

# HackneyHistory

VOLUME EIGHT

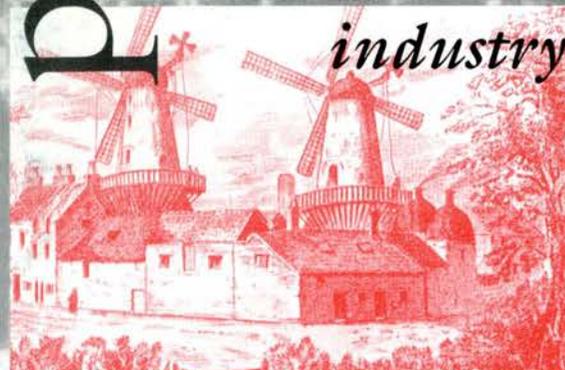
poet & painter



*the slump*



*madhouses*



*industry*

*workhouse*



*quakers*

# HackneyHistory

*In this issue –*

- Quakers
- Poet & Painter
- Madhouses
- Industry
- Workhouse
- The Slump

Hackney History is the annual volume of the Friends of Hackney Archives. The Friends were founded in 1985 to act as a focus for local history in Hackney, and to support the work of Hackney Archives Department. As well as the annual volume they receive the Department's regular newsletter, *The Hackney Terrier*.

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For further information -  
telephone 020 7241 2886  
fax 020 7241 6688  
e-mail [archives@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:archives@hackney.gov.uk).

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# HACKNEY *History*

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This volume of *Hackney History*  
is dedicated to the memory of

**Angela Jean Wait**  
1946-2002

formerly Senior Assistant Archivist,  
Hackney Archives Department



*Publication details appear on page 59*

## QUAKERS IN STOKE NEWINGTON to the mid-19th century

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*Peter Daniels*

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### *George Fox and the first Quakers*

The Quakers, or Society of Friends, arose from the new ideas around in England of the 1640s. In 1647 George Fox began preaching around Leicestershire, motivated by a sense of direct communication with the Light, or Holy Spirit, described later in his Journal:

Now was I come up in spirit through the flaming sword into the paradise of God. All things were new, and all the creation gave another smell unto me than before, beyond what words can utter.<sup>1</sup>

He and his companions called themselves 'Children of Light', but they ran into trouble with the authorities, and found a new name:

This was Justice Bennet of Derby that first called us Quakers because we bid them tremble at the word of God, and this was in the year 1650.<sup>2</sup>

In 1652 he found 'a great people to be gathered' around Westmorland and Furness, where people called 'Seekers' were much in sympathy. Margaret Fell, wife of judge Thomas Fell, gave particular support at her home, Swarthmoor Hall, where a base was established for an organisation. In 1654 the 'Valiant Sixty' were sent around the country to spread the word. Francis Howgill and Edward Burrough were delegated to London, where they spoke and published constantly, attracting metropolitan attention

and developing London's eventual position as organisational centre of Quakerism.

Several regular Quaker meetings were set up in London itself, but especially after the Restoration in 1660 they were subject to disruption by the authorities, and many Friends passed through Newgate prison, or died there, like Edward Burrough.

### *Dalston and Shacklewell*

When George Fox was in London he often found refuge in outlying places, to write free from interruption. One was the home of the widow Mary Stott in Dalston, from where a number of his epistles are dated.<sup>3</sup> Women like Mary Stott played an important part from the beginning, and spoke prominently at Quaker meetings.

In 1668 Fox set up a girls' school at Shacklewell to be run by Mary Stott, 'to instruct young lasses & maydens in whatsoever things was civill & useful in ye creation'.<sup>4</sup> By 1677 the Shacklewell school was run by Jane Bullock. A loan of £50 was arranged for her to develop the school, as it appears to have been short of pupils.<sup>5</sup> George Fox visited Jane Bullock in Shacklewell in 1683, though the school is not mentioned.<sup>6</sup> Mary still lived in Dalston at the time, but by the end of 1684 had moved to Bethnal Green.<sup>7</sup>

*The first Stoke Newington meeting*

In 1698, it was proposed to hold a meeting for worship once a month in Stoke Newington. Local meetings for worship were under the care of a monthly meeting for business: Stoke Newington came in the territory of the Peel Monthly Meeting, based at the Peel meeting house in St John's Lane, Clerkenwell (named after the sign of a baker's 'peel', the shovel for handling loaves in an oven). The body responsible for London Quaker property, the Six Weeks Meeting, approved this, initially with the option left open whether to take two rooms or a barn; it was decided to hold a meeting for worship fortnightly, alternating with another meeting being established in Tottenham.<sup>8</sup>

The two rooms taken for the 'Newington' meeting were at the premises of Robert Walburton, a gardener.<sup>9</sup> In a posthumous pamphlet, William Beck, a Stoke Newington man, calls this 'a rambling old structure' on the site of the Clarence Tavern (now the Daniel Defoe pub).<sup>10</sup> A drawing of the building dated 1825 (below) appears in a book held at Hackney Archives about Mary Lister's invalid asylum that was initially housed there.<sup>11</sup> It seems unlikely that the look of the building changed much during the intervening 18th century.



*The meeting-house as it probably appeared in the 18th century*

*Daniel Defoe and the Quakers*

These premises were directly opposite the house where Daniel Defoe lived from 1714. Defoe was not a Quaker, but was sympathetic. William Penn made efforts on Defoe's behalf when in 1702 he was tried for seditious libel, and sentenced to be pilloried three times and imprisoned for a year. Penn was not successful: he had been able to found Pennsylvania because Charles II owed his father money, but he had less influence by the reign of Queen Anne.<sup>12</sup> Defoe returned the favour to the Quakers, defending them against anti-Quaker pamphleteer Francis Bugg.<sup>13</sup> He also used the character of a Quaker for anonymous pamphlets such as *A Friendly Rebuke to one Parson Benjamin* (i.e. Bishop Benjamin Hoadley), published in 1719 as 'By One of the People called Quakers'.

*A secret wedding*

It took the Society of Friends much trouble to establish the legality of Quaker marriages without a priest, where the couple declare their union during worship ('We marry none; it is the Lord's work').<sup>14</sup> Much Quaker administrative business of the time is connected with marriages, and the circulation of information about their approval, or otherwise. In 1704 a Quaker cou-

ple, Thomas Taylor and Rebecca Clifton, lacking the approval of the Society, came to quiet, rural Stoke Newington with a few associates, and before the meeting for worship had assembled 'did then & there pretend to take each other in marriage'. Devonshire House meeting in Bishopsgate, where they were members, disowned them for 'their disorderly works of darkness'.<sup>15</sup> Their disownment was circulated around the London meetings, and appears in the Peel Monthly Meeting's 'Book of Condemnations'.<sup>16</sup>

*Decline and rise*

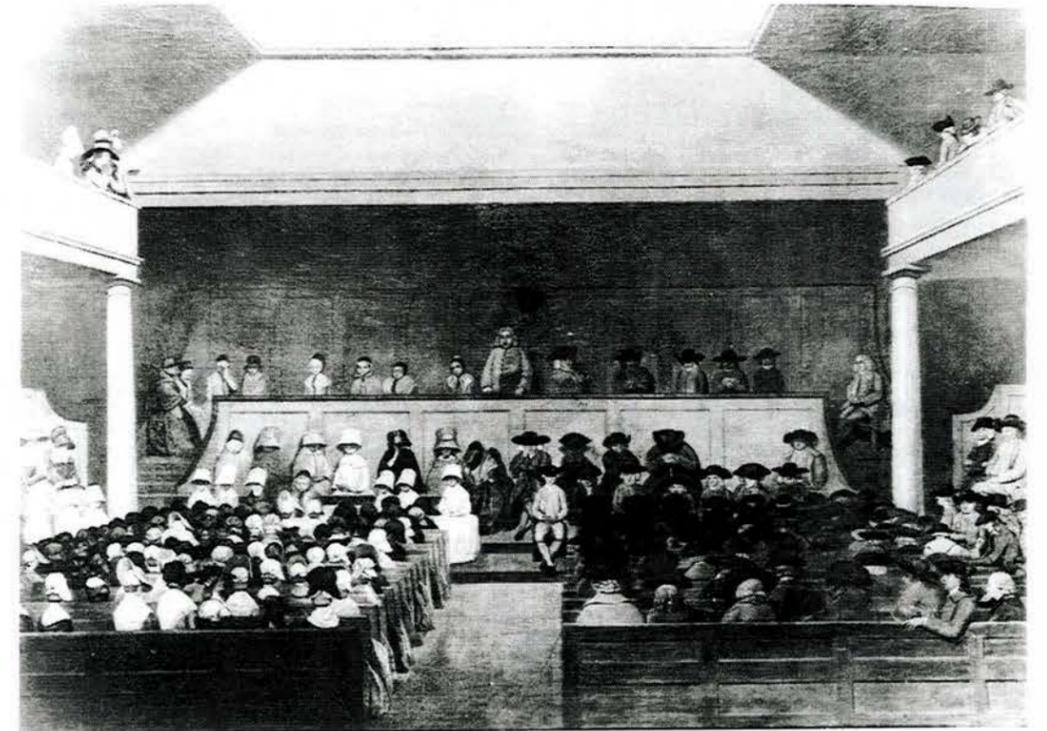
The need for a worshipping group to catch people's weekly habits is demonstrated by the difficulty arising when the Enfield Monthly Meeting, responsible for Tottenham, decided in 1716 to hold that meeting every week instead of alternating fortnightly with Stoke Newington (at first 'for this Winter only, for a Tryall').<sup>17</sup> Regular worshippers, apparently living especially around Stamford Hill, between the two, would inevitably prefer not needing to remember which week to travel north and which south. Stoke Newington's congregation declined, and in 1728 Six Weeks Meeting considered it 'of little or no service', but the meeting, or at least

Peel Monthly Meeting, thought otherwise.<sup>18</sup>

In 1733 the premises were taken over for the parish workhouse, though this did not affect the Quakers' tenancy. A Peel minute of 1734 insists that 'the continuance of a meeting at Newington may be of service', and it was kept up until 1741.<sup>19</sup>

Quakers were more and more in evidence in the Stoke Newington area, as the successful business folk of Gracechurch Street Meeting in the City found it a congenial and convenient place to live. A painting, in Friends' House Library, of Gracechurch Street Meeting around 1770, may be the first accurately-observed representation of Quaker worship, and many of these worshippers would be Stoke Newington residents. Samuel Hoare, who lived in Paradise Row, has been identified as a figure shown on the men's side-bench: it was his son Jonathan who had Clissold House built. His wife and three daughters are said to be on the opposite side benches. One of the daughters is Grizzell, who married William Allen (of whom more later).<sup>20</sup>

Eventually, because so many Gracechurch Street Quakers were living in the area, it was from this meeting, rather than Peel, that the beginnings of a new Stoke Newington meeting



*The Gracechurch Street meeting, about 1770*

emerged. Most of the Gracechurch Street records were destroyed when the meeting house burned down in 1821, but minutes passing through the Quaker administrative system reveal some of the developments. Six Weeks Meeting approved their arrangement of a public event in 1801, with Sarah Lynes Grubb speaking.<sup>21</sup> She was a formidable Gracechurch Street Friend, whose preaching was evidently much admired, though probably more among Quakers than 'the world's people'. Elizabeth Fry wrote in her diary -

S. Lines brought in her account to the monthly meeting of her late visit, and asked to go out again. This appeared almost too much for my weak intellect to comprehend; at least it appeared as if she never could rest.<sup>22</sup>

Mary Martin, a pupil at Susanna Corder's school, recalled a visit by her:

She was like some weird prophetess, very forbidding and gaunt, who even eschewed a white lining to her Friends' bonnet.<sup>23</sup>

Although the meeting had officially closed in 1741, by end of the century the old premises were again associated with Quakers, with the founding of Mary Lister's Invalid Asylum mentioned earlier: this was a place for domestic servants to receive rest and medical care when not ill enough to need a hospital. A Bible class or prayer meeting was held there, organised by Edward Harris. In *Look Back, Look Forward* David Mander refers to this as a Quaker meeting.<sup>24</sup> It was not a meeting for worship recognised as such in the Society's system, although informally it would have maintained an identifiably Quaker activity in the area. The local Quakers of this time have been usefully described in a study of their reading habits by Jane Desforges.<sup>25</sup>

**William Allen**

Six Weeks Meeting's authorisation for the public meeting with Sarah Lynes Grubb notes that a copy of the minute is to be sent to William Allen, so he was probably responsible for organising it. William Allen (1770-1843) was born in Spitalfields. He became a successful chemist at Plough Court near Lombard Street, and for



William Allen

many years was a public lecturer in chemistry at the Royal Institution. He was active in a wide range of philanthropic projects: campaigning against slavery, visiting Newgate Prison with Elizabeth Fry, travelling in continental Europe to gain increased liberties for oppressed Greeks and persecuted Waldenses, and he was one of the founders of the British & Foreign School Society.<sup>26</sup>

Allen was also interested in agricultural improvements, and developed allotments in Lordship Road. This was evidently a smaller version of his extensive project at Lindfield in Sussex, to improve the condition of agricultural labourers with allotments and education. Christine Majolier (later Alsop) who grew up in his household, describes the anti-slavery MP William Wilberforce visiting the project in 1823:

On the day of his visit we walked to the cottages in the Lordship Road, where William Allen was conducting his agricultural experiments. I had the honour of walking with the great man, who, however, took little notice of me, but hummed a tune most of the way, except when he wished to say something to William Allen; upon which he would leave me, say what he had to say, and then almost mechanically offer me his arm, and go on singing his hymn. At the cottages he was

weighed in the scale, and though many have had the opportunity of recording the talents of Wilberforce, few have been able to tell his weight, and this, insignificant as it is, may give some idea of his person, and confirm the saying, that the mind is the standard of the man. He weighed, including the 5 lbs for the iron stays which he wore, 76 lbs.<sup>27</sup>

Incidentally, Wilberforce (not a Quaker) had other local associations: he requested to be buried in Stoke Newington with his sister and daughter, but Parliament voted to bury him in Westminster Abbey.<sup>28</sup>

Sophia de Morgan, a non-Quaker neighbour who attended Allen's lectures, wrote:

He was a good observer and classifier, but stopped at facts and phenomena. In philanthropy the same ready perception and hastiness of inference were apparent. His exceeding benevolence and strong impulse to help the suffering led him occasionally into exaggeration of the evils he opposed; but all good causes need pioneers who overdo their work at first.<sup>29</sup>

Allen married his first wife, Mary Hamilton, at Tottenham meeting house in 1796: she died following the birth of a daughter, Mary, 11 months after their marriage. In 1806 he married Charlotte Hanbury, and divided his time

between Plough Court and the house in Stoke Newington that had been Charlotte's, and which became his usual residence. Charlotte died in 1816 while they were visiting Geneva. In 1823 his only daughter Mary died in childbirth, like her mother.

In 1827, in his 57th year, William Allen married the widow Grizzell Birkbeck, who was 69. Their close friendship had developed since the blow of Mary's death, when Grizzell's personal support had become very important to William. Despite this genuine companionship, the marriage provoked comment not only among Quakers but around London generally, because of her age and wealth, and the house in desirable Paradise Row that became their home. Robert Cruikshank (1789-1856), whose brother George is better known, lived in Knightsbridge, but was aware enough of this unQuakerly fuss on the other side of London to publish a series of satirical cartoons about it. Several are in Friends' House Library, including different versions of 'Sweet William and Grizzell: or Newington Nunnery in an Uproar' (below).



'Sweet William and Grizzell: or, Newington Nunnery in an Uproar'



A cartoon of March 1827, satirising the marriage of William Allen and Grizzell Birkebeck

It is hard to know whether most of the Quakers depicted are generic caricatures or individuals. However, 'Newington Nunnery' is definitely the girls' school at Fleetwood House run by Susanna Corder, who is identifiable from a later photograph. She is depicted fainting and being attended to by pupils, including Grizzell Birkebeck's nieces, whose inheritance would be affected by the marriage. The implication seems to be that Susanna herself had hopes of William's hand.

As well as this satirical series, there was at least one other cartoon (artist not identified) which defends William and Grizzell, with a theme from Aesop of 'Willie the Lion' derided by asses in Quaker hats.

#### *Susanna Corder's school*

Susanna Corder, 1787-1864, had a clear vocation as a teacher. After the death of her mother, whom she had nursed at home in Essex, at the age of 30 she found a post at Suir Island School at Clonmel in Ireland, and learned much from the educational methods there. In 1820 William Allen met her on a visit to Ireland, and when a Quaker girls' school was proposed for Stoke Newington in 1824, it seems that she was already intended to run it.

The first prospectus proposed -

an Establishment in our religious society on a plan in degree differing from any hitherto adopted, wherein the children of Friends should not only be liberally instructed in the Elements of useful knowledge, but in which particular attention should be paid to the state of mind of each individual child.<sup>30</sup>

The school occupied Fleetwood House (where the Fire Station is now), which had extensive grounds suitable for the pupils to walk in, later incorporated into Abney Park Cemetery. It started with 12 pupils, but more than doubled in three years. Subjects included astronomy, physics, and chemistry, which were taught by William Allen; the languages available included Latin, Greek, German and Italian as well as French.<sup>31</sup> Susanna Corder was well known for her order and decorum, and views on dress by then somewhat old-fashioned even in the Society.<sup>32</sup>

#### *A pioneering bus*

Susanna's resourcefulness included transport arrangements. When the school started in 1824, the meeting for worship was still at Gracechurch Street, and the girls had to walk to the City. A vehicle was ordered to take 25 pupils facing on bench seats: this was a new idea, as vehicles of this kind were only just being used as passenger omnibuses in Paris, developed by George

Shillibeer who had worked for the coach company Hatchedts in Long Acre (the coach-building centre of London). In 1827 Joseph Pease, a Quaker visitor, wrote a verse letter to his cousin in which he describes 'Newington Nunnery' and refers to this bus:

The straight path of Truth the dear Girls keep their feet in  
And ah! it would do your heart good Cousin Anne  
To see them arriving at Gracechurch Street Meeting  
All snugly packed up, 25 in a van.<sup>33</sup>

We also have an account of the bus from Louisa Stewart, who recalled that half the pupils would walk ahead to meeting, the others catch up in the bus, and they would change over half way.<sup>34</sup> When the new Stoke Newington meeting house opened in 1828, the bus was no longer needed, and she tells how the girls watched it being repainted in the yard with the title 'Omnibus' and 'Paddington to the Bank' on the sides. This was the route that George Shillibeer started running on his return to London in 1829, the first true London bus when the only rival services were stagecoaches, unsuited to local journeys.<sup>35</sup>

#### *An inspired pupil*

Louisa Hooper Stewart, 1818-1918, was from a City Quaker family that moved south, to Kennington, rather than Stoke Newington. She was educated in Croydon at first, but the school was much inferior to Susanna Corder's, which her older sister Emily attended. There was a delay in sending her there, for family reasons, until she was 13, in about 1831, when the bus had already become redundant, so her reminiscences about it are second hand from Emily.

Louisa's memories were recorded by her granddaughter soon before she died aged 99. This may account for some confusion about the purchaser of the bus. She calls him a rival of Shillibeer, but from the date and the detail of the bus destination it seems clear that this was Shillibeer himself. We have to be cautious about her testimony, which includes the assertion that the whole idea of the vehicle with benches inside was Susanna's, but maybe it was, if she ordered it from Long Acre before Shillibeer left for Paris.

Louisa was only at the school for a year, but

the Corder education made a tremendous impression, and stimulated her active mind. In 1855 she married John Stewart, owner of the Edinburgh Review. She became keenly interested in women's suffrage: in 1869 she published *The Missing Law; or, Woman's Birthright*.<sup>36</sup> After her husband's death she opened a girls' school at Cronks Hill, Reigate, on the lines of Susanna Corder's, with weekly visits from professors of London University for Classics and Science.<sup>37</sup> In 1874 she moved back to Stoke Newington with her daughter, organising the Women Friends' Total Abstinence Union and starting what an obituary calls 'a most successful Coffee Cart work in that district'.<sup>38</sup> She also formed a school in a caravan for the children of travelling showmen. This was an interest developed from an early age: her reminiscences include an episode from schooldays in Croydon where she went to discover what really went on at the fairground - thought very shocking for a Quaker girl. Her granddaughter describes taking tea with the Fat Lady on a visit to the fair where 'Louisa was always welcome' when it came to the Agricultural Hall in Islington.<sup>39</sup>



Louisa Stewart

*Designing a meeting house*

Gracechurch St meeting house burned down in 1821. It was rebuilt, but not surprisingly Stoke Newington Friends began proposals for their own building. The architect was William Alderson, who later designed the Hanwell Lunatic Asylum.

Some of the drawings survive in Friends' House Library, including one early idea for it with a frontage of curved colonnades and a carriage sweep.<sup>40</sup> This may have been dropped as too ostentatious, although the site would scarcely have accommodated it as well as the burial ground behind the building. Another projected design is in Hackney Archives, with a detailed plan which is nothing like what was built; but more odd is the figure on the portico roof which looks like a triumphal statue, though it may be a poorly-scaled person, showing use of it as a balcony.<sup>41</sup>

There are also drawings in Friends' House for a meeting house bench or 'form', one of the most typical features of a Quaker meeting house.<sup>42</sup> Some like this are still in use in Quaker meetings, although the tendency now to add cushions would have been thought unnecessary luxury in 1828.

On a page of rough calculations, the cost of the meeting house building works come to £2,086 12s 0 1/2d, being £1,805 12s 0 1/2d for building works, plus £281 for stove and furniture; there is an additional £90 8s 0d for the architect and surveyor.

Besides this, the purchase of the site in Park Street (now Yoakley Road) was £480, and further land to extend the burial ground was bought in 1849 for £400. The building included a large meeting room 44 feet by 36 with a gallery, and a side room to be used for the Women's Monthly Meeting. This was later extended as classrooms and a kitchen.<sup>43</sup>

The meeting house opened in 1828. The first meeting of the Meeting House Building Committee in 1830 was 'to consider some means for remedying the echo' (temporary calico curtains were to be tried). The acoustic aspect of Quaker architecture is easy to forget when the major part of the worship is silent: the difficulty is that



*An early design for the Stoke Newington meeting house*

unlike chapels centred on a pulpit, Quaker meeting houses must accommodate spoken ministry from any part of the room, and it must be audible.

On the northern side were built the Yoakley almshouses. Michael Yoakley, 1631-1708, was a sea-captain from Thanet who shipped goods to America for William Penn. During his life he founded almshouses 'for aged poor women' in Spitalfields and Margate, and as his widow died childless, his endowed charity inherited the whole estate. In 1834 the trustees had spare money available and bought the land next to the meeting house for ten almshouses and a committee room.<sup>44</sup>

Stoke Newington Quaker meeting became established as the largest of London's meetings, attended by Friends who were prominent and active in the society, and more generally in society. A future article will take the story from the high Victorians to the present day.

## Notes

## Dates

It is essential to remember that Quakers refused to use pagan names for months, so before the calendar change of 1752 March is the 'first month' (usually abbreviated '1mo.'). New year was on 25th March.

## Editions of Fox's journal

Fox, George, ed. John L. Nickalls, *The Journal of George Fox: a revised edition*, Cambridge, 1952 (corr. ed. London Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 1975). This is the standard 'reading edition' based on early printed versions, but Norman Penney's edition of 1911, taken from the manuscript, includes details not otherwise published (and shows up embellishments of the post-humous editors). The *Short Journal* and *Itinerary Journal* are briefer manuscript drafts, also with additional detail. Penney's notes are valuable secondary sources in themselves.

The publications cited below, with the exception of those identified as at Hackney Archives (HAD) are in Friends' House Library.

