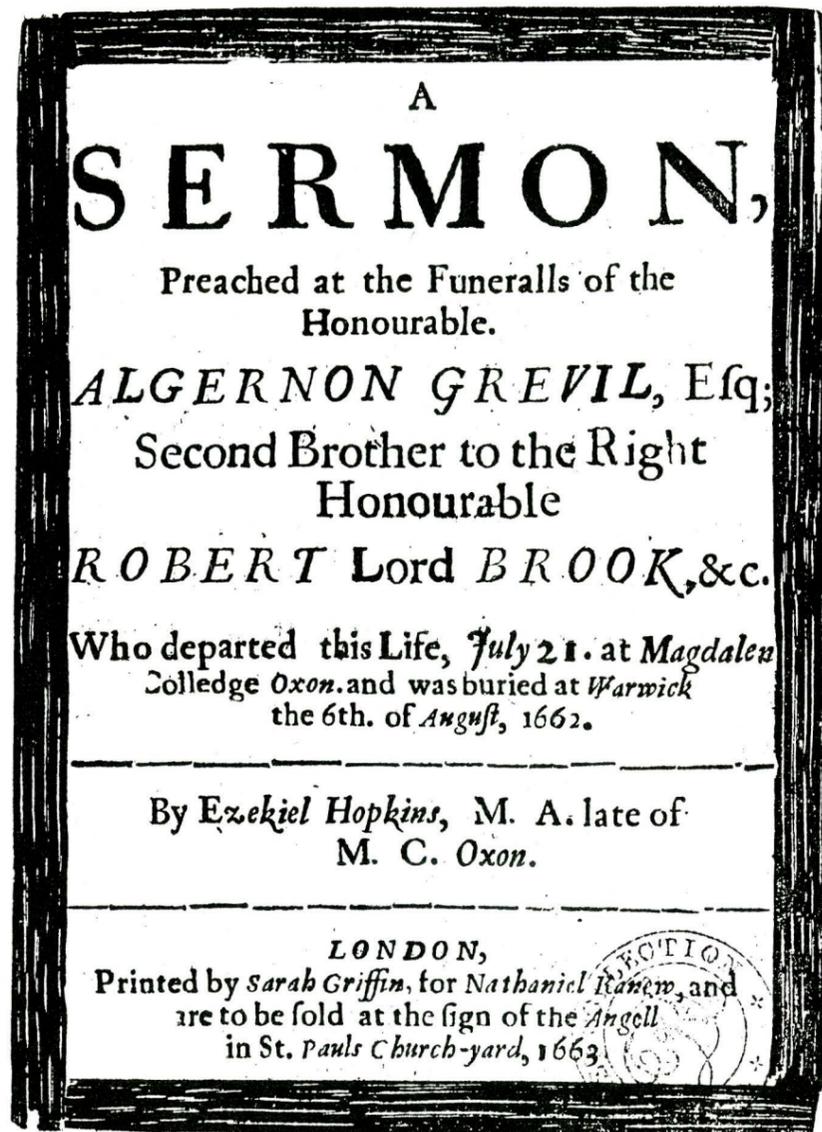
Spurstowe's only child, William, died in March, 1654 aged 9, and Simeon Ashe, Preacher of the Gospel and Lecturer at Hackney, preached the funeral sermon addressing Dr Spurstowe and his virtuous wife, Sarah, as 'his much esteemed good friends'. Tyssen managed to collect four copies of the printed sermon as well as examples of two other funeral sermons Ashe gave in the same year. Ashe was a well-respected minister who had been ejected from his first living in Staffordshire for refusing to read the Book of Sports' and afterwards came under the protection of Lord Brook. The Book of Sports' was a declaration first issued by James I in 1617 to be read from every pulpit permitting archery and dancing on Sundays and was designed to counter the Puritans' Sabbatarianism. Charles I reissued it in 1633 and deprived all clergy who refused to publish it. It was publicly burnt by order of Parliament in 1643. By then, when the Parliamentary army marched against the King in August 1642, Ashe, together with Stephen Marshall and Obadiah Sedgwick (represented by three sermons) marched with it. Ashe preached a fast sermon before the House of Commons in 1647 and in an earlier sermon had used such modern sounding phrases as 'sinking heart' and 'short hand' in 1642 on 'a day of great trouble and deep danger in the City'. On May 17th, 1642, he preached to the Commanders of the Military Forces at Great St Helen's. Ashe also edited and published the works of other divines such as John Ball.



'Revd. Simeon Ashe...He died just previous of the Act of Nonconformity...'

### Ezekial Hopkins

Ezekial Hopkins became assistant to Dr Spurstowe at the Restoration and preached a sermon at the funeral of Algernon Grevil, brother of Robert, Lord Brooke, on 6th August 1662. Hopkins conformed after the Act of Uniformity that year and after some years in London, and in his native Devon, pursued his clerical career in Ireland, eventually becoming Bishop of Derry. He was a good scholar and an



excellent preacher so it is not surprising to find fourteen volumes of his sermons in the Collection. One of Hopkins' works on original sin was revised and republished in 1809 by Josiah Pratt.

#### Richard Vines

Richard Vines, a puritan divine, was minister of St Lawrence Jewry from 1650 to 1656 and had been an active member of the Assembly of Divines. He preached three successive annual sermons to the current Lord Mayor, of whom the first was Sir Thomas Viner, on obedience to magistrates, both supreme and subordinate, a much sermonised topic of the age. When his funeral sermon, preached by Thomas Jacombe, was published it contained not only a short account of his life and death but a preface by Ashe and eulogies in verse by Spurstowe, Newcomen and others. The copy

in HAD of the second edition contains annotations in a seventeenth century hand written by a critic of Vines. Although Spurstowe approved of the Restoration, he resigned the living at Hackney upon the Act of Uniformity and continued to live in Hackney until his death in 1666. The six almshouses he founded for six poor widows were finished that year and endowed by his brother, Henry Spurstowe, a London merchant. Before he died, however, he had welcomed into his home the Presbyterian divine, Richard Baxter, and was not unsympathetic to those who had lost their livings after the 1662 Ejections. Many of the ejected ministers came to Hackney to live: a trawl through *Calamy Revised* suggests there were upwards of thirty-five living there during the years following the Act.

#### The Sedgwicks

The puritan divines, John, Joseph and Obadiah Sedgwick who were brothers, and William Sedgwick who was brother to Robert, Governor of Jamaica, are well represented amongst the sermons and tracts in the Collection. William, described as 'Sometimes a presbyterian, sometimes an independent, always an anabaptist', published a number of tracts about the Remonstrance of the Army. This was originally drafted by Ireton, who wanted the King to be tried for responsibility for the war. Lord Fairfax, the commander of the army, still wanted to negotiate in 1648, but eventually signed the document which was submitted to Parliament on 20th November 1648. One tract was *A Letter to his Excellency Thomas Lord Fairfax... in prosecution of his Answer to the Remonstrance of the Army* (1649). In turn, Richard Collier wrote *A Vindication of the Army Remonstrance... Answer to Mr Sedgwick's Book*. The fast sermons given before the House of Commons by John and Obadiah include one by the latter in thanksgiving for the 'happie and seasonable Victory of Sir Will. Waller and Sir Will. Balfore &c. over Sir Ralph Hopton and his Forces raised against the Parliament'. Obadiah was succeeded at St Paul's, Covent Garden by Thomas Manton, said to be his father-in-law: but this was not so. Joseph Sedgwick preached a sermon at Cambridge in 1653 on universities, learning and Christianity.

#### John Okey

Two items involve John Okey, identified by Tyssen as being of Hackney,<sup>2</sup> who was a colonel in the Army and one of the regicides who signed Charles's death warrant. The first is the *Declaration of the Armie* (1647), which was presented in Saffron Walden Church and has Okey's name on the title page together with Fairfax, Cromwell, Ireton and Colonel Fleetwood of Stoke Newington. After the Restoration, Okey made the mistake of fleeing to Holland. Those regicides who stayed in England were shown clemency but Okey, and two others, were ambushed in Holland, brought back to London and duly executed. *The Speeches, Discourses, and Prayers of Col. John Barkstead, Col. John Okey, and Mr Miles Corbet upon the 19th April, being the Day of their Suffering at Tyburn* (1662) gives the full story.

#### John Worthington

Described on the title pages of his posthumously published sermons always as the late pious and learned Dr John Worthington, that

worthy indeed had a full and varied life in the Church and University before becoming lecturer at Hackney, 1670-71. He was displaced as Master of Jesus College, Cambridge, in October 1660, to make way for the restoration of Dr Richard Sterne, who, ironically, had himself been ejected from the post in 1644 to make way for one of the Smectymnuus authors, Thomas Young. Losing his wife while they were living in the country, he decided to accept the appointment at Hackney to be nearer 'friends and books'. He died at the age of 54 and was buried on 30th November, 1671 in the chancel of the church at Hackney. One of the three sermons in the Collection, *Charita Evangelica*, published by his son in 1691, appears to be his first sermon at Hackney. A volume of miscellaneous writings published in 1704 contained a series of letters to 'Mr Hartlib of pious memory' which were mainly about books and publishing and also a tribute to Worthington's character by Archbishop Tillotson.

(to be continued)

#### Notes and sources

1. *Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB).
2. Of Barber's Barn, Mare Street (later Loddiges' nursery grounds): William Robinson, *History and Antiquities of the Parish of Hackney*, 1, 88.

Although this account is based on the Tyssen Collection in Hackney Archives Department it was necessary to consult many books and journals ranging from the *DNB* and the *Victoria County History* to specialist monographs in the British Library, Guildhall Library, Dr Williams' Library, the Hackney Collection at HAD, and others, in order to establish the Hackney ambience. *DNB* was invaluable but not infallible and additions and corrections can be made to the new edition as a result of this research.

With the exception of the portraits of Ridley, Sheldon and Ashe, the illustrations are taken from the Tyssen Collection.

## DAVID ALVES REBELLO: A JEW OF HACKNEY

*Melvyn H. Brooks*

### *Jews in Hackney*

1996 marked not only the Centenary of Hackney Synagogue but also the 200th *yahrzeit* (death anniversary) of David Alves Rebello (1741-1796), one of Hackney's most fascinating Jewish residents. To understand a little of the life and times of Rebello it is important to place him in the context of his surroundings, his neighbours and history.

The closing years of the eighteenth century were ones of social unrest. Constitutional reform was being demanded. The French Revolution and its aftermath caused fear in English society that a similar upheaval would happen in Great Britain. The established Church was being challenged by dissenters and the Industrial Revolution was changing the face of England.

At this time Hackney was still a country village on the outskirts of London. It was not until about 1840, with the advent of cheap railway travel, that the area lost its status as a retreat for the rich many of whom had country estates there. The development of Hackney was taking place at a number of settlements along existing roads, in the centre, with the parish church of St. John-at-Hackney and groups of houses at Shacklewell, Homerton, Upper and Lower Clapton, Stamford Hill, and Dalston.<sup>1</sup>

The earliest record of Jews in Hackney<sup>2</sup> after the Resettlement was that of the family of Isaac Alvares, a jeweller who bought a modest home in Homerton in 1678. The first synagogue was probably in the home of Jacob

Franco, a gem merchant who, in 1744, bought Clapton House facing the pond in Lower Clapton. Amongst the Jews who chose to live in Hackney were the Rothschilds in Stamford Hill, the Montefiores in Kingsland Road and later Stamford Hill, and the Aguilar family at the Triangle, Mare Street and Clapton Square.

Part of the area south of the junction of Well Street and Mare Street was built up from about 1690 by Thomas Tryon.<sup>3</sup> Tryon's Place is roughly the line of Tudor Road from Mare Street to Tudor Grove.<sup>4</sup> It consisted of large houses with ornamental gardens. The Rebello family home at Clifton House occupied about eight acres<sup>5</sup> on the north corner of Mare Street and Tudor Road. It shared a carriageway with the adjoining house - The Elms - and, like many large houses, gradually lost its grounds to terraced houses and its carriageway to the widening of Mare Street. Clifton House was demolished between the two World Wars. Ede House, the police section house, is built on part of the site.

The earliest reference found to the Rebello family in Hackney is in 1750 (Isaac Duwart Rebello - father-in-law of David Alves Rebello, also known as Isaac Duarte Rebello Da Mendoza).<sup>6</sup> The family probably rented Clifton House for many years, with David Rebello finally buying the copyhold from Thomas Cotton only months before he died there in 1796.<sup>7</sup> Isaac Rebello was nominated an overseer of the poor for 1752, a headborough (petty constable) in 1755, a constable 1760 and collec-

tor of the lamp rate for 1773. David Alvez (sic) Rebello was elected a headborough in 1790.<sup>8</sup> These communal functions were the duty of all ratepayers and many would pay a fine or appoint a proxy in their place. Moses Montefiore and Nathan Mayer Rothschild were later appointed to similar positions.

### *David Alves and family*

At the age of 18 Rebello married his first cousin, Sara de Isaac Rebello da Mendoza, two days before Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, 5520 (corresponding to Wednesday, 3 October 1759) at the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, Bevis Marks. There were four children. The first daughter, Sarah, died in infancy in 1760. A son, Isaac Alves, died in 1803, as did the second daughter, also called Sarah. Rachel died in 1806 and Ester in 1812. Rebello showed great concern for his second daughter Sarah, who must have been unable to care for herself. Several times in his will he requests that his three other children take care of her and ensure her welfare. She may have had some kind of mental or physical handicap.

Rebello was an active member of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue.<sup>9</sup> He can easily be visualised setting out from Clifton House, crossing Mare Street into Exmouth Place (now Helmsley Street) and meeting the pathway from Mare Street that crossed London Fields to the Broadway and then on to the City by way of Shoreditch Church. At this time this area of South Hackney (sometimes called the Cat and Mutton Fields, after the public house on the corner of the Broadway Market, and later London Fields) was often the site of attacks by robbers and highwaymen.<sup>10</sup>

Rebello may sometimes have been accompanied by a servant or two for protection on his weekly walk to the City for Shabbat morning services. He served as Treasurer of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in 1773 and Warden in the years 1777, 1782, 1786 and 1790.<sup>11</sup> Rebello also had an address in the City at 25 St Mary Axe, and it could well have been that he stayed there for the Sabbath when the weather was bad. The synagogue must have played an important part in the life of Rebello. Substantial bequests were left by him to the Wardens and Treasurer of the 'Portuguese Synagogue', including money to be distributed to the poor on the day of his burial, one week later, on the thirtieth day, and on the expiration of the eleventh month after his burial. In addition he left an investment of five hundred pounds sterling, the dividends of which were to be used to purchase, for twelve poor

men and twelve poor women of the Sephardi congregation, underwear, stockings and shoes on 1st November each year. The money still exists and in 1970 was amalgamated into the Welfare Board Benefit Fund of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation. It is perhaps difficult today to realise the value of five hundred pounds in 1796 but a clergyman with a living of three hundred and fifty pounds per annum accompanied by a house and fruit and vegetable garden could live quite comfortably, allowing him a servant or two plus a horse.

Rebello is described as a merchant of the City of London. I have been able to find little about his business life. He did inherit money and property from his father and other kinsmen. He was an amateur geologist and supporter of the arts.<sup>12</sup> His name appears as a subscriber to Milton's *Views of Ireland* in 1783 and to *A Course of Physico-Theological Lectures upon the State of the World* by Robert Miln, 1786. Rebello is listed posthumously (1798) as a subscriber to *A New Merchant's Guide; containing a concise System of Information for the Port and City of London: together with Some Observations particularly useful to Commercial Men and Their Clerks*, compiled and digested by I. Sequeira. At this time subscription lists were often used as a form of advertisement. There were several annual guides to the City of which Rebello took advantage. His name appears in *Kent's*



*David Alves Rebello*

*Directory* from 1769 to 1783 with his address as Mare Street, Hackney and the Rainbow Coffee House at 34 Cornhill. The same entry appears in Baldwin's *New Complete Guide* (1770), Sketchley's *Sheffield Directory* (1774) and the *Complete Pocket Book* (1776 and 1779). The *New Complete Guide* (listings 1772, 1774, 1777 and 1783) gives the same two addresses but in 1779, 25 St Mary Axe replaced the Rainbow Coffee House. A similar change of his City address occurred in the London Directory. For the years 1770, 1777, 1781 the address is Mare Street, Hackney and the Rainbow Coffee House but in 1795 it is 7 Bevis Marks, St Mary Axe. In all the directories except one his occupation is given as merchant/commerce. However in the *Complete Pocket Book* for 1776 it is listed as hop merchant, food/drink(s). This is the only clue that has been found as to his livelihood. Isaac Alves Rebello Esq, Hackney, FAS (the son of David Alves) appears in the list of subscribers to Malton's *Picturesque Tour thro' London and Westminster* in 1792-1801.

