THE TERRIER

THE NEWSLETTER OF HACKNEY ARCHIVES DEPARTMENT

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EDITORIAL

Not much room for editorial matter this month, because I have received so many contributions. That's the way I like it! There is just room to congratulate Jon Newman on passing the rest of his exams to obtain his Diploma in Archive Administration.

Jean Wait
Editor

CAN YOU HELP?

East End Furniture Makers 1880-1980

The Geffrye Museum is organising a major exhibition on this theme next summer. They would like to hear from anyone who has memories of furniture making or retailing, particularly women workers. They are also interested in photographs, drawings and designs, catalogues and brochures and actual furniture which might be lent for the exhibition. If you can help, please contact Julia Porter at the Geffrye Museum, Kingsland Road, E2 8EA (01-739 8368) or go to their tea party at the Museum on Saturday, 11th October. 2.30-4.30 pm.

BENJAMIN CLARKE, LOCAL HISTORIAN OF HACKNEY

Work is now well advanced on the preparation of a new edition of *Glimpses of Ancient Hackney and Stoke Newington* by 'F.R.C.S', alias Benjamin Clarke. For those unfamiliar with the work, this consisted of a series of articles that originally appeared in the Hackney Mercury from April 1892 to November 1893. The author looked back to the Hackney of his childhood and early manhood and wrote his pieces based on a series of imaginary routes round the Hackney of the time. Clarke had also carried out some basic research, drawing heavily on the history of Hackney produced by William Robinson in 1842-43 and on the less accurate work of John Thomas compiled in 1832. The new edition will have an introduction to Clarke and his world, footnotes to the text making necessary corrections and placing sites which would have been familiar to Clarke's readers but have now vanished.

The contents page will be revised, and the work will also incorporate an index compiled in 1938, a concordance of old and new street names, and the illustrations that the old edition needed but which were never included. The substance of this preparatory work will form the basis of the talk on 2 December on Clarke, but in the meantime to whet appetites I can provide a short biography of the author. Clarke had been curiously neglected by local researchers and by previous members of staff, though his book has always been well thumbed in the absence of a comprehensive history of Hackney. In the course of research I was surprised to find that I had attended one of Clarke's former surgeries, and this remote link has helped in an odd way to bring me closer to the man, and the world he inhabited.

Benjamin Clarke was born in 1820/1, the eldest son of Benjamin and Catherine Clarke. The Clarke family originated from Waddington, Lincolnshire and the first of the family to come to London was George Clarke, who by 1654 was a mercer of Cheapside with a house in Mare Street, Hackney, where he lived until his death in 1658. A nephew, Sir Edward Clarke, was Lord Mayor of London in 1617, but after George's death the family link with Hackney was broken until the early 19th century.

Benjamin Clarke Senior came to Hackney in 1819 when he bought an already established chemist's business on Mare Street just to the north of Pemberton Place. In 1800 this had been a stationer's shop but in 1815 the second chemists shop in Hackney had been founded there. The photograph shows the house, No. 172 Mare Street, as it appeared about 1900 when used as a restaurant and undoubtedly the projecting shop area would have been the place where the chemist's customers would have been received. In Clarke's childhood there was a long garden behind the house but this had already been truncated for building by 1900. The house was demolished about 1908 and its site is now part of Cordwainers College.

Clarke's birthplace, 172 Mare Street, c.1900

Clarke gives little away about his early home life, though from the Census returns of 1841 we know he was the eldest of three children. However in *Glimpses* he recalls a frightening evening during the celebrations that followed the passing of the Reform Act of 1832, when the franchise was extended. Clarke would have been about 11 at the time and recalled the local jubilation:

'The old Tory Wilson opposite (in the house now the Lansdowne Club) and the no less Tory chemist entertaining other views, would have closed their shutters as in mourning, but it would not do. A rabble rout, coercive as Radicals are even now towards all who think fit to differ from them, paraded the streets, and would have smashed the windows if they had failed to give the then popular sign. However, in each case farthing rushlights saved their windows, but it was an awfully anxious night'.

Benjamin's father kept his windows and survived well into the 1850s. By 1855 the business was in the hands of his younger son Henry and remained a family business into the early 1880s.

The young Benjamin's first school was Mrs. Todd's, in what was then Grove Street (now Lauriston Road) behind the Albion Public House. Clarke recalls a mulberry tree in the garden, which was still there in the 1890s, though by that time the schoolhouse formed part of a small brewery. Later he attended the Hackney Church of England Grammar School in Clarence Place.