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- Nickalls, 58.
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- Penney, ed., *Journal*, vol.2, 119.
- Six Weeks Meeting minutes vol. 1, 112 (1677).
- Penney, ed. *Short Journal*, 89.
- Penney, ed., *Short Journal*, 305 (note).
- Six Weeks Meeting, vol.3, 330 (25 8mo. 1698), 344 (6 10mo. 1698).
- W. Beck and T. F. Ball, *The London Friends' Meetings: showing the rise of the Society of Friends in London* (1869) 211-12, quoting the registration at Middlesex Sessions as a place of worship.
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- Enfield Monthly Meeting (vol.2), 29 (6mo. 1716).
- Six Weeks Meeting vol.8, 157 (4 1mo. 1728).
- Six Weeks Meeting vol.8, 290 (22 8mo. 1734); Peel Monthly Meeting vol.8 (29 2mo. 1741).
- The Biographical Catalogue: being an account of the lives of Friends and others whose portraits are in the London Friends Institute* (1888), 351-2. See also D. Mander, *Look Back, Look Forward: an illustrated history of Stoke Newington* (1997) (HAD) for more about the Hoares.
- Six Weeks Meeting vol.8, 13 (3 10mo. 1801).
- E. Fry, diary, MS Vol S 260 (10 ii 1802).
- B. Marshall, *Emma Marshall* (1900), 13.
- p. 58.
- J. Desforges, "'Satisfaction and Improvement': a study of reading in a small Quaker community 1770-1820", *Publishing History* vol. 49 (2001), 5-47.
- Further background can be found in M. Nicolle, *William Allen: Quaker Friend of Lindfield* (Lindfield, Sussex) (2001).
- Memorials of Christine Majorier Alsop*, compiled by Martha Braithwaite (1881), 66-67.
- Dictionary of National Biography*.
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- Quoted in Shirren, *Fleetwood House*, 159.
- Shirren, *Fleetwood House*, 160.
- 'Dictionary of Quaker Biography', unpublished files in Friends House Library.
- J. Pease, 'Yearly Meeting epistle from Friend Joseph in London to his cousin Anne in the country' (5 mo. 1827) MS box 10 (13) 2; quoted in Shirren, 163.
- L. Hooper Stewart, ed. E. Roberts, *Louisa: memories of a Quaker childhood* (1970), 35.
- A full size replica of his vehicle is in the London Transport Museum. Information from scrapbooks on bus history at the Museum's library, and H. C. Moore, *Omnibuses and cabs: their origin and history* (1902).
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- R. H. Marsh, 'Michael Yoakley's Charity', *Journal of Friends Historical Society* vol.14 (1917), 146-156.

## WINDMILLS TO ROCKETS: THE WHITE LEAD WORKS OF SOUTHGATE ROAD

*Norman Huxford*

Damage and casualties were caused in southern England by enemy air activity in the 24 hours ended at dawn yesterday. Another bomb crashed on a factory. The works manager, who had been with the company for 20 years, was killed and a lorry-driver who was sitting in his lorry outside the factory also lost his life.

To *The Times* of the 9th January 1945 this event could be reported in just these four lines. To the employees of Champion Druce & Co. of Southgate Road, it was a direct and tragic experience of the devastation of war. To the neighbourhood it brought an abrupt end to 160 years of an enterprise which had prospered since 1786. The site of the factory can still be seen on the western side of the southern end of Southgate Road; it is now a small public park. At 11.23 am on 8th January 1945, a V2 rocket<sup>1</sup> fell destroying practically the entire plant, killing the two men, works manager Cyril Skeet and lorry-driver Percy Rafferty.<sup>2</sup> Several others were injured; one employee died later of his injuries. What follows is an attempt to fill in the history of that manufactory through the 19th and 20th centuries.

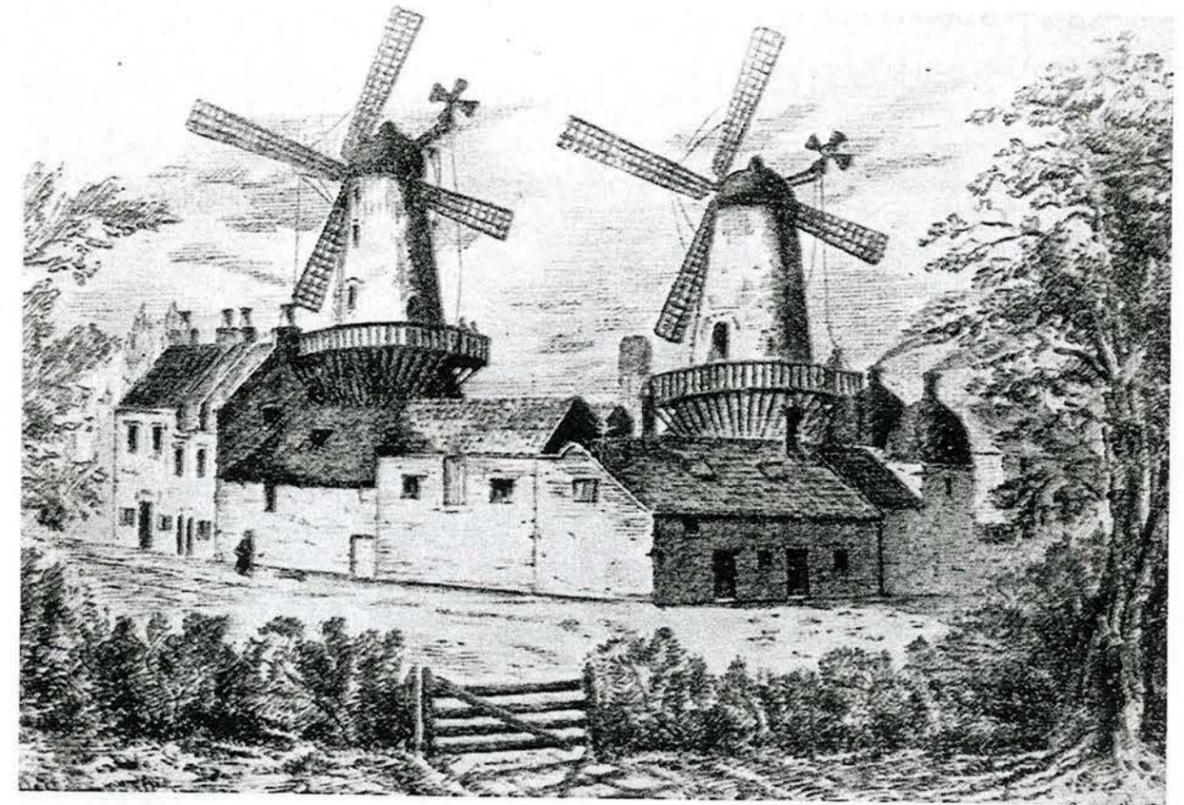
### *Colours, cosmetics and china*

In 1786 Samuel Walker, in partnership with Thomas Maltby, established a manufactory for

the production of white lead on a site known as the Rosemary Branch - the name of a well-known public house at the easterly end of a lane from Lower Street (now Essex Road) to Hoxton Fields. By 1786 the Rosemary Branch was in some sort of financial trouble, and Samuel Walker secured the property, which lay across the boundary between the parishes of Islington and Hackney.

Walker was a well-known ironmaster from Masborough, near Rotherham in Yorkshire, and had been in partnership since 1778 with Richard Fishwick and Archer Ward as lead manufacturers. He was also connected with the firm of Walker Maltby & Co., of Steel-yard in Upper Thames Street, which already manufactured white lead. There were other white lead producers in London in the late 18th century, but demand for it as a constituent of paint was such that increased capacity was required. White lead itself was not a novel pigment; it had been known since Roman times and was used for cosmetics, paints and pottery glazes because of its extreme opacity and durability. Dean Swift gave us these lines:

White lead was sent us to repair  
A lady's face and China ware.



*An early 19th century view of the windmills*

### *The windmills*

Tomlins, in his book *Yseldon, a Perambulation of Islington*, published in 1858, quotes a Mr John Nichols describing the south-eastern corner of the parish in 1788:

Samuel Walker . . . erected here, in the year 1786, a curious windmill, for the purpose of grinding lead (*sic*) differing in two remarkable particulars from common windmills; viz. first that the brick tower of it is crowned with a great wooden cap, to which is affixed, on one side, the flyers; and, on the opposite side, a projecting gallery, terminated by a very small machine of four flyers, by means of which the whole top is turned round at pleasure, so as to bring the sails into that direction which is most convenient with respect to the wind; and secondly that instead of four, the usual number of flyers, this was furnished with five. Another mill, similar to the above, was added about the year 1792, but the flyers of both are now reduced to four, which are so constructed\* as either to unfurl or take in the sails as the wind increases or diminishes, and that without having any effect upon their motion while the alteration is taking place.<sup>3</sup>

In 1772 Andrew Meikle, a Scot, had invented the 'spring sail' to supersede the wood and canvas

was sail used till then. For the canvas he substituted small, hinged shutters (like those of a Venetian blind). All the shutters were connected and controlled by a spring whose tension could be varied according to the power required. That is, if the wind pressure increased beyond the required point, the shutters opened to spill the wind.

These windmills were a notable landmark in this part of London, and a fine sketch of the two windmills is reproduced as figure 1.<sup>4</sup>

### *Partners and successors*

Several name changes followed through the 19th century. The *Victoria History of the County of Middlesex* (VCH), referring to Nelson's *Islington*<sup>5</sup> gives the company name as Maltby Parkes (*sic*) & Co. There may be an error here, as later the name Parker appears in trade directories. The VCH also quotes Cromwell's *Walks through Islington*,<sup>6</sup> published

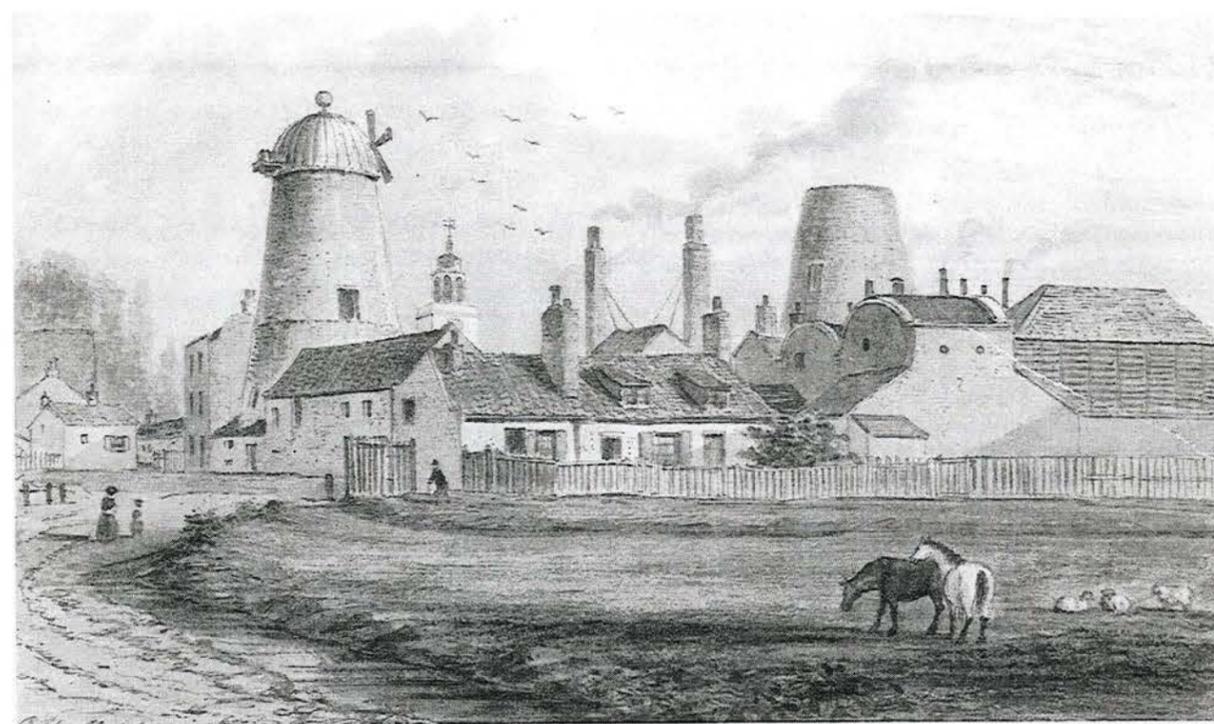
in 1835, saying that these windmills were superseded and the mill, then owned by T. & C. Maltby & Co., was powered by a 20 horsepower steam engine, considerable power being required to grind the initial pigment.

By 1791 the white lead works, their address now being given as Islington Fields, were owned by Walker, Ward & Co., who were still operating the factory in 1808. In 1809 Archer Ward retired and the business was continued under the name of Maltby Parker & Co. In 1824 that partnership was dissolved, and the business was continued by a new partnership, between Guy Champion and Richard Fishwick. Champion was also connected with Champion & Co. of Old Street, producers of vinegar and acetic acid, an essential raw material for the manufacture of white lead. That Champion business had been founded in the early 1700s by William Champion, and continued by Thomas, respectively grandfather and father of Guy. Guy and Percival Champion were managing the vinegar business in 1838.

Guy Champion died in 1846, and Fishwick a little later. In 1847 Stephen Alers Hankey purchased the Islington business from Fishwick's executor and Champion's administrator. It then operated under the name of Champion Hankey & Co., a Mr. Wright and Mr. Harriss also being

admitted as partners. Frederick Druce, son of Hankey's solicitor Charles Druce,<sup>7</sup> entered the business, eventually becoming a partner. The name of the firm was changed to Champion Druce Harriss & Co. in 1880. Harriss died in 1885 and his son in 1890, the name changing again, to Champion Druce, a name which continued until 1929 when the business joined Associated Lead Industries. ALI was the direct successor to the original lead manufacturing business of Walker, Fishwick and Ward that had started in 1778, so in a way the business returned to its roots. The minutes of the Champion Druce board from 1930 to 1952<sup>8</sup> describe the progress of the company up to its closure, with only brief coverage of the rocket damage. The managing director from 1942 to the closure in 1952 was J. B. Dunn.

As well as the 35 Southgate Road address dealt with above, in 1908 Champion Druce was also operating at Pountney Hill and in Caledonian Road. Another white lead manufacturer, Richard Gorringe, had been operating in Caledonian Road at least from 1882. In the 1882 edition of Kelly's Directory of Middlesex there is a drawing of the Gorringe works in Caledonian Road with the date 1765 appearing on the building. As late as 1965, Champion Druce are still identified as 'white lead corrodors' at 425, Caledonian Road, the original Gorringe site.



The factory in the 1850s: a watercolour by C. H. Matthews

#### A poisonous pigment

What exactly was being manufactured at these white lead businesses? White lead was known to the ancient Egyptians and was used by them to ornament the coverings of mummies. To the Greeks white lead was known as psimithium and to the Romans as cerussa. White lead was added to many pigments, coloured as well as white, to increase their opacity or 'hiding power', that is, their ability to mask underlying colours effectively. White lead, though poisonous, was the most widely available white pigment for this purpose until the mid-20th century, when it was replaced by non-toxic pigments such as titanium dioxide.

Pliny, in the first century AD, describes a method of preparing white lead from lead and vinegar (probably using dung to produce the necessary heat), but for many centuries a larger-scale process, the origin of which is ascribed to the Dutch as early as 1662, was used to produce it. Although competing processes for the manufacture of white lead became available towards the end of the 19th century, the 'old Dutch proc-

ess' was carried on in the Southgate Road works in practically the same manner for the whole 160-year span, from 1776 to 1945. One major advance had been made in 1787, when Richard Fishwick obtained a patent for the use of spent tan bark to replace horse dung, claiming a more uniform degree of heat was obtained.

In a technical publication of 1913, G. K. Hurst described the manufacture of white lead:

The plant consisted of several brick 'sheds', 16 x 13 feet, 20 feet high. In the shed a stack was built as follows. First a 3 feet layer of spent tan. (The use of tan in place of horse dung was introduced in England to obtain a purer product although it leads to a slower and less thorough corrosion). Placed on the tan layer were earthenware pots about 6 inches high containing 2-3% acetic acid. On top of these pots were placed lead buckles each about 2 feet by 5 inches by about 1/4 inch thick and freshly cast from lead ingots melted down in a furnace, the buckles forming a layer of about 5 inches. Above these was a layer of flooring boards and on these boards a further layer of tan, a layer of pots containing dilute acetic acid, a layer of lead buckles and another layer of boards. This construction was continued until there were about ten sets of layers in the shed. In such a stack there could be up to 100 tons of lead. The completed stack was left undisturbed for three months during which time the temperature rises to about 71 degrees Celsius owing to the fermentation of the tan. At this temperature the acetic acid and water slowly evaporate and large quantities of carbon dioxide are formed by the fermentation. In this atmosphere the buckles of lead gradually corrode first

to lead acetate, and then by the action of the carbon dioxide to a thick crust of basic lead carbonate ( $2PbCO_3Pb(OH)_2$ ), formed on the surface. The lead was rarely corroded away completely, about 70% of the lead had been converted when the process was stopped. A great deal of experience was required in building the stack, however, to obtain successful corrosion the tan must be of the right quality in order to develop the temperature most favourable to corrosion. As the stack was pulled down the corroded buckles were loaded on trucks for conveyance to the mills. Here the buckles were crushed between rollers, flaking off the white lead and flattening the residual metallic lead which was removed by subsequent screening. The crude pigment was then subjected to a process of grinding and washing to remove all traces of metallic lead and other impurities and reduced to a fine powder. The final product was then pumped through a filter press yielding a press cake containing about 20 per cent water. This cake was finally dried at low temperature to yield the final product.<sup>9</sup>

Nelson, in his book *Islington* published in 1829, describes the process more briefly:

Between 40 and 50 persons, chiefly women, are employed here in the manufacture of . . . white lead for the use of potters, painters &c. This article which forms a considerable branch of the trade, is prepared from the blue-sheet lead, with the aid of vinegar, or some strong acid; the vapour of which, by a curious process operating on the metal, corrodes and reduces it into a white calx, which is afterwards ground in these mills to a proper consistency for use.

It was thought that women were less susceptible than men to lead poisoning! It was also felt that the greatest danger of poisoning was to painters and others engaged in its use rather than employees under direct control in a well-managed works. The drinking of dilute sulphuric acid (half an ounce to one gallon of water) had been used as an antidote but was abandoned in favour of drinking milk!

The white lead produced by the stack process was the standard article of commerce and by the end of the 19th century an annual total of hundreds of thousands of tons was produced nationally. There were difficulties and drawbacks to this process. It took a total of three to four months for the building of the stack, waiting for conversion to white lead and final dismantling. This was a disadvantage not so much on account of locking up capital (even though this could amount to a thousand pounds for each stack) as on account of adjusting output with demand.

### Hit by the Luftwaffe

Champion Druce remained in business, albeit with difficulty, throughout the depressed 1930s, providing employment for up to forty Hackney and Islington residents at any one time. The author recalls visiting the works in the late 1930s and early 40s, at which time there were two fine houses, nos. 37 & 39, fronting onto Southgate Road.<sup>10</sup> No. 39 was occupied by the works manager, Cyril Skeet, who was, sadly, to die in the rocket attack.

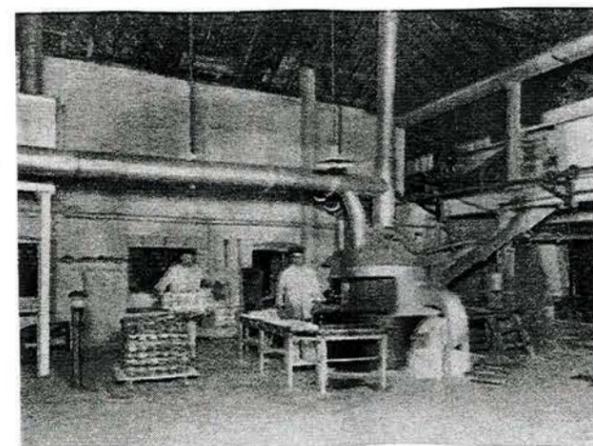
During the Second World War the factory was kept busy supplying white lead as a base for paint - particularly camouflage paint for warships, as the lead content acted as an effective anti-fouling agent. An earlier attempt by the Luftwaffe to destroy the factory in 1940 failed, when a large bomb failed to explode. It fell into the pile of tan awaiting use outside, and caused much trouble to excavate and remove it. The bomb was eventually defused on site, and driven away on a lorry with the army team sitting nonchalantly on the tarpaulin-covered bomb!

On Tuesday January 8th 1945 the result of air attack was more disastrous. Lorry-driver Percy Rafferty arrived for a collection of white lead soon after 11 a.m., and reported to Mr Skeet in the main office. The author's father, Joseph Huxford, who was Mr Skeet's assistant, left the office to check the readiness of the order in the factory. At that moment the V2 rocket arched from the sky, hitting directly behind the office area, instantly killing the two men there. The adjoining factory area was severely damaged, falling beams injuring Mr Huxford and a senior lead-caster who later became the third fatal victim. Photographs<sup>11</sup> show tile-less roofs, fractured pipework and piles of timber and rubble. Board Minutes of June 1945 indicate that, although some of the machinery was recoverable, manufacture itself never resumed at the site, though the stocks of lead and white lead were gradually disposed of over the next five years.

The factory site itself is now an all-weather play area, created by the London County Council in the late 1950s after a decade as a bomb-



site. The original cobbled approach road from Southgate Road and along the south side of the site can still be seen, together with the weighbridge installed by David Hart of the North London Iron Works. This roadway turns northwards along what was the front of the building. Here an overhead crane once carried the tan across the road and into that part of the factory where the stacks of the old Dutch process were built. A grassed area with trees and seating now occupies the site of the Southgate Road houses and gardens.



at the Tyne & Wear Archives,<sup>11</sup> on the site itself there is sadly no reference today either to the factory, or its destruction. The only remaining signs are the weighbridge and a solitary stone let into one of the remaining gate pillars on Southgate Road, inscribed 'Factory' and recessed for a bell-pull. But at least the site has never been redeveloped, and the park and recreation area, now aptly named 'Rosemary Gardens', are maintained by the London Borough of Islington and serve as a place of rest and enjoyment for young and old, all probably unaware of the years of industry - and the final tragedy - that are associated with the place.

### Notes

1. Wakefield, *The Blitz Then & Now* (1991) 508 (V2 incident No. 482).
2. "In Memoriam", *Enfield Gazette & Observer*, 12 January 1945.
3. T. E. Tomlins, *Yseldon, a Perambulation of Islington* (1858), 158.
4. *Official Architect*, July 1939; see also *Country Life*, 23 June 1950.
5. VCH, XIII, 73; Nelson, *History of Islington* (1829), 196.
6. T. Cromwell, *Walks Through Islington* (1835), 108.
7. Letter from Chas. Druce, 1871.
8. Tyne & Wear Archives, accession no. 1512/1009 et seq.
9. G. H. Hurst, *Painters' Colours, Oils & Varnishes* (1913).
10. LMA 57/12/HB/3979 et seq.
11. Tyne & Wear Archives, accession no. 1512/1063 et seq.

### Other sources

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*Kent's Directory* (1802)  
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*Piggott's Directory* (1833)  
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## THE MADHOUSE-KEEPERS OF HACKNEY

*Elaine Murphy*

### *Money out of madness*

The early 19th century private madhouses of east London were strikingly successful enterprises providing well over a thousand places by the time their scandalous conditions were exposed in the parliamentary Select Committees of 1815/16 and 1827. Most of the institutions for the insane in Hackney took private fee-paying patients only, and were, on the whole, respectable and well-run: but there was money to be made from providing a service for the local parish vestries providing 'care' for insane paupers. Two families dominated the parish pauper trade, the Warburtons and the Miles. Thomas Warburton, reviled proprietor of Whitmore (or Balmes) House in Hoxton and the notorious Bethnal Green Asylum, was something of a pantomime figure. His admirable son, however, John Warburton MD, over a period of 15 years, transformed Bethnal Green Asylum from the worst to the best asylum in the country. John's success in retrieving his career from the taint of his father's reputation was a triumph of singular determination. Sir Jonathan Miles, proprietor of Hoxton House Asylum, Shoreditch seems to have been more buffoon than villain, floundering around in seas too deep and choppy for his intellect to cope with. A handful of others competed for the pauper trade, but there was also a

group of rather more professionally competent proprietors, who owned smaller establishments for the better classes sited in the more salubrious neighbourhoods of leafy Hackney. This article is about these men and their singularly adaptable businesses.