#### **Rebello and Priestley**

In 1788 Rebello met with Joseph Priestley, the famed discoverer of oxygen and a prominent dissenting Christian theologian.<sup>13</sup> He was an early Zionist<sup>14</sup> and wrote that he believed 'the true aera of the renovation of the world would not come about until the Jews were returned to their ancient home in Palestine'.<sup>15</sup> Priestley's home in Birmingham was burned down by a rioting mob in 1791 and he then fled and came to live in Hackney (opposite the site of the Round Chapel in Lower Clapton Road) until 1794, when he emigrated to Philadelphia. In a letter dated 13 May 1788,<sup>16</sup> Priestley and Lindsey described the following meeting.

We had our conference at Hackney...but met only one of the Jewish nation, but he alone was being a person of sense and reflection, well informed concerning his own religion, what it was that it consisted, and willing to give up a great deal and come nearer to christians (sic) such as we were than almost any other perhaps besides he himself.

Rebello appears to have adhered to his belief in Judaism, as the letter continues 'After a long discussion, he seemed to think and said he did not see what he would gain by becoming a christian'. Priestley continues that the Jews were uninterested in converting Gentiles to their faith and they were indifferent to 'further inquiry after the gospel'. He continues that Mr Rebello was against reformation of Judaism lest 'people should run away with the notion that all was wrong and desert Judaism'.

The closing sentences give a clue to Rebello's roots:

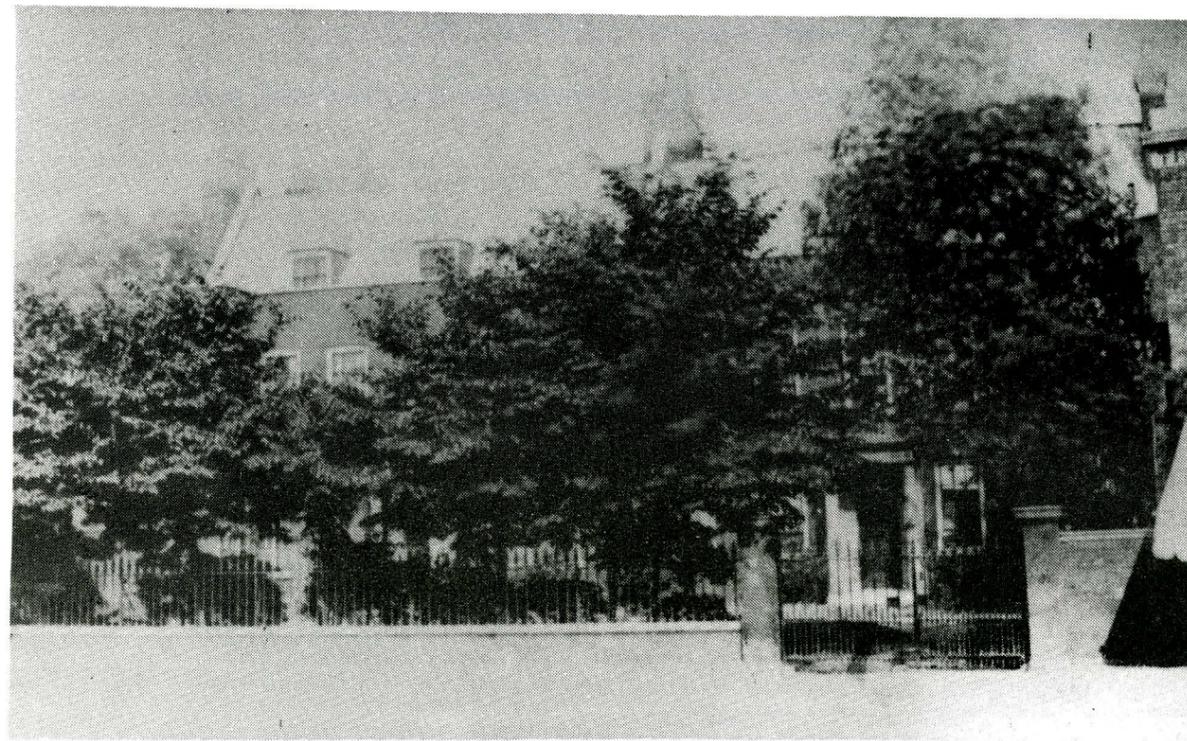
This gentleman's father was in the Inquisition. He has many such relatives in Portugal who pass for being old christians. He himself was bred up there as a christian.

It appears therefore that Rebello was born in Portugal to a Marrano family who, after arriving in England, returned to the open practice of Judaism.

#### **Rebello the coin collector**

It is generally accepted that David Alves Rebello issued the first private token in England, although there is some doubt about this, and Bell claims that the honour might go to Seward's Lancaster Token of 1794.<sup>17</sup> Rebello's name is associated with two pieces from 1795 and 1796, both now rarities. Robinson the topographer and local historian of North-East London is the first printed source found about Rebello and his tokens. He gives brief descriptions and illustrations of the 1795 Hackney promissory (halfpenny) token and the 1796 medal. Although this latter piece is regarded as a commemorative token Rebello is likely to have seen and approved its design. Bearing in mind the description of his physical state before his death<sup>18</sup> it is probable that Rebello realised that he was nearing his death and he was the instigator of the medal and saw it as his memorial. This would be in character: a number of requests in his will point to a desire that his memory be kept alive.

Robinson illustrates a third token from this period, the Sheffield Constitutional Society (SCS) one penny token which shows on its obverse side old Hackney Church. On first glance this illustration and that on the 1795 Rebello halfpenny are the same. On closer examination there are several differences. The time on the clock of the Rebello token is 4.09 and 7.00 on the SCS; in the exergue MDCCXC (1790) Rebello, MCCXC (1290) the SCS; the coat of arms is narrower, the tower has no brickwork and the weather vane altered in the SCS coin, and the initials 'JM' do not appear on the SCS coin. It could well be that this SCS coin is a mixture (called a 'mule' by collectors) of an adapted obverse side of the 1795 Rebello coin with a new reverse side. In 1995 a reputable coin dealer advertised a 'David Alves Rebello 1795 halfpenny Conder token' (which was purchased by the author of this essay) that on close inspection shows an obverse side identical to that of the SCS coin with the same Latin date in the exergue. The reverse side is an



Clifton House (right) and 'the Elms', Mare Street, photographed by George James about 1870

imitation of that of the 1795 Rebello halfpenny. The laurel wreath is not as ornate, the letters DAR are less flowery and the palm branch and scuppet different. This was probably one of the forgeries produced about 1796 by Skidmore and sold to unsuspecting collectors often at inflated prices. Skidmore employed Jacobs, a die sinker of inferior ability to John Milton, the Royal Mint engraver who had produced the original coins. The fame of the two Rebello coins made it worthwhile to produce forgeries!<sup>19</sup>

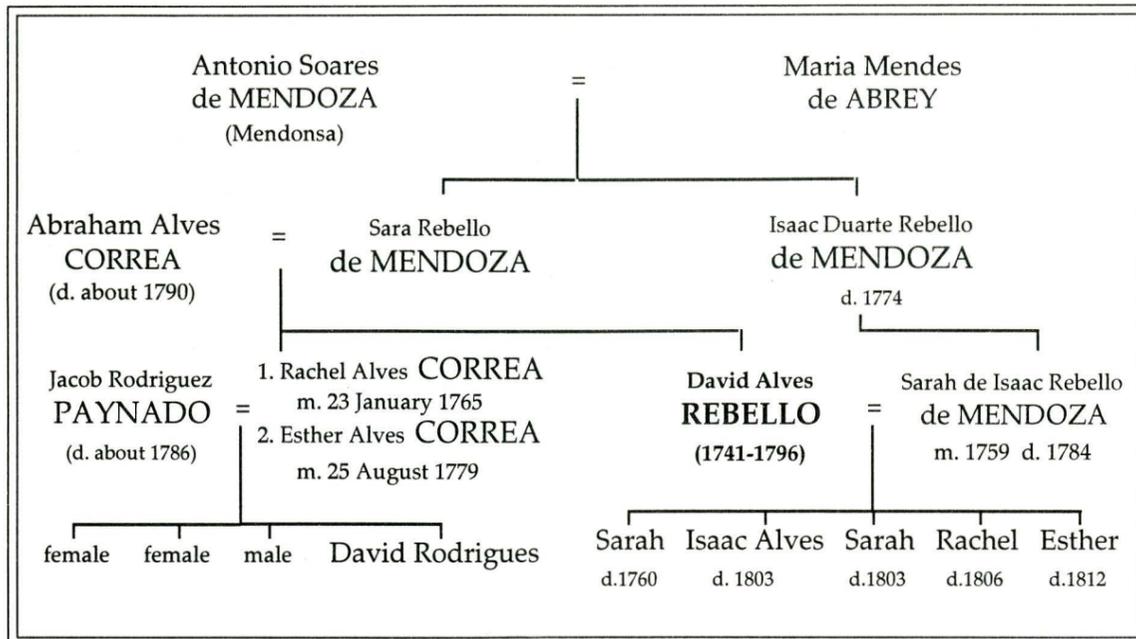
According to Jewitt<sup>20</sup> there were three versions of the SCS token of 1792. The obverse side had the inscription of the SCS with a cap of Liberty on a pole between branches of oak with PRO PATRIA on a label across the pole. One of the varieties showed Hackney Church on the reverse, illustrated in Robinson. The SCS was a radical movement demanding constitutional reform with about 2000 members.<sup>21</sup> They met in groups of 10 and Robinson suggests that there was a branch of the society in Hackney with their own version of the SCS token. The SCS was founded in 1791 and faded out of existence in 1795. It had connections with other groups and Robinson describes a Hackney Constitutional Society Token of 1795. Joseph Priestley and Dr Richard Price were members.

Robinson makes a double mistake. He gives the date 'MDCXC' of the SCS token. In the Errata he corrects this to 'MDCCXC'. The correct version is 'MCCXC'.

In 1879 correspondence<sup>22</sup> debated the meaning of the word 'scuppet', thought to be the implement illustrated on the reverse side of the 1795 token, underneath the initials DAR. R.T. Samuel, a coin expert and Hackney resident (who lived in Paradise Row, Paragon Road) gave the most authoritative answer.<sup>23</sup> He suggested that 'Rabello' used the scuppet to represent death, the instrument being used for digging and filling graves; the palm branch (also illustrated) represented immortality.

R.T. Samuel also wrote a series of detailed descriptions of tokens of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which appeared in the *Bazaar, Exchange and Mart*.<sup>24</sup> His description of the two Rebello pieces is the most comprehensive written, and subsequent authors seem to have taken their data from him.

R.C. Bell's descriptions of the Rebello coins was taken from Samuel. Bell did not agree that a scuppet is illustrated on the 1795 token but thought it more likely that the illustration is of an old-fashioned penknife in its case. He thinks that the 'palm' is really a quill that would have been sharpened by the penknife. He does not



The Rebello family tree. Abraham Alves Correa and Sara Rebello de Mendoza were Marrano Jews. Married in Portugal, they 'remarried' in Bevis Marks in 1784 in order to receive full privileges as members of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue.

give any explanation for this symbolism.<sup>25</sup>

Robert Thompson believes that a ship's rudder is illustrated and not a scuppet and had been copied from a previous halfpenny token of 1788.<sup>26</sup> He does not give a reason for this but adds that Rebello's coin collection was sold after 1803 to Edward Roberts, Richard Miles and Marmaduke Trattle.

There is an alternative reason for the use of the scuppet which was probably an instrument used in building the new church of St John- at-Hackney. The palm branch may have represented fertility and thus increased the demand of the residents of Hackney for their new church. Rebello was a practising Jew who celebrated Succot, the festival of Tabernacles. At this time a palm branch, together with a citron, myrtle and willow branches are used in the synagogue and the home for religious custom. If indeed a palm branch is illustrated in the 1795 token the idea may have been taken from its use in the synagogue at Succot.

**Last days and testament**

Rebello's obituary<sup>27</sup> states; 'A paralytic affection, that, for the space of two years, by progressive strides, deprived him of his faculties, finally terminated his existence'. His complicated will was made in October 1794 and presumably he supervised the minting of his 1795 token. Although Rebello suffered from a chronic disabling neurological disease his rea-

soning and mental facility were left intact as evidenced by the codicil to his will dated 9 October 1794. There is a good possibility that he suffered from the 'shaking palsy' as described by James Parkinson.<sup>28</sup> Parkinson lived within walking distance of Clifton House, across the fields at Hoxton Square. He was the Physician to St Leonard's Hospital, Shoreditch and published his classic work on the shaking palsy in 1817. However, none of the six cases originally described in 1817 fit the description of Rebello. No record of inpatient care of Rebello has been found in the archives of the Royal London Hospital.

Both Rebello and Parkinson were amateur geologists and coin collectors. They could well have met each other through their common interests. The coin collection of James Parkinson was still in existence in the 1950s.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately I have been unable to trace the coin collection of Parkinson. Florence H. Stevens, a great great granddaughter of James Parkinson, writes in March 1997 that nothing of the coin collection reached her branch of the family.

In his will, Rebello wrote: 'I desire that my body may be buried at least forty-eight hours after my decease'. Bearing in mind that Jewish religious law (Halacha) requires that a person be buried as soon as possible after death (indeed, in Israel funerals sometimes take place at night) this request by Rebello

needs explanation. There may be two reasons. It was common at this time for bodies to be stolen soon after burial for dissection in the anatomy schools. Delaying the funeral meant that the body would not be in the best condition for the students. The delay could also have been requested to ensure that death had actually taken place in view of the old fear of being buried alive, in 'suspended animation'.

David Alves Rebello and his family were buried in the main section of the Novo Cemetery of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation, Mile End Road. A large part of the grounds have been built over to provide accommodation for Queen Mary College. A section from the latter half of the 19th century remains behind the University. Re-burial of remains was at Brentwood in Essex.

**A picture of Rebello**

What picture can we draw of David Alves Rebello? He was the son of a Marrano Jew, born in Portugal and married at the age of 18. Whilst a supporter of his synagogue and prepared to take on community office he was also ready to discuss his religion and argue in its favour with some of the foremost Christian theologians of his time. A cultured man, of good financial means, 'he was quite a gentleman in his manner, spoke sensibly but not fluently'<sup>30</sup> this probably referring to his Portuguese accent. He died leaving bequests to his family, his friends, to Jew and non-Jew and to his synagogue. Two hundred years later his tokens and their forgeries are held by a few lucky collectors. And some members of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation still benefit from his generosity.

**Notes**

1. VCH, X.
2. M. Brown, 'The Jews of Hackney before 1840', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, XXX (1987-1988) 71-87.
3. I. Watson, *Gentlemen in the building line* (1989).
4. B. Clarke, *Glimpses of Ancient Hackney* (1893) reprinted 1986.
5. Brown, n.2 above.
6. R. Simpson, *Memorials of St John at Hackney* (1882), 3, 148-149.
7. HAD ratebooks (1736-1811); J. Picciotto *Sketches of Anglo-Jewish History* (1875) ed. Finestein (1956) 220-221; A. M. Hyamson, *The Sephardim of England* (1951), 113-114; codicil to Will of David Alves Rebello, 9th October 1794.
8. Brown, n.2 above.
9. Personal correspondence with Miss M. Rodrigues-Pereira.
10. (e.g.) *Morning Chronicle*, 20th December 1781. R. Paley, *Justice in Eighteenth Century Hackney*, (1991) London Record Society, 28, ix-x, 51, 116.