His father had been one of the founder trustees in 1830. Inevitably there was friction between this school and the Hackney Grammar School in Sutton Place, which was not resolved until rivalry with the Hackney Charity School brought the boys together: 'and the two schools, in face of a common enemy, at once became friends (and ever after remained so). Our field of Waterloo was the Hackney Churchyard and, as the 'charity brats' (the name then given them) poured in from Chatham Place along the Churchwell Path to intercept the Grammar School boys as they came out of school in the afternoon, we, from Clarence Road, in equally 'imposing columns' rushed down Clapton Square, took the path, now by the Coroners Court, along the Rectory Garden wall and outflanked the Charity boys. There really was some military genius shown on the part of our leaders. The fight became fast and furious, stones and other missiles were freely used, as well as heavy book straps. In the midst of the combat the police made their appearance and by dropping on the ringleaders (for the Charity boys were the aggressors) the riot was with great difficulty quelled, even without a magistrate to read the Riot Act, or calling out the military to empty their shot belts or give a bayonet charge. So ended the battle of Hackney ....'

Clarke is altogether more reticent on what the school managed to teach him, but he evidently benefitted from his father's links with medicine, for he went on to train as a doctor at the London Hospital.

He became a member of the Royal College of Surgeons in July 1842 and a Fellow in November 1859. From this arose his later *nom de plume* 'F.R.C.S'. By 1847 he had established himself in a practice at No. 4 Spackman's Buildings, the terrace on the east side of Mare Street between Darnley and Paragon Roads, renamed Richmond Terrace in the 1850s and now Nos. 224-238 Mare Street. On the strength of his new income Clarke married in 1846 and by 1851 his wife Charlotte (possibly one of the Hensley family) had borne him two daughters, Elizabeth Hensley (b1847) and Charlotte Emily (b1848). Presumably the practice flourished, for when the larger bow-fronted house at the end of the terrace became vacant in 1850, on the expiry of the original 90 years lease granted by St. Thomas's Hospital the ground landlords, Clarke took the property and moved his family three doors down the road.

Spackman's Buildings are still standing, though the large gardens of No. 1 have gone. The large bow-fronted house had probably been the home of the builder of the terrace, Joseph Spackman, hence its larger size. Clarke stayed for thirteen years, and for many years a large copper beech in the front garden commemorated his occupancy. After his departure the house continued its medical associations and has only recently ceased to be a surgery. It was in the dining room of this house that Tyer's system of railway signalling was first demonstrated, presumably to Clarke and a gathering of the scientifically curious of the parish.

It was during his time at Richmond Terrace that Clarke was appointed Surgeon to the Homerton District of the Hackney Poor Law Union, later becoming Surgeon to the East London Union Infirmary. He was also involved in the volunteer militia movement that sprang up all over the country in the later 1850s in response to fears of a French invasion and became Assistant Surgeon, and later Depot Surgeon to the King's Own Light Infantry, Tower Hamlets Militia, who met in the Assembly Rooms on the West side of the Narrow Way, Mare Street.

Just when Clarke's antiquarian interests began is impossible to say. As a boy he had fished on the Lea and roamed the fields and common lands of what was still almost a country parish. During his early working life he saw much of Hackney developed for building which swept away the remaining farms and removed many of the old houses of his childhood. In common with most of his contemporaries Clarke had little liking for Georgian architecture, but he was well aware of the losses in the local architectural heritage caused by the 19th century development. By 1868 he was already a member of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society, for when a Roman marble tomb was found in Lower Clapton he presented a paper to the Society on the discovery, and his wider interest in Hackney's past in general must have been well established by this time.

By the 1860s Mare Street had become noisier and busier. Clarke's near neighbour, Loddiges Nursery, had been sold for building and the construction of Darnley Road deprived him of part of his garden. This prompted him to move in 1863 to No. 1 Arbutus Place, a large Georgian house in Upper Clapton at the present junction with Ickburgh Road. Here he continued his medical practice and wrote both his only recorded medical article and the pieces for the Hackney Mercury that later became *Glimpses of Ancient Hackney and Stoke Newington.*

Clarke had left Mare Street when building development affected his house and garden. Upper Clapton too was changing and during his time at Arbutus Place the railway cut through just to the south of the house and a station opened across the road. Hackney was changing from a collection of village settlements to a suburb and was soon to become a part of Inner London. Many times in *Glimpses* Clarke bewails the passing of old families as their descendants leave the district, but a mere six years after *Glimpses* first appeared Clarke also left Hackney. He and his daughter Charlotte moved to No. 1 Crowther Terrace, Bournemouth where he worked as a Medical Examiner for Life Insurance G.P.O. His last house was St. Lawrence in Crescent Road, Bournemouth.