### *The 'trade in lunacy' in east London*

At the beginning of the 19th century, a large number of institutions for the mentally ill east and north of the City of London created a thriving market economy in both patients and staff. Proprietors, doctors and keepers constructed a complex web of personal relationships and interdependent financial arrangements that spanned the private, voluntary and public sectors. The spectrum of provision included the socially exclusive, to what might be termed the 'socially over-inclusive'. No pauper was ever turned away from Thomas Warburton's asylums, however full, while its proprietor had room in his purse for the fee. The network of professional and business links extended to the charitable and voluntary hospitals of Bethlem in the City, St Luke's Hospital for the Insane on Old Street, and Guy's madhouse at London Bridge, and a metropolitan network of madhouses in Islington and west London. Diversity of style of pro-

vision and a huge volume of trade were the key characteristics of this thriving local industry.

The pauper lunatic houses of east London were strikingly different in a number of respects from the generality of madhouses. The trade was dominated by smallish ephemeral businesses, quickly established to meet the demand for places in the early 19th century, medical proprietors gradually replacing the laymen madhouse keepers of earlier times. The east London pauper houses however were not 'Johnny-come-lately's' created specifically to milk the public purse. Miles's and Warburton's houses were well established businesses set up over a century earlier, Hoxton House having taken its first patient in 1695 and Bethnal Green in the early 1700s. The business leases had been traded as going concerns several times before the current owners took over. If there was a skill in milking the trade, these businesses had been perfecting it over long years of practice, having been the preferred placement for pauper lunatics in London and the south-east for as long as anyone could remember.

Most of the 36 London madhouses in 1816 were small, a quarter registered for fewer than 10 patients and the majority for less than fifty. Hoxton House and the two Bethnal Green asylums had nearly 500 patients each, far larger than either Bethlem or the voluntary hospital for the insane in London, St Luke's. By 1844 there were about 1600 patients in pauper lunatic houses in east London, and 200 to 300 more in 'private-only' establishments.

The proprietors' business strategy was 'low cost, high volume'. To compete on cost with parish poorhouses and pauper 'farms' (privately run poorhouses), it was essential to attract large numbers of inmates to generate any reasonable profit. The unique market opportunity however that enabled these asylums to grow into huge enterprises in the 18th century was their geographical situation on the very edge of the City of London. Before the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, the Poor Law was administered by over 90 separate, individual parishes, many tiny with no more than a few hundred residents. Many parishes had no poorhouse of their own

or only a very small one with a handful of places. Children, the refractory, the chronically sick and the idiotic were all sent out of the City to 'pauper farms' on the outskirts of town. It seems likely that the unusual character of these small workhouse-less City parishes fostered the early expansion of the east London madhouses.

The premises had the advantage of high visibility. There was no need to advertise, when the buildings were as splendid a marketing feature as these well-known local landmarks. Both Hoxton House and Bethnal Green Asylum fronted onto main traffic thoroughfares. The main route out of town to the east and north went directly past the Asylum on Bethnal Green. Hoxton House, even in the 18th century, was on the main road in the middle of a theatre district that extended from Curtain Road up Hoxton Street towards the Rosemary Branch tavern, and surely would have been quite well recognised.

Some of the 'private patients only' houses occupied truly splendid buildings. Whitmore House and Northumberland House were surprisingly palatial. Brooke House, the flagship of the Monro family's mad-houses, though somewhat physically run down for much of the 19th century, had been one of the most prestigious great houses in the area. These were not 'hole-in-the-corner' shady businesses. Dr John Conolly, Medical Superintendent of Hanwell County Lunatic Asylum and a master-proselytiser of the rival public asylum system, described the private houses as gloomy, grubby back-street 'buildings on which no eye rested with pleasure', 'repulsive in aspect and bore a suspicious character.' Old buildings can go rapidly to seed if poorly maintained, and etchings can create false impressions of grandeur, but Conolly's implication that the trade operated in a back street kind of way is not born out by the 'up-front' obviousness of the east London cluster.

### *The proprietors*

The licensed house proprietors were men of considerable social position on the local scene. Thomas Warburton was a trustee of the poor and a sizeable freeholder in Hackney. The street

and council flats named after him (in E8) probably commemorate his place of residence and more edifying public-spirited activities rather than his madhouse business. When George III went mad it was Warburton who was asked to provide keepers to supervise him. Warburton's son was considered a good enough catch to marry the daughter of the most distinguished (and wealthiest) surgeon of his generation. The two Jonathan Miles, father and son, were prominent members of the Painter-Stainers' Company and were well-heeled enough to keep a mansion house with a 'park' in fashionable Ealing. The pauper lunacy business made the Warburton and Miles families rich and respectable.

The east London proprietors were also unusual in not being resident on site, and in employing non-medical superintendents to undertake the day-to-day supervision of the patients. Their careless recruitment of bad staff, left unsupervised and unseen, led to the scandalous abuses.

Most licensed house proprietors were medical men who opened up their own homes to patients as a species of 'paying guest'. Warburton lived at his private establishment in the early years, but as his profits grew he acquired a separate home for himself. The elder Miles had also lived on site, but like other successful men soon bought himself a place in the country. In several respects, then, the east London houses were unusual: in origin, in size, and in the important contribution they made to public social services in the City of London and the wider metropolis throughout the 18th and 19th centuries.

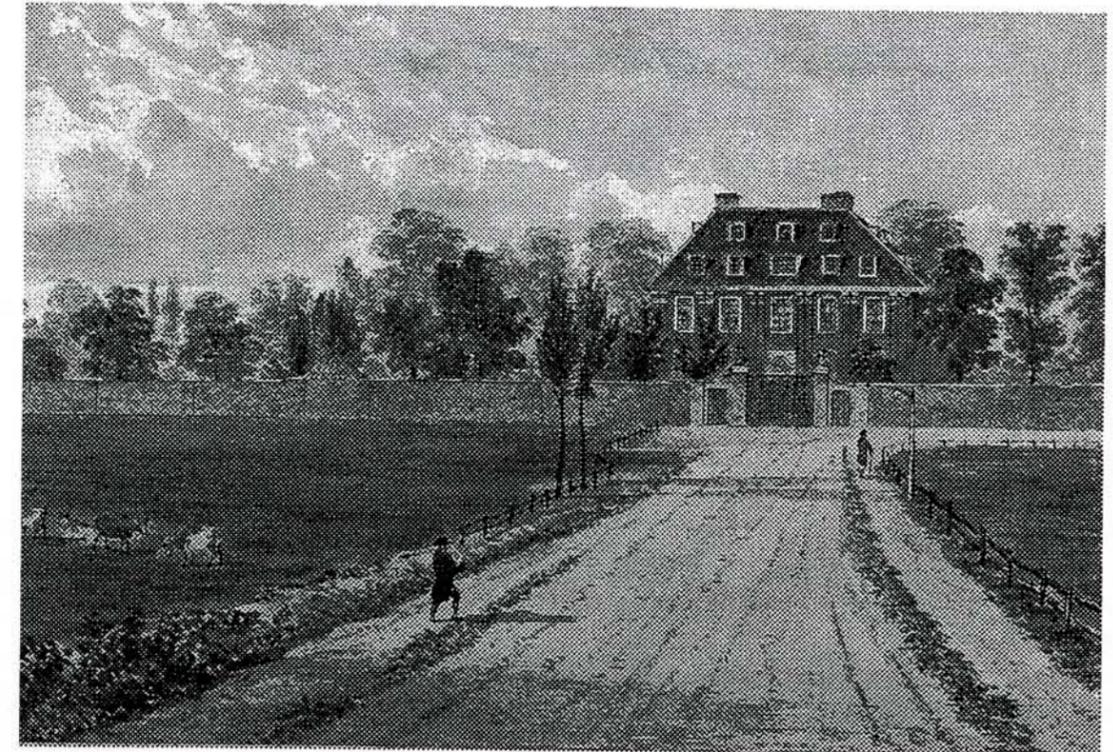
#### Thomas Warburton

Warburton's Bethnal Green asylums largely took pauper lunatics placed by parishes, and included a number of small over-spill houses. Whitmore House, however, just outside Hoxton, a magnificent 17th century red brick mansion formerly called Balmes House, became Warburton's prestige asylum for private paying clients.<sup>1</sup> Fees were carefully tailored to a family's pocket.

John Mitford, a dissolute and intermittently

paranoid ultra-radical, published a highly critical pamphlet about his time as a patient at Whitmore House between May 1812 and March 1813.<sup>2</sup> Mitford's account of Warburton, whether accurate or not, is memorable. 'More than six feet high, broad, heavy built with knock-knees and 'a proboscis three inches long... I heard the King said 'Take away that fellow with the long nose-take him away - away - away...'. According to Mitford, Warburton started life as a butcher's apprentice in the country but fled to London when 'a bastard child was sworn to him'. First employed as a gate porter at Whitmore House, he 'obtained a footing as a servant ... being expert at conveying liquor in to the house for keepers to dispose of among the patients'. With 'help and industry' he learnt to read and write and worked his way up to first keeper. When the physician/proprietor died, he married the widow and thus became the owner himself. Left with no physician, Warburton raised the £200 to engage Dr Robert Willis, a distinguished mad-doctor, 'who soon had the wards filled'. Jemmy Davis, the most notorious of the thug-gish keepers employed by Warburton at the Bethnal Green houses exposed by the Select Committee hearings, was quickly promoted to head keeper.

Whether Mitford's account of Warburton is accurate is doubtful. On the other hand - who can guess what Warburton might have swaggered about to Mitford? Apothecary John Rogers' account is a little different in the detail. He has Warburton marrying someone else, but the general theme of a vulgarian promoted by luck and cunning is very much the same. What we know for sure is that Warburton acquired the lease from the De Beauvoir estate, and the ownership of the business, in 1790. Warburton lived in Mare Street, Hackney, a member of the select vestry and a trustee of the poor from 1812 to 1815. By 1823 his attendance was so infrequent, he was disqualified from serving as a trustee, although he continued to serve on Dr Spurstowe's almshouse charity committee. Warburton comes across as a bombastic but canny entrepreneur whose business sense suffocated any finer feelings.



Balmes House: watercolour by C. H. Matthews

Mitford's account describes beatings, sexual abuse of the young and vulnerable, tying up and flogging of the awkward and helpless and generally dehumanising and degrading treatment. Warburton's performance before the Select Committee suggests a puzzled air of pained hurt that anyone should criticise his standards of care. He remained confident of the management of violent lunatics of all classes - violent pauper lunatics could readily be controlled with a leg lock and manacles. Moving round was good for them, so -

if, as is often the case, the lunatic was so bad as to kick at any person he came near, the only restraint put upon him was what I should call hobbles, almost in the manner you would put round a cow when milking...<sup>3</sup>

#### Parliament investigates

Bethnal Green Asylum was in business on the same site continuously for nearly two centuries, from 1727 until 1920. Throughout much of its history it was run as two separate institutions, known as the White House and (next door) the Red House. Thomas Warburton bought the business in 1800 and the asylum rapidly expanded. Almost all City of London parishes, and

many further afield in the south east of England, contracted to send their pauper lunatics there.

The appalling conditions at Bethnal Green were exposed during the Select Committee Inquiry into the State of Madhouses in 1815 and 1816.<sup>4</sup> The physical environment was terrible. If the ramshackle sleeping arrangements provided insufficient beds for the number of bodies, then two must squeeze into one. Both Warburton, and Miles at Hoxton House, would cram three in a bed when under pressure.

More serious criticisms came from the apothecary John Rogers, who was vitriolic about the conditions he and his sister, one of the housekeepers, had witnessed over a period of 13 years. The inquiry hearings, chaired by Lord Seymour, were triggered by the publication of Rogers' pamphlet describing the brutality of the keepers and the degrading regime.<sup>5</sup>

Brutal forced feeding, using objects such as a long spouted 'tea-pot' and a large key to crank open the mouth, smashed front teeth. Rogers said the spout was pushed in too far and food passed down the windpipe: 'Suffocation ensues'. Mrs Hodges, the wife of the vestry clerk for St

Andrew Holborn, had died of incompetent forced feeding by a cack-handed woman keeper, Mary Seal. Pauper patients were left naked on wet straw beds in unheated rooms, soiled straw was unchanged for days; the place was filthy and infested with vermin. The limbs of the frail were 'mortified' by cold and neglect; one woman's foot had to be half amputated. There was unreasonable use of restraint, almost everyone was chained to the bedstead at night. Rogers was sure that Warburton knew of the cruelty.

Warburton's brief response to the apothecary's accusations was 'No further than a direct contradiction to every assertion he has made'. Unmoved, Seymour and his committee painstakingly demolished Warburton's defence in half a page of evidence. Yes, patients tended to throw off their clothing; yes, the rooms were unheated; yes, a lot of patients were wet; yes, that particular patient had a circulation problem caused by paralysis; yes, the head keeper had been dismissed eventually for striking a patient but 'He was a man I had a good opinion of'. Warburton was speedily dismissed from the hearings.

There seems, surprisingly, to have been little change in the Bethnal Green regime following publication of the devastating 1816 Report. Only 11 years later, revelations of further disgraceful conditions triggered the 1827 Select Committee established specifically to investigate conditions at the Bethnal Green asylums.<sup>6</sup> An infirmary room was discovered where 'disgusting objects of humanity' were chained semi-naked to the wall lying in cribs (wooden boxes), the stench of human excrement so offensive that the visiting parish officer 'could not draw breath' and had to withdraw to stop retching. The regime was essentially unchanged from 1815. The beatings had continued.

There was no occupation, no pastimes and barely any medical treatment, certainly no specific treatment for insanity. The visiting apothecary, John Dunston, Warburton's son-in-law, visited twice a week to physick the handful brought to his attention out of the 500 or so inmates. Purgatives were his stock in trade, an unfortunate enthusiasm in an institution without the means to manage incontinence prob-

lems.

Warburton came in person to Select Committee of 1827 to repeat his performance at the 1815 hearings, blustering his way through in a thoroughly unconvincing manner. John Warburton, Thomas's son, asked the committee if he could be heard, thinking no doubt to retrieve some of the damage. He insisted he was not a physician to the Asylum, just a proprietor, so did not visit the patients' rooms very often. The Committee pressed him on why he did not visit the infirmary. It was Dunston's responsibility, he blurted out, dropping his brother-in-law straight in the mire. 20th June 1827 must have been one of the most depressing days of John Warburton's professional career. An ill-rehearsed story left his credibility in shreds.

#### *Towards regulation*

The notoriety of the Bethnal Green houses was instrumental in producing the Act for the Regulation of Madhouses, 1828 that brought in better regulations for resident medical cover, created the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy and introduced some rather complex rules for committing patients to asylums and licensed houses. By 1831, Bethnal Green Asylum had a grand total of 933 patients, the majority paupers. Thomas Warburton died soon after, leaving his physician son John to pick up this overcrowded morass of human suffering, the dilapidated inconvenient buildings, a set of critical annual reports from the new Commissioners, an unenviable public profile but - a very convenient 'but' - a sizeable fortune and a thriving business.

John Warburton was in his 30s when he took over his inheritance, already making a name for himself as physician to St Luke's. He moved in highly respectable circles within his profession, having married the daughter of Abernethy, the flamboyant Barts surgeon. Over the next 15 years, the new national Commissioners in Lunacy believed, Bethnal Green Asylum was transformed into a most remarkable institution, the best in the metropolis. So impressed were they with the transformation that a whole chapter was given over in their Special Report of 1847

to documenting the process of change.

#### *The Miles family and Hoxton House*

London County Council acquired the site of Hoxton House Asylum in 1902 to build a new school. The site is now occupied mainly by Hackney Community College. 34 Hoxton Street, a tall four-storey late 19th century house is the only surviving part of the old asylum. Charles and Mary Lamb had short stays there and James Hadfield, George III's deranged would-be assassin, was lodged with a number of other criminal lunatics from Newgate Prison.

Hoxton House had become an asylum in 1695. The Miles family bought the business in 1715 and extended the capacity in 1756 when Jonathan Miles the elder bought two large houses in Hoxton Street. In 1791, a lucrative contract with the Navy ensured rapid growth and by 1814 there were 500 patients, half parish paupers and most of the rest naval patients. When the Select Committee turned their unforgiving searchlight on the stinking straw rooms, wooden box cribs and squashed 'three in a bed' dormitories, the unfortunate current proprietor was Sir Jonathan Miles junior.

Miles was born in the house and grew up there, inheriting the business from his father in 1772. He expanded the business again in 1784. Miles became a City alderman, Sheriff in 1806, a knight in 1807 and Master of the Painter-Stainers' Company in 1815, the year he appeared before the Select Committee. Miles had been absent for the better part of four years when a Navy Report of 1814, disastrously critical of appalling conditions in Hoxton House, was made public.<sup>7</sup> He began to attend the asylum regularly again, rushing hither and thither rather ineffectually, amending a few procedures, putting right a few inconsequentials, building a partition wall or two but making no fundamental changes to the regime. There is something farcical about Miles's pathetic attempts to tidy the place up and separate the rooms and exercise grounds of the officers from the seamen and other private patients, who were confined randomly together, dirty with clean, officer with tradesman, captain with common sailor.

The fundamental problem at Hoxton House was overcrowding. The inexorable growth in numbers of both navy and parish patients between 1800 and 1815 resulted in bodies crammed cheek by jowl in close oppressive compartments. Staff could not cope with the numbers, and the building could not be further extended on its cramped urban site to accommodate more. Like Warburton, Miles never turned down a patient. He paid Haslam, the Bethlem apothecary, an annual retainer of £100 to recommend incurable patients from Bethlem. The use of leg manacles, handcuffs, chains and strait-jackets became routine at Hoxton, allowing a handful of staff to watch over an immobilised gaggle. The shambolic conditions were more the result of poor management and thoughtless ignorance than the cruel sadism found at Warburton's.

Miles's rather badly-executed portrait, donated by him in 1815 when he became Master, hangs in a corner of the court room in the Painter-Stainers' livery hall. The picture is of a youngish Regency fop, perhaps in his 30s or 40s, blonde quiff, ruddy self-indulgent fleshy cheeks, hooded eyes and a vacant, self satisfied expression which may owe more to bad art than bad character but fits well with the not very bright absentee landlord found by the Select Committee.<sup>8</sup>

#### *Standing for Parliament*

The best clues to the younger Miles's personality lie in the saga of his attempts to win a parliamentary seat. Having first stood for Barnstaple and been trounced, he was approached by a Cornish publican by the name of Middlecoat who offered to bring him to Parliament in the elections of 1806 for the safe Whig seat of Tregony (one of the rotten boroughs), for a fee to defray election expenses of 4000 guineas. Unfortunately, in the event, this didn't prove sufficient to cover Middlecoat's burgeoning expenses; Miles paid out 'a large sum in notes to make up the doceurs (sic) agreed upon'. Election day produced a magnificent majority Whig poll for Miles and his co-candidate John Nichols, but curiously the returning officer,



*Burrows': a watercolour by T.H. Shepherd*

Mayor Joseph Hannah, found 'all the good votes rejected and all the bad ones admitted for the opponents'. Miles was induced to pursue the blackguard Hannah and protested against the victors Wentworth and O'Callaghan taking up their seats. He got leave from Parliament to submit evidence of improper electoral practice. The ever-helpful Middlecoat suggested he employ a Truro solicitor, Edwards. Another £2,500 was handed over to prepare his case. Edwards engaged two eminent but pricey London lawyers, Thomas Plumer and Serjeant James Pell, to put the case. The day of the hearing was fixed; neither Middlecoat nor Edwards turned up. There were no other witnesses prepared. Parliament dismissed the case and the victorious two took their seats. Middlecoat, Hannah and Edwards were between them over £10,000 richer. The House of Commons Journal<sup>9</sup> accepted that 'the returning officer had been guilty of most corrupt partiality in favour of Wentworth and O'Callaghan'. Miles didn't risk standing for Parliament again.

Miles did not lose his licence for the asylum as a result of the 1827 Inquiry. The naval lunatics were not removed. Miles already had his knighthood and even posterity was kind to him - the archives of the Painter-Stainers' Company list him as a 'gentleman' and until 1997 had no record of his connection to the mad trade. Miles lived in his later years at Castlebar House and Park in Ealing, and died sometime before 3 May 1824.

Hoxton House Asylum continued to provide care for some paupers from all over the south of England, just as Bethnal Green Asylum did, for many years after the Lunatics Act of 1845. It closed finally in 1902.

#### *Mrs Burrows of Holly House*

Generally referred to as Mrs Burrows', sometimes spelt Burroughs', Holly House was owned by John Burrows who ran the business jointly with his wife Esther. After his death, their son George William Burrows joined the business and appeared in the official returns as proprietor; but

the institution was always referred to locally by his mother's name.

The buildings of Holly House were three separate houses in Hare Walk off Hoxton Street. The visiting surgeon was the Shoreditch parish medical officer James Parkinson, now famous for the 'shaking palsy' he first described which is named after him. Parkinson would have walked past Holly House on the route home (he lived in Hoxton Square) from St Leonard's Shoreditch Workhouse, where he was surgeon to the workhouse infirmary.<sup>10</sup> In 1819 Mrs Burrows had 119 patients; the house expanded to accommodate 140 in the 1830s before it closed. Of these 100 were paupers, a quarter to a third belonging to St Leonard's Shoreditch and the rest to other parishes all over London and the south of England. A Bedfordshire overseer wrote to Theed Pearse, Clerk to the Bedford Asylum Visitors: 'Sir, We have a Woman by the Name of Jane Webster wich is at Mrs Burrows at Oxten wich we intend to send to the Silom at Bedford as soon as she can conveniently be Gott Down'.<sup>11</sup>

Burrows' is not so well described as the other Hoxton licensed houses because it avoided being the object of complaints brought to the attention of the Select Committees of 1815/6 and 1827. There is some evidence that it was for a time at least a rather better institution than the Hoxton madhouses owned by Warburton and Miles. It is referred to several times in the Select Committee minutes of evidence, but only in passing. Both Miles and Warburton were asked if they had visited Burrows; neither had. Mrs Burrows was then charging 11 shillings a week for pauper lunatics; Miles was asked why he only charged eight shillings, the implication being that he was too cheap compared with Burrows; even Warburton was charging 10s at Bethnal Green. Miles had no explanation.