11. As n. 9 above.
12. Picciotto, n. 7 above.
13. A. D. Orange, *Joseph Priestley* (1974), M. Gray, 'Joseph Priestley in Hackney', *Enlightenment and Dissent* (1983) 107-110; 'Joseph Priestley in Clapton 1791-1794', *East London Record* (1983) 32-38.
14. J. Fruchtman, 'Joseph Priestley and Early English Zionism', *Enlightenment and Dissent* (1983), 39-46.
15. J. Priestley, *A Discourse to the Supporters of the New College, Hackney* (1791) 33.
16. Theophilus Lindsey to William Tayleur at Shrewsbury 13 May 1788 (in the John Rylands Library, Manchester). I am grateful to Mike Gray for drawing my attention to this letter.
17. D.M. Friedenberg, *Jewish Medals from the Renaissance to the Fall of Napoleon; 1503-1815* (1970) 84-85, 140-141; W. Robinson, *History and Antiquities of the Parish of Hackney* (1842), I., 32-38; R. C. Bell *Tradesmen's Tickets and Private Tokens 1785-1819*, (1966) xi 81-82. 99-102.
18. *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1796, 441.
19. On comparison of one of the 24 copper DAR 1/2 penny 1795 tokens (acquired in June 1997 by the author) with the Skidmore forgery, the craftsmanship of the Royal Mint diecaster, John Milton, becomes obvious. Brickwork is shown up on the old tower and the Heron family shield is clear, not blurred. The lettering on the reverse side has a clearer and more beautiful type. Without doubt the original is of a much superior quality.
20. L. Jewitt, 'The Traders' Tokens of Sheffield', *The Sheffield Miscellany* (1897).
21. J. Taylor, 'The Sheffield Constitutional Society (1791-1795)', *Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society*, 5 (1943).
22. *Notes and Queries*, 1879: 16th August, 128-129; 20th September, 235-236.
23. R. T. Samuel, *Notes and Queries*, 20th September 1879, 235; J. Wright, *The English Dialect Dictionary* (1905) 293, 300.
24. R. T. Samuel, 'Provincial Copper Coins, or Tokens of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *The Bazaar, Exchange and Mart*, 9th January 1884, 33-34; 12th March 1884, 274-275.
25. Bell, n.17 above.
26. Personal correspondence. See also following article.
27. *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1796, 441.
28. See C. Gardner-Thorpe, *James Parkinson 1755-1824*, containing a reprint of Parkinson's work of 1817; also personal correspondence.
29. Personal communication from Dr Gardner-Thorpe.
30. Lindsey, n. 16 above.

**Acknowledgements**

The author wishes to thank Robert Bell of Newcastle and Robert H. Thompson, South Tottenham, for advice about coins and tokens; Dr Christopher Gardner-Thorpe of Exeter, David Webb of the Bishopsgate Institute, Miss M. Rodrigues-Pereira of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation and Alan Ruston.

# THE REBELLO COLLECTION OF COINS AND TOKENS

Robert H. Thompson

## The Rebello collection

The obituary of Rebello in the *Gentleman's Magazine* noted that he was 'a great admirer of the works of art, particularly coins, of which he had made an elegant and judicious collection'.<sup>1</sup> His coin collection brought him into contact with museum curators, dealers, and doubtless other collectors, and Cecil Roth, the authority on Anglo-Jewish history, discerned that the change of attitude towards Jews at the close of the eighteenth century was probably due, in some measure, to personal intercourse with such persons as the art-patron David Alves Rebello.<sup>2</sup>

There is evidence of Rebello's other collecting interests in a surviving letter, dated from Hackney 4 August 1778, to the naturalist Emanuel Mendes da Costa (1717-1791), in which he arranged to buy some of da Costa's duplicate minerals. In October 1787, apparently through da Costa's influence, Rebello was elected a member of the Society for Promoting Natural History, whose property was subsequently taken over by the Linnean Society.<sup>3</sup>

The Rebello collection was not, however, recorded in any published catalogue, and in consequence it can be only partially reconstructed from references in other works, and from a transcript of a lost manuscript on the Anglo-Saxon portion. If Rebello collected tokens his collection was not drawn on by Samuel Birchall for his catalogue.<sup>4</sup> The only reference found to a token in the Rebello collection is in a printed advertisement dated 30 July 1803, A

*list of the Cabinets who have in their possession the Penny Token issued by me, Robert Orchard, Grocer & Tea Dealer: 'Mr Rebello, Hackney'*.<sup>5</sup> Since Robert Orchard's penny token is dated 1803, it must have been received by Isaac, or by another member of the family.

Before 1782 Rebello was credited with a single Anglo-Saxon coin by Dr Charles Combe (1743-1817), who listed coins of the kings of England and Great Britain with a note of the contemporaries from whose collections they had been recorded.<sup>6</sup> The two may have been acquainted, therefore, but there is nothing to indicate whether Dr Combe might have advised Rebello in his purchase of coins, as he did for William Hunter.<sup>7</sup> Whatever his collecting interests and principles, within a few years Rebello had added more than two hundred and fifty specimens to that single Anglo-Saxon coin.

When he made his will in 1794 he directed that 'in case my son and my two daughters Rachel and Ester should choose to keep all or any part of my collection of Books or Coins or Subjects of Natural History that they may be divided between them each taking that part that may best suit their inclination'.<sup>8</sup> From their subsequent history it is clear that Isaac selected the coins. However, when the will was drafted it was evidently not apparent to his father that Isaac was numismatically inclined. This emphasises that the collector was first and foremost David Alves Rebello.

Dr Combe's son Taylor Combe (1774-

1826) was from 1803 Assistant Librarian in charge of the coins and medals in the British Museum. Already in 1803 he was supervising the engraving of thirty-three plates of representative specimens of Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon coins, although they were not published until 1819 (with others) by Rev. Rogers Ruding, who also printed an 'Explanation of the Plates'.<sup>9</sup> Taylor Combe had noted the name of the collector to whom each coin belonged, and he also listed the moneyers on Anglo-Saxon coins in those collections. His notes must have been destroyed in the wartime bombing of the British Museum, but thanks to the survival of a transcript made in 1812 it can be confirmed that the remarkably fine coins listed at the end were choice pieces in the collection of Isaac Rebello, and that at least 253 Anglo-Saxon coins were in his collection, including four of King Alfred (871-899), and eleven of King Harold II (1066).

A few of the notes indicate from whom his father had acquired the pieces, mainly the Tavistock Street coin dealer Richard Miles (1740-1819). Another source was Captain Robert Bootle (1693-1758), one of whose coins was 'bought at his sale by Mr Rebello' according to Ruding's text, although no Bootle sale catalogue is known, and much of Bootle's collection was bought by Miles in 1802. Isaac Rebello's collection, between his death in 1803 and Bryer's transcript of 1812, was sold to Edward Roberts Esq., M. Trattle Esq., and Mr Richard Miles who is said to have bought all the (Ancient) British and Saxon coins.<sup>10</sup> One penny of King Edgar (957/959-975) has been published in a British Museum catalogue with a provenance in the Rebello collection.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps it should be explained that, although coinage was the earliest form of mass production, many coins are so rare that individual specimens can, like paintings, have provenances attached.

The above-named Edward Roberts, deputy clerk of the Pells in the Exchequer, must have bought for his younger son Barré Charles Roberts (1789-1810), whose fine col-

lection had largely been formed before he was sixteen, and now enriches the British Museum.<sup>12</sup> Miles's coins were auctioned by Sotheby's in 1820, and Marmaduke Trattle's in 1832.<sup>13</sup> Their auction catalogues do not identify which pieces had been in the Rebello collection, although Trattle lot 35 does cite Ruding, plate 12, nos. 5 and 6, which were Rebello coins.

It seems unnecessary here to identify the coins further, beyond correcting misattributions; the excellent engravings by W. Parsons can speak for themselves. For some illustrations the authority given is Rebello and another collection; while it is uncertain in these cases whether Rebello's is the specimen engraved, clearly his coin must have been similar. Passages below in angled brackets are additions to Taylor Combe's notes from Ruding's printed text. The following should also be noted:

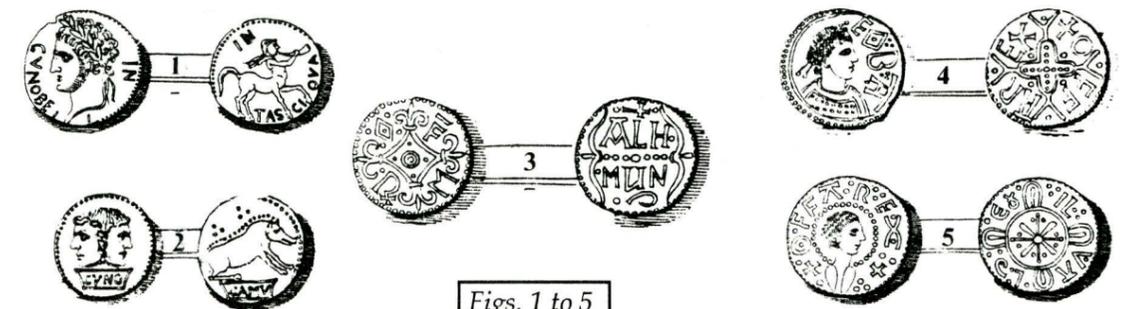
(a) British coins, pl.5, Cunobelinus, 31, is acknowledged to Rebello and to White in Ruding, but to the British Museum in Bryer's transcript.

(b) Anglo-Saxon coins, pl.5, Kings of Mercia: Offa, 26, is credited by Ruding to specimens in the Bodleian Library and in the Rebello collection, but Taylor Combe's list attributes the illustration to the former.

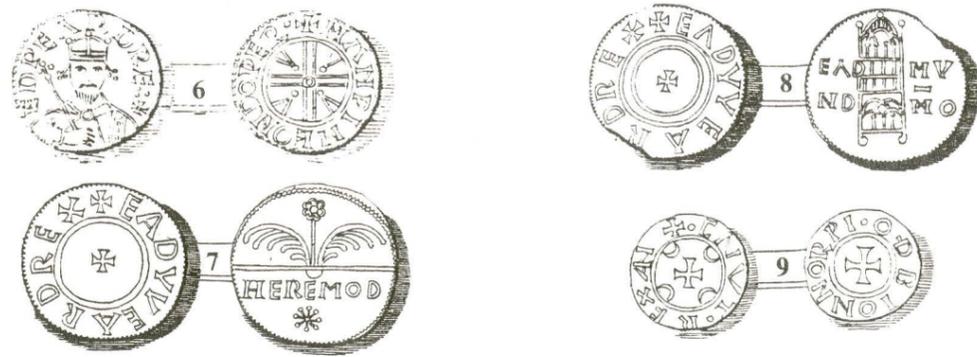
(c) pl.13, Archbishops of Canterbury: Ceolnoth, 5, is acknowledged by Ruding to Rebello and to Pembroke, but 'Rebello' is known to be an error for 'Rashleigh'.<sup>14</sup>

(d) Ceolnoth, 4 on the same plate is credited by Ruding to Rebello and to Rashleigh, but in Bryer's transcript to Rashleigh alone.

There must be at least a doubt whether (a) and (d), as well as (b) and (c), were in the Rebello collection, and in consequence all four are omitted. The remaining Rebello coins on Taylor Combe's plates include the names of such historically important figures as Cunobelin (Figs.1-2), Shakespeare's Cymbeline;<sup>15</sup> Offa, King of the Mercians (757-796), and builder of Offa's Dyke (Figs.3, 4, 5); Edmund, King of the East Angles (855-869), martyr and saint; Athelstan, first King of All



Figs. 1 to 5



Figs. 6 to 9

England (924/5-939), or of All Britain as the two coins style him; and (Fig.6) Edward the Confessor (1042-1066). By contrast there is also a coin of an otherwise unknown king, Ethelweard of East Anglia (c.845-855), who appears on pl. 26 as 'Aethelward' of Wessex.<sup>16</sup> There is a specimen of the extremely rare floral type (Fig. 7) of Edward the Elder (899-924), and an example (Fig.8) of his very rare type bearing what usually has been called a church-tower, but is more likely to be a reliquary or shrine.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, the Taylor Combe plates include from the Rebello collection (Fig.9) what was long supposed to be the unique representative of a coin-type of King Canute (1016-1035), inscribed CNVT REX AN for Cnut King of the English, and ODBION NORPI for the moneyer Othbi in Norwich.<sup>18</sup> It bears, however, the types of the later Danish king Cnut the Holy or the Saint (1080-1086), whose coins have such suspiciously similar readings as CNVT REX DA for Cnut King of the Danes, and ODBIORN I L for Othbiorn in Lund (then ruled by Denmark).<sup>19</sup> Examination of the actual coin, which now lies in the Danish trays in the British Museum, does not reveal a solution through a hand lens. Rebello acquired the coin of Tasciovanus figured as plate 5.36 from White,<sup>20</sup> i.e. the Newgate Street hatter and coin dealer John White (died 1787), who is suspected of having tooled false letters onto genuine coins. However, to know whether this 'Canute' coin is a John White forgery, which he imposed on Rebello, requires further investigation.

**Tokens**

By 1787 there was such a shortage of small change in Britain that large employers, led by the Parys Mines Company of Anglesey, manufactured copper pence and halfpence of their own. They naturally chose their own designs, in the Anglesey case the bust of a

Druid and a monogram of PMCo.; around this monogram were the words WE PROMISE TO PAY THE BEARER ONE PENNY (or HALF-PENNY), which continued in letters on the edge of the disk ON DEMAND IN LONDON LIVERPOOL OR ANGLESEY. The variety of designs created great interest, and led individuals to form collections of them. By 1795 there was a 'rage' for collecting these tokens, one consequence of which was the publication of catalogues, among them illustrated works. Another consequence was the creation of types specifically intended for sale to collectors, also various combinations of the dies between which the tokens were struck, and varieties of edge lettering. Finally, connoisseurs themselves might have a 'private token' made, for their own gratification, and for the pleasure of exchanging with fellow collectors.<sup>21</sup>

The earliest such private token is believed to have been Rebello's Hackney Promissory Token, of which a contemporary observer (and magistrate at Peterloo), Rev. William Robert Hay (1761-1839), stated that 'they were only given to his private friends'.<sup>22</sup> In 1801 the engraver Charles Pye recorded the proprietor of what was virtually an anonymous issue as D. A. Rebello, the quantity struck as ten in silver and twenty-four in copper, with the observation 'Private token'.<sup>23</sup> The Hackney tokens need extended consideration, both because Rebello's halfpenny-size piece was counterfeited, and because those tokens were further complicated with 'muling', i.e. combinations of dies which



Fig. 10

were not originally intended for the same coin. This complex situation is best clarified by concentrating on the dies, obverse dies being identified by letters, and reverse dies by numbers. The genuine Rebello halfpenny will first be described, secondly the counterfeits, then the muled tokens, and finally the Rebello penny.