Clarke's departure from Hackney noted by the 'Our Local Lounger' column of the *Hackney Gazette* on 3 October 1898. Inevitably the newspaper was not quite correct in all its facts and Clarke wrote to the Gazette on 12 October recalling his birth in Mare Street and his time at Richmond Terrace:-

'The bow fronted house at the corner of Darnley Road was my last residence there. I took it when it had a spacious wing standing where Darnley Road now stands. This road was cut through my orchard and Loddiges gardens, which for the earlier years of my practice were in full existence and from which some of the finest palm [misprinted 'plum' in the text] trees were removed to Crystal Palace .... Many a plant in Chatsworth came from there. A striking memento of my residence in Richmond Terrace is a copper beech tree in the front, planted by me some 36 years ago, which has retained its full health and vigour, and yet has never grown any larger. I trust my successors will respect that vegetable wonder. It was from that house that I removed to Upper Clapton some 35 years ago, to be subjected to a similar lopping or curtailment, for Ickburgh Road was in like manner cut through my premises in the front and reduced their length at the back. I now only await Time's inevitable scythe on my own person'.

Benjamin Clarke died in Bournemouth on 3 November 1906.

David Mander

The sources for this biography will be listed in the forthcoming reprint of Glimpses of Ancient Hackney and Stoke Newington *which David is editing.*

DOCILITY AND NEATNESS

Many researchers seem to ignore the records of 19th century Nonconformist chapels. Incorrectly they are seen to be of limited interest as they are believed to be about the activities of people with a narrow view of life and outdated theology. This can be wide of the mark, and as an example of a fascinating set of sociological records, I want to refer readers to the minute books of the New Gravel Pit Hackney Chapel School. These are now on permanent loan to Hackney Archives, Reference D/E/237/17-22.

The Gravel Pit Chapel in Paradise Fields was one of the leading Unitarian congregations of the early 19th century. In some ways it could be regarded as the most important in political terms. Some of the evidence for this is contained in Volume 14 of the London Record Society (published 1978). This sets out, with notes, all the minutes of the Committees for Repeal of the Test and Corporation Act, 1786-90 and 1827-28. The second agitation, leading to their repeal, was carried through by a committee, many of whose members also attended the Chapel, led by their minister Robert Aspland. Those who want to know more about these Hackney Unitarians can read my history of the congregation, which closed in 1969 following a Greater London Council Compulsory Purchase Order.

But it's the School, founded in the 1790s, that is the subject of this brief article. For much of the period up to 1850, there was a boys and a girls school, each set up for the poor of Hackney. Run on strict 19th century 'charity' terms, the characters of the girls between 1835 and 1854 are listed. There are 92 names to be found in a small notebook, and the character profiles are short and to the point. Neatness and docility were the qualities looked for in the girls, a perfect background for servants which many of them become, often to members of the congregation. A couple of the profiles give an idea of what most are like:-

ANNE DOVE entered the school in 1837, aged 6 years, left 7th May 1844.

Character: A well disposed and good tempered girl. One who had greatly improved under the mild influence of the school mistress. Personal neatness yet to be acquired but not to be characterised as an untidy girl.

Mrs. Netteville obtained her a situation as nursery maid in Dalston where she is to be immediately engaged.

This engagement was not entered into, she was disappointed. Mrs. Sadler engaged her on trial: it is feared she will be considered too young and without experience.

Note Mrs. Sadler was the wife of the Chapel's Junior Minister.

ELIZABETH WRIGHT entered the School October 1840, aged 6 years, left 7th May 1844.

Character: This little girl was dismissed at ten years of age, for a series of falsehoods continued many days and which appeared to be occasioned by a love of exciting wonder and interest.

She was afterwards received into the School of Industry at Dalston.

Poor little Elizabeth Wright! Her fate may seem harsh to us today, but the school was in advance of its time and considered highly benevolent and caring by the wider community. It was a privilege to attend and learn to read and write. The parents were expected to co-operate as this extract from the Minutes of 6 April 1853 demonstrates:-

'There has been an evident desire for improvement on the part of Tomlin during the last month, but it seems there is no co-operation by the mother, the struggle for cleanliness and regularity is almost hopeless, Miss Johnson has therefore desired Mrs. Tomlin to attend at the next committee, to hear whether her child will be allowed to remain'.