Since Burrows' was the most expensive of the local private licensed houses that admitted parish paupers, the parish trustees of the poor of St Leonards became concerned about the rising costs of their placements.<sup>12</sup> There were 22 paupers out-posted there from the workhouse in January 1815, so the Trustees sent a party of four,

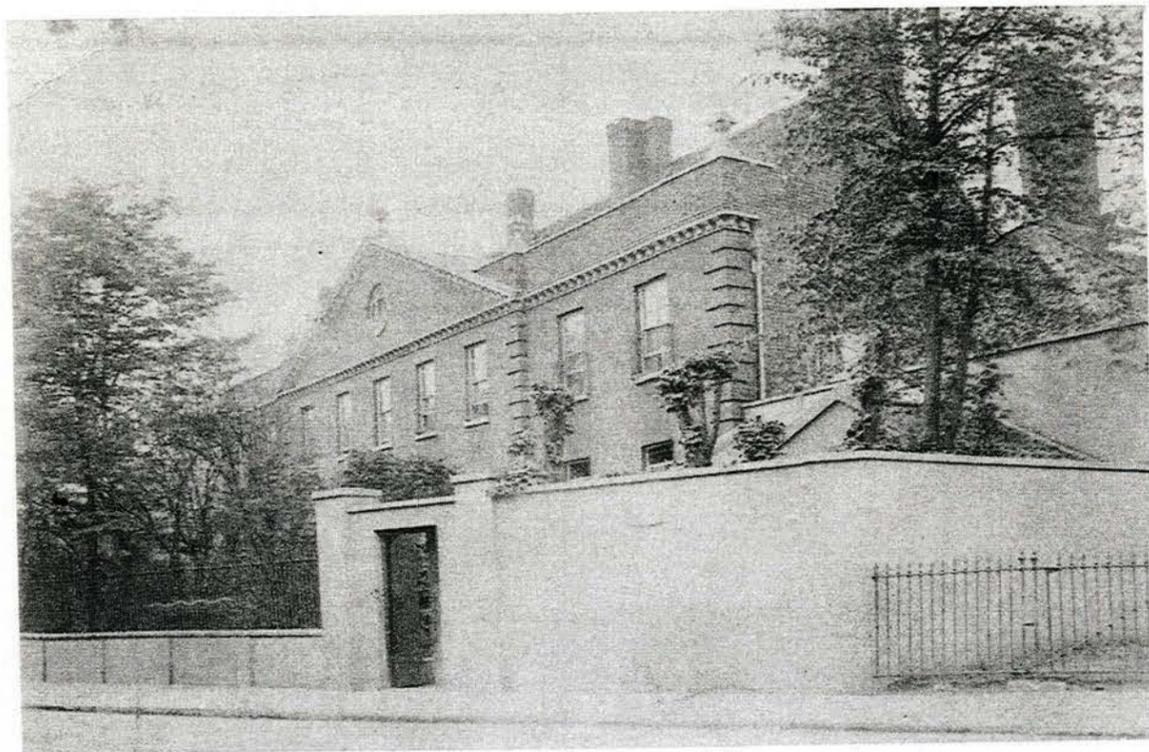
with James Parkinson, to visit Burrows', to reassure themselves that the cost was justified.<sup>13</sup> They continued to send patients there so presumably they accepted the cost.

Edward Wakefield, a radical land agent who had visited Burrows' on one of his many reconnaissances of Hoxton madhouses in pursuit of his campaign for improvements, found it not much different from the other pauper houses in appearance; and the patients were chained at night.<sup>14</sup> In 1824, after Mrs Burrows' death, the Commissioners also complained bluntly 'this house is much out of repair and ill-managed'.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, the two St Pancras Guardians of the Poor, whose horrifying observations of conditions at Bethnal Green had triggered the Committee of Inquiry in 1827, thought conditions at Burrows' considerably better than at Bethnal Green.<sup>16</sup> It looks as if Holly House was marginally the best among a bad bunch, though it probably deteriorated after Esther Burrows' death. It closed in 1837.

#### *Brooke House*

While the pauper madhouses flourished on income from the public parish purse, Hackney and its surrounding hamlets was home to a number of fee-paying private establishments. Brooke House, for example, at the junction of Lower Clapton Road and Brooke Road, was the flagship asylum of the medical Monro family of mad-doctors. A grand mansion, sadly torn down after bomb damage in the Second World War,<sup>17</sup> Brooke House was in a neighbourhood losing its aristocratic cachet when it was sold to James Monro in 1758 specifically for institutional use as an asylum.

The Monros have been described as a 'veritable dynasty'<sup>18</sup> of visiting physicians to Bethlem, the hospital for the insane, which in the early nineteenth century was sited at Moorfields in the City. The post was passed down through five generations. They combined their visiting appointment at Bethlem with private enterprise at Brooke House and several other licensed madhouses at Clapham and Clerkenwell. The dynasty began with James Monro in 1728; his great-grandson Edward Thomas Monro ended



*Brooke House, seen in 1903*

it in the late 1850s when he was himself confined as a lunatic in his own madhouse.<sup>19</sup>

None of the Monros emerges with great distinction.<sup>20</sup> Thomas Monro, who was the proprietor-physician to Brooke House at the beginning of the 19th century was possibly more interested in water-colour painting than in pursuing his family's practice or attending to his duties as physician to Bethlem. A great patron of water-colour artists, Monro founded round about 1794 what was called 'the Monro Academy', whose members included J. M. W. Turner. Monro was required to put in a brief appearance at Bethlem only twice a week, and attend a regular weekly meeting one other day, leaving him plenty of time to pursue a lucrative private practice. Day to day superintendence at Brooke House was provided by the resident Misses Pettingall.<sup>21</sup> While the Commissioners' usual description of their visits every six months between 1829 and 31 was 'house in good order', Paternoster, writing in 1841, described Brooke House as follows:

The house is an old-fashioned dilapidated sort of place, to which a modern front has been attached, which fails to give any idea of what the interior is. The situation is low and damp, and devoid of any prospect. Immediately behind the house is a grass plot of about thirty paces square, surrounded by a high wall. This, with the exception of the gravel walk round it, was entirely under water. Beyond was an extensive kitchen garden in which the female prisoners...were allowed to walk....Not one foot of pleasure garden, no flowers, no shady walks, no seats, nothing whatever pretty or agreeable.

Thomas Monro took a fairly cavalier approach to treatment of patients at Bethlem. Coming under heavy fire from the Select Committee of 1815 inquiring into conditions at Bethlem, Monro was asked 'Would you treat a private individual patient at your own house in the same way as has been described in respect of Bethlem?' He replied 'Certainly not!' 'Why is not the restraint by chains and fetters in your private house?' 'There is such a number of servants there is no occasion; I have forty odd patients and as many servants.' 'You have stated that chains and fetters are fit only for pauper luna-

tics; what do you mean by that answer?' 'I mean of course that pauper lunatics of course cannot pay for the regular attendance to prevent their doing mischief; and there are so few servants kept for this purpose but it is the only mode of restraining them.'<sup>22</sup>

Monro confessed to having little faith in medicines, treatments were largely determined by the seasons and habit:

In the months of May, June, July, August and September we generally administer medicines, we do not do so in the winter season because the house is so excessively cold that it is not thought proper...We apply generally bleeding, purging, and vomit; those are the general remedies we apply.....and after they have been bled they take vomits once a week for a certain number of weeks, after that we purge the patients....That has been the practice invariably for years, long before my time; it was handed down to me by my father, and I do not know any better practice.

I really do not depend a vast deal upon medicine; I do not think medicine is the sheet anchor; it is more by management that those patients are cured than by medicine; ...if I am obliged to make that public I must do so.

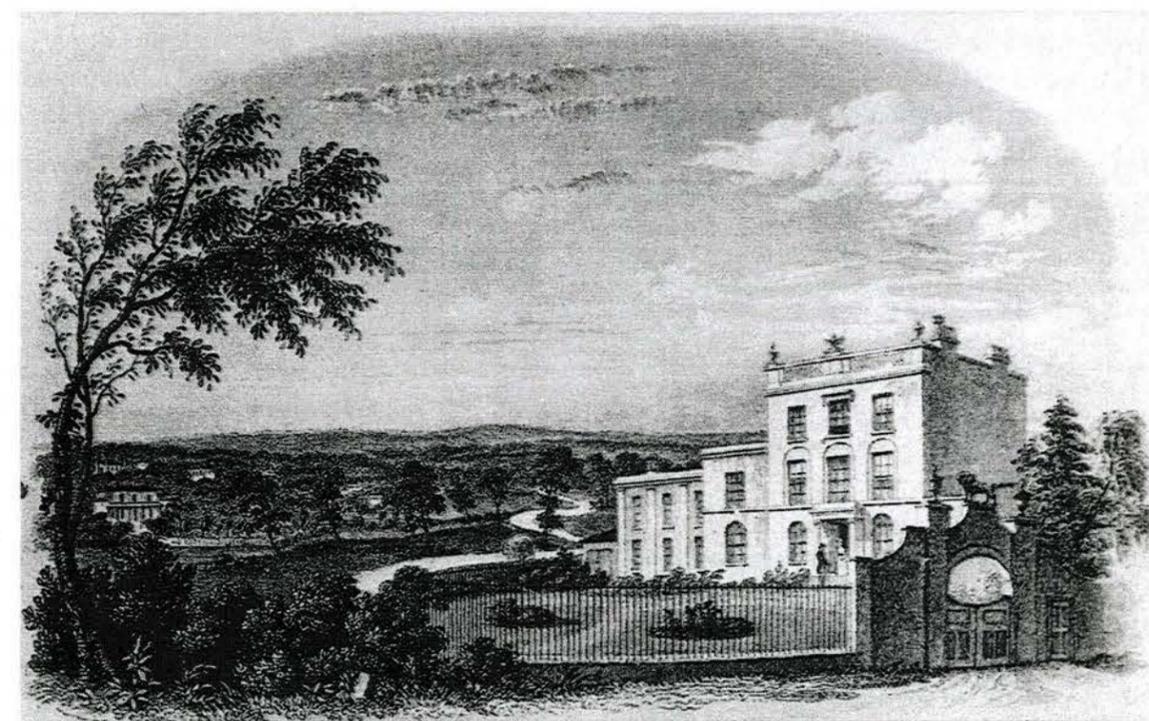
After E. T. Monro's death the proprietorship of the licensed house passed to another Monro, a solicitor. He went into partnership with the

'talented and genial' Dr Adams, 'a thoroughly practical medical man', who served as resident physician up to the 1890s.<sup>23</sup> Brooke House continued as a private asylum until the Second World War.

#### *Fee-paying patients*

The kindly Samuel Fox and his wife ran another asylum called London House in London Lane, from 1813 to 1822 but moved their business to the splendid Northumberland House, in Green Lanes, near Manor House, selling it on to Mr and Mrs Richard Birkett in 1829.<sup>24</sup> London House was acquired by a Dr. Oxley who also in 1851 took over a small asylum in Mare Street, Hackney called Grove House. It is possible that London House and Grove House were contiguous houses on the corner of London Lane and Mare Street.

Edward Francis Tuke MD lived at Sidney House, Hackney Wick briefly from 1828 to 1833, using his home as a licensed house for five patients of independent means. He moved his home and his business to Chiswick in 1833, establishing a larger licensed house for wealthy clients, becoming part of a west London circle



*Northumberland House, Green Lanes*

of intermarried mad-doctoring families.<sup>25</sup>

Dr George Rees' private madhouse Pembroke House, Mare Street, Hackney,<sup>26</sup> very close to London House and Grove House, became the largest private asylum in the metropolis which did not admit pauper patients; there were 99 places by 1846.<sup>27</sup> The East India Company contracted with Pembroke House to provide treatment and continuing care for European Company employees whose insanity developed during their service in the East.

#### Concluding remarks

Partially eclipsed first by the establishment of voluntary lunatic hospitals and asylums in the last half of the 18th century, the mad trade was dismembered by the burgeoning County Lunatic Asylums ushered in by the mandatory 1845 Lunatics Acts. However, independent private and voluntary enterprise was not superseded by public provision until much later in the 19th century. Campaigners for the public system made much of the horrors of private madhouses. Some private 'licensed houses' were indeed atrocious, particularly those of Thomas Warburton, but many were respectable and kindly institutions. Hackney contained both the best and worst of the very mixed provision for mentally disordered people that characterised a flourishing service industry in 19th century England.

#### Notes

- Balmes House is described in E. Robinson, *Lost Hackney*, 34-35 and P. Metcalf and K. Sugden (1997) 3 *Hackney History*, 3-8.
- Anonymous (J. Mitford) *Crimes and Horrors in the Interior of Warburton's Private Mad House at Hoxton (currently called Whitmore House)*, 1825.
- Select Committee for the Better Regulation of Madhouses, Parliamentary Papers (PP) 1814-15 (296) IV, 801. Minutes of Evidence 1815. First Report PP 1816 (227) VI, 249.
- Select Committee for the Better Regulation of Madhouses in England. Minutes of Evidence, Hearings of 1814-15. PP (296) IV, 801; First Report PP 1816 (227) VI, 249.
- J. W. Rogers, *A Statement of the Cruelties, Abuses and Frauds which are practiced in Madhouses* (1815). (Tower Hamlets Local History Library).
- Select Committee on Pauper Lunatics and Lunatic Asylums in the County of Middlesex PP 1826-1827 (557) VI, 75.
- Report of the Inspector of Naval Hospitals (Weir's Report). Remarks on the Management of Sick Officers, Seamen and Marine belonging to Her Majesty's Naval Service and of Such Prisoners of War as are committed to the House of Messrs Miles and Co of Hoxton for the Cure of Mental Derangement,

- 13 November 1812, quoted in Papers Relating to Management of Insane Officers and Seamen in HM Naval Service, PP 1813-14 (346) XII, 365.
8. His father presented a silver punch bowl to the Company inscribed with his name.
9. Vol 62, 12.
10. There is a plaque on 1 Hoxton Square marking the site of the house where Parkinson lived.
11. B. Cashman, *A Proper House: Bedford Lunatic Asylum 1812-1860* (1992), 29.
12. £96. 18s 0d for the Michaelmas quarter 1814. St Leonard's parish, minutes of the trustees of the poor, 3 November 1814, LMA, P91/LEN/11.
13. ib.
14. Select Committee on Madhouses 1815, 4th Report, 19.
15. ib.
16. Select Committee on Pauper Lunatics in Middlesex 1827 Minutes of Evidence, 184-186.
17. Brooke House is described in Robinson, *Lost Hackney*.
18. For an account of the Monros, see A. Scull, C. Mackenzie, N. Hervey, *Masters of Bedlam: the Transformation of the Mad-Doctoring Trade*. Princeton, N. J. (1996), 15, 17. See also numerous references to John, James, Thomas, Henry and E T Monro in the same work.
19. N. Hervey, PhD. thesis, Bristol University, 1997: 'The Lunacy Commission 1845-1860 with special reference to the implementation of policy in Kent and Surrey'.
20. J. Andrews, A. Briggs, R. Porter, P. Tucker and K. Waddington, *The History of Bethlem* (1998), chs. 23, 25 and pp. 269, 273ff, 446. See also Thomas Monro's evidence to Select Committee on Madhouses 1815, Minutes of Evidence 90.
21. Reports of the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy, May 1829-November 1831: PRO HO44/51 f1-f18.
22. Select Committee on Madhouses 1815, Minutes of Evidence 93, 95, 99f.
23. Adams was described by his 'good friend' Benjamin Clarke in *Glimpses of Ancient Hackney and Stoke Newington* (1894, 1986), 208.
24. P. Gosnell, *Northumberland House Green Lanes* (1962) (at HAD).
25. I. Watson, 'A House at Hackney Wick', (1995) 1 *Hackney History*, 25.
26. W. Ernst, *Asylum Provision and the East India Company in the nineteenth century*, (1998) *Medical History* 42, 476-502.
27. W. Ll. Parry Jones, *The Trade in Lunacy: a study of private madhouses in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries* (1992) 43.

## 'DELINEATIONS OF HOME SCENERY' or THE LYRICAL COMMUTER

*William Fox and C. H. Matthews*

#### Editor's note

On a summer day in July 1800, William Fox, resident in or near Hackney Grove (the neighbourhood now of Hackney Town Hall) went for a stroll in the fields near his home (or, as he put it himself, 'contiguous to my habitation'). When he returned, his exuberant description of the natural beauty that surrounded Hackney village gave rise to teasing, not to say ridicule, on the part of a lady guest of the family, who sarcastically upbraided him for praise of an unworthy subject: "What of Sylvan, or of rustic beauty could be anywhere found at a distance of not more than three miles from the metropolis, within the din of its noises and the very smoke of its chimnies?"

Fox was stung into verse. If Pope could lyricise about a mere lock of hair, then what made Hackney an unworthy subject? Cowper had celebrated the landscape in which he found himself.

Britain has little less picturesque beauty and romantic scenery than Attica and Campania - the lakes, the dales, Wye Severn and Isis, the banks of the Thames near Richmond, the woody scenes of Norbury.

In the following year Fox published a slim volume, *La Bagatella*,<sup>1</sup> or, *Delineations of Home*

*Scenery*, describing his walk, of a morning, to his place of business in Finsbury, and his return in the afternoon, followed by meditation in his study and a further ramble amongst the Hackney fields and commons. Throughout, flights of verse take him sideways to Canonbury and Kenwood, and footnotes (more extensive than the text) earnestly draw parallels between the Middlesex landscapes of his day and the Italian landscapes amongst which he had travelled, as a young man on the 'grand tour', and in spirit, in his study of the classics.

With the hope of conveying somewhat of interest to scenes and objects, that many will consider as possessing no attractions in themselves, I wrote the following poem, which if destitute of every other merit, at least possessed the charm, in the composition of it, of strewing with flowers the dull, diurnal path of its author.

In the 1850s the artist C. H. Matthews painted an anachronistic, and doubtless romanticised, series of watercolours to illustrate Fox's perambulations.<sup>2</sup> One of these (page 33), known as 'Mr Fox going home to his dinner', has become a familiar illustration of the brickfields surrounding the Kingsland Road. It and others of the series, are now in the London Metropolitan Archives. One, depicting an array of wheeled ve-



The inscription on this watercolour describes the scene as Love Lane (now part of Cecilia Road); it appears to be envisaged from the north, looking towards Dalston and the distant brickfields

hicles near Kingsland Crescent (p. 31), is in Hackney Archives. Necessarily, the pictures are not strong eye-witness evidence. Matthews, even more than Fox, is a shadowy figure, and we do not even know whether he had been born when the poem was written. He is depicting Hackney - and Hoxton - as they *may* have been half a century before he worked, and is not likely to have seen the settings his figures are made to inhabit at the time they purport to show.

To get the full flavour of Fox's work (and for some charming miniature woodcuts) it is necessary to look at the complete volume, which is on microfilm at Hackney Archives. Here however for the first time extracts from the verse, chosen for their topographical interest, and several of Matthews's illustrations, are published in parallel.

**Morning**

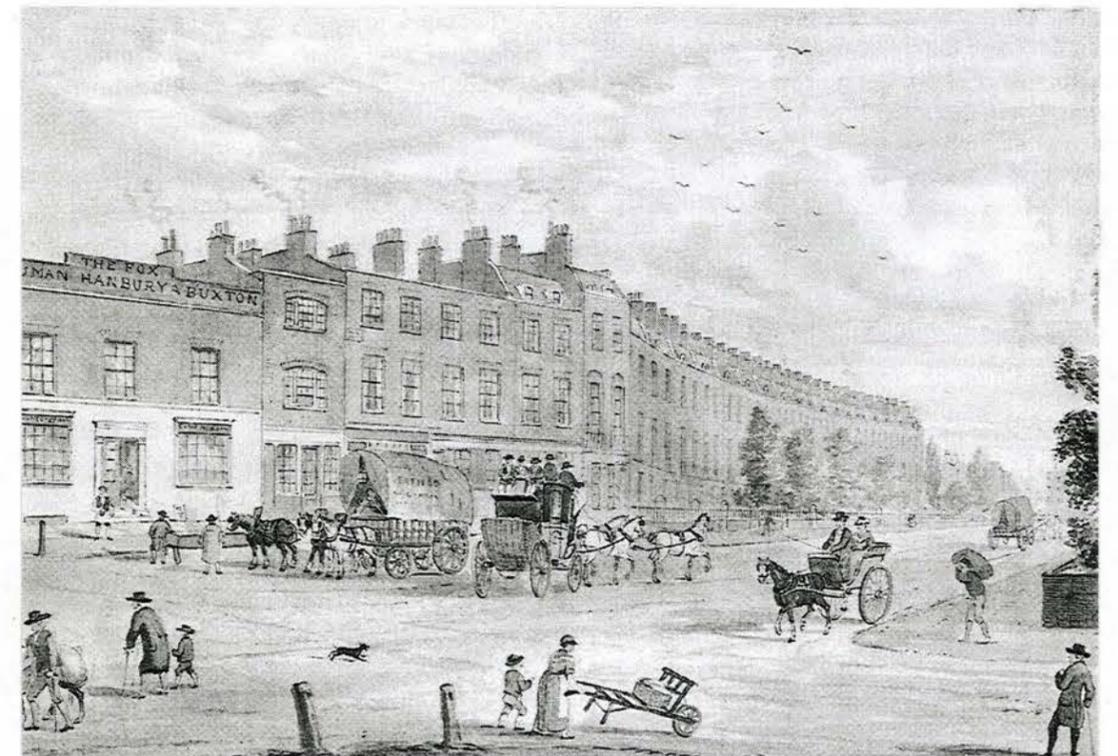
Now by young-springing corn I pass, and o'er  
A rugged unaccommodating stile  
(The terror of our fair) whence gently winds  
My fav'rite wand'ring path, the meads along.  
Close at its side the streamlet murmurs on,  
By dropping willows shaded, and o'erhung  
By spreading elders, whose low-bending boughs  
In the cool water dip their fragrant flowers.

Pendant with night-fall'n dew the early grass  
Drips o'er the path, or in the sunny stream  
As chrystal sparkles on an emerald stem.  
On either hand the flower-enamelled meads  
Swell with the varied blossoms of the spring -  
The modest daisy, the wild marigold  
The deep-red poppy and the yellow orchis  
With variegated tints enrich the green.  
Oh, how I love to stop and loiter there  
On the green bench, beneath the willow tree  
To list the trembling of the water by,  
To watch the herd that in the meadow graze  
Or track the labourer to his morning toil.  
Or, if my vagrant eye should rove so far  
To tell the turrets of the distant town,  
Pleased with the space that rolls twixt them and me!  
Hence, oft as turns my path, I backward turn  
To spy at intervals our village tower  
Just peeping forth twixt yonder aged elms.  
In this lone path the foot of passenger  
I seldom meet, save one good careful dame  
Who, as the morning punctual, tends her charge,  
A ruddy blooming child on either hand  
To daily school. - 'Good morrow! sir, she cries,  
With curtsey dropp'd. 'Good morrow' I rejoin,  
And onward each our destin'd journey wind.  
Far to the right the nursery extends,<sup>3</sup>  
The school of plants, where, as in other schools  
Scions are form'd, and cultur'd for the world,  
Rear'd but to be remov'd to stranger soils

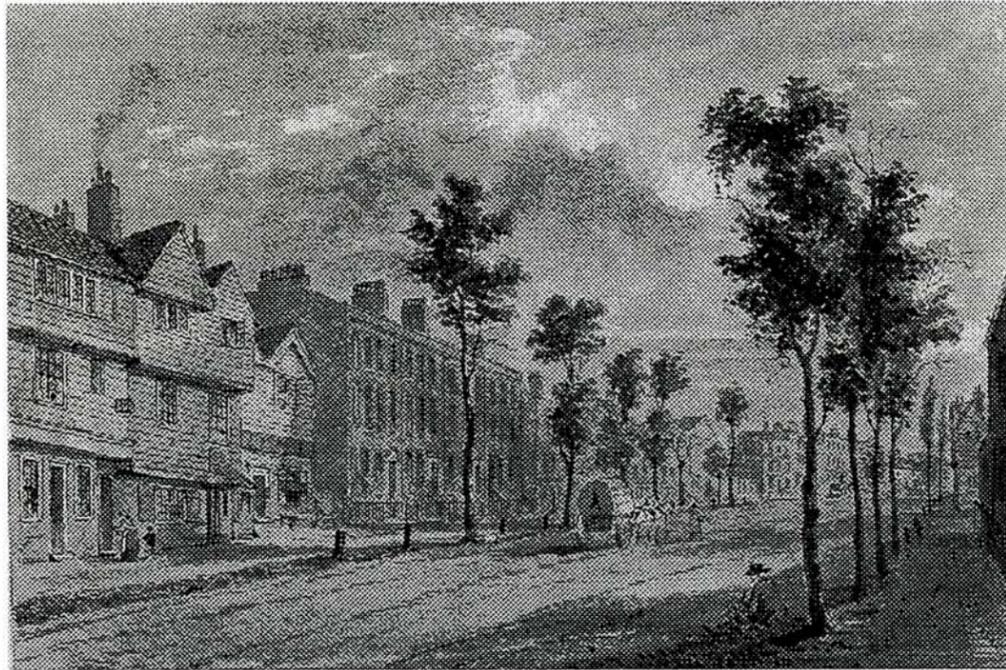
The greater part condemn'd, alas! by fate  
To droop and die in yonder sickly town...  
... I turn me now  
Along the rough inbeaten summer track,  
Traffick'd alone from the near grounds to bear  
The harvest load, where the deep rut forbids  
The winter passage. Here th'unsheltered fields  
Extend to many a distant acre round,  
Green with the spiral shoots of springing corn.  
This rude untrodden path I joy to tread,  
For pleasant thoughts it oft had conjur'd up  
Of grassy lanes in country, lone and wild,  
Deep rutted, plashy, and that poorly serve  
To link the hamlet to the distant town,  
O'er which the farmer with his sturdy team  
To weekly market drives the pond'rous load;  
Or where with dairy treasures richly charged  
Forth on old *gray* his thrifty housewife goes.  
Onward I press towards yonder scatter'd pile<sup>4</sup>  
Where now the long brick wall in ruin hangs  
Whilome the falling mansions honour'd bound.  
Perhaps, for history is silent here,  
And we may guess at will - perhaps some cit,  
Grown wealthy, here retir'd in peace, to pass  
His latter days. Some courtier here, perchance,  
Erst liv'd in pomp, and feats, and revelry.  
How alter'd now the scene! How changed the fate!  
Where late the chateau rear'd its gaudy head  
Where spread the gay saloon, or painted hall,

And where the corridor, stretched far along  
Echoing to festive song, or footing dance,  
Now but a wretched, naked ruin shows!  
Where pauses oft the passenger to trace  
The deep foundations of the antique pile!  
The summer bower, the only relic spar'd  
From the rude grasp of Time's relentless hand  
Now, for a home, yon squalid labourer serves.  
Where erst the garden lay, with flowers o'erstrawn,  
A fragrant wilderness of thousand sweets,  
None wander now, save, to their lonesome shed,  
The sun-burnt brickman, with his screaming child,  
Mean, dirty, wretched, beggarly and poor.