**The Rebello halfpenny**

For token [A]-[1] the standard reference is Middlesex 309 in Dalton & Hamer.<sup>24</sup> The token, dated 1795, had been produced by June of that year, and was very soon illustrated.<sup>25</sup>

[A] HACKNEY CHURCH | a view from the north-west of the old church with tower, a clock on the tower showing 4:09, and beside the tower a shield bearing the arms a chevron ermine between three herons; signed bottom left J M | MCCXC (Fig.10)

Maitland has a similar view of the old church, from which the obverse die might have been copied. A window, however, has been inserted on his plate in the proper position of the clock, which is placed too low. (Fig.11) On the token the clock is correctly placed, as may be confirmed from the surviving tower.<sup>26</sup> The arms are for Heron, *sable a chevron ermine between three herons argent*.<sup>27</sup> Other representations were carved between each arch of the nave, and placed in the chancel, to commemorate a sixteenth-century rebuilding of the church by Sir John Heron.<sup>28</sup> The initials at bottom left are those of John Milton, third engraver at the Royal Mint 1787-97, and London's leading medallist and seal-engraver. The Mint defended him in 1796 as 'an artist of great

professional skill and ability'.<sup>29</sup> The date MCCXC (=1290) is approximately correct, for the vicarage had been endowed by 1291.<sup>30</sup>

[1] HACKNEY PROMISSORY TOKEN | D A R, a laurel wreath above, an aplustre and rudder in saltire below | 1795 (the numeral 1 curved) (Fig.12)



Fig. 12

The swash letters crowned with laurel are the closest Rebello came to identifying himself on his token, and in consequence it has been consistently catalogued under Hackney, not under the issuer's name. His identity, nevertheless, was known to contemporaries such as Hay and (as noted above) the engraver Charles Pye. Incidentally, on Rebello's bookplate similar letters 'D A R' occur, with the crest, above, of a bird's right wing erect, and below, his name on a ribbon.<sup>31</sup>

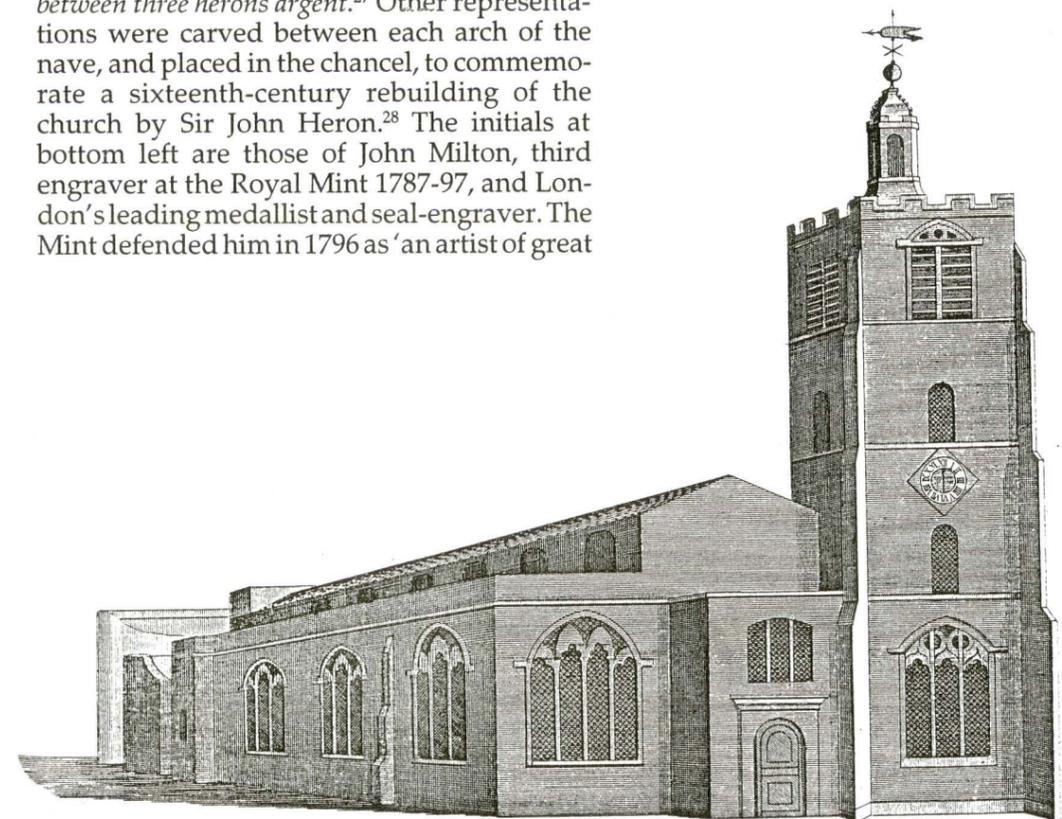


Fig. 11

The aplustre, hitherto described as a palm branch, was an ornament on the stern of ancient ships, composed of curved planks with streamers to show the direction of the wind. It seems to have been used to send signals, and to proclaim a triumph.<sup>32</sup>

The object crossing the aplustre has given rise to a number of identifications, but nevertheless another will now be made. A laurel wreath was a well-known symbol of triumph since Roman times. As regards the other elements, it seems not to have been noticed previously that exactly the same objects in saltire (though with aplustre rising from the left) are to be seen below Britannia on certain 1788 pattern halfpence, such as that in Fig.13.<sup>33</sup> As with Britannia, where the association is more obvious, the suggestion here is that the object crossing the aplustre on Rebello's halfpenny is not a scuppit or grave-digger's shovel, not a knife or penknife, but that essential device for steering the ancient ship, a rudder. The thinking may have been that Rebello had triumphantly shipped home goods from such places as Portugal.



Fig. 13

**The counterfeit tokens**

The small quantity struck of what was reputedly the first private token resulted in its being in demand among collectors, and Pye recorded in 1801 that this halfpenny token had been publicly sold at £1 1s. (=£1.05).<sup>34</sup> He added 'This was counterfeited in London', which refers to token [B]-[2] below, Middlesex 310b in Dalton & Hamer. A contemporary commentator indicates that this happened very quickly: 'No sooner was the proprietor deceased, but a counterfeit token was struck from very inferior dies, and sold to collectors at 2s. (=10p) each', and he added 'Impressions were taken on penny-pieces; which, I believe, had never been done by Mr Rebello; and the dies were interchanged and crossed into others'.<sup>35</sup> The dies of this copy are attributable to Jacobs, who worked for the London manufacturer Peter Skidmore.<sup>36</sup>

[B] a copy of [A], without the signature J M, the church clock showing 10:35 (Fig.14)

[2] a copy of [1], the numeral 1 in 1795 straight (Fig.15). Edge plain



Figs 14 and 15

The same dies [B]-[2] occur more rarely with edges lettered as follows: PAYABLE AT MACCLESFIELD LIVERPOOL OR CONGLETON (Dalton & Hamer, Middlesex 310), the usual edge for the Macclesfield halfpence of Messrs Roe & Co.; and PAYABLE AT CRONEBANE LODGE OR IN DUBLIN (Dalton & Hamer, Middlesex 310a), the usual edge for the Cronebane halfpence of the Associated Irish Mine Company. These indicate the source of the disks that were used for the Hackney counterfeits, and they may point to the deliberate creation of varieties. Dies [B]-[2] also occur on larger, penny-size flans, with edge plain, struck without a collar (Dalton & Hamer, Middlesex 17a); and with the edge lettered ON DEMAND WE PROMISE TO PAY ONE PENNY (Dalton & Hamer, Middlesex 17). This last is engraved in the *Virtuoso's Companion*, p.138, a plate published 3 Nov. 1796, which shows that the counterfeit dies existed by this date.<sup>37</sup>

**The muled tokens**

The inferior obverse die [B] was also paired with other reverses, as follows. Unfortunately, Robinson was misled by [B]-[5] below, HACKNEY CHURCH with SHEFFIELD CONSTITUTIONAL SOCIETY, into supposing that 'Probably this was a token of a branch of that society at Hackney';<sup>38</sup> but the mule was a variety produced to impose on collectors, and in no way amounts to evidence of a Hackney branch of the Sheffield Constitutional Society. Robinson even asserts that in the *Virtuoso's Companion* is a token bearing the words HACKNEY CONSTITUTIONAL SOCIETY around 'the same device as above'; but there is no such engraving.

[B] From the same die as above  
[3] WE·PROMISE·TO·PAY·THE·BEARER·ON·DEMAND·ONE·PENNY·| PMC ° [monogram] (Dalton & Hamer, Middlesex 19).

[B] From the same die as above  
[4] REVOLUTION PENNY | a lion rampant supporting a shield of the royal arms of 1714-1801 and trampling symbols of Popery | palm branch (Dalton & Hamer, Middlesex 20).

[B] From the same die as above  
[5] SHEFFIELD CONSTITUTIONAL SOCIETY. | fesswise on a pole between two oak branches a scroll bearing the motto PRO PATRIA, in chief a cap of liberty (Dalton & Hamer, Middlesex 18 b (penny) and 311 (halfpenny)).

There are also strikings of [B]-[5] on penny-size flans with edges lettered ON DEMAND IN LONDON, LIVERPOOL OR ANGLESEY ·X·, and ON DEMAND WE PROMISE TO PAY ONE PENNY (Dalton & Hamer, Middlesex 18, and 18a, the latter corrected on p.552).

The inferior reverse 2 also was paired with other dies, as follows.

[C] Bust of Druid to left between two oak branches, signed W[ilson] on truncation  
[2] HACKNEY PROMISSORY TOKEN..., as with [B] above (Dalton & Hamer, Anglesey 258).

[D] Within a wreath a bust of William III to right | 1688  
[2] HACKNEY PROMISSORY TOKEN..., as with [B] above (Dalton & Hamer, Middlesex 22 (penny-size)).

[E] UNITE & BE FREE | on a pole an oval shield bearing the Union flag and inscribed BRITAIN, between two flags to left inscribed FRANCE and POLAND and two flags to right inscribed AMERICA and HOLLAND, the whole dividing 17-92 | TO PERSEVERE IS TO CONQUER  
[2] HACKNEY PROMISSORY TOKEN..., as with [B] above (Dalton & Hamer, Middlesex 21 (penny size)).

These 'foreign' obverses, however, form true pairs with the 'foreign' reverses struck with [B], as follows.

[C] Bust of Druid, as above  
[3] WE·PROMISE·TO·PAY..., as with [B] above (Dalton & Hamer, Anglesey 256; this copies the penny tokens of the Parys Mines Company).

[D] Bust of William III, as above  
[4] REVOLUTION PENNY, as with [B] above (Dalton & Hamer, Middlesex 199; this refers to the 'English revolution' of 1688-9, when William and Mary replaced James II).

[E] UNITE & BE FREE, as above  
[5] SHEFFIELD CONSTITUTIONAL SOCIETY., as with [B] above (Dalton & Hamer, Yorkshire 4 (penny size) and 61 (halfpenny size); there is an obvious connection.)

This pattern of die linking can be set out diagrammatically as in Fig.16. The die combinations [B]-[2], [C]-[3], [D]-[4] and [E]-[5] are true pairings, and all the others are concocted varieties. As far as Rebello is concerned, only Milton's work ([A]-[1] and [F]-[6]) should be attributed to him.

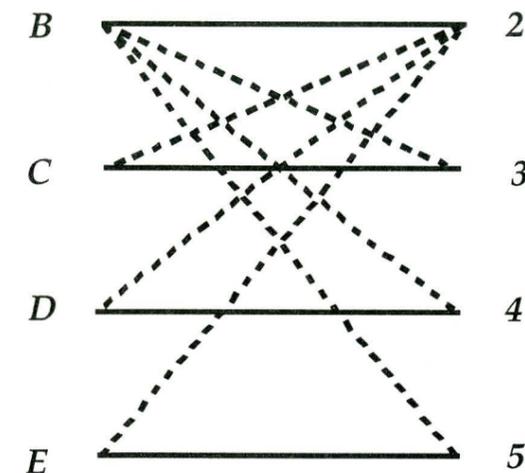


Fig. 16

**The Rebello penny**

The final piece to be considered is a very fine production by Milton. It resembles token [A]-[1], but is dated for the year of Rebello's death, constituting in effect a memorial to him by his son.

[F] HACKNEY CHURCH MCCXC | a view of a church with clouds above, gravestones before and houses either side, the clock showing 3:52 | J Milton F within a cartouche (Fig.17)

[6] MEMORIA IN ÆTERNA | below the sun in rays a figure of Father Time, winged and holding a sickle, supporting a shield inscribed David | Alves | Rebello, and seated on a collector's cabinet with one drawer pulled out, between book, coins, a globe and scientific instruments to left, a shell and a pot plant to right, signed M[ilton] | 1796 (Fig.18) (Dalton & Hamer, Middlesex 24).

There was also a trial piece on thin white-metal, with the clouds on the obverse more prominent, and the reverse lacking the signature M (Dalton & Hamer, Middlesex 23). Pye (1801), pl. xxii.2 and 'Index', adds that the proprietor was J. [i.e. Isaac] Rebello, that the quantity struck was eight silver and twenty-eight copper specimens, and that 'This was engraved [on Pye's plate] by mistake; the proprietor having since declared it was not intended for a token, but for a medal'. It is indeed



Figs. 17 and 18

of a medallic nature, but a contemporary annotation in the British Numismatic Society copy of Pye appears to read 'Milton co[n]tradicts this...', and it has normally been accepted as a token.

Source of reproductions

Dalton, R. & Hamer, S. H. *The provincial token-coinage of the 18th century illustrated* (Bristol, 1910-18): figs.14,15.  
 Hamer, S. H. 'Notes on the private tokens, their issuers and die-sinkers [Part 1]', *British Numismatic Journal*, 1 (1903-4): figs.10, 12, 17, 18.  
 Maitland, W. *The history of London from its foundation to the present time* (1756): fig.11.  
 Peck, C. W. *English copper, tin and bronze coins in the British Museum 1558-1958*, 2nd ed. (1964): fig.13.  
 Ruding, R. *Annals of the coinage of Britain* (1817-19): figs.1-9

Rebello coins on Taylor Combe's plates

The descriptions below are taken from Ruding's 'Explanation of the plates', vol.3, 236-300:

British coins

Pl.5, Cunobelinus, 17 ('Mr Rebello's coin of this type reads TASCIO VAIF'), 24 (White and Rebello), 33, 36 [these two actually of Tasciovanus] (Figs. 1, 2).

Anglo-Saxon coins

Pls.4-5, Kings of Mercia: Offa, 14 (Fig.4), 23, 38 (Fig.3).  
 Pl.7, Berhtulf, 2, 4 .  
 Pl.9, Kings of the East Angles: Eadmund, 3.  
 Pl.10, Kings of Northumberland: Eanred, 11.  
 Pl.12, Saints: St Peter, 5 (Bootle <afterwards Rebello and British Museum>), St Eadmund, 6.  
 Pl.14, Archbishops of York: Vulfhere, 3.  
 Pl.23, Sole monarchs: Cnut, 26 (Fig.9).  
 Pl.25, Edward the Confessor, 25 (Fig.6).

Appendix

Pl.26, British [actually Gaulish] (Bootle <bought at his sale by Mr Rebello>). Kings of the West Saxons: Aethelward [actually Ethelweard of East Anglia], 1.  
 Pl.27, Kings of Mercia: Offa, 1 <Bootle (N.B. Bought of Mr Miles by Mr Rebello)> (Fig.5); Kings of Northumberland: Ethelred, 2, Osbercht, 1, 2.  
 Pl.28, Sole monarchs: Eadweard 1st [i.e. Edward the Elder], 1, 2 (Figs.7,8); Aethelstan, 1, 2, Eadgar, 2, Harold 1st.

Notes

1. *Gentleman's Magazine*, 66 part 1 (1796), 441.  
 2. C. Roth, *A history of the Jews in England*, 3rd ed. (1964), 291.  
 3. British Library Additional Manuscripts 28,541 ff209,210.  
 4. S. Birchall, *An alphabetical list of provincial copper-coins or tokens issued between the years 1786 and 1796* (Leeds, 1796), [iv].  
 5. W. J. Davis, *The nineteenth-century token coinage* (1904), 75.  
 6. J. S. Martin, 'Some remarks on eighteenth-century numismatic manuscripts and numismatists', in *Anglo-Saxon coins*, ed. R. H. M. Dolley (1961), 227-40, at 230. The reference 'Rebello, I.' in the Index Personarum should read 'Rebello, D. A.'  
 7. British Academy, *Sylloge of coins of the British Isles*, [2]: *Hunterian and Coats collections, University of Glasgow, Part I: Anglo-Saxon coins*, by Anne S. Robertson (1961), ix.  
 8. PRO PROB 11/1276, f.277r-280v, proved June 1796; transcribed by Dr M. H. Brooks.  
 9. Rogers Ruding, *Annals of the coinage of Britain* (1817; supplement, 1819), vol.4, and vol.3, 236-300. There is a copy in the Hackney Reference Library.  
 10. Taylor Combe, 'Engravings of British and Anglo-Saxon coins, to which is added in manuscript the weight of each coin and the name of the collection to which it belonged; copied from his manuscript... [by] Robert Bryer', August 1812; MS (property of British Numismatic Society), British Museum, Department of Coins and Medals.  
 11. British Academy, *Sylloge of coins of the British Isles*, 34: *British Museum: Anglo-Saxon coins*, V, by M. M. Archibald and C. E. Blunt (1986), xxxvi and pl.xl, no.920. The statement of Isaac Rebello, that 'He issued a private token', would be more appropriately applied to his father.  
 12. Barré Charles Roberts, *Letters and miscellaneous papers; with a memoir of his life* [by Grosvenor Charles Bedford] (1814), xii; the assistance of Mr Hugh Pagan is here acknowledged. Roberts accented his first name Barrè, but the French name is Barré.  
 13. Sotheby, *A catalogue of the very extensive, select and valuable collection of coins...of the late Mr Richard Miles...which will be sold by auction...the 14th [to 22nd] day of March* [and Part 2, 5th to 12th May] (1820); Sotheby and Son, *A catalogue of the unique collection of coins and medals...of the late highly distinguished and well-known collector Marmaduke Trattle, Esq....which will be sold by auction...on Wednesday, May 30...[to July 13]* (1832).  
 14. C. E. Blunt, 'XVII-XIX century manuscript material on Anglo-Saxon coins', in *Centennial publication of the American Numismatic Society*, ed. Harald Ingholt (New York, 1958), 125-36, at 132.  
 15. Sir John Evans, *The coins of the Ancient Britons* (1864), 327, 345, 239, and 242, mentioning the four 'Cunobelinus' coins in the Rebello collection (pl.5); the last two bear the name not of Cunobelin but of his father Tasciovanus. The 'British' coin on pl.26 is actually Gaulish, cf. Henri de La Tour, *Atlas de monnaies gauloises* (Paris, 1892), pl.xxiii, no.6804.  
 16. 'Aethelward', King of the West Saxons (pl.26) was re-attributed by Taylor Combe himself, cf. H. E. Pagan, 'The coinage of the East Anglian kingdom from 825 to 870', *British Numismatic Journal* vol. 52 (1982), 41-83, at 47;

Rebello's specimen is mentioned on p.68 (and on p.79 his coin on pl.9).  
 17. Rebello's two coins of Edward the Elder (pl.28) are mentioned by C. E. Blunt et al., *Coinage in tenth-century England* (Oxford, 1989), 78, 340 (b), and 73, 320B (a).  
 18. Edward Hawkins, *The silver coins of England*, 3rd ed. (1887), 155, and references. I am grateful to Mr Tim Webb Ware for assistance in locating the coin.  
 19. P. Hauberg, *Mynt forhold og udmyntninger i Danmark indtil 1146* (Copenhagen, 1900), 227 and pl.xi.3.  
 20. Evans (above, note 15), 242-3.  
 21. See for example Peter Mathias, *English trade tokens: the Industrial Revolution illustrated* (1962).  
 22. S. H. Hamer, 'Notes on the private tokens, their issuers and die-sinkers [Part 1]', *British Numismatic Journal*, 1 (1903-4), 299-332, 4 pls., at 300-1. On p.326 he records Lancaster tokens naming A. Seward and dated 1794, with the odd statement 'but for the fact that they are dated one year before the "Hackney promissory Token" I should have no hesitancy in classing them as private tokens'.  
 23. Charles Pye, *Provincial coins and tokens issued from the year 1787 to the year 1801* (Birmingham; London, 1801), pl. xxii.1 and 'Index', p.11.  
 24. R. Dalton & S. H. Hamer, *The provincial token-coinage of the 18th century illustrated* (Bristol, 1910-18), p.131.  
 25. Charles Pye, *Provincial copper coins or tokens issued between the years 1787 and 1796* (London; Birmingham, pref. 1795), pl.34, 1 Aug. 1795.  
 26. William Maitland, *The history of London from its foundation to the present time* (1756), vol.2, plate facing p.1364.

27. T. Woodcock, *Dictionary of British arms: medieval ordinary*, vol.2 (1996),308.  
 28. VCH, X, 119.  
 29. T. Stainton, 'John Milton, medallist, 1759-1805', *British Numismatic Journal*, 53 (1983), 133-59, at 134, 136.  
 30. *Victoria County History of Middlesex*, X, 116.  
 31. Jewish Historical Society of England, *Anglo-Jewish notabilities* (1949), pl.xviii, no.144.  
 32. The identification of the aplustre is due to Dr Jonathan Williams of the British Museum Department of Coins and Medals.  
 33. C. Wilson Peck, *English copper, tin and bronze coins in the British Museum 1558-1958*, 2nd ed. (1964), 242-5, 250-2 and pl.17, DH 1-2, 4, 11-13.  
 34. Pye 1801, pl. xxii.1 and 'Index', p.11.  
 35. R. Y., 'Plan for arrangement of provincial tokens etc.', *Gentleman's Magazine*, 67 part 1 (1797), 267-70.  
 36. Thomas Sharp, *A catalogue of provincial copper coins, tokens, tickets and medalets issued...during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries...*, described from the originals in the collection of Sir George Chetwynd (1834), 58, no.6; R. N. P. Hawkins, *A dictionary of makers of British metallic tickets, checks, medalets, tallies and counters, 1788-1910* (1989), 98.  
 37. M. Denton, *The virtuoso's companion and coin collector's guide* (1795-7).  
 38. Robinson (1842-3), i.37; he was copied in a derivative article 'Hackney tokens', ?by the editor C. H. Nunn, *Numismatic Magazine*, new series, 10 no.112 (April 1895), p.29, no.16.

# THE LAST HARVEST OF HAGGERSTON FARM

Isobel Watson

## A crop of bricks

The richest crop for any field  
Is a crop of bricks for it to yield.  
The richest crop that it can grow  
Is a crop of houses in a row.<sup>1</sup>

This article discusses the last harvest produced by an estate once known as Haggerston Farm - a double harvest, first of bricks and then of houses. The transformation was not only physical, but financial: pastureland worth about £450 a year in a good year was ultimately made to produce upwards of £1,700 in ground rent, at no appreciable risk to the landowner.<sup>2</sup>

## Topography

Figure 1, a survey carried out in 1775, shows some 85 acres in Shoreditch belonging to Nathaniel Lee Acton, part of which was known as Haggerston Farm, no doubt because it surrounded the old and very poor hamlet known as Haggerston, lying at the bend in Haggerston Road. Separated by other land belonging to Milner and Nichol, these eight fields (the most northerly of which was in Hackney parish) were, from about 1810 onwards, further divided by the Regent's Canal.

A small detached portion of Acton's estate (not discussed here in detail) lay west of Mare Street, including the site of the Horse and Groom (presently 'Hobson's Choice') pub and back towards London Fields. Others lay in Hoxton and Bethnal Green.<sup>3</sup>

Some twelve acres were identified on this

map as consisting of brick earth, and it is by what was built with the bricks (taken from many more acres than twelve) that we now identify the land. The estate, once boundaries were straightened out through mutually convenient deals with landowning neighbours, took a lozenge shape. The 'Black Horse Field', lying between the Kingsland Road and the settlement called Haggerston, bordered north on a cartway that became Lee Street, and the boundary veered north-westwards alongside Stonebridge Common. The south side of Middleton Road (between Mayfield Road and Queensbridge Road) and south side of Albion Drive formed the northern boundary: to the north, east and south lay land belonging to William Rhodes. The estate stretched, beyond what is still called Acton's Lock, to Brougham Road and the west side of Broadway between there and the canal.

## Genealogy

This area was what we may perhaps now most usefully call the Middleton estate, though it belonged to the Lees and Lee Actons for much longer. In 1598 Sir Robert Lee of London bought various lands, formerly of St Mary Spital and known as Burgoyne's lands, the parts on the Hackney/Shoreditch boundary totalling around 81 acres.<sup>4</sup> Sir Robert died in 1605. His estate descended to Sir Henry Lee of Woodford and Bury, and was inherited by Baptist Lee of Ipswich in 1724. This gentleman had also acquired the *Livermere* estate in Suffolk with the proceeds of a lottery.<sup>5</sup> By the begin-

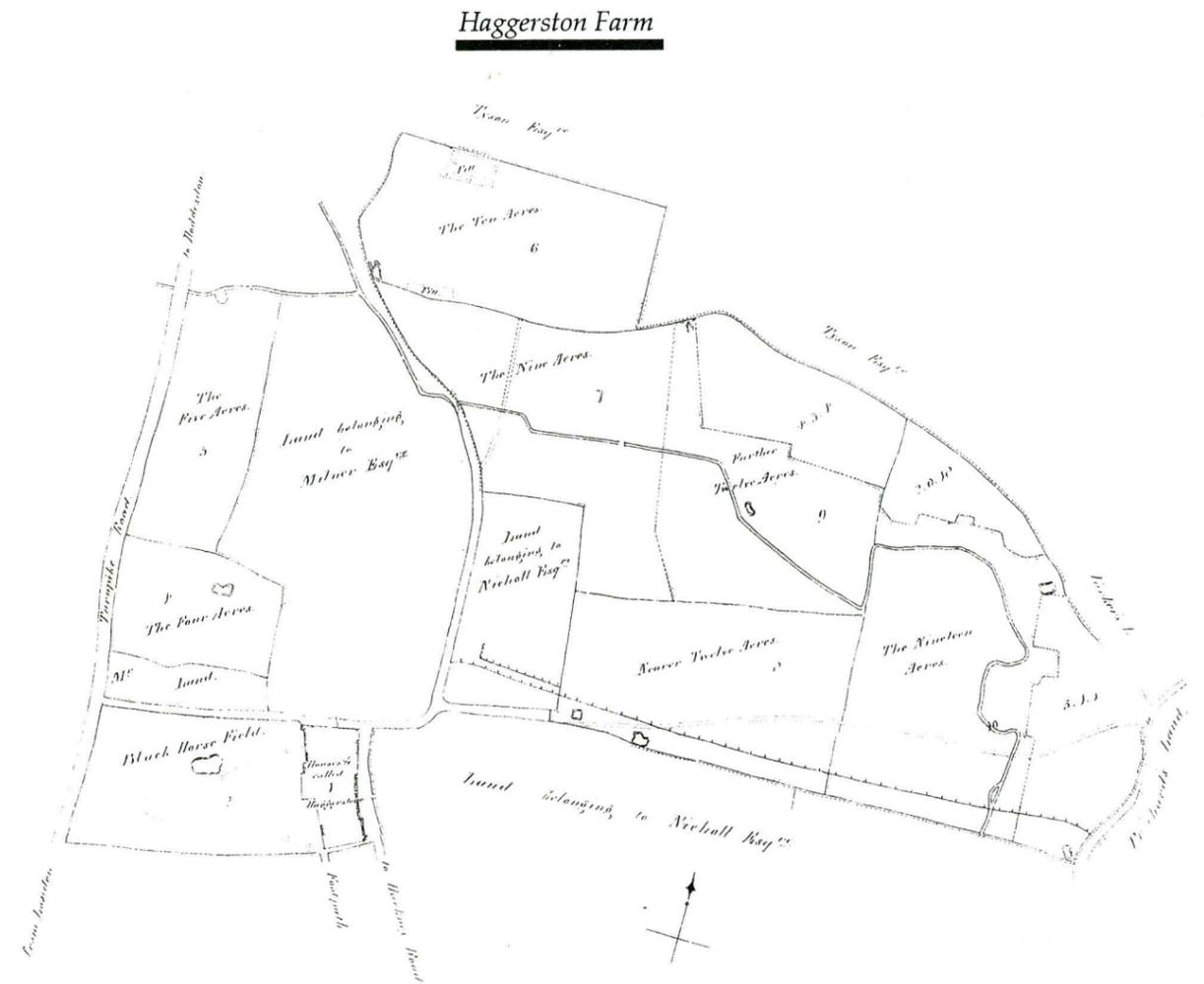


Fig. 1: James Crow's survey of the Lee Acton estate, 1775

ning of the 19th century it consisted of some 95 acres, the bulk in the northern part of the parish of St Leonard Shoreditch, with upwards of 16 acres over the parish boundary in Hackney and 2 acres in Hoxton.<sup>6</sup>

An entail governed the passing of the lands in every generation, so that the main estate should not be broken up, but it rarely descended in the direct line. Baptist Lee's will, of 6 April 1765, was in favour of Nathaniel Acton, husband of his niece Caroline. Nathaniel took as tenant for life, the remainder to his son Nathaniel (b. 1757), conditional on his taking the surname of Lee also.<sup>7</sup> His sisters were Charlotte (b. 1753), Henrietta, always called Harriot (b. 1755) and Caroline (b. 1761). Each inherited some £6,000 under Baptist Lee's will; Charlotte's was put into trust, as she was 'in a weak state of mind'.

Nathaniel Lee Acton had no children, and died in 1836. Poor Charlotte spent the remainder of her life 'deprived of her reason'. Caroline did not marry, and on her death in 1838 her interest passed to Harriot, who had married Sir William Middleton (d. 1830), the

first baronet, a rich man with money made in the West Indies and slave-owning States. Their only son was William Fowle, named in honour of John Fowle of Broome, Norfolk, a relative through Harriot's paternal grandmother. Dame Harriot subsequently inherited Fowle land, on condition that she and her heirs took the surname Fowle. Thus in 1822 the younger William acquired an extra surname in addition to his given name of Fowle, and documents relating to his estate are always expressed, with careful formality, in the name of Sir William Fowle Fowle Middleton.<sup>8</sup>

Sir William also inherited his father's estate at *Shrubland*, near Ipswich. He and his wife Anne, daughter of Lord *Brownlow*, had no children, and on his death in 1860 his estates passed, through the marriage of his sister Sarah, to Sir George Nathaniel Broke, of Broke Hall, Ipswich, who was also childless.

The Hackney and Shoreditch estates were entailed in favour of Jane, daughter of Captain Charles Acton Vere Broke and Lady Middleton's niece Anna. In 1859 Anna re-married Rear Admiral William Horton. In 1882

Jane Broke (was heiress ever so ineptly named?) married the Baron de Saumarez. In 1921 she sold her Middlesex inheritance by auction.<sup>9</sup>

All the names in italics, together with those of George Pownall, Sir William Fowle Middleton's estate surveyor, and John Chevallier Cobbold, his Suffolk-based solicitor, are or at some time have been commemorated in street, terrace and even pub names on the Hackney or Shoreditch lands.<sup>10</sup>

#### *Estate development*

Development for building was inhibited by the entail, the tenant for life's power to grant leases being restricted to terms of 21 years. The estate was fully agricultural in the 1770s, though 12 acres along the later line of Brougham Road were set aside for brick-making.<sup>11</sup> In 1808, in order to exploit the recent opening of the Regent's Canal (making the land on each side 'peculiarly well-adapted for the purpose of making Docks, Timber Yards, and Wharfs, and of building warehouses and factories'), Nathaniel Lee Acton obtained an Act of Parliament. This empowered him to grant building leases of up to 99 years. Thus in 1813-19 there were granted leases of six small properties in Acton Place (Kingsland Road south of Arbutus Street), towards the north-western extreme of the property rather than close to the canal. A project of the 1820s to extend Great Cambridge Street north-east across several estates to Clapton Pond came to nothing.<sup>12</sup>

The Act required leases to be registered in the Middlesex Register of Deeds. An absence of expert local management (the estate was still run from Suffolk) must have contributed to the failure to do so, and a further Act<sup>13</sup> had to be obtained to validate them. In the short time of Caroline Acton's ownership, the estate was producing about £450 p.a. from agricultural rents, not always realised to the full: tenants in difficulty were treated with considerable forbearance.<sup>14</sup> On Harriot's succeeding in 1838, the trustees were replaced by Reeve Bunn of Ipswich and John Pownall of Staple Inn; this appears to have been the decisive moment when the full potential of the estate began to be exploited, though a start had been made the previous year with the lease of two fields north of London Fields for brickmaking.<sup>15</sup>

Although there had been ribbon development along the Kingsland Road since the 1790s, including the fine Kingsland Crescent north of Arbutus Street, there was no large-scale development in the Haggerston-Dalston area before that which took place on the De Beauvoir

estate to the west. Though the latter development had been planned by William Rhodes from before the death of the landowner, the Revd. Peter de Beauvoir, in 1821, it was inhibited by litigation until the late 1830s. Once freed for development, however, it was swiftly and successfully built up. All this must have influenced the way the faltering beginnings on Middleton land gave way, under the new management, to something more confident.

The surveyors were Wigg and Pownall, of Bedford Row, and the work soon fell directly into the hands of George Pownall. His, apparently, was the concept of the Queen's (Queensbridge) Road as an elegant, wide carriageway, broadening out from the former Great Cambridge Street on crossing the Regent's Canal, and entering the Middleton estate. (The road narrowed again once it reached Rhodes land on the north side of Middleton Road.) His also was the grid pattern of streets both north and south of the canal, and a clear intention to raise the social tone of the development as the streets marched northwards. This is evident not only in the design and specification of the houses planned and built, but in the very street names. Around the central show-piece, well to the north, patriotically named Albion Square and Road,<sup>16</sup> the landowner's family are commemorated in Middleton, Broke and Brownlow Roads - following the earlier Acton and Lee Streets - and their estates in Shrubland and Livermere Roads. Modestly, Pownall Road, nearest the canal and amidst the area conceived as industrial, knows its relative place.

#### *Squire and surveyor*

Sir William's relationship with Pownall seems to have been cordial and one of confidence. It was to Pownall that he addressed a report of his mother's health in 1851<sup>17</sup> which continued "I hope you can give a good account of the estate and that the buildings are going on prosperously". At this time he had recommended Pownall to 'Mr Berners', of Marylebone, who was looking for a new surveyor.<sup>18</sup>

Though as well as living at Shrubland Sir William had a town house in Whitehall, he did not take a very active interest in his Middlesex property, significant though it may have been towards the bills he had to meet in the upkeep of Shrubland and a grandiose redesigning of its Hall undertaken by Sir Charles Barry.<sup>19</sup> Indeed there is no direct evidence of his visiting, and he could be quite vague about the area and its institutions. Letters soliciting financial

support - which was rarely generous, some £5 going to 'the poor of Bethnal Green' in 1857 - were referred to Pownall for advice.<sup>20</sup> On an approach by the incumbent of St Paul's, Broke Road, for financial support, Sir William thought he had supported some similar object already. Pownall, in advising that the object was "a most desirable one and in every way deserving of your support", clarified his employer's recollection.