But hence to yonder crowded way I turn  
Now half obscur'd by clouds of gathering dust,  
From foot of horse, or frequent carriage driv'n.  
The punctual stage, the crouded caravan,  
Light curricle, or close-pack'd one-horse chair,  
The cockney spark goading his worn-down hack,  
The sandman with his ass, the loaded barrow,  
Each, with the dust half-choak'd, the other  
drives,  
And press, with posting haste, to yonder town.  
I cross, and 'twixt a range of tenements,  
Filthy and mean, to moping Hoxton<sup>5</sup> come,  
Dull, melancholy place, where the tall trees,  
And uncouth buildings - massy, old and drear,  
With fancies quaint oppress the passenger.



'The punctual stage, the crouded caravan, light curricle...' Fox's observations of 1800 envisioned by Matthews in 1852.



'Moping Hoxton....dull, melancholy place, where the tall trees... oppress'

Where yet, e'en the usages of antique time,  
And customs that, in villages remote,  
Long since were exil'd, still are sacred held.

Here, at the well-known shop, where beards  
are mown

Clean for a penny, politicians meet  
To settle state - and family-affairs;  
To curse, for rise of bread, the new lord-mayor;  
To curse the minister, 'cause Heav'n ordain'd  
That torrent-rains our last year's crops should

spoil.

Passing the porch, I sometimes have espy'd  
(As the well-lathered chin expectant turn'd,  
Waiting the stroke) the master, strapping slow,  
With still returning hand the razor, whilst  
He, to his customer, the pleasant tale  
Told, with big emphasis, and strong assurance.  
Meanwhile the hungry 'prentice by his side  
With pewter bason standing, curses oft  
The lengthen'd story, that this cruelly  
Him from his near-ey'd breakfast keeps so long.  
The checker'd shutter here, in lieu of sign,  
Shows where "neat wines" are sold, and to beguile  
The passenger to loiter on his way  
On either side the door a bench invites,  
Where the cool tankard he may sip at ease.  
The chandler's, where in broken windows lie  
Commodities of ev'ry medlied class,  
Whether to eat, or drink, for use, or wear,

Shews on its front, in plain broad characters,  
That "Ladies are genteely taught within".  
This senseless town no noises e'er disturb,  
Save when the baker, at the hour of noon,  
By sound of bell, to neighbours round proclaims  
His oven waits; or now and then, perchance,  
"Dust ho!" dreams slowly on the dreary road.  
Hence, down a new-built street, late dignified  
By Gloster's name, I turn me, and pursue,  
To yonder terrac'd town, my easy walk.  
There, lightly borne upon the western breeze,  
Oft have I heard, and oft times stay'd to hear  
The notes of swelling horn, by learner blown,  
Now indistinct and low, now clanging loud.  
To me there is 'sweet magic in those sounds'  
And to far distant scenes and distant years  
Quick they transport my fancy, wand'ring wild.

I turn - to where, along the ingrate stream,  
Yon close-built populous village stretches far.  
Whither the convalescent oft repairs  
To breathe, or where the new-made mother goes  
With babe and nurse, from chamber close and warm  
In solemn cavalcade, fresh air to seek.  
Old Iseldon, tho' scarce, in modern song,  
Nam'd but in scorn, may boast of honour'd days...

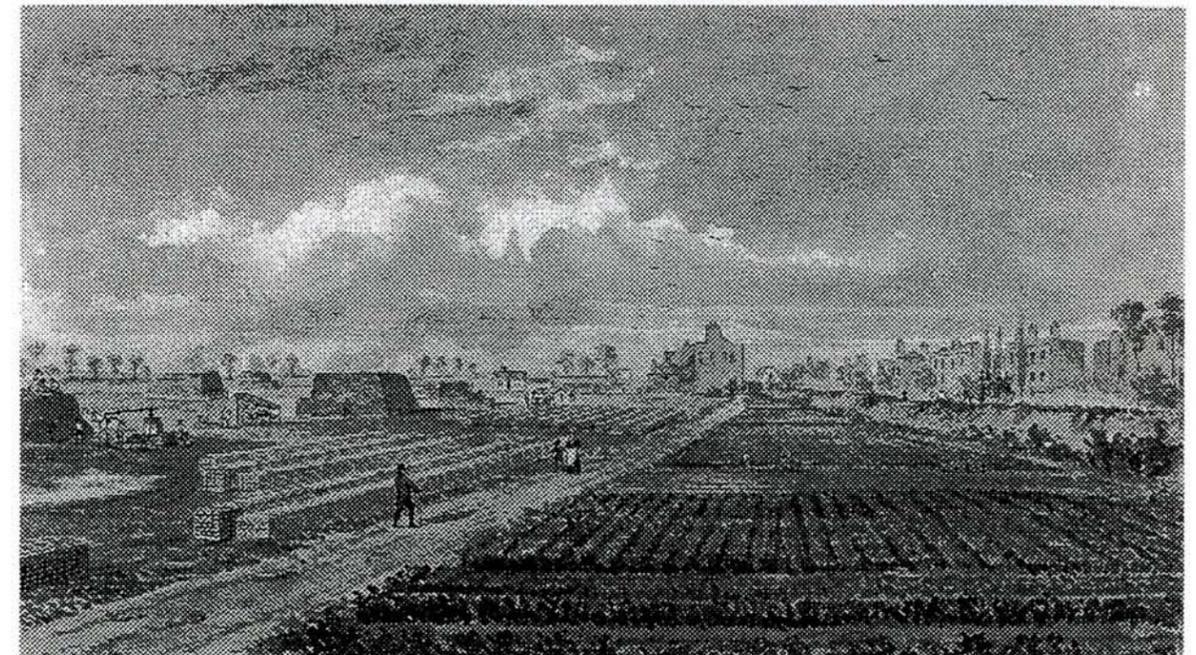
Let those of cities tell, that cities love;  
The country, and the rural scene, be mine...

Afternoon

The busy duties of the morning done<sup>6</sup>  
Homeward I turn, nor undelighted leave  
For quiet walks, and daisy-cover'd meads  
The bustling cares of this devoted town.  
First the broad square of Finsbury I cross  
Erst a wild moor, now populous and grand...

Yon massy gateway, that the sculptor's art,  
A venerable pair hath doom'd to guard,  
Beckons my steps to where the ponderous pile,  
On Tuscan colonnade supported firm.<sup>7</sup>  
Within its charitable roof receives  
The aged poor. Hither, when worn with care,  
Or, by the weight of many a year, press'd down,  
To pass his winter-life, the old man comes.  
The well-known tinkling of he chapel bell  
Across the distant streets full oft I hear,  
Sounding the summons to the mid-day prayers.  
Then forth, in flowing gown, all duly clad,  
Out from their quiet cells the suppliants come,  
And, by the cool arcades, with sluggard pace,  
And tottering step, creep to the house of prayer.  
Happy old men! from earth-born cares set free,  
And I this still asylum, stealing slow,  
Resign'd, yet cheerful, to the peaceful grave!  
Now Gloster's airy terrace<sup>8</sup> follows nigh,  
Whence, on the distant slope, majestic shews  
Old Canonbury's tower, an ancient pile...

Far onwards now, and where the path-way winds  
Bold to the view, stands the once-fam'd abode  
Of plump lord-mayor, and oft-prais'd civic cheer,  
The seat of loyal Whitmore - Good old man!  
Who, for his duty to his king, prefer'd  
To pass, in prison-house, his lonesome hours..<sup>9</sup>  
Far other uses now the mansion claim,  
And where the music and the banquet cheer'd,  
Now mopes the maniac wretch the live-long day,  
And clanks his chain, and weeps, and laughs aloud.  
Thro' deep-sunk meadows next my path-way leads,  
And lowlands, where of life, our second staff,  
The poor man's stay, is cultur'd and matur'd..<sup>10</sup>  
An odious range of brick-clamps to the left  
Offends the sense - the poison of our fields;  
Whilst to the right the high-rais'd public way  
Of Haarlem's dyke,<sup>11</sup> the faithful image shews.  
Thro' clouds of gather'd dust - resemblance faint  
To Afric's marching sands,<sup>12</sup> quickly I press,  
And cross our willow grounds, my walk pursue.  
Here where the spiral corn late feebly sprang,  
Now wave the fields, and to the reapers, yield  
The harvest-load. The busy throng are gay,  
And, tho' the sultry sun, from every pore,  
Chase the big drops down the labourer's cheek,  
Still, light of heart, he sings, nor recks the toil.  
Whilst, near at hand, his faithful mastiff guards  
His thrown-off coat, and thirst-allaying flask.  
Faint and oppress'd beneath the fervid beams,  
That now o'er all their hottest influence shed,



'An odious range of brick clamps to the west offends the sense, the poison of our fields....' Kingsland Road, looking north.

With gladsome heart I greet the well-known bench,  
 Where oft, as now, in noon-tide heat I sit,  
 To rest and fan me by the willow-shade.  
 Lur'd by thy sweets, full oft, with London friends,  
 Twixt dinner-hour and tea, we hither stroll  
 To toss the new-cut grass, or sit at ease,  
 Watching the meadow-sports, and the sweet air  
 Inhale, with thousand fragrant flowers embalm'd.  
 Oft-times too, with my own contracted group,  
 With Harriet and our little ones, I rove,  
 In playful mood, this winding path along.  
 Exulting I behold my darling boy,  
 My much-lov'd Frederick, o'er his hobby stride,  
 Calling on brother George his joy to share.

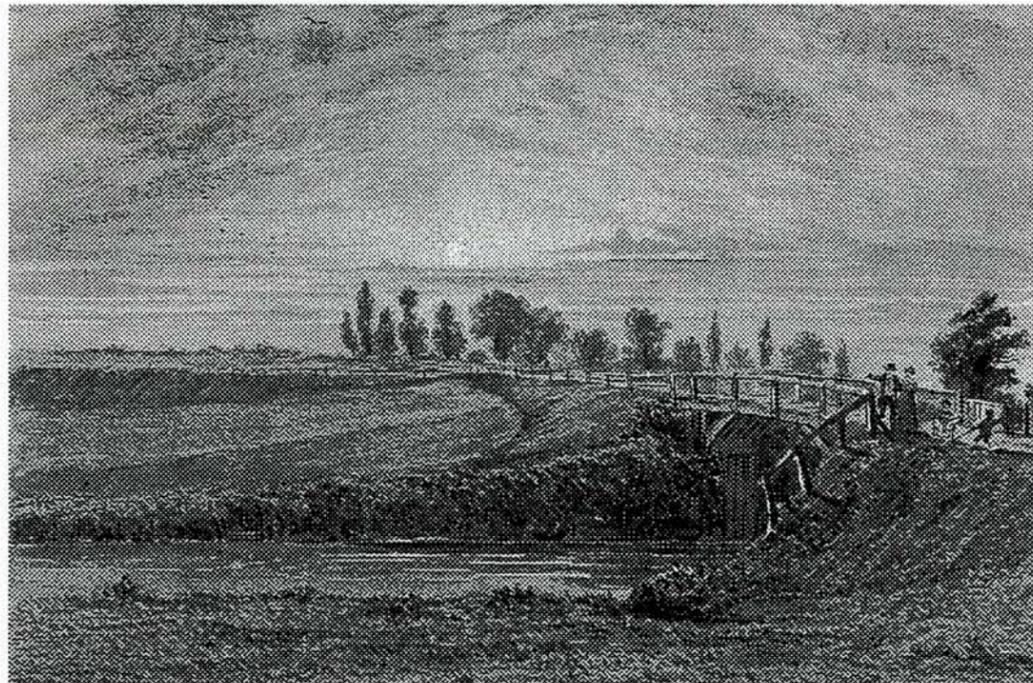
Now slowly down the path I wend my way  
 O'er the rough stile - and, by the narrow bridge  
 That cross the streamlet leads, whence our old tower  
 Invites me - faithful landmark - to my home.  
 The close-pent hedge-row, whether the light breeze

That tempers these hot hours, no entrance finds;  
 And the low humming of the summer fly,  
 In Fancy's ear, assists the sultry gleam -  
 This sweltering pathway to my garden-gate  
 Leads me at length, where joyfully I turn  
 My little latch, jaded, oppress'd and faint.  
 Small is the circuit of my garden's range,  
 But yet the little spot is mine - and oft  
 O'er the broad walk, at dawn, or summer eve

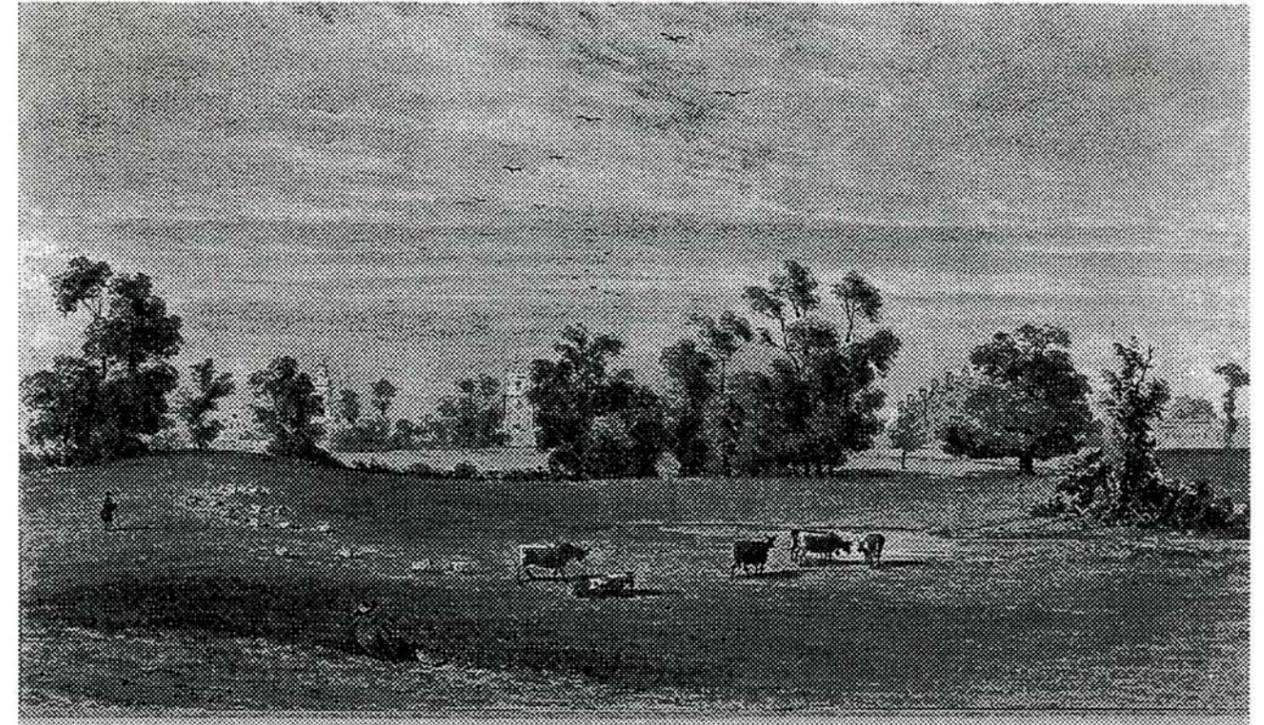
I love to pace me to and fro, and breathe  
 The grateful odour of the new-blown flowers.  
 Here too, beneath the trunk of yon old elm,  
 Frequent I stand to watch the moonbeams play,  
 As thro' the branches, with light-rustling sound,  
 The night breeze gently quivers o'er my head.  
 Now to the temperate meal - for temperate meal  
 Is all that I require - in haste I turn.  
 Hence quick I steal me to my favourite haunt,  
 My library...

*When his sight is tired, he is tempted out of doors,  
 'allur'd by summer scenes', to Dalston and Shacklewell.*

To Dorlestone's shaded path I turn me then  
 Across the brook, and by my favourite bench  
 Linger, to gaze upon the old gray tower  
 By the red glare of setting sun illum'd.  
 At such an hour, methinks, how grateful 'tis  
 Through some old minster's Gothic walls to steal...  
 Thence to the near lone village<sup>13</sup> next I pass  
 Mean hamlet now, tho' once the chosen seat  
 Of many a noble, many an honour'd one.  
 Here rose the mansion of pomp-loving Rowe,  
 And here Cecilia - More's accomplish'd child,  
 In peaceful stillness pass'd her morn of life,  
 And many a name beside, of worth and note  
 Dwelt here - tho' vainly now, alas! I seek  
 Some remnant ruin, where the buildings rose -  
 Such are the ruthless ravages of time -  
 Such are the changes man is doom'd to feel...



*The Fox family by the Hackney Brook*

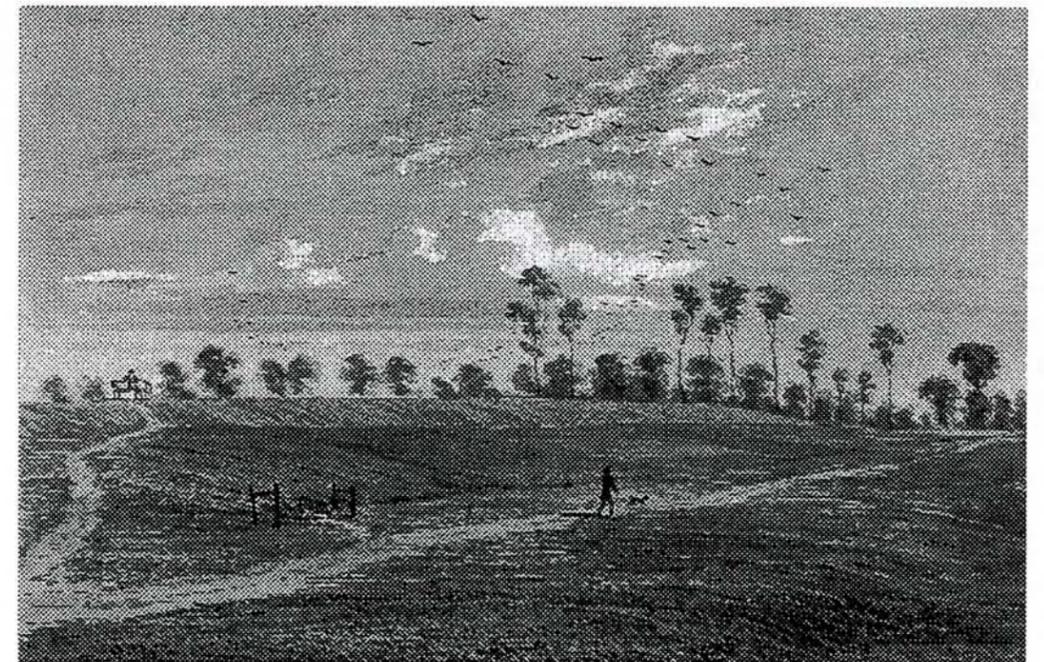


*'Our old tower invites me - faithful landmark - to my home'. Hackney Grove is to the right of the picture.*

*He is 'warned home' by the 'chilling night air', and  
 muses on the seasons and the nobles buried in the church  
 and churchyard.*

No noises now rouse up the listening sense,

Save, at long intervals, the rural bleat  
 Of distant herd, that in the meadows graze,  
 Or the soft cooing of the cuckoo bird,  
 Or that, from yon old tower, our village clock  
 Strikes on the ear his deep and drowsy chime...



*'Oft at twilight hour on this low bench by moonlight did he sit...' Fox lingers on his favourite bench  
 on Hackney Downs, contemplating commemoration by a future graffiti artist.*

...The common grass here scents  
As pure as in the unfrequented vale,  
The gently rippling stream here runs as clear  
As other streams - the birds as sweetly sing  
As forest birds, where no one lists to hear.  
And this our homely well, and bubbling brook,  
Tho' never honour'd yet by poet's song,  
To me more grateful flows than stranger rills,  
Whose sides no friend hath trod, and from whose  
banks

No kindly hand hath cull'd the flower, to say  
'Remember me!' and (might I dare indulge  
A thought so vain) altho' unknown to Fame  
These humble walks now wind their modest course  
All unhistoric - unpoetic ground -  
Yet hitherward, in other days, perchance  
Led by this pensive verse, some kindred heart  
May heave a sigh for me - some love-lorn youth  
May, as across th'old bridge he hangs his head,  
To his companion whisper tenderly,  
(While I, a listening spirit, hover nigh)  
"Twas here our village bard was wont to stray,  
Muttering his fancies to himself aloud;  
Here I have met him at the gray of morn,  
When the fresh roseate breath of early spring  
Wav'd o'er the daisied meadows, pacing slow  
These paths along - and oft, at twilight hour  
On this low bench, by moonlight did he sit,  
Gazing, in pensive mood, on yon old tower.  
And here it was, they tell, he wak'd the strain  
That now hath hither lur'd our wandering ways.  
Then pause a moment, comrade, while I grave  
( 'Tis all the tribute we can yield him now! )  
On this, his favourite bench, his lowly name.

## Notes

1. 'The trifling thing'.
2. Matthews images are also reproduced on pages 15 and 21 of this volume. The picture of Balmes House on page 21 is one of a group based on a sketch by Robert B. Schnebbelie, made in 1816 (see *Hackney History* 2, 8), or possibly on later surveys by Toussaint. Items in the small collection of Matthews' works in Guildhall Library Prints and Drawings Section include Matthews' copies of Schnebbelie originals of a generation earlier.
3. Fox seems to have set out westwards along the Willow Walk (on the line of Wilton Road). In 1800, extensive nursery grounds lay to his right, to the south of Dalston Lane. See London Topographical Society, *Thomas Milne's Map of Land Use in London, 1800*, 1976. He is not describing Loddiges' famous nurseries, which lay well to the east of his route.