The School you before subscribed to is on another part of your estate. Both Church Schools are much wanted in this neighbourhood where the dissenters are actively employed.<sup>21</sup>

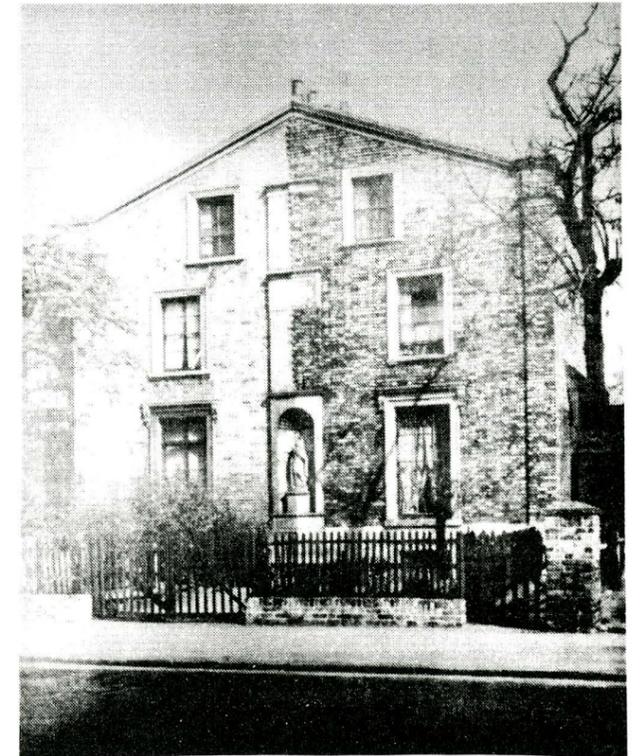
Even the economic concerns of the building trade were remote. Josiah Wilkinson had become the estate solicitor. On 2nd February 1847 he felt compelled to write to Sir William:

I send herewith two leases and explanatory memorandum - You are aware I believe that from the position of the various builders on your estate they are frequently under the necessity of taking up their leases to raise money - in this case any delay attending their execution is very prejudicial to them and they cannot afford the expense of a special {...illegible}. This you will I trust admit as a sufficient apology for my asking you occasionally when you are away from Shrubland or Whitehall to permit me to send you in a parcel such leases...<sup>22</sup>

Other correspondence indicates that Pownall was left a fairly free hand as to what was put on the land. When it was proposed to build the school (later Institute) in Albion Square, it seems to have been sufficient for Sir William to be told "Mr Pownall has approved, and any building that may be erected will be under his superintendence and control".<sup>23</sup>

#### *Neighbouring proprietors*

The access from the south, from Great Cambridge Street across Rhodes territory, was critical, and it was soon discovered that the Regent's Canal Company were in breach of a long-standing obligation to widen the Queen's Road Bridge, where Great Cambridge Street now becomes Queensbridge Road. This obligation was honoured only once legal proceedings (in which Rhodes was joined) had been launched and the parties virtually reached the doors of the court.<sup>24</sup> One of the first deals to be struck was in 1839, when an agreement was negotiated with Milner, as to the street layout on the latter's Haggerston Field, north of Lee Street.<sup>25</sup> In 1843, there was, with William Rhodes, an exchange of land north and south of Albion Road (Drive),<sup>26</sup> and in 1845, there



'Hope Cottages', 204-6 Queensbridge Road, about 1958

was a further exchange with Rhodes (in Queensbridge Road).<sup>27</sup>

Most notably, in September 1843 Sir William Middleton granted a 7 year lease to William Rhodes jr., then described as 'of Balls pond, brickmaker', of 24 acres of land south of the south side of Shrubland Road (then subject to a building agreement) for the express purpose of making and removing bricks. Other Middleton land to the east was described as being on lease to Rhodes.<sup>28</sup>

#### *Building agreements*

The estate was divided into substantial parcels, up to 16 acres at a time, and building agreements let to a handful of developers who sub-let plots to building tradesmen in smaller parcels, often two or four house sites, at a time. Each main agreement reserved a global fixed rent, usually reached in between two and ten stages. Once that rent had been secured on the property leased, the developer was entitled to leases of the remaining land on peppercorn terms. Such terms of agreement as survive indicate that minimum standards, as to the type of housing and materials, were set by the estate, and these probably included some guidelines as to the buildings' 'footprint' and elevations, although the visual evidence of the buildings themselves suggests that details were left to the builders and, by implication their

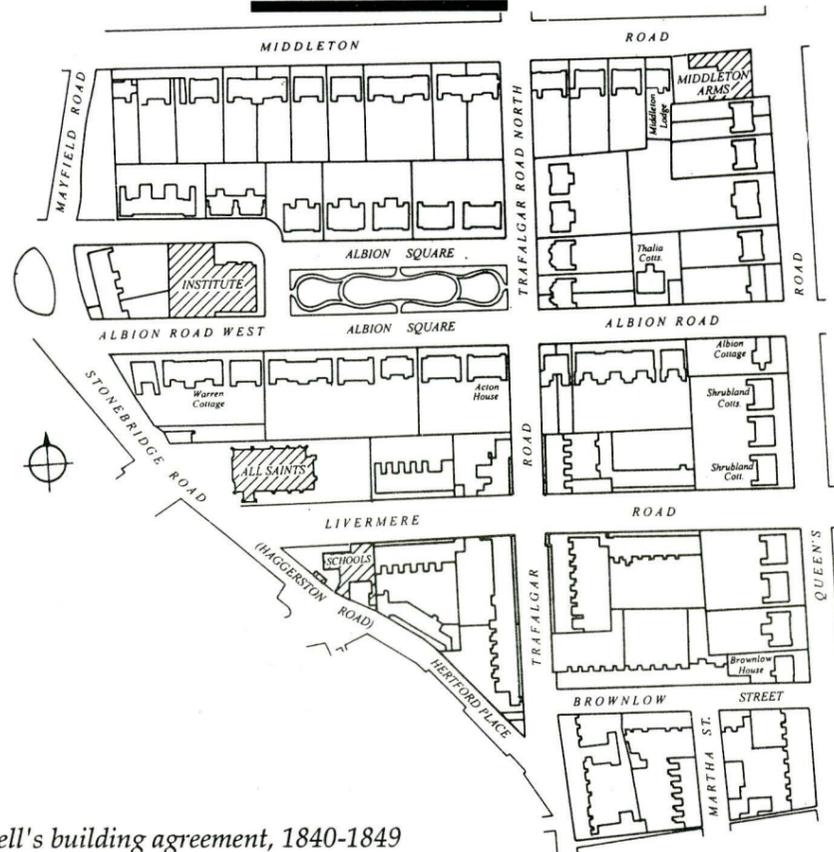


Fig. 2: Islip Odell's building agreement, 1840-1849

backers.<sup>29</sup>

The first agreement, for the lowest quality housing contemplated by the estate, was negotiated with James Kent Vote in May 1839. It is the only one for which precise specifications survive, and almost certainly set the pattern for others. It concerned the Black Horse Field, together with 'the land on which old Haggerston formerly stood' (indicating, as does an earlier Rhodes estate map, that Haggerston had been re-sited). The resulting streets surrounded the west end of what is now Whiston Road; Kent Street nearby commemorates the builder.

The term was 80 years from Midsummer 1840, the rent rising to £170 in 1846 (raised to £270 on Vote's purchase of part of the freehold). Vote was to form the roads to a specified timetable. He was also required, within 3 years, to build a sewer from Kingsland Road. The houses were to be 'full 4th rates', that is to say the smallest type contemplated in the London Building Acts, and all materials were to be subject to the estate surveyor's approval.<sup>30</sup>

By 1843, though in a manner that was far from trouble-free to the estate, J. K. Vote had completed his building in John Street and claimed, under the agreement, the freehold of 100 houses.<sup>31</sup> Other than in Bethnal Green, this appears to have been the only part of the

Middleton estate where the sale of a freehold was contemplated before the estate was broken up in 1921.

#### Going upmarket

A further agreement,<sup>32</sup> with Islip Odell in April 1840, concerned the estate east of Haggerston Road and west of Queensbridge Road, and set the tone and pattern aimed at, with more mixed success, further east. Odell was principally a brickmaker, who had formerly worked at Upper Clapton. His agreement was for 16 acres, partly in Shoreditch and partly in Hackney, on the north-westernmost part of the estate, now bounded by the carriageway of Middleton Road on the north, Queensbridge Road on the east, Stonebridge Common on the west (figure 2). The rent reserved was £272 for the whole site, to be reached in eleven annual stages. The terms of the agreement do not survive, but it must have been similar to Vote's in respect of the laying of roads and sewers. The specifications for the houses were undoubtedly higher.

The term was 99 years from Lady Day 1840. Odell was also granted a licence to dig, make and remove bricks, with an annual limit of a million, later doubled. Building here and subsequently on the eastern part of the estate followed a classic pattern: amongst the first

leases granted to Odell, indeed if not the very first, was that of the Middleton Arms, in November 1841. The estate imposed no covenants other than for nuisance, but Odell's underleases prohibited the use of a leased dwelling for the sale of wines and spirits - well designed to protect the value of the Middleton Arms.<sup>33</sup> Odell surrendered the leases of dwellings in Holly Row almost as soon as they had been granted, to re-lease on terms permitting the development of shops.<sup>34</sup>

As early as October 1844 Odell had already secured the amount of the ground rent and was henceforward entitled to leases at a peppercorn. Leases granted in this way included land and houses to Josiah Wilkinson, solicitor, for which a premium of £3,800 passed to Odell: this included the east end of Albion Square. No specific designs for the Square (or any other part of the estate) have so far come to light, and the only architect with whom a circumstantial connection can be made is Pownall. Perhaps the time has arrived to give him due applause.<sup>35</sup>

Last but not least, in 1849 Odell gave directions under his agreement for remaining land in Livermere Road to be leased for church building and for a school; hence All Saints, and its National School. He was also concerned with the Institute, discussed further below.

#### 'The most respectable district'

In 1843 the first agreement was let for land east of Queensbridge Road, and by 1847 all the land was let for building. Though the auguries must have been good at the outset, many of the main contractors being sub-contractors from Odell (and, indeed, each other), none of the eastern builders were as successful as Odell, and nothing as ambitious as Albion Square was attempted. The houses were third or, towards the south and east, fourth rate, in Building Act terminology. Several of the contractors went bankrupt, before or after the collapse of market confidence in 1847;<sup>36</sup> and the rescue operation (see figure 3) mounted in 1849-50 took more than a further decade to complete the original layout, though with less architectural coherence. There were some risks attached to the area, not least because of the industrial implications of the canal; and there was further slowing down around the market slump of the mid-1850s. Part of the south-eastern portion, when put on the market unbuilt in 1858, was advertised as 'considered the most respectable district of the very populated parish of Shoreditch', a description which carries more than a whiff of despondency, not

least when combined with a puff for the area as a 'healthful retreat' by reason of its proximity to Hackney Downs, Well Street Common and Victoria Park.<sup>37</sup>

There is not space here to list the agreements in detail; these can best be understood from figure 3, overleaf.<sup>38</sup>

#### The Institute

Houses alone do not a community make. Amply provided as were his 16 acres with its Anglican church, and with shops in 'Trafalgar Road', Odell had licensed the site at the western end of the garden of Albion Square for a proprietary school, with the estate's agreement. Building seems to have begun by 1850, though the company promoting the school was wound up on Odell's petition. The buildings for what became until about 1868 'the Kingsland, Dalston and de Beauvoir Town Literary and Scientific Institution', and thereafter the Albion Hall, were finished by J. K. Vote in 1850 and managed by him until 1853. The building was licensed as a theatre, and variously used as a school, and for evening classes, amateur dramatics, and Baptist and other non-conformist worship. Swimming baths were constructed, which in 1887 were assigned to the Albion Baths Company Ltd, which spent £1,000 on upgrading the premises. They briefly sublet part to R. W. Jarrett, piano manufacturer of Eleanor Road. A survey of a decade later describes spacious assembly rooms approached by a lofty portico entrance facing the square. There was a gallery, a refreshment bar, classrooms and offices underneath. Part was occupied by a Conservative Club as a club room, billiard room and offices; also "extensive and well-arranged public swimming baths, fitted with dressing rooms and also with private hot and cold baths". It then transpired that use of the premises for baths was a breach of the original covenants, consent for which was belatedly obtained.<sup>39</sup>

In 1887 the underlessees (successors to the lease granted by Odell) had mortgaged the premises; by 1892 the mortgagee had full possession. His heir conveyed the site to the London School Board (who replaced Odell's cottages on the main road with a school) in 1899, and they purchased the head lease in 1906. Thus the west end of the Square had a varied career, and was, before recent redevelopment, set somewhat apart from the character of the Square itself.

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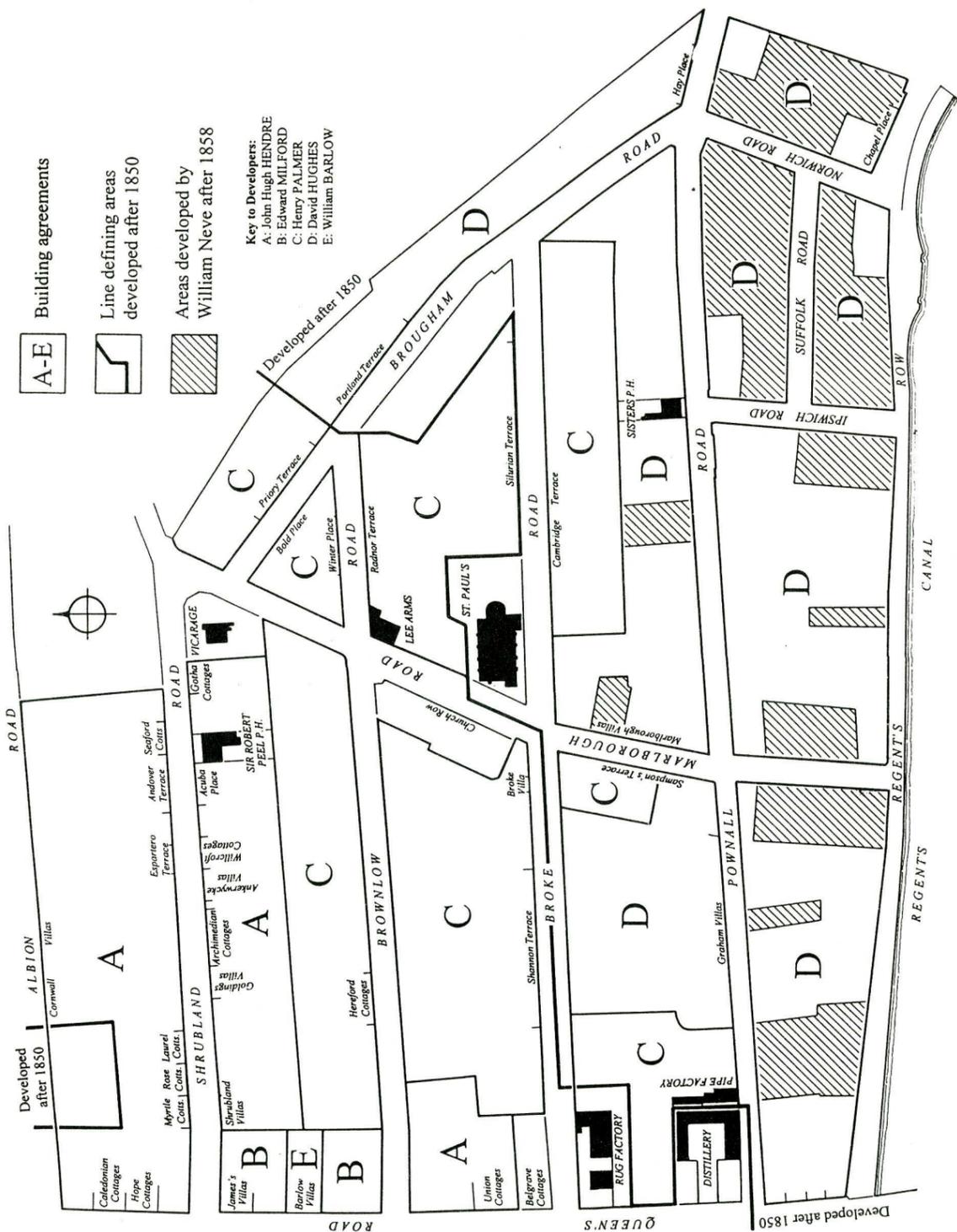


Fig 3: building agreements east of Queensbridge ('Queen's') Road. John Hugh Hendre, plumber, of Church Street, Hackney, (A) came unstuck within months in 1843; his agreement was completed by Palmer and Barlow. Edward Milford (B), formerly a sub-contractor to Odell, had his agreement of 1843 frustrated by his bankruptcy and death. Henry Palmer (C, 1844-7), was refinanced by Hughes in 1849 and became publican at the Lee Arms. David Hughes (D), solicitor, renegotiated Palmer's arrangements and found new mortgages and assignees. William Barlow (E) took over land from Hendre in Queen's and Shrubland Roads.

Suburb and inner city

This part of London had its first moment in the 1840s. Like De Beauvoir Town, it was eclipsed by railway travel from the 1850s, and inundated by tramway travellers in the 1870s. There were still unbuilt pockets on the eastern part of the estate in 1863,<sup>40</sup> and as time went on the quality of new building did not rise. In the 1880s, though no Middleton land north of the canal was classified as other than well-to-do or fairly comfortable by Charles Booth's poverty survey, no part of Dalston (to which the area came to be perceived to belong) was ranked alongside Leyton and Walthamstow as a desirable suburb.<sup>41</sup> In 1899 Albion Square garden - then being replanted and opened to the public - could be described as 'for years the greatest eyesore in the Dalston district'.<sup>42</sup> By 1909 the eastern part of Shrubland Road was perceived as 'situated in a very poor neighbourhood',<sup>43</sup> and the divestment of the ground landlord's interest in 1921, after the earliest leases had ended, did nothing to secure up-keep and conservation. Multi-occupation became the norm, and semi-basements were out of favour.<sup>44</sup> Thus it was that, post war, the southern part of the Middleton estate provided opportunity for comprehensive redevelopment both north and south of the canal, and much of the fabric has been replaced elsewhere. It may be little more than happy accident of both war and peace that northern parts of the estate survived for rediscovery by committed inner city dwellers of the last thirty years.

Notes

1. Anon., 1875; H. J. Dyos, *Victorian Suburb* (1961) 87.
2. SRO HA93/3/346/35 and HA 93/3/859-871.
3. The Mare Street holdings were expanded by purchase of part of the Spurstowe/Dann property unsold at auction in 1839: see 25 *Hackney Terrier*, 7.
4. *Survey of London VIII* (1922) 36-7.
5. SRO, de Saumarez catalogue.
6. 48 Geo. III c. 123.
7. 19 Geo. III, cited 7 Geo. IV c. 20. Gainsborough's House, Sudbury, Suffolk, has Acton portraits, and information about others elsewhere. Information from Hugh C. Belsey, gratefully acknowledged.
8. SRO HA 93/3/906; Burke's Landed Gentry; 24 & 25 Vict c.5.
9. HAD M. 3575.
10. Suffolk Road started as Cobbold Road. Horton's command of the 'Shannon' (capturing the US frigate 'Chesapeake' in 1813) led to 'Shannon Terrace' in Broke Road.
11. HAD M.530.
12. 48 Geo. III; HAD V260.
13. 7 Geo. IV c. 20.

14. Letter from Cobbold, SRO HA93/3//836. Such was Caroline Acton's reputation for benevolence that her summer resort of 40 years, Southwold, declared a day's mourning on her death: SRA HA93/10/2.
15. HAD M.717.
16. The suburban-sounding 'Albion Drive' was substituted in 1939, probably to avoid confusion with Albion Road N16.
17. Sir William wrote from Bath in 1851: "I am now staying with my mother who is in excellent health and vigor for a person of ninety seven years of age...". There is a discrepancy between this number and the Act of 7 Geo. IV.
18. SRO HA93/3/906. The post was already filled. Pownall subsequently became surveyor to Eton College's Hampstead estate: VCH IX, 64.
19. The Hall is now used as a fitness club.
20. SRO HA93/3/879.
21. SRO 93//3/907-8. Only Anglican churches were established on Odell's land, and Middleton/Pownall had lost effective control when nonconformist chapels were built on the extremities of the eastern estate.
22. Wilkinson financed parts of Albion Square and underleased houses in Queensbridge Road.
23. SRO HA 93/3/918.
24. SRO HA/93/3/874.
25. *ib.*
26. Probably the younger, his father in August 1843 being paralysed on his deathbed at Leytonstone: Wilkinson and Cobbold to Middleton, SRO HA 93/3/874.
27. HAD D/F/RHO/2/5.
28. SRO HA/93/3/918.
29. SRO HA/93/33/858. Compare, for example, amongst others in different hands, ranges leased or part-leased to James Galer, builder, of Balls Pond: the terraces 50-6 Middleton Road and 250-8 Haggerston Road. See LMA MDR 1842/4/995; 1843/4/421; 1844/4/579; O/408/16.
30. SRO HA 93/3/874, /857.
- 31, 32. SRO HA 93/3/918.
33. SRO HA 93/3/917, LMA O/408/16. Also the Navarino tavern: LMA MDR 1853/5/127-8.
34. SRO HA 93/3/918.
35. Leases 1845-8, *ib.* The attribution in *From Tower to Tower Block* (Hackney Society, 1979) to J. C. Loudon appears to be based on his promotion of similar (but nowhere identical) elevations and ground plans.
36. See (1979) 5 *London Journal* 176.
37. HAD M.3967.
38. Details of building agreements, where surviving, are in SRO HA 93/3/918; those undischarged at Middleton's death listed in 24 & 25 Vict. c.5. For land on the south eastern estate purchased and sub-leased from 1858 by William Neve: see HAD M. 3967.
39. HAD LBH/C/A1/1-35; VCH X, 71; D. Howard, *London Theatres and Music Halls* (1970).
40. HAD M.3967.
41. Omitted from W. S. Clarke, *The Suburban Homes of London*, 1883.
42. *Hackney and Kingsland Gazette*, 14 July 1899. I am grateful to Mrs R. Gibbs for this reference.
43. *ib.*, 1 December 1909.
44. HAD LBH/C/A/6/21-22 (CPO inquiry, 1957).

# THE 1890 HOUSING ACT: A SHOREDITCH CASE STUDY

Peter Foynes

## Introduction

The pioneering contribution of the late 19th century Shoreditch vestry to the field of public health has long been recognised.<sup>1</sup> One of its most important enterprises in this area was the construction of dwellings for over four hundred persons, in the Plumber's Place/Moira Place area in the south west of the parish. Though small by later standards, the scheme was the first of its kind by a London vestry and the first under the Housing of the Working Classes Act 1890.<sup>2</sup>

The 1890 Act was seen by contemporary commentators as a significant step towards addressing the appalling conditions in which the less well off in Victorian London were obliged to live.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, despite the intentions of the framers of the legislation and the energy of the vestry, there was a gap of almost eight years between the initial proposal for clearing the area and the signing of a contract to begin construction of dwellings.

The intention of this article is to trace the administrative and legal complications associated with the 1890 Act that caused the delays. To do so it will be necessary to rehearse details of legislation and local geography. It may be of some consolation to the reader to know that whatever tedium they may feel navigating this material, it will be as nothing compared to that of the unfortunate public officials who participated in the events described. The story, however, is not just one of bureaucratic infighting. It casts a light on late Victorian attitudes to questions such as the role of the public sector

in housing provision and the governance of London, questions which remain unresolved.

A contributor to the delay was the procedure for establishing the compensation due to freeholders and leaseholders on properties included in the area. It was agreed that the 1890 Act was an improvement on earlier legislation, which was thought to be weighted towards property interests, but it was, nonetheless a complicated procedure.<sup>4</sup> The vestry clerk was obliged to devote a good deal of his time to this aspect of the scheme, notwithstanding the fact that the vestry had contracted a valuer for the purpose and were later obliged to employ a firm of accountants.<sup>5</sup> Occupiers, leaseholders and freeholders had to be identified, served with notices, title established, and compensation agreed. Each step could lead to complications. Establishing sufficiently good title to qualify for compensation under the Act, for example, became, in some cases, an extremely lengthy process continuing over a period of years.<sup>6</sup>

While negotiations were, in part, complicated by the events described below, I do not propose to deal with this aspect of the scheme as these complications were in large part due to technical issues of property law rather than aspects of the 1890 Act.

## *The Housing of the Working Classes Act 1890*

The primary purpose of the Act was to enable local authorities to acquire and demolish houses unfit for human habitation. Con-

struction of replacement buildings was very much a secondary consideration. The mechanism employed was for the Medical Officer of Health to make representations to the local authority concerning such dwellings. The local authority - in the case of London, the newly created (1889) London County Council - decided whether the matter was of sufficient importance to be addressed by the Council itself or by the appropriate vestry. Should the Council decide that it was a matter for the vestry, the vestry had the right of appeal to the Home Secretary, who then determined whether the matter was a vestry case and how much, if anything, the Council should contribute to the costs of the scheme. The vestry then passed the appropriate resolution, agreed a scheme, which was then presented to the Local Government Board, the forerunner of the present Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions. The Board then held a public inquiry locally, where the views of residents and other interested parties were aired, and the Board could choose to modify the scheme before issuing a draft order. This draft was then discussed by the agencies concerned and finally the Board issued a confirming order allowing the scheme to proceed. The Act also empowered the County Council to monitor the progress of any scheme to ensure that it was properly put into effect.

## *The Scheme*

Allowing for the slight variations in the earlier legislation<sup>7</sup> this was the procedure the Moira Place/Plumber's Place scheme followed. In April 1890 the Shoreditch Medical Officer of Health applied to the Council to address the 'closely packed ... defectively constructed and ... worn out dwellings' in the area, which were 'a danger to health and unfit for human habitation'.<sup>8</sup> The Council decided that the scheme was not its concern and the matter was referred to the Home Secretary. In November 1890, the Home Secretary agreed that the management of the scheme should lie with the vestry but that the case was of 'general importance to the county of London and that it should be dealt with under Part II of the Housing of the Working Classes Act and that the London County Council should contribute one half of the expense'.<sup>9</sup>

It was not until January 1892, some fourteen months later, that the vestry produced an outline scheme for the demolition of the houses. The explanations offered by the vestry for the delay were various. In November 1890 it was because they did not wish to proceed until

after the conference on the 1890 Housing Act planned for December of that year. In February 1891 it was because a new clerk to the vestry had not been appointed; by September 1891 it was because the vestry required counsel's opinion on some matters, though a Housing of the Working Classes Committee had been created to manage the scheme. By November 1891 the Council was threatening to take the scheme into its own hands if a plan was not produced within two months. This notwithstanding, in December the vestry reported that further delays were imminent as they were awaiting details on the proposed new underground railway (the Northern Line) which was planned to run under the area.

The vestry's proposals, when they did arrive at the Council in March 1892, were considerably more ambitious, and expensive, than anything that the Council had anticipated. Apart from acquiring and demolishing the properties named in the original order, the vestry also wished to cut a new street from East Road through the Plumber's Place and Moira Place areas west to Britannia Street, the better to 'ventilate' the area. (The vestry had initially planned to cut the road right down to City Road but dropped the proposal when St Luke's Vestry refused to co-operate.) The total cost was to be in the region of £78,000 rather than the £21,000 estimated by the LCC for simply acquiring and demolishing.<sup>10</sup> While Council officers had reservations about what they saw as 'a street improvement scheme'<sup>11</sup> and 'not what the Act intended',<sup>12</sup> the Council agreed to support the scheme with some modifications. These included closing Moneyer and Custance Streets south of the proposed new road and including that land in the scheme; stipulating that the ground floor of any new buildings to face the new street be used as shops (to increase the recoupment potential) and that any buildings erected facing Nile, Provost or Ebenezer Streets be set back 40 feet from the opposite side of the streets. This agreement did not preclude the Council publicly criticising the vestry for being very 'dilatatory' in giving effect to the Home Secretary's decision, criticism which Dr Robinson, the vestry clerk, wrote was 'uncalled for'.<sup>13</sup>

The Local Government Board inquiry, held at Shoreditch Town Hall, did not take place until February 1893, and its conclusions were issued in May in the form of a draft Order. The Board insisted that the portions of Nile, Provost and Ebenezer Streets abutting onto the scheme be widened to 40 feet. There then followed six months of discussion to rec-

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oncile the views of the three parties; the Board, the Council and the vestry.

The vestry objected to the street widening as it would lessen the building land available and reduce the possibility of recovering their costs through rental income. To address this problem they proposed that the most westerly part of the new road, that between Provost Street and Britannia Street, be abandoned. After considerable discussion the Council agreed to amend its own road widening conditions. By September the vestry and the Council had agreed modifications to the scheme which included abandoning the western end of the new road and widening the western side of Provost Street down to City Road, presumably to compensate for the loss of 'ventilation' caused by the loss of part of the new road. Dr Robinson forwarded the scheme to the Board adding 'that the reconstruction of this area will afford work for the unemployed who are strongly agitating for it to be immediately commenced.'<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately, the Board could not accept the proposals. In October they gave their opinion that the widening of Provost Street down to City Road was 'outside the scope of a confirming order'<sup>15</sup> as the part of Provost Street nearest City Road was not within the area of the original scheme. The vestry then suggested to the Council that the widening could be done under a separate Act and asked the Council to pay half the cost. The Council's Housing Committee referred the matter to the Council's Improvements Committee who decided that they could not offer any assistance. There then began further negotiations on the scheme. In January 1894 these negotiations concluded and a revised draft order was placed before the Board.

Far from being the end of the matter, this draft order set in motion an acrimonious legal wrangle between the Board and the Council, with the vestry caught between.

*The legal problem*

The nub of the problem was the borrowing powers provided in the 1890 Act. The potential difficulty was outlined by Dr Robinson in a letter to the Board in January 1894.

A legal difficulty has arisen in a similar scheme now before the London County Council as to borrowing for the cost of reconstructing the area... it appearing that [...] the Housing of the Working Classes Act 1890 that a loan can only be raised for purchase money and compensation in acquiring the property. As the Shoreditch scheme involves the construction of a new road and widen-

ing of three others the costs of reconstruction will be very heavy.<sup>16</sup>

He went on to suggest that the draft order to be amended by the Board to allow the vestry to borrow for the construction of dwellings in addition to the acquisition of land and that a meeting be held between the Board, the vestry and the Council to address this issue.

The Council, however, were far from convinced that an amendment by the Board to the draft order would meet the problem. Their view, expressed at a meeting of the Housing sub-committee on 31st January, was that the amendment proposed was outside the power of the Board and contrary to law. Nor did they see any purpose in attending a meeting on the matter. Nor would they contribute to any incidental cost associated with the scheme, such as the local inquiry, which Dr Robinson had asked for.