4. The author possibly refers to the ruinous state of the old and relatively isolated hamlet of Haggerston; or buildings in the neighbourhood of Lamb Farm. What follows is invention.
5. "So extremely harsh and dissonant are the names of these several places described in this poem, that I have, in almost every instance, either suppressed them, or given them an antient termination. In the present case, however, I have preserved the original, Hoxton, as peculiarly characteristic and descriptive of the actual flatness and dead monotony of the town." - *La Bagatella*.
6. Jonathan and William Fox, merchants, had premises at 6 The Pavement, Moorfields (*Holden's Triennial Directory*, 1802-4), though by 1808 Jonathan was in business alone, in Little Moorfields.
7. Aske's Hospital (Haberdashers' school and almshouse), moved here from the City in 1692. The building described by Fox was already decayed, and was to be replaced in the 1820s by the structure converted c. 2000 into flats and known as the Hoffman Building.
8. Gloucester terrace became St John's Road after the building of the church of St John the Baptist (1825-6), and is now the northern end of Pitfield Street.
9. Sir George Whitmore, builder of Balmes, or Whitmore, House in the early 17th century (see *Hackney History* 2) was a prominent royalist. At the time of Fox's book Balmes was occupied by the asylum run by Thomas Warburton (see pages 20-22). Matthews's depiction of Fox approaching Balmes is on page 21.
10. Potatoes.
11. "Those who have visted the two situations here alluded to must be immediately impressed with the similarity. This spot is named by all the drivers on this road, The Bay of Biscay, from the number of different currents which meet here: and it is considered, in winter, as the most severe track between London and York." - *La Bagatella*.
12. "This description may to some appear rather hyperbolic. The reader is therefore reminded that this poem was composed in the summer of the year 1800, one of the hottest and driest ever known in England; and during which our public roads were so completely pulverized, that in midday, on those which were much trafficked, the passenger was obscured in one continued cloud of dust for miles together." - *ib.*
13. Shacklewell.

## LIFE AT HACKNEY WORKHOUSE 1920-1923

### *Dick Hunter*

A walled town, its huge size bewildering...as if you could spend a day walking around it. A railway embankment formed one boundary and when it rained hard a huge puddle appeared. A line of children's cottages backed onto the grounds.<sup>1</sup>

Rex Russell, born during a Zeppelin raid in September 1916 at Hackney Workhouse, was the second son of Alfred and Mildred Russell, workhouse master and matron. The family remained there till 1923, Rex attending Cassland Road School.<sup>2</sup> This article is based on his recollections, and the records of the Hackney Poor Law Union Guardians, his parents' employers.

The Guardians had invited applications for the joint appointments of master and matron in 1912, seeking 'disciplinarians, able to keep the books and accounts,...(who) also possess good administrative ability'. A married couple was sought, and the marriage of Alfred Russell (38) to Mildred Amos (30) on 10 December 1912 at St. Barnabas Church, Sutton, was duly reported to the Local Government Board. They started work on New Year's Day 1913.<sup>3</sup>

Alfred Russell was well prepared for the post of workhouse master. After clerking for De Grelle, Houdret, & Co, 130 London Wall, in the City (1890-94) his career had been in public administration: with the Metropolitan Asy-

lum Board at Gore Farm, Fountain and Brook hospitals (1894-99); and as First Assistant Clerk to the Asylum Clerk, Banstead Asylum, London Asylum Committee (L.A.C.) (1899-1903). A short period followed as clerk and storekeeper to the L.A.C. Ewell Colony (1903-04) before appointment as assistant master at Hackney Workhouse (1905-12).<sup>4</sup>

Russell's contract as master stipulated a starting salary of £150 per annum, with annual increments of £10 to a maximum of £180, plus rations, washing, and furnished apartments. Mildred's annual salary started at £70, rising by £5 increments to a maximum of £80. She had previously been a clerk in charge of a sub-post office in Sutton (1899-1906); and was subsequently employed by the Guardians as a temporary clerk (1906-09), and matron's clerk (from 1909) at the Homerton Children's Homes within the grounds of Hackney workhouse.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Workhouse planning*

Hackney workhouse had been designed by William A. Finch, and rebuilt as a separate-block workhouse between 1898 and 1914 - adjacent to a Poor Law Union infirmary - on its existing site in Homerton. Whilst certified to

accommodate 1,404, the workhouse on New Year's Day 1923 was still a substantial community with 935 inmates, comprising 498 men, 405 women and 32 children under three years.<sup>6</sup>

Separate-block planning, designed to inhibit the spread of disease from one building to another, was a response to contemporary understanding of the air-borne nature of many infections. Separate blocks were connected by long covered walkways, men's wards set apart from women's. By January 1923 cleaning, repainting and repair of the workhouse, largely in abeyance during the war, was mostly complete - with geranium giving a splash of red to the master's garden.<sup>7</sup>

Workhouses - renamed 'central institutions' by the Local Government Board in 1913 - were managed by Boards of Guardians. The Hackney Board met on alternate Wednesdays at the Union offices at 2 Sydney Road (Kenworthy Road), Homerton, under chairman J. J. Fox. Its responsibilities were extensive, and included the infirmary, children's homes at Homerton and Ongar, and provision of out-relief to the able-bodied unemployed.

#### Staff and facilities

The staffing establishment indicates the scale of the operation, with 536 employed by the Board in April 1922, including 280 at the infirmary, 79 at the central institution and 88 at the children's homes. The Board administered these disparate elements via a structure of ten committees, matters relating to the central institution being dealt with by the House Committee, whose remit also included a branch institution and infants' school at Brentwood. F. R. Coles, Clerk to the Guardians, headed a secretariat of 19 at the Sydney Road site in 1922.<sup>8</sup>

Whilst the workhouse was separately managed from the infirmary, certain facilities, such as the massive laundry, built 1914-16, were shared. Those admitted to the workhouse might be transferred to other provision. For example, Chris Adams (57) and Joseph Addison (44), admitted to the workhouse in 1921, were subsequently transferred to the infirmary. And Joseph Allen (61), admitted to the workhouse

on 5 March 1921, remained six months before being discharged onto out-relief on 29 September. Some inmates were viewed as having the capacity to work and were transferred to Wallingford Farm Colony; for vagrants, there was the bleakness of the casual ward.<sup>9</sup>

#### The post-war context

The period saw growing unemployment, and this was reflected in a substantial increase in those in receipt of out-relief. For example, in the week ending 23 April 1921 there were 3,294 in receipt of relief, with £555 paid - a threefold increase in the number of recipients over the corresponding period in the previous year. Numbers increased through the summer months of 1921, with 5,078 in receipt of relief in the week ending 13 August 1921, with £884 paid.<sup>10</sup>

Concern at mounting unemployment was vigorously expressed by the unemployed themselves. Rex Russell recalls the institution gates closed to a mass of people with mounted police inside. His father refused to open them.<sup>11</sup> The Board recorded its appreciation of Second Assistant Clerk W. D. Harris for dealing with an unemployed demonstration on 31 August 1921, and the press reported that

some hundreds of men marched to the entrance of Hackney Workhouse...A large body of police, mounted and on foot...formed a long line in front of the workhouse gates and the outside walls...an open air meeting was held at the top of Cheviot Street, at which several strong speeches were delivered.<sup>12</sup>

The unemployed were demanding substantial increases in the scales of relief for themselves and their families. They sought 15 shillings for a married man, 15 shillings for his wife, 7 shillings and sixpence for each child, 15 shillings for a single man - and 12 shillings and sixpence rent allowance plus a hundredweight of coal. These demands challenged the Guardians, who chose to deal with each case individually, sometimes providing work - painting the institution, or building a coal bunker - at the rate of 10 shillings for an eight hour day. Unemployed leader George Bullen, 27, a pianoforte worker of 5 Fenn Street, Homerton, was arrested with 20 others - aged 17 to 27 - and charged with refractory



An early 20th century view of the workhouse precinct, from Homerton High Street

conduct and refusal to work. Mostly labourers, they included a baker, lathe hand, cutter, and trouser presser.<sup>13</sup>

In court Bullen said that he had refused to work except for trade union wages. Russell commented that the men had received accommodation and food. Not only had they refused to work, but they had tried to escape by climbing the gates. Seven of the men were subsequently sent to prison - Bullen to seven days hard labour - one shouting 'roll on the revolution!' as he left the dock.<sup>14</sup>

A letter from Hackney Unemployed Committee dated 3 September 1921 requested the Board receive a deputation to discuss the scale of relief. At the Board meeting on 12 October the Clerk reported he had received two letters from unemployed workers demonstrating outside the gates. However, their request to send a deputation to hear the Board's decision regarding provision of work or adequate maintenance was rejected. The Board refused to adopt the scale proposed by the Unemployed Committee.

#### Competing pressures

The Board was subject to competing pressures. A letter - also dated 3 September 1921 - from the Middle Classes Union (Hackney Branch) asked the Guardians to oppose to the utmost demands made on behalf of the unemployed as they considered ratepayers were paying as much as they could bear. They may have feared the spread of the practice adopted by neighbouring Poplar Guardians who provided relief on the basis of need and at a more generous level.<sup>15</sup>

Evidence that some Poor Law Unions viewed the level of unemployment as politically threatening is highlighted by a letter from the Association of Poor Law Unions to the Board of Hackney Poor Law Union dated 8 September 1921. The Clerk to Hackney Board summarised its contents:

... as a result of the War unemployment has become so widespread and general as to constitute a National danger and suggesting co-operation between the Guardians and Government to deal with the problem in such a way to diminish the evil as far as possible and thus assist in stabilising the Country...<sup>16</sup>

However Hackney Board merely noted this letter, its reluctance to act collectively with other Unions on the issue indicating a degree

of complacency and detachment. Government monitored the position by demanding monthly statements of numbers of those on out-relief, and quarterly cost returns. Where the *Guardians'* scale was exceeded in special circumstances - for example, a sick wife or child, a pregnant or 'indelicate' wife - lists of individual recipients were submitted to the Ministry of Health with reasons and sums.<sup>17</sup>

**The role of the master**

The master had responsibility for the efficient day to day administration of the institution. His staff in 1921 consisted of an assistant master, a senior clerk, an assistant clerk and a junior clerk.<sup>18</sup> Duties included staff recruitment, ordering provisions and equipment, and accounting for expenditure - for example, the master asked the House Committee to note that

the milk delivered by the Contractors on 30 May 1920 being sour, I borrowed two chums from the Infirmary. The wheel of the truck carrying the milk caught in the broken kerbstone of the Goods Receiving Yard and overturned the truck, causing a loss of 30 quarts of milk value 12s 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d. Recommendation: That the milk lost be written off the books.<sup>19</sup>

Reports to the House Committee suggest the range of the master's remit:

- a concert for inmates by the Bowe Bells concert party.
- accidents to three inmates.
- transfer of Leonard Morgan to the Wallingford Farm Colony at a cost of 13 shillings 5 pence.
- approval sought for excess purchases: payment of 15 shillings to the Orient Motor and Cycle Works for re-tying three wheels to a wheelchair and supplying a second hand wheel; £2 11 shillings to A. & E. Shepherd for six dozen cups and saucers; and 9 shillings 4 pence to H.B Bird & Co. for two chickens.

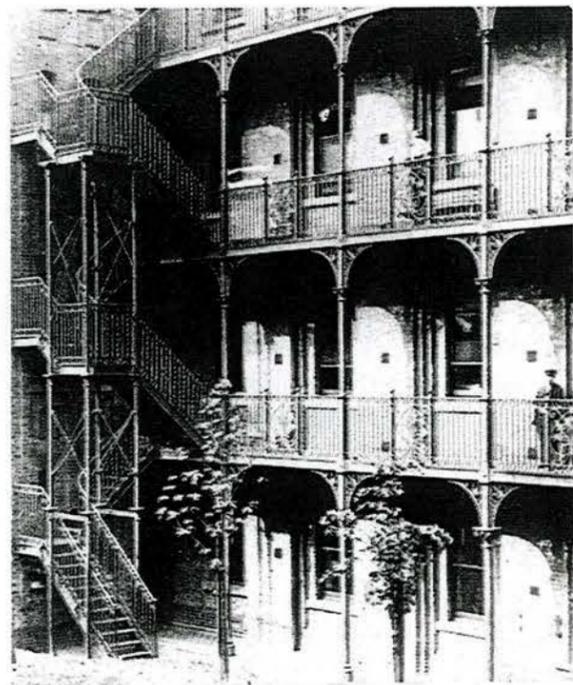
- approval for recruitment and expenditure on wages for temporary staff including two staff nurses, an attendant, a scrubber, baker,

needlewoman, laundress, storekeeper, motor driver - and an assistant shoemaker at 79 shillings 9 pence a week. (The following year the House Committee accepted an offer from the London Dress Shoe Manufacturing Company to supply second hand shoemaking machines and two sets of iron lasts for £12).

- general industrial employment for 195 men for the two weeks ending 18 March 1922 involved expenditure of £109 13 shillings 9 pence. This was agreed.

- a proposal for levelling the Women's East Yard for a tennis court for officers was not approved.<sup>20</sup>

Rex Russell, son of the workhouse master, hints at the range of activity in servicing the institution. He recalls a butchery, and a bakery to where he trundled his child's wooden cart to collect hot rolls for Sunday breakfast. Old male inmates would make finger rings from their beef bones. Years later, the smell of cockroaches on a naval hulk reminded him of kitchen smells at the workhouse - a view echoed by Catherine Cookson who recalls hordes of cockroaches ap-



The 'sanitary' block at the workhouse, c.1900

pearing nightly in the kitchen of Harton Workhouse where she worked as a laundry checker between 1924 and 1929.<sup>21</sup>

**Inmate voices**

Occasionally the voices of inmates are captured. In 1920 four inmates from Blind Ward 44 - Robert Baker, Henry Hartley, William Cornwall and John McLeod - wrote to the Ministry of Health objecting to their weekly pass being stopped. The pass had allowed them out of the workhouse. They claimed other Boards offered more freedom, and they asked that an inspector visit their ward so they could explain their case. The Ministry merely forwarded their letter to the Clerk of the Board.<sup>22</sup>

Nellie Williams offers another glimpse. She entered one of the Homerton children's homes, within the grounds of the workhouse, in 1912, aged four, remaining till she entered domestic service in Amhurst Road in 1922. She was separated from her mother, who cleaned for the workhouse matron. Nellie - whose house mother, Mrs Bunion, was 'a big, bulky woman' - shared a room with five girls, each with 'a little black hospital bed', scarcely warm with its blanket and white honeycomb quilt. Toilets were down an iron staircase, and the children washed in cold water with carbolic soap.

Boys and girls ate together from large wooden tables in the dining room. Breakfast was porridge with salt, and two thick slices of 'brown bread', with sweet tea from a blue-rimmed white mug. There was mince for lunch, and at tea-time bread and jam - with a little fairy cake on Sundays - and a sweet mug of hot cocoa before bed. Bowels were regulated with the aid of liquorice powder.

Nellie went to Homerton Row Infants' School. Girls from the children's home wore a striped dress with buff pinafore - and black patent shoes with ankle strap, and metal toecap. They

stuck out like a sore thumb. When you're young you don't worry about it; when you get to about 8 or 9 then it sort of does something to you and it makes you really...it makes you bitter it does, you never get over that. I could cry when I think of it.

Nellie recalls her brother out of work in the 1920s. He'd go each day to the workhouse where he'd be given a job, sometimes breaking stones or unloading dirty washing.<sup>23</sup>

**Management problems**

The master's responsibilities earned an annual salary in 1922 of £259 9 shillings, including bonus. Mildred, with responsibility for female inmates, earned £6 13 shillings 4 pence for the month of April 1922. Not surprisingly, in March 1923, she requested a pay rise.<sup>24</sup>

With 935 inmates, and a staff of only 79, pressure on management appeared to impact on the health of the master and matron. In October 1921 Dr D.C. Cassidy, assistant medical officer, had certified Russell as suffering from pharyngitis and bronchitis. In October he was absent with lumbago, and in April 1923 with bronchitis (again) and prostate pain. Mildred was on sick leave with gastritis in February 1922, and pleurisy in October. In December one of their sons, Ralph, was moved to the Eastern Hospital with diphtheria.<sup>25</sup>

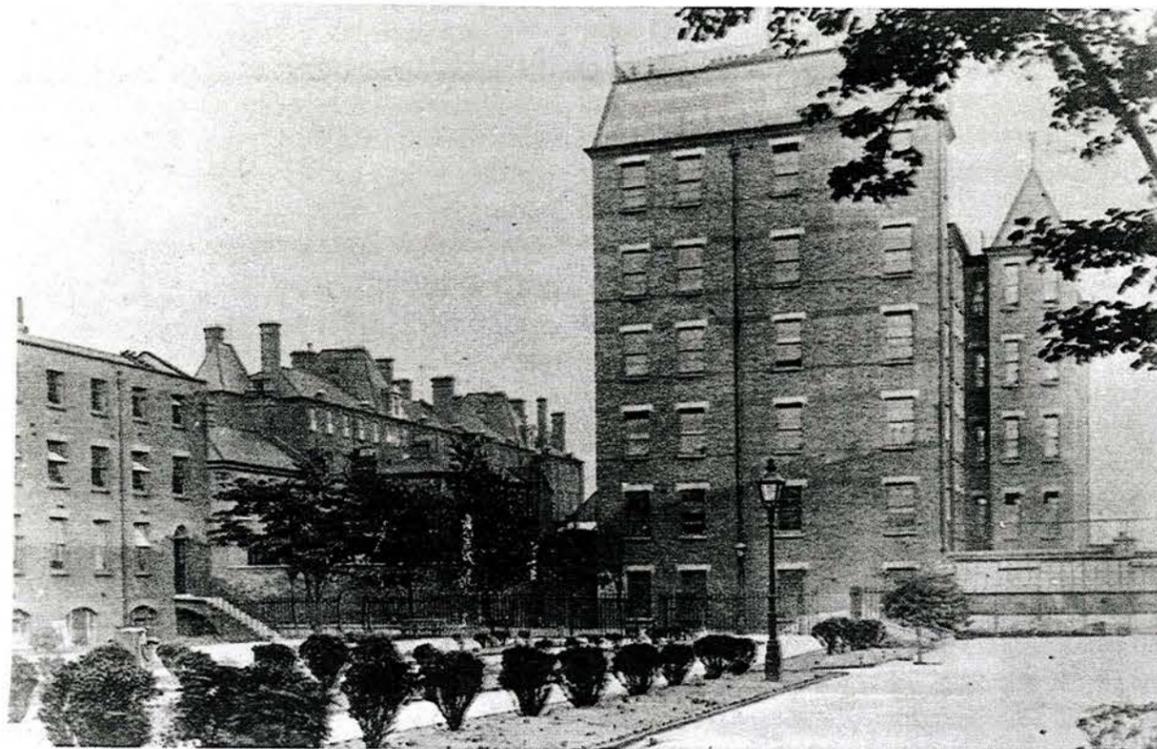
Anxiety may have been induced by the report of C.R.H. Hobbs, assistant district auditor, on 27 April 1921. This noted the absence of entries in the weekly provisions receipt and consumption accounts, and the quarterly summary of provisions accounts, since 30 September 1920. The master admitted being in arrears in entering up his books, and pleaded changes in staff, his own indifferent health, and the heavy workload involved in preparing the salaries and wages accounts.<sup>26</sup>

The auditor's findings were subsequently transmitted to the Ministry of Health:

... the *Guardians* resolved to reprimand the Master and warn him that serious notice of his conduct will be taken if the grave irregularities recur, and they have requested him to place the organisation of his staff on an efficient footing....

Two months later the House Committee reported satisfaction with the way Russell was discharging his duties.<sup>27</sup>

Problems re-emerged for the master in May 1923, prompted by a letter of complaint from the acting chaplain, Rev. W. E. Andrews. Sub-



'F' Block, north side: early 20th century

sequently the Clerk reported to the House Committee on 26 May 1923 that he had examined the master's receipt and payment account and had requested him to produce the balance due from himself to the Guardians, but the master was unable to do so. Russell was immediately suspended, a decision confirmed by the General Purposes Committee on 30 May, despite the balance being repaid to the accounts. H.J. Elkington, previously assistant steward of the infirmary, was appointed acting master.<sup>28</sup>

At the Board meeting on 1 August 1923 it was reported that the House Committee had interviewed Mildred Russell (who had left the service of the Guardians on 28 July) and had expressed satisfaction and thanks for the admirable way she had carried out her duties as matron of the institution. Rex recalls his mother as sympathetic to her female inmates; for example, pressing for them to be supplied with hygienic single petticoats instead of their thick flannel ones.<sup>29</sup>

Alfred Russell remained in London in search of work whilst other family members travelled north to the maternal home in Holme on Spalding Moor in the East Riding. There were to be two Christmas reunions in Yorkshire before he had sufficient income to support his family again, this time in Loughton, Essex.<sup>30</sup>

### Notes

1. Taped interview with Rex Russell conducted by Dick Hunter, 15 August 2000.
2. *ib.*
3. LMA HA/BG 283/7.
4. *ib.*
5. *ib.*
6. Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England NBR: 101997; Hackney Poor Law Union Board of Guardians minutes, 1921-1923, LMA HA/BG/118-124.
7. K. Morrison, *The Workhouse: A Study of Poor-Law Buildings in England* (1999); Board minutes, 17 January 1923.
8. Board minutes, 12 April 1922.
9. Hackney Poor Law Union Board of Guardians Creed Register 1920-3, LMA HA/BG 209/25 vol. 25.
10. LMA HA/BG/120, 319.
11. Russell interview.
12. Board minutes 14 September 1921, 491; *Hackney Gazette* 2 September 1921.
13. *ib.* 2 September 1921.
14. *ib.* 2 September 1921.
15. Board minutes 14 September 1921.
16. *ib.* 14 September 1921.
17. *ib.* 14 September 1921; letters to Government Depts., letter 353, LMA HABG/180/31; Ministry of Health Circular 298E, 20 June 1922.
18. Board minutes 27 April 1921.
19. Board minutes 9 June 1920.
20. Board minutes 29 March 1922 (report of master to House Committee).
21. Russell interview; C. Cookson, *Our Kate* (1969).
22. Ministry of Health letters, LMA HA/BG/177/52) 30 August 1921.
23. Transcript of interview with Nellie Williams, conducted 20 February 1984, HAD.
24. Board minutes 12 April 1922, 17 January 1923.
25. Board minutes 26 October 1921, 15 February 1922, 11 October 1922, 6 December 1922.
26. Board minutes 27 April 1921.
27. Letters 242 & 346, LMA HA/BG/180/3.
28. Board minutes 30 May 1923.
29. Board minutes 1 August 1923; Russell interview.
30. Russell interview.

## SURVIVING THE SLUMP

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*A. J. Root*

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### *Foreword*

Alfred John Root was born on 6th September 1913 at 7 Shipway Terrace, Victoria Road, Stoke Newington - Saturday's child. He was the fourth child of Hackney council worker Edward Everett Root and Kate Root, nee Warren. His parents were married at St. Monica's Chapel, Hoxton Square. His father was born in the workhouse in Hoxton New Town on 4th December 1882; his great grandmother and two of her 13 children had also died there. In the 1930s Mr Root had a stall himself in Hoxton Market, but he did not then know about family links with the workhouse.

His grandfather (Alfred Root, a marble-polisher) and grandmother (Edith Rothera Doyle Root, also known as Jane, a boxmaker) were recorded as homeless and destitute in 1879. They moved on constantly, like many similar families, being recorded in Baxendale Street, Turin Street, Orange Street, Thorold Square, Ravenscroft Street, Buttesland Street, and Nicholas Street, all in a matter of three and a half years. Seven years later the family were again homeless - there being then five living children - and again admitted to the workhouse.

The Root family, listed as Roote until the 1850s, had been in Hackney at the end of the 18th century. They lived in Hoxton, Bethnal Green, and later in Stoke Newington and Harringay. On his father's side A. J. Root is descended from a Windsor chair-maker who worked in Curtain Road, Shoreditch, and from French-polishers, marble and stone masons in east and north London. His father, a volun-

teer in the British Expeditionary Force, blown to pieces at Ypres in July 1915, is recorded on the memorial in Stoke Newington Public Library. His widowed mother kept her four children by scrubbing school and pub floors.

On his mother's side A. J. Root comes from the Warren family, costermongers and horse-dealers, reputedly of gypsy origin, who kept market stalls, and also a greengrocer's at 85 Homerton High Street. The family lived in Rosina Cottages, at the back of the shop.

Mr Root has led a remarkable life. He has been partially sighted for most of his life. He went blind due to measles at 18 months. He was sent to blind schools at Whiteoaks, Swanley and the East Anglian School for the Deaf and Blind Children at Gorleston, by Essex County Council when the family were amongst the first rehoused at Dagenham - although they soon moved back to London. He was taught Braille. Later, after a series of operations at Moorfields Hospital, he recovered partial sight, and taught himself to read. He worked hard all his life. He learnt bootmaking by hand at school, and his first job was in the boot factory of Frank & Co., in Tudor Grove, South Hackney. Later, after four years of unemployment, he did all manner of jobs. In the 1939-45 war he served in the army in Northern Ireland.

He has always been and remains a great optimist, despite his disadvantages. In this memoir he tells the story of how he survived the slump in the 1930s.

### *Living rough*

Not being able to read and write, only Braille, every job you went after in those days you had to fill in a form and then you had to have a medical test. This is in 1928.

Well, I couldn't fill in the form. I didn't know nothing about writing. This was when I left home. It got to such a pitch, because you only got 6s. a week for 6 weeks on the dole. And that was the end. Because social services hadn't been invented.

I realised that I could not give Mum any money at all. And she was working like a bloody slave. Going out working, scrubbing pub floors and the floors of the school in Wordsworth Road, Stoke Newington, doing housework and all that kind of thing. And I said to her, "well, I am going to go away for a few weeks, and I'll be back in a few weeks time". I used to have the throw-outs in dustbins. You think it's not possible. But when you are hungry, you are hungry. I literally lived on the Embankment for about four months.

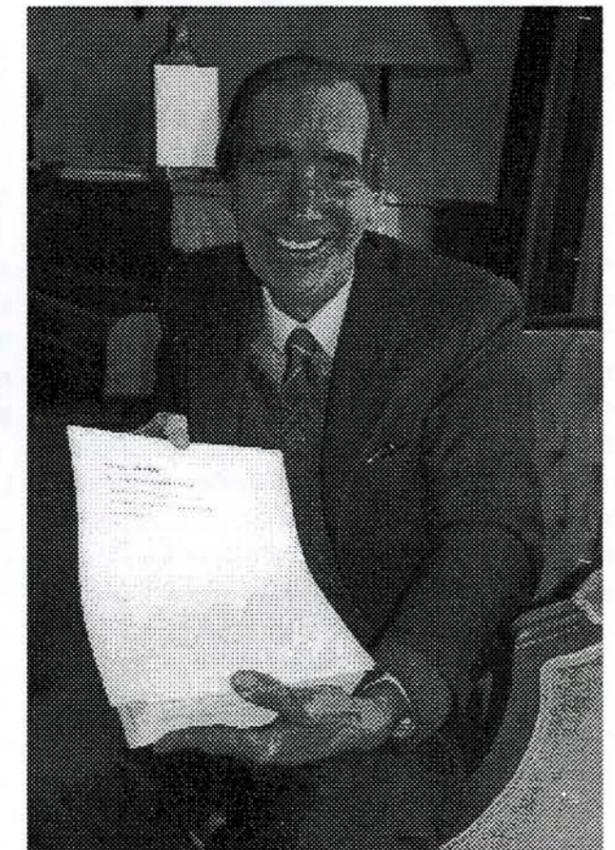
I knew that Mum was never in a position to go on keeping me without handing something over. Where did I sleep at night? I tell you where I slept more often than not. You won't believe it. In St. James' Park. In the clothes. In all weather. There's a sort of restaurant in St. James's Park, and on the opposite side there's a bandstand, isn't there? Well, underneath the bandstand there's a little door, where they used to keep their stuff. And we used to go in there, about half a dozen of us.

I was out of work for about four and a half years, you know. I lived on the Embankment, you know, even though people don't believe it. Clifford Morris, a friend of mine, he was a clever bloke. He got a job in the Hotel Cecil. Clifford got a job as a commie-waiter. You know what that is. Him taking the food from the kitchen, up to the point where the waiter entered in and he handed it over. And he knew that we didn't have anything. And anything that was left good that come back he'd put in a little container. And he'd wait till half past ten at night. And he'd go out and put it on a certain one of the dust-bins. They had about eighteen dust-bins.

As if it had been thrown away. 'Course, I used to come along, pick it up, take it, go down to the Embankment. There used to be a big coffee stall down on the Embankment. I'd buy a penny cup of tea, and eat the food.

Living on the Embankment, you'd think we were grubby, with only one set of clothes. How did we deal with all that? Well, in Essex Road there's a penny baths. Slipper Baths they used to be called. Next to the swimming baths. Same as in Church Street. But it's a better one in Essex Road, 'cos it's bigger. I used to go in there either in the morning, or in the afternoon, when it was slack. Sometimes I'd say "Look. I haven't got any money". "Alright, go on, in you go". People were more understanding in those days. Because of the unemployment.

Could you shave there? No. Lots of people used to go to a barber then, to be shaved with a cut-throat. But we used to shave with a safety-razor. They'd brought the safety razor out. I used to get half a bar of Sunlight soap, and use that.



*The author, December 2001*

Once, only once, ever, I went to a Turkish Baths. It was up in the West End somewhere. There was nothing like that in Hackney or in Stoke Newington. One thing I didn't do was go to the Salvation Army. They had soup kitchens. First of all, that was for real down and outs. You were going to sleep in places like Rowton House. It was the biggest doss house in London. It was in the Gray's Inn Road area.

I used to go home, for a change of clothes. She didn't like it, Mum. Me living away like that. But she thought I had a room somewhere. Eventually, it upset her so much that I had to go back. But then, of course, there was no money to give to her. That's why I wanted to be away. I didn't want to be there, not being able to make a contribution.

#### *The time of my life*

I think the '30s were the best time of anybody's life, either poor or rich. Even despite the unemployment. Because, actually, what it meant was that there was total freedom in England. If you didn't break the law, you know, everything was possible. You could walk about all night long. Nobody would bother you or anything like that. There was hard times in the '30s, with the poverty and unemployment.

The very poor had it bad. There was no question of that. Very very bad. And then there was the next grade up, a bit better off. If you 'ad a decent job, you know, somewhere about thirty bob a week, you were laughing. The postmen and the policemen were the best. Both got the same wages. Three pound five. The police got better, 'cos they got boot allowance, clothes allowance, and rent allowance, on top of their three pound five. They had police houses in those days. At the bottom of St. John Street in Islington, on the right hand side, there was three big blocks of flats. Two of them were all police flats. And they used to live in there. And there rent was about 15 bob a week. But they 'ad everything nobody else 'ad. They 'ad baths, and everything.

In the '30s when the slump came I used to queue for the *Hackney Gazette* to read the jobs. It was published three times a week, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. At the Labour Exchange



*Leswin Place, 2002*

you had to sign on every day of the week. You had to queue up. It was still six bob a week for six weeks on the dole and then you're finished. I think everybody wanted to work. And in consequence they would be better off. They would be better off in life.

The mounted police used to walk their horses along the pavement in Mare Street, Hackney, to keep you in line. I suppose, looking back on it now, there has got to have been a thousand men there, all the time, all day long queuing up and going in. Every day of the week.

You could not get work without the green card. I had to sign on every day, but after six weeks you had it, you finished. If you wanted a job, you had to go in the line. Not get any dole money, but you had to queue up, go to the desk, and they would tell you what jobs they'd got, and they would give you a green card. That entitled you to go for an interview. Then you had to bring the green card back, signed 'suitable' or 'not suitable'. Ramsay MacDonald cut the benefit from six to four shillings for six weeks, and that was it. There was no social security, nothing like that. What there was - it seems hard to

believe - was a ration. They gave you a milk ration, a bread ration, a document with a ration on it. You would go to a local shop and you get a loaf of bread, a pint of milk, and so forth. That was alright if you were a member of a family. But one on your own, they would only give you one for the week.

#### *'Carry your bag, sir?'*

On Friday I used to sell carrier bags outside the market in Caledonian Road, the big market near King's Cross.<sup>1</sup> There were no cattle when I was there. The tower was still there; big landmark. It was a tremendous market. I should think biggest market in England. There was everything. Anything you wanted to buy you could buy there. You could buy anything cheap.

I used to buy the carrier bags from Hacketts, the paper merchants in Leswin Place, Stoke Newington whose son Alf I'd grown up with in Newington Green. He married my sister Violet, who has just been 91. I used to buy them at a ha'penny and sell them at a penny outside the gates. I could do about three dozen. If it rained you were finished. If it rained you would lose all your money, finished, wasted.

I did that on a Friday. Then Saturday morning I would go down to Manger's, the salt people in Ridley Road Station. Buy a 28 lb. block of salt, take it home, saw it up in lumps, and stand on the corner of Ridley Road and sell it at a penny a lump. It was unwrapped. Well, I used to use newspaper as you had to put something round it. There was no running salt for sale in those days. So that was Saturday. I used to start at about seven o'clock, and finish late. If it was a good day I would go on until Manger's had shut their place. I would keep on going down buying. A 28 lb. block was 8d. I used to get 28 pieces out of it. A hell of a do.

I did a different thing each day. I used to go to King's Cross station, or Liverpool Street station, or St. Pancras. If you remember, they used to have hundreds of porters, didn't they. Well, I used to say, "Carry your bag sir?" Of course, you have got to watch the porters, otherwise they give you one! They always went to a taxi, and you would carry the bag to there. And you would

get what they would give you, tuppence, penny, sixpence, whatever you got.

I did those three things, carrier bags, the salt, and carrying bags. I earned my living like that for about four years, because I could not get work anywhere. This was in the crash, 1928. I remember the Wall Street Crash, I remember seeing the pictures in the newspapers of people throwing themselves out of the windows and killing themselves. I didn't really understand the Stock Exchange and what had happened. But the awful thing of seeing someone deliberately jumping out of a window! So we had the general strike of 1926, the 1928 crash, the National Government of 1931 (of Ramsay MacDonald). It was a tough time.

#### *'Penny a bag to put it in?'*

This is how I got started with the carrier bags. I went up to the market, Caledonian Road Market, which was the biggest market I think in England. And I thought I would walk in there and get some kind of work. You know.

Well, 'course, I thought bloody wrong. You know, 'cos it was heavily guarded. The bloody security men as you know now with bloody great sticks like a police baton you know, or a belt, you know. And I thought I would walk in there, walk round, and get a job easy on Friday.

But it was packed to capacity. Thousands used to go there Friday. Nobody wanted me. They were all struggling to get a living their selves, you know.

And I went up there one Friday and it was pouring of bloody rain. And I was looking at these people, and I thought they are buying all this bloody stuff, some of 'em 'ave got leather carrier bags, which they used to 'ave in those days. You know, big ones. And a lot of people 'ave got no bags at all. And I thought, bloody 'ell, what's good of buying bloody stuff, time you get 'ome it's saturated, wet through.

Nobody 'ad cars. You 'ad to walk or go on buses. All buses then. Suddenly I saw this big bloke in me mind, and her - the woman. It had always fascinated me. They had to go to Hacketts and pick 'em up, you see. And I used to sit there at Hacketts and watch this woman. Oh, she used

to do it quick as lightning. Hacketts had the machine that cut the kraft [paper] and glued the bag together. They 'ad the machine. And she put the handles in by hand. Well, first of all it 'ad to go through a stapling machine. Then she made the handles. That was 'er part. She 'ad to do all that for three pence a thousand. And she was like lightning, you know. And then I thought "Christ. I'll sell the bleeding bags up 'ere." And I wasn't working for Hacketts then. Either I'd had a row with 'im and 'e's kicked me out.

So back I went to Hackett. So he said "What do you want?" So I said, "Well, Mr Hackett", I said, "I want a gross of bags." He said, "What for?" I said, "well, never mind what for," I said, "I want a gross of bags. 'Ow much are you gonna charge me for 'em?" 'E said, "What do you want 'em for?" I said, "Well, what would you want bloody bags for?" And 'e said, "Sod off, Alf!" "Sod off!", 'e said, "I'm losing my temper with you every time I see you." I said, "Well, Mr Hackett, be sensible, what would you want carrier bags for?" He said, "To put bloody stuff in!" I said, "Well, of course! That's what I want 'em

for!" He said, "Well, what are you gonna put in the bloody bags?" And, of course, that done it! I said, "You silly sod!" Well, of course, that did it! Oh!

He always wore a bowler hat. And when he was in a temper 'e'd take 'is bowler hat off and let you have it! He shouted "Bert! Bert! Come and take this little sod out of it."

And his son Bert's come along and said "What's the matter Alf?" And I say "I've just told your Dad, and 'e don't understand," and all that kind of thing." And 'e used to say to 'im, "oh, Dad, you know what 'e is. Listen to what 'e's got to say."

And I said, "Well, you know, let me 'ave a gross of carrier bags." "Gross?" I said, "Yes." 'E said, "Where the bleeding 'ell you gonna sell a gross of bags?" I said, "Well, I'm not telling you where I'm going to sell 'em, but I am going to try and sell 'em, I can tell you that much."

'E said, "Well, you are not going to try and sell 'em with my money. That's it," 'e said, "If you want a gross you've got to buy 'em." I said, "Well you know bloody well I ain't got no money, don't you".



Kingsland High Street, looking towards Dalston Junction: mid 1930s

And Bert said to 'im. "Oh, let 'im 'ave 'em. 'E lives next door but one to you, but Christ you can go in and tell 'is Mother if 'e don't pay, can't you?" And the old man said to Bert "Oh, alright, give 'im 'em."

My sister Violet wasn't married to Alf Hackett, Bert's brother, at this point. So we weren't family. But 'e said, "Give 'im a gross." Well, 'course you don't realise 'ow 'eavy a gross of kraft bags are. It's not like plastic stuff, you know. And they're bloody 'eavy you know. And bulky.

And Bert said to me "Where's your barrer, Alf?" "Well I ain't got a barrer". "Well, 'ow the bloody 'ell are you going to carry all these. Where ave you got to get them to?" I said Pyrland Road. He said, "You won't do that."

I said, "Well, I'll take a couple of dozen at a time." He said, "When are you going to start selling them?" I said, "On Friday." He said, "Oh, I see." Well, I 'ad to go and carry them.

They wouldn't let you on the bus in those days with that kind of load. So I used to take about three dozen at a time, outside Caledonian Road market.

I went inside, like a silly sod, you see. And suddenly I got a belt round the back! A real leather belt. I turned round and there's this bloody big bloke. He said, "What are you doing?" I said, "Well, you can see what I'm doing, can't you? I'm selling bags." He said, "Well you 'aven't paid yer licence 'ave yer?"

I said, "Licence?" "Yes, it's seven and six to come in 'ere hawking. And you're not allowed to come in 'ere unless you've got a hawker's licence. And you don't sell enough, you 'aven't got enough to 'ave a stall. So, out!" 'E said, "and if we ketch you in 'ere, gawd 'elp you!"

So, 'course, I 'ad to take the bloody bags, and stand outside. And I stood outside the gates, and I thought, "Oh, sod yer!" I've got the bloody things, and I've got to sell 'em. So, I thought, oh, sod yer!"

So I used to say "Carrier bag for a penny Ma'am? 'cos you need it, walking round there, you know you got to carry the stuff all the way round. It's easier to put it in a bag, for a penny." I used to sell 'em, you know. When I'd sold what I could carry I 'ad to go back to Pyrland as quick

as I could get there. I 'ad a bicycle. Well, 'course, I 'ad to save up seven and six to buy the bloody bike.

I was bussing it back. But I 'ad to walk there 'cos I couldn't get on the bloody bus. I used to lose two hours though. 'Cos it was a long walk. Caledonian Market was at King's Cross, top of York Road. Three or four miles from Pyrland Road and Newington Green. Long walk. Long way. But, you know, when you're young, don't 'urt you, do it? You 'ave to do it. You just do it, don't you?

The key to it was to get there at twenty to five. 'Cos they used to shut at five, you see. And anybody that was coming out, that 'ad bought stuff they didn't think they were gonna buy, that's when you sold 'em, you see. Quick as lightning, you know, I used to 'ave the bag open. "Penny a bag to put it in. Penny a bag to put it in." Quick. Like that, you know. I 'ad the patter, you know!

Except when it was pouring of rain. Then it was ruined. You know, I 'ad a sack, you see. I 'ad to put 'em all in the sack. It was useless in the rain. I went on with the bags for a long while. Every Friday. Only used to do it Fridays. Every Friday I used to do it, oh, all through the winter. The whole winter.

#### The porter's art

The rest of the time I was carrying the bags at King's Cross station, Euston Station.

But not Liverpool Street. I caught a cold at Liverpool Street. Ooh! They were vicious at Liverpool Street.

But Euston was the worst. 'Cos at Euston the entrance to the main thing was under the arch, but the goods entrance was round the corner in the side street. And that's where all the porters used to wait. Oh, 50 to 100 porter's they used to 'ave, you know.

They were all standing round there in the toilets, where the toilets were, you know. Well, 'course, you couldn't get in the front entrance. You 'ad to wait to dive in the goods entrance when the express come in from up the north somewhere. And cause the porter's got used to me and others... 'cos, other blokes were doing it

as well, and anybody that was starving was trying to do it, you know.

Well, they had coshes. Oh, bleeding hell. They used to 'it you on the knees. Oh, bleeding 'ell! You were taking their job. They were all in uniform. Well, only a hat, that's all. At Liverpool Street you couldn't get away, could you. You know, Liverpool Street's below. You 'ad to go down the stairs to get to Liverpool Street. You couldn't get away in time. Ha! At Euston it's right on the end of the pavement and you could get out quick when they chased you. And they couldn't come out. At Liverpool Street you got banned. Oh, bloody 'ell!

At King's Cross you could get away. At St. Pancras you couldn't get away, 'Cos it's up, you see. You got to go down the steps. You learn. Cause, you go there. You get hit once. You know which ones to dodge, you know.

I did a lot of that. I dodged. I used to learn to dodge it. You know, I 'ad good ears in those days, even though I couldn't see very well, though. I could see better than what I could see today. But I 'ad good ears, you know. The days when I was blind you can 'ear things long before you can when you've got your sight. And I used to 'ear people coming up. 'Cos, I turned me 'ead quick. I used to dodge 'em.

People used to pay you to carry their bag. Yes, three-pence and tuppence, three pence, penny, you didn't know what you was going to get. The old ladies were the best, of course. You used to watch out. Your eyes, you would go up and down the bloody track. You could see the all blokes come out: oh, sod them. You'd wait for the old ladies.

You 'ad to get in. What you 'ad to do was jump over the bloody turn-stiles. So you 'ad to go in, and look at the end. If it was being used, you 'ad to go to another station, 'Cos you couldn't get in. That was all dodging, you know. Directly the train comes in, you've got to get in there as quick as you can. As the passengers get thinner they see you.

I did that I think through the summer and I think I went back to the Ridley Road. You didn't have a cap. You weren't supposed to be there at all.

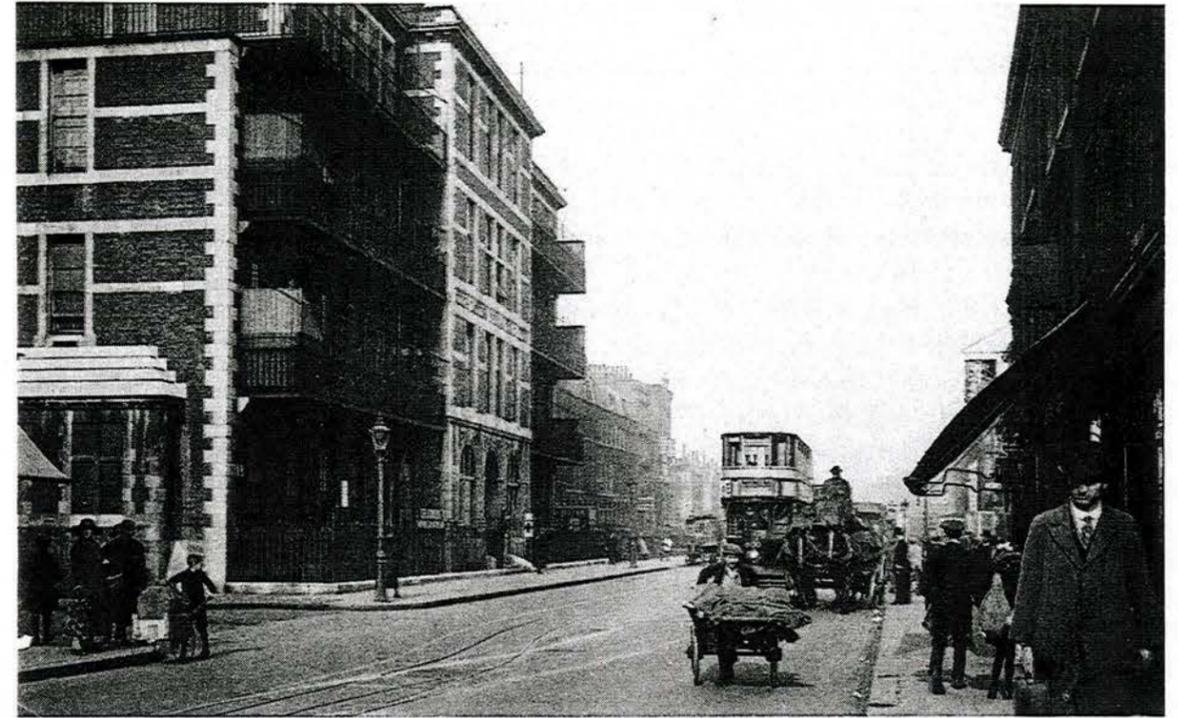
It's a wonder that you got any business, 'Cos all the porter's 'ad their own trolleys, with their name on it and their number on it. You were supposed to 'ave a penny platform ticket as well. Yes. They used to collect them from people. They 'ad gates then, you know. Do you remember? Everybody had to give their tickets up, didn't they? We used to 'ave all that to contend with. We used to 'ave to get in and get out with all that.

Well, what I used to do, you see, I used to watch the old ladies. They're the ones that used to give you a tanner, six-pence. You know, six-pence was a lot of money in those days, it was. I used to watch for them. And then I used to get right behind them.

'Course, they were all very civil then. More civil to old ladies. Never knew who they were. They were all frightened of losing their jobs. I used to get right behind the old girls, with their two cases, and as she walked through with the ticket I used to walk right through. They were frightened to say anything. They used to think I was 'er relation, until they got used to me, you know. Then I 'ad to find another dodge.

I would say to them "Carry your bag, Ma'am?" And I would carry 'em. And as you go out, you do it quick and you say "Cab? Do you want a taxi cab?" And you'd go like that, wave your arm. Well, the taxi-cab driver took no bleeding notice of you. He'd already seen 'em, so you'd make out that you were calling a cab, you know. I used to say "Just a minute Ma'am. I'll call a cab". I used to put me 'and up like that. 'Cause, she'd think I'd called a cab as well. 'Cause, 'e was coming anyway. He'd sighted 'er before 'e's spotted me.