The Board, however, insisted to Robinson that existing legislation was perfectly adequate and the reconstruction money could be borrowed under the Metropolitan Management Act, a view Robinson conveyed to the Council on 9th February. The Council was not convinced, but agreed, on 4th April, to ask the Board if they would accept the opinion of the Law Officers of the Crown - that is to say, the Attorney and Solicitor General - on the questions raised and, if necessary, to seek an immediate change in the law.<sup>17</sup> The Board responded by issuing the disputed order and informing the Council that the Metropolitan Management Acts were sufficient to allow the vestry to borrow money for the scheme. The Council's solicitor was instructed to reply to the Board 'in terms of his report of the 4th of April'.<sup>18</sup>

This left Robinson in a difficult position. Throughout the preceding months, and indeed years, the vestry had been negotiating with freeholders and leaseholders of property in the area. These were becoming anxious about the progress of the scheme, now almost four years in discussion. In February 1894, for example, he advised one freeholder that

the ... scheme has not yet been sanctioned by the Local Government Board... a legal difficulty having arisen... which has led the Vestry into a controversy with the London County Council and the Local Government Board; as you are doubtless aware neither of the latter bodies are precipitate in their business.<sup>19</sup>

In March he wrote to another 'The Vestry are now only awaiting the Local Government

Board to give their sanction... and steps will be immediate...'<sup>20</sup>

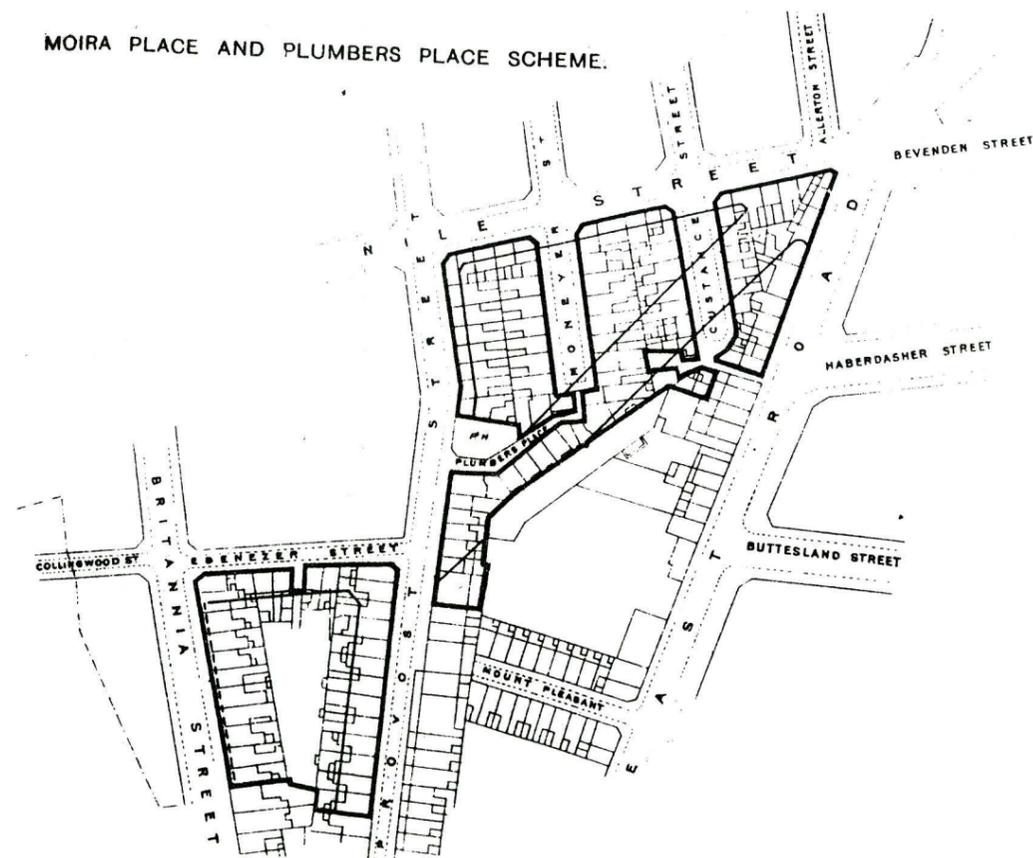
Given this pressure, Robinson would appear to have had little choice but to proceed on the basis that the order was valid, irrespective of the views of the Council. He wrote to the Council in May asking when it was going to pay its share of the cost as instructed in the Home Secretary's original decision of November 1890. The Council's response showed a considerable hardening of its position. In its view not only was the Board's order void but the Home Secretary's instruction of November 1890 was also. This assertion was based on the grounds that he had instructed as to proportions of cost to be paid when the Act only provided for him to decide on whether action was to be taken under Part I or Part II of the Act. No money would, therefore, be forthcoming from the Council.

Faced with the absolute refusal of the Council to proceed, Robinson wrote to the Board, on the suggestion of the Council, asking for a new order 'as the London County Council are the masters of the situation in so

far as their consent is necessary for the Vestry to borrow any money'.<sup>21</sup> The Board refused to issue an new order. Robinson then suggested to the Council that they agree to a modification of the existing order, adding -

the Vestry are bound by the Act to proceed with the scheme and if the Council cannot agree to the modification of the Order than they will have no other course but to commence legal proceeding against the Council to test the validity of the order.<sup>22</sup>

It would appear, however, that the Board had been persuaded of the difficulties regarding its own order. In July 1894 it promoted a bill<sup>23</sup> to have the 1890 Act amended. An accompanying note to the draft bill explained, economically, that though the Board customarily provided for borrowing powers for reconstruction in an order 'a doubt having been raised as to the validity of their orders the Bill is introduced for the purpose of setting this doubt at rest'.<sup>24</sup>



A diagrammatic representation of the vestry's proposals as submitted to the LCC. An earlier plan to extend the new street (Vestry Street, its alignment shown here by diagonal lines) had been dropped at an earlier stage. The heavy lines outline the property to be purchased for demolition and rebuilding.

The passage of the 1894 Act ended any legal difficulties concerning borrowing powers regarding the scheme, though the order was further amended in March 1896 to allay the Council's anxieties about borrowing for the scheme. In July 1896, however, a new complication arose, concerning the construction of the dwellings.

#### Housing management

The position of public authorities regarding the provision of housing was in a period of change. Section 12 of the 1890 Act, reflecting the conventional suspicion of public authorities being involved house construction, stated that 'the local authority shall not themselves, without the express approval of the confirming authority, undertake the rebuilding of houses'. (It should be noted here that the term 'construction' did not imply that the work would be done by a direct labour force of the local authority, merely that the local authority would manage the construction and, later, the properties. The imprecision, to modern eyes, of the language, reflects the novelty of the whole area to the late Victorians.) It was envisaged that either private developers or philanthropic bodies would take over the cleared sites and build and manage the properties. The

Council shared the view that housing management was not a proper function for a local authority, at least on its own part. It is true that it was, at that time, building the Boundary Street estate in neighbouring Bethnal Green, but this was seen as an exceptional situation. When the chairman of the Council's Housing Committee said at the 1890 conference on the Act 'We have distinctly stated it to be our policy to proceed, whenever possible, under Part II in preference to Part I', he was using the language of the Act to make it clear that the Council had no desire to become involved in clearance schemes, let alone construction and management of dwellings.<sup>25</sup>

Events began to force a change in this approach quite soon after the passage of the Act. Certainly by 1894 the Board was in the habit of obliging the authority to build if, within a year, they were unable to find an appropriate private builder.<sup>26</sup> That this would normally be the case was implicit in Dr Robinson's letter of January 1894 to the Board quoted above. Certainly by 1896 it was the common experience of public bodies that it was impossible to get private agencies to undertake the schemes.<sup>27</sup>

Nonetheless, when the vestry, in June 1896, applied to the Board to be allowed to build and manage the dwellings, the Board

insisted upon an explanation for the request. They responded by stating what was common knowledge to anyone involved in working class housing, that private developers would not take the project. The Board then decided that a further local inquiry was required, which was held at Shoreditch Town Hall in December 1896. The Council's officers attended the inquiry in support of the vestry's petition, and in May 1897 the Board's order was again modified.

So, after six and a half years, one Act of Parliament, two public inquiries and five revisions of the original Board order, not to mention the vestry threatening the Council with legal action, the way was clear for the vestry to proceed. In all, eight years intervened between the inception of the project and the signing of a contract to begin construction.

#### The Moira Place merry-go-round

It is tempting to dismiss the whole drama as a tale of bureaucratic wrangling with the LCC cast as the villain; obstructing the 'model vestry'<sup>28</sup> at every turn. In defence of the Council, it should be pointed out that it was a newly-created authority implementing new legislation. It was concerned throughout to ensure that it was acting within the law and that any disbursement it was obliged to make of rate-payers' money was both legal and necessary, something for which it can hardly be criticised. Nor were the other agencies without blame. It is difficult not to believe that the vestry took the opportunity to turn a simple clearance scheme into a street improvement scheme because it would not be obliged to meet the full cost.<sup>29</sup> The Local Government Board showed a healthily bloody-minded attitude in defence of its own position, despite legal advice that it was acting outside the law.

Contemporaries saw the 1890 Act as the villain of the piece. According to the *Daily Telegraph* -

In carrying out the project the Vestry has exposed numerous defects in the Working of the Housing Acts, among them the unconscionable delays occasioned by having to submit every step for the approval of two central bodies, the Local Government Board, and the London County Council.<sup>30</sup>

There is some force in this view: there was a technical fault in the Act which was exposed by the LCC and, more seriously, the Act's assumption that local authorities ought not to build houses was shown to be untenable

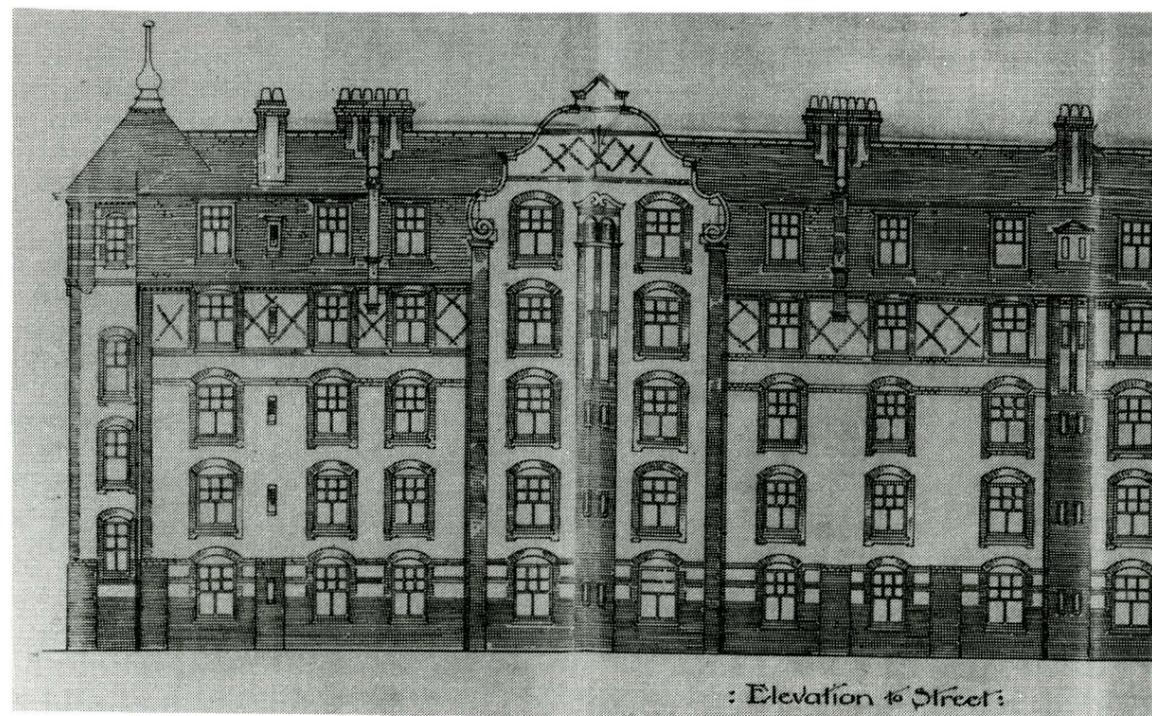
very soon after the Act was passed. But the assertion that any development implemented under the Act necessitated the merry-go-round seen in the Moira Place scheme is wrong. Nothing in the Act precluded the LCC itself undertaking such schemes, either under Part I or Part II of the Act, and had it done so much of the difficulty that arose would have been avoided. The decision of the LCC not to undertake the scheme was a political choice, not a legal obligation.

The proceedings of the December 1890 conference on the Act makes clear the context in which that choice was made. The conference was called by the Council and attended by representatives of all the London vestries. The minutes show that there was little support for direct action by the metropolitan authority; in fact most parties, including the LCC, were vigorously antagonistic towards the idea. One delegate, the vestry clerk of St Luke's, Finsbury, did remark that he believed 'the tendency of modern legislation is to make London one whole and not a number of separate parts with no interest between them'.<sup>31</sup> But in the main the notion of London as a single entity, with the LCC as the administrative expression of that entity and the vestries in a subordinate role, was not conceived of, let alone accepted, in 1890.

Undoubtedly, the implementation of the Moira place scheme was a muddle. But the muddle arose as much from the uncertainty of the late Victorians about the role of the public sector in social provision, and the relationship between central, metropolitan and local government in the capital, as from any particular piece of legislation. *Plus ça change.*

#### Notes

1. cf F. Sheppard, 'St Leonard Shoreditch', *The Government of Victorian London*, (ed. D. Owen) (Harvard, 1982); D. Mander, *More Light, More Power* (1996) 61-72.
2. I cannot say that it was the first scheme under the 1890 Act but it was almost certainly the first London scheme. The Act was passed in August 1890; instructions to proceed were issued in November 1890.
3. E. Bowmaker, *The Housing of the Working Classes* (1895), 33-38.
4. *ib.* 37. See also Owen, n.1, 112-113.
5. Reported in *London*, 14 October 1897, copy Shoreditch Cuttings Books (HAD S/LD1/1, 41).
6. Out letters of Shoreditch vestry clerk, HAD L/V/C/13/2 and L/V/C/14, *passim*.
7. The concern of the present article is the execution of the scheme under the 1890 Act, so the elision in this assertion is justifiable. Strictly speaking, the scheme had its origin in an 1885 Report of the Shoreditch Medical Officer of Health (MOH) to the Metropolitan Board of Works (MBW)



Rowland Plumble was the architect for the scheme; this is a detail from his drawings for the Provost Street elevation. The buildings were demolished following substantial war damage.

under the Artizans' and Labourers' Dwellings Improvements Act. The MBW and, later, after a renewed appeal by the MOH in 1890, the LCC, decided that the scheme was not of metropolitan significance and should be dealt with under the Artizans' Dwellings Act which meant the cost would have to be met by the vestry. However, under section 5(2) of the Housing of the Working Classes Act 1885, a vestry had a right of appeal to the Home Secretary in such cases. It was the exercise of this right by Shoreditch vestry that gave rise to the Home Secretary's decision of November 1890, which was, of course, taken under the Housing of the Working Classes 1890. The 1890 Act consolidated the older procedure under one Act.

8. LMA LCC/MIN/7322; the addresses concerned were East Road 75-93 (odd); Nile Street 62-86 (even); Custance Street 1-9 (odd), 10, 11-21 (odd), 2-8 (even); Moneyer Street 2-17 (consec.); Plumber's Place 1-7 (consec.); Provost St 11-35 (odd, west side), 40-68 (even, east side); Ebenezer St 6-10 (consec.), Moira Place 1-21 (consec.), Britannia St 5-15 (consec., east side). The LCC insisted that all Moneyer and Custance Streets south of Nile St be closed.

9. Annual report of the vestry of St Leonard, 1891, 121-122; HAD L/V/77/2.

10. Valuer's report, 24 April 1892; LMA LCC/MIN/7778.

11. *ib.*

12. Solicitor's report, 24 April 1892, LMA LCC/MIN/7778.

13. LMA LCC/MIN/7333 (16 January 1893).

14. HAD L/V/C/1 (13 September 1893).

15. HAD L/V/C/1, letter from Board to Robinson, 7 October 1893.

16. HAD L/V/C/13/2, 10.

17. LMA LCC/MIN/7782, 4 April 1894.

18. LMA LCC/MIN/7246.

19. HAD L/V/C/13/2, 26.

20. *ib.*, 34.

21. *ib.*, 80.

22. *ib.*, 96.

23. Housing of the Working Classes Act 1894.

24. PRO HLG/L29/42, 157ff.

25. LMA LCC/MIN/7800, Proceedings, 132. Strictly speaking, the statement quoted does not necessarily mean that the LCC saw no role for itself in housing but, given the context in which it was made, the interpretation is accurate.

26. PRO HLG/L29/42, 157ff.

27. LMA LCC/MIN/7322.

28. The term was used by Lord Rosebery in his speech opening the dwellings in 1899 (reported in *Daily Telegraph* 16 November 1899; copy in Shoreditch Cuttings Books, HAD S/LD1/2, 9).

29. In addition to the events described in the article there was also an ongoing dispute between the vestry and the Council regarding who should pay how much and when. This was finally resolved only by recourse to the Home Secretary, who decided that the LCC should pay £27,000, which was agreed as half the net cost (cost after allowing for recoupments). This apparently equitable solution turned out not to be so for the Council, as it found itself saddled with a fixed cost. The vestry was able to manage and reduce its costs, something it was happy to trumpet publicly, to the considerable irritation of the Council's valuer.

30. *Daily Telegraph*, n. 28, above.

31. LMA LCC/MIN/7800, Proceedings, 71; compare Lord Rosebery's speech at the opening of the dwellings. 'Since the establishment of the London County Council we have all worked - or many of us have worked - to try and make London feel that she is one': *Daily Telegraph*, n. 28 above.

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