But it was always a tanner, you see, a six-pence. Sometimes a shilling. Oh, gawd. You'd be surprised, too, there was a train every five minutes. There were only about 12 to 14 platforms in those days you know. Not like they 'ave today. You were backwards and forwards. Sometimes you've missed. You couldn't get in, and then the porters have 'ad every one. But you used to look up the platforms. 'Course, unfortunately I'd to go right up close to it. Always find out where the train was coming from.



*Hackney Road, looking east: mid 1920s*

You wanted long-distance. And especially with the old girls, that's it. They all used to wear long skirts in those days. And hats. Never went out with out hats. And umbrellas, things like that. And lovely luggage. Oh, beautiful luggage. And bloody heavy, and all, some of 'em. No wheels on cases in those days. You used to wear your bloody shoulders out, you know. Long platforms. Big leather cases. No plastic. Plastic 'adn't been invented. It was a tremendous 'ard day's work. When you were finished you were bloody tired. But you struggled through.

I soon learnt the art: get the old girls. I used to leave all the youngsters. All the young women alone. Never used to bother about them. Unless there weren't any old girls. Or old men, as well.

And some of 'em was too mean to 'ave the porter, you see. We used to watch for the blokes who wouldn't. 'Cos they are only going to give you tuppence, but you are going to get tuppence anyway but the porter would 'ave got a shilling.

I think they 'ad to pay a shilling for the porters. 'Cos they didn't get any money from the railway, you see. They 'ad to work for themselves. They provided their hat. They 'ad to belong to

the Transport and General Worker's Union. I never thought of wearing a hat, as I didn't belong to the union, you see.

You wasn't allowed in at all. You 'ad to get on the platform and get out with the luggage, dodging as you could. You'd go to the last entrance, where everybody got on the train who wanted to go to the toilet. So you'd find out where the toilets were, and you'd get there as quick as you could. When they were going into the toilets, "Mind your bags sir?" And when they come out, "Carry your bags sir?" And then walk with them. You were safe enough if you walk with them till you got the other side.

There have been some adventures! But I was never a spiv. Nothing like it. I wanted to work, and I was doing my best to make something of my life. As my nephew said to me, I couldn't see properly. I 'ad no education to speak of. No training. No Dad. No family connections. No networks, no money, no capital. All those things they now say are vital to make any opportunity at all. So I just got on and tried to use my initiative, and do the best I could.

*Selling salt*

We used to go to boxing every Friday night, to the other end of Hackney Road. In Ridley Road, to a hall owned by the fish-monger, who became world famous - Jack Solomons. Shilling to go in. Professional boxing. He was the leading man behind the boxing. Used to put all the boxing shows on - at Harringay, Olympia and so on. He was a fishmonger in Ridley Road. He had a boxing arena the other end of Hackney Road. Half of the world famous boxers learnt the art there.

I'd got started selling salt one day in the Ridley Road. How did this start? Well, I was walking up and down the Ridley Road and I didn't know what to do. I was out of work. I was looking up and down and I thought, "Christ, they buy a lot of fish on this road!"

It never dawned on me that it was the Jewish women, you know. "Christ, the amount of fish that these people are selling!" Well, you must 'ave salt when you are going to clean fish, you know.

And I remembered, that's what Mum used to do, she used to wash fish in salty water. And I looked at it. And I thought, "oh, sod it, I'll sell salt." I went down to Jack Solomons when I was buying salt at Manger's, down the bottom at Ridley Road station.

I used to buy the big block of salt, 28 lbs, sometimes two or three times on a Friday when all the Jewish women were buying fish. I used to get 28 blocks out of it, and charge a penny a time. I think I used to make 100 per cent profit. I cut it up with a little saw. Wrapped it in newspaper.

I went down to Jack Solomons. I didn't know him. He was the leading one there. All the Jews used to go and buy their fish off of him. He had the most beautiful fish there.

I said, "Well, I just wondered, Mr Solomons, if you would like me to bring some trade to your shop?" And he turned round and he said, "What? What did you say? I've got enough bloody trade for five shops!"

Well, I said, "You'll have enough trade for six shops!" "Oh", he said, "and how will I do that?"

So", I said, "if I stand outside here Thursday and Friday, will that be alright?" He said, "What do you mean, stand outside?"

I said, "Well, if I stand outside in the kerb selling lumps of salt, will that be alright?" I wanted to get his permission. "What do you mean, selling salt?" I said, "well, they all want salt, don't they?" He said, "Well, of 'course they bloody do. But what are you talking about?"

I said, "well, if I tell you you'll probably do the same bloody thing and sell it in the shop, won't you?"

He said, "What is it you want?" "Permission from you to stand outside your shop." He said, "Until I know what the bloody salt is, you ain't gonna get it." He said, "What is it?"

I said, "I've got 28lb of salt, penny a lump, I saw it, wrapped up." He said, "Penny a lump?" I said, "Yes". "You can stand out there as long as you bloody like, it won't affect me, will it?", he said.

I said, "Well, it will bring you trade, won't it? They all want the salt on Fridays, don't they?" He said, "well, that's a kind way of putting it, ain't it? I could say to you piss off! But I won't. Go on then," he said.

I said, "Well, when it's wet..." "Ah, I see why you come", he said, "You want to stand under here." He had an awning. "Oh, you crafty little sod," he said.

'Course, it was a disaster when it rained. All the salt got bloody wet. I got under the awning, but it didn't stop the salt getting damp and damp and damp. I used to give it to him when it was so bad. I used to say "here you are Mr Solomon..." But otherwise I 'ad to stand on the kerb. I didn't 'ave a barrow. 'E used to let me have a table, a small one.

When I first started on this I had gone down to Manger's. I thought I would get credit. When I got down there they said, "yes, what do you want?" "Bar of salt." "Well, go to a bloody shop".

"No, I want the 28 lb. one". "What are going to do with it?"

I said, "Sell it." He said, "Well we won't sell to you. We don't do wholesale to you. We only serve shops. Not to an individual," he said. You go to a shop and buy it."

I said, "No." He said, "Well, what are going to do with 28 lb. of bloody salt?"

And I said, "I don't want to tell you." And he said, "I don't care a sod if you don't tell me, but you ain't going to get it anyway."

I didn't know anybody there, in the firm. I 'ad no contact. But he said, "Excuse me. It intrigues me. Nobody's ever come down 'ere and asked for 28 lb. They come down 'ere and ask for 'alf a ton or five hundred-weight or a hundred-weight. What you going to do with it?"

"Well," I said, "to tell you the truth," I said, "I suppose I'm not going to get it unless I tell you." He said, "You ain't going to get it if you DO tell me!"

I said, "Oh well," I said, "I'll tell you." I said, "I thought I'd saw it through into squares", I said, "and I've seen the block, and it's two foot four inches isn't it?" "Yes, 'course", he said. "The four inches is for the shop-keeper's profit. You're buying a two foot slab." I said, "I see."

He said, "You're are going to saw it up?" I said, "Yes." "And then what are you going to with it?" I said, "Sell it."

"Sell it?" he said, "where?" I said, "Outside the fish shop." "Ah, bonkers", 'e said. "Whatever fish shop you go to," 'e said, "He'll soon tell you,

and you won't stand there day after tomorrow!" 'e said, "They won't 'ave any of that!" He said, "Well, anyway, 'ave you been to the Council?" I said, "What for?" He said, "You've got to have a licence." I said, "No. I haven't been to the Council."

He said, "Why are you out of work?" I said, "cos I can't get a bloody job!" My last job - the first after I left the blind school - 'ad been when I came out of the boot-factory in Tudor Grove in Hackney, and I couldn't get any work. "That's it", 'e said, "Why can't you get a job? Everybody else 'as to try and get a job." I said, "Well, I don't know, I said, they perhaps don't like the look of me."

'E said, "Oh well, well alright," 'e said. "I don't know 'ow I'm going to book it in," 'e said, "wait a minute," 'e said, I'll 'ave go into the office and ask them," 'e said. "cos they were dead frightened of losing their jobs. "I don't know," 'e said, "we've never 'ad anybody buying 28 lb. like this. And in any case," 'e said, "in any case, we don't take any money. It's all done through the office", 'e said, "all the bills business." 'E said, "I'll go and 'ave a look and see what can be done about it."

'E come back about ten minutes afterwards.



*A shoe factory in the Well Street/Tudor Grove area, 1920s*

'E said, "well, alright," 'e said, "but you 'ave to go to the office and pay the money and get a receipt and give it to me, and you 'ave to keep one copy, and I 'ave to keep one copy, you see, and you pay for it."

I think it was one and tuppence for the block. So, 'e said, "go and pay in the office. And you've got to give them your name and address. He said, "whether they'll give you an account is something out of this world," 'e said. "How can they give you an account? You are buying one block! It ain't worth the paper it's printed on, is it?"

Well, anyway, she's in there, the manageress and she says 'well alright, let 'im buy it.' So, I went in and so she said, 'Mr Mac tells me what you want to do. It shows some initiative,' she said. "We'll do it for you. So how many blocks are you going to buy?" she said.

So I said, "only one." She said, "only one? What, one a week?" "Oh, no," I said. "I'm only going to do it on a Friday."

She said, "On a Friday? Why?" I said, "Do you know, I'm getting fed up answering these kinds of questions. The more I tell people what I'm going to do," I said, "the more they'll get ideas; they're talking to somebody else" I said, "and they'll all be bloody well doing it!" And she said, "No swearing in this office!"

So anyway, so I told 'er. And she said, "oh what a good idea!" "oh, yes", she said. "But you'll 'ave to come every time. You can't come in the morning and take one and then come back and take another one. You've got to pay for every one". So she said "one and tuppence".

And I said, "well, I can't do it today as I 'aven't got the money." She said, "You 'aven't got the money???" "Oh well", she said, "you'll 'ave to come back when you've got the money".

"Well, anyway", I said, "can't I pay..." "Oh no", she said. "You know what they call that," she said. "They call that tick. There's no tick 'ere. You pay before you get the goods 'ere. We've 'ad enough of people like you, only on a bigger scale". I said, "Not people like me". She said, "People are all the same." I thought, "Oh well." Anyway, she said "that's it, you can't have it until you pay for it".

So I came out of the office, and he was expecting me to give 'im the order, you see. So he said, "What's the matter? Won't she do it?" So I said, "well, she will do it, but I 'aven't got the money". "Oh, bloody 'ell", 'e said. "You come down 'ere", 'e said, "where did you think you was going to get it?" "Well, I thought...", I said. "No", he said.

So he said, "It's a nice day". And I said, "Yes, it's a nice day. And they'll all come out the fish shop and I won't be there!"

And 'e said "so who you gonna sell in front of" And I said "Jack Solomon." And 'e said, "Ooh, God, 'e's the best fishmonger in Ridley Road." 'E said, "'ave you asked 'im?"

I said, "Yes. 'e's agreed to it." 'E said, "I should think 'e would do, and all."

'E said, "So you 'aven't got the money?" I said, "No." 'E said, "Wait a minute. I'll go in and see 'er." And 'e come out. And e' said, "Go on, go in", 'e said. "She'll give you the invoice. You'll come back and give me the invoice. And I'll give you the thing".

I said, "Well, 'ow is she gonna do that?" He said, "'cos I'm gonna lend it to yer. I'll lend it to you", 'e said. 'Cos you've got a good idea there. And it shows initiative. I'll lend it to yer. I'll pay for the first one and then you make yer profit and you give it me back".

So, 'cos I got on well with 'im and no trouble at all. I paid 'im the same day. Oh, I sold four lots that day.

I went on doing that - it didn't work in the summer - it only worked in the winter. The worst time for standing outside. I didn't 'ave an umbrella. I 'ad nothing like that. I went down there in the summer and I was lucky if I sold one block all day long, the salt. In the winter you 'ad to keep it covered, with newspaper.

I used to get down to the shop and 'e lent me this, well it was a rough old table you know, and I 'ad the saw. And 'e showed me what to do, 'ow to wrap it up in Vaseline, keep the whole lot in Vaseline, and then wipe the Vaseline off, and saw a piece of wood to take the Vaseline off, and how to stop the Vaseline getting into the salt.

There's lots of little things you've got to know, you know. And everyone who come out, I'd say,

"A bar of salt, Ma'am? A penny lump of salt Ma'am"? And they were so surprised, that they automatically bought it whether they wanted it or not. It was a strange affair, you know. I did it for a whole year.

I used to go to all the newsagents, 'cos they were sale or return - 'papers - in those days. But if it was a big newsagent, they 'ad so many returns that they just used to clip the side off, and the inspectors from the press used to come round and see that they couldn't sell 'em, and they didn't used to take 'em back.

And I used to go to all the newsagents and say "Got any papers you want to get rid of?" And they all wanted to get rid of them. So I used to wrap it up, you know, like that.

I stood there all day long. No dinner. I didn't used to 'ave nothing. And when I used to go to the toilet, 'e wouldn't let me go in Solomon's. I used to 'ave to go the end of Ridley Road. Public convenience. I didn't used to 'ave 'alf an 'our off for dinner.

Did I bring anything with me in the morning to eat? No, nothing. No. There weren't hot tea flasks in those days. Well, there were. But we couldn't afford 'em. They were about four and six in Boots. I never used to take anything. I used to just go on there.

You'd be surprised in the winter how quick the time goes when you're working and serving. You don't notice the time. And, 'course, it's pouring of bloody rain! I did it for a year.

When I was selling the salt we were living in Pyrland Road, Newington Green. Walking from Newington Green to Dalston. Fair old walk. Beginning of Kingsland High Road. Stoke Newington High Road ended at Dalston and Dalston started from there to Shoreditch.

The station, Ridley Road station, was a goods station only. Wasn't a passenger station. There was lot of them in those days, you know. People don't know. But 'cos they all 'ad the sidings.

All Manger's stuff used to come from the north. The trains would pull up at the siding, at the loading plank. Load everything onto the loading plank, and Manger's men used just to wheel it all in. There was about 20 or 30 firms 'ad Ridley Road goods station, where the market was.

That's how the whole system worked. They 'ad the right idea at the right places. I mean, Ridley Road station was right there. So somebody must 'ave 'ad the idea. They must have put the station there as a service in the first place. Somebody must 'ave 'ad the idea of a market. Because it was the best market in the East End, except Chrisp street in Poplar. They was only the two really that counted.

I didn't have a barrow. I just had a board, one board and a saw. No name on it. Nothing like that.

I was supposed to have a hawker's licence. How did I work that? I didn't. I reckoned I had Jack Solomon's permission, and I didn't need a hawker's licence. I wasn't hawking. The Council inspectors used to come down. But for some reason or other he used to say to me "hop it!". And directly he said "hop it" I'd be gawn. I'd leave the salt. One of his boys took it in. "Hop it!". He'd shout out if he was serving - Jack or one of his boys. He was for me.

You had to have a licence. But you couldn't get 'em. They were seven and six, for a year. And you had to go before the Council. They had to know about your character. And of course, there was a heavy restriction on where you could do it and where you couldn't do it.

I got on well with Jack Solomons. I don't know how he got from fishmongering to boxing. He was a great big bloke. He was a nice bloke. He was about 26 or 27 then. He had a good fish shop in Ridley Road. He used to employ four people. I should think he started it himself.

Of course, he had to go to the market at Billingsgate at about three o'clock in the market. 'Course, he was a good buyer. That was the art of it. He was a good judge of fish. There's no doubt about it. He knew what he was talking about. And he knew how to clean it.

It was all sold as wet fish. A great big marble slab. Sloped down to the front. And he had water jets coming down all the time into a tray that used to go into a drain in the road. Now, 'e 'ad to pay the Council for that. 'E didn't used to 'ave it packed in ice, the way fishmongers usually did. 'Cos 'e 'ad the water running down all the time. It used to come under slats, and the

fish was laid on the top of it. The water come down underneath the slats, but the coldness would rise up. His ice was packed round the corner.

Wonderful displays. Oh, beautiful fish. Cod, hake, even the dear stuff - salmon and the dearer stuff. 'E used to 'ave the proper Dover Sole, not the ones they manufacture today. Lemon sole, crab, scallops, mussels. 'E used to sell everything, every day.

And it was all fresh, every day. And they 'ad to sell out every day. They 'ad to, 'course there was no fridges in those days. They used to get the ice delivered every day, you know, with a horse and cart. Stacked with blocks of ice, three quarters of a hundred-weight of solid ice.

They used to deliver. Fleet's, in Stoke Newington High Street - almost opposite Woolworth's which was on the corner of Ridley Road - he used to have a complete van every other day, of ice. They used to stack all this stuff in the middle of it. I remember the smell. Oh, you could smell it miles away. It was a fishy smell. It used to get in your clothes, in the house. You couldn't get rid of it.

I love fish. Solomons used to virtually give it to me on a Friday. He used to say, "here, take that home to Mother". That was the expression he used to say.

#### Walking west

I was out of work for those four and a half years in all. I used to walk to the West End every day, and again walk back. I used to go to the West End every day of the week to try to get work.

In the end, I got on Debenham & Freebody's. First of all I was a bicycle boy, delivering quick to all the celebrities. That was when they were building The Dorchester. I was a bicycle boy for three months.

Then I got a van boy's job. Then I was on the Chelsea round, first of all. And then on the Hampstead round. On the Hampstead round I got a delivery to Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle. He was living - oh, a beautiful 'ouse. I can't actually remember the name of the road. It was a night delivery there. The house was set back.

And they 'ad a long entrance, beautifully covered entrance, glass all over it. Beautiful girl opened the door.

I never saw him. Had I read Sherlock Holmes? Yes, I had. Was I excited about going there? I was, actually, 'cos he was a world-famous man. I made about six deliveries there. But I never met him. He had staff there. Full staff. And the house was in its own grounds. Beautiful grounds. I always thought I would meet him, but I never 'ad the opportunity.

And, course, whether 'e'd 'ave taken any notice of me, being a van boy is another thing, isn't it? But you never know. There was a brass plate with 'is name on it. By the bell. 'Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle.' Actually, I was thrilled there. I always thought I'd meet 'im. But I never did meet 'im.

Who else did I deliver to? Dame Lloyd George, Lloyd George's daughter. Oh, real cow! I delivered to the front door, got the door shut in me face: "Tradesman's Entrance to you!" That was her! Lady Megan George.

And he said - Cyril said to me- "we're in for the high-jump. She'll report it over the 'phone." And when we got back the yard foreman said "Root!" I said "Yes?" He said, "You're wanted upstairs. Personnel Manager."

So I 'ad to go up to see 'im. And 'e said "What happened?" So I said "Well,..." 'E said, "But you know you've got to go to the tradesman's entrance, don't you? You know you're in a different class." I said, "well, I don't know about that." And that almost got me the sack, that answer!

We delivered to No.10 Downing Street on the Debenham's van. The policeman at the door took it. 'Cos, there was no gates up in those days. Just walked through.

Then there was the Hatry crash. You probably never heard of the Hatry crash? Well, there's a financier in the City. Suddenly they found deficiencies of about £160 million. They closed all the banks and they closed the Stock Exchange for two days. And it caused enormous trouble.

Anyway, they called us all up - every driver and all the outside staff to this board-room meeting. They said that the wages would have to be



Kingsland High Street, looking north from Ridley Road: late 1930s

cut by half for everybody, and you would have to do two rounds instead of one. Sacked half of us. So, the last lot in would be disposed of. Well, I was one of the ones that was the last lot in, so, of course, I got the sack you see.

That was about 1936, '37. There was no career structure, not for van boys anyway. Oh, no, none at all. They took on van boys. Once they got to 18, 19, they got rid of 'em. They didn't want to pay 'em a man's wages.

I knew it was going to happen to me. I knew it was a short-term job. I knew I couldn't climb the ladder. So that was the end of it.

So I started a stall in Hoxton Market. Which is how Charles Clore comes in. But that's another story!

#### Notes

1. Opened by Prince Albert on 15 June 1855 as the Metropolitan Cattle Market. Livestock was sold in huge numbers on Mondays and Thursdays, and Fridays became the day for a peddler's market for household goods, furniture, antiques, jewellery, bric-a-brac. From 1924 this functioned on Tuesdays as well, and grew rapidly as the cattle market declined. In 1930 it was reckoned that on one peddler's market day there were 2,100 stalls. The site was used by the Army during the second world war and afterwards the City of London was pressed to re-open it. But it re-opened in 1950 in Bermondsey instead. The old abattoirs still functioned until 1953. Blocks of flats now stand on the site.
2. 'A number of famous people have worked in the market. It has often been the setting for many films and documentaries. Among the celebrities was Jack Solomons, top boxing promoter, who used to go to work at a fishmonger's. His brother, Max, who now runs the business, said, "Jack still retains an interest. He phones every day for news of the market. He likes the place and the people"'. D. Mander, *Late Extra: Hackney in the News* (2000), 33.

### Contributors to this volume

Since 1985 **Peter Daniels** has been both an Assistant Librarian at Friends House and a Stoke Newington resident. He is a member of Stoke Newington Quaker meeting (revived in 2000 after closure in 1966), and is clerk of Devonshire House & Tottenham Monthly Meeting. He is also the poet P. D. Luczinski.

**William Fox** the younger was a Finsbury merchant and non-practising barrister with family connections in Islington, who after his marriage in 1796 to Harriet Hall lived in or near Hackney Grove for a brief period. His two other known published works deal with architectural styles, and a controversy about public religious worship. By 1822 he was living near the Strand.

**Dick Hunter** is a history tutor with the Workers' Educational Association in North Yorkshire. His main research interest is in 19th and 20th century British and Irish social history.

**Norman Huxford** is a retired industrial chemist. Born in Hackney in 1930, his current interests are genealogy and industrial archaeology. The search for the origins of Champion Druce was prompted by his family connection with the firm, and a chance observation of the works on a map of 1841.

Almost nothing is known about the artist **C. H. Matthews** (see pages 15, 21 as well as 29 to 36). He was working in or near the Hackney Road in the late 1850s. The principal collections of his watercolours are in London Metropolitan Archives, Islington Local Studies collection and the Crace collection at the British Museum. They depict mainly inner north east London, especially Islington. He may have come upon Fox's *Bagatella* from the references to it as 'a pleasing poem' in S. Lewis's *History and Topography of St Mary Islington* (1842).

**Elaine Murphy** is Chairman of North East London Health Authority. Formerly she was Professor of Psychiatry of Old Age at Guy's Hospital. She is now a part-time Visiting Professor at Queen Mary College, University of London, and Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine at University College London.

**A. J. Root** is now retired. He is in his 90th year and living in Bournemouth. His article is taken from interviews with his nephew, **John Spiers**, External Professor in the School of Humanities and Social Studies at the University of Glamorgan, and founder of the Harvester Press.

#### ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS VOLUME

HAD Hackney Archives Department  
LMA London Metropolitan Archives  
PP Parliamentary Papers  
PRO Public Record Office

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The Friends of Hackney Archives were formed in 1985 to act as a focus for local history and to support the work of the borough council's Archives Department. Membership is open to all. Members receive the Department's regular newsletter, the *Hackney Terrier*, and *Hackney History* once a year. The subscription for the calendar year 2002 is £10 for mailing to UK addresses, £20 (if paid in sterling) for mailing overseas. The Friends are registered as a charity (no. 1074493). Other publications available are *Historic Hackney* (£1.20), a fold-out itinerary for a walk round central Hackney with historical notes, illustrated in full colour; and *Under Hackney: the archaeological story* by Keith Sugden and Kieron Tyler, a fully-illustrated paperback (£4.95).

Enquiries and correspondence can be addressed to the Friends of Hackney Archives, Hackney Archives Department, 43 de Beauvoir Road, London N1 5SQ, telephone 020 7241 2886, fax 020 7241 6688, email [friendsofhackneyarchives@hotmail.com](mailto:friendsofhackneyarchives@hotmail.com). Information is also available through the Council's website, [www.hackney.gov.uk](http://www.hackney.gov.uk).

Contributions to *Hackney History* are welcome. Intending contributors are invited to get in touch with the editor before putting text into final form.

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