Thus these volumes give considerable background about some of the poor who attended the school who lived in the area of Morning Lane and Mare Street. But to my mind they reveal far more about the mores and attitudes of the mainly affluent members of the congregation!

Alan Ruston

For more information on the New Gravel Pit, come to Alan's talk on 2nd October

OFF THE SHELF

The Records of the Shoreditch Vestry

Sybil Shine is one of our 'regulars', doing research for her thesis on local government in Shoreditch in the later nineteenth century. Here she describes a particular experiment in setting up a 'direct labour organisation'. The information is taken from the committee minutes of the Vestry of St. Leonard, Shoreditch.

In September 1893 a Special Committee re the Unemployed was called, 'at which Mr. Moss of the L.C.C. was present. The committee was to consider ways of relieving the unemployed by offering them work on the Vestry's projects. Enquiry Officers were employed to issue tickets for work to those who complied with the conditions of having resided in the Parish for at least three months and who also appeared to be of a deserving character. One month later the Enquiry Officers reported that they had had enquired into 604 cases of whom 521 were good, 21 were bad and 62 false. They listed the occupations of the applicants and tables of their 1,836 dependents, giving ages, and length of time unemployed, of applicants for work .... 'and we beg also to report that in a large number of cases the money received from the Vestry for work done had to be applied to meet the demands of the landlord for rent'.

The committee members were in some difficulty over the decision to use the Vestry projects as a means of relieving local unemployment. The Lighting Committee had agreed to this in opening trenches for laying the electric lighting mains, so that some of the work was done by an outside contractor, the British Insulated Wire Company, and some by the Works Department employing out-of-work men who lived in Shoreditch.

The cost per yard of trench work was higher for the Works Department than that paid to the outside contractor. The committee enquired into this, and debated how to account for it, some members being more critical of the cost of work and others trying to make a case for the continuation of the use of direct labour and by accounting for the extra cost involved. The discussion illustrates the work organisation and the technical decisions in which committee members were involved. Employees were interviewed by the committee in compiling its report.

When the Works Department started, there was no surveyor and no estimate had been given. The foreman was able, but had been overstretched when more gangs had been put on. An assistant foreman had been appointed, but was discharged for misconduct. For Mr. Gammage, the foreman, the problems began when the number of men was increased from one gang to four or five. He said that about 40 men had been discharged, including about 12 for incompetency. He had been under pressure to get enough men to satisfy Mr. Fergusson, the Clerk of Works, and therefore prevented from discharging men, and Mr. Fergusson threatened to report him if he did. The work was delayed when the conduits did not arrive on time and also because the consulting Engineer ordered more time than usual to be allowed for the conduit joints to be set.

The Surveyor had complained to him from time to time that the men on the job were 'too thick' [too many]. The foreman thus seems to have been under pressure from men needing relief work, from the Clerk of Works not to dismiss men, from the Surveyor not to have too many men on one piece of work, and from the consulting engineer not to proceed too fast. In this light Mr. Gammage thought the job was a fairly satisfactory one. He did not regard the cost of the work as his responsibility. He was asked about his connection with a Watch Club. This arose, he said, when some of the men clubbed together to save money, for clothes and watches, and asked him to be Secretary. The surveyor wanted him to resign after 2 months. He did not make any money out of it nor did he give favours to members, for of the 9 members in the club, 3 were discharged by him owing to drink. One of the Special Committee members (Mr. Hyat) reported seeing some of the men dig out some lead from the trench and one of them immediately sold it at a shop nearby, but when he (Mr. Hyat) reported the matter to Mr. Gammage the men returned the lead. Another time he saw three foremen drunk in City Road who told him that their orders were that the men were not to be hurried.

Committee members debated the differences in costs. For Mr. Winkler, who was also a member of the Building Sub-Committee, it was not possible to compare the work done and costs incurred, to those of the contractors in Kingsland Road where the trenches were not so long and were under a footpath, rather than being deep and requiring concrete to be broken on a main road. The Works committee went to a depth of 8 feet, some of the tunnelling under tramlines was done at night.

Mr. Winkler was quite satisfied that not a penny was spent unnecessarily. Another committee member (Mr. Kershaw) disagreed. The British Insulated Wire Company had tendered to trench anywhere for 3s. 8d. per yard; the Works Department costs were 6s. 4d. It was the same kind of work, but Gammage went under carriageways when he might have gone under a footway. Mr. Gammage had a bricklayer's idea of the work and Mr. Fergusson an engineer's. When Mr. Fergusson arrived at 9.30 on the site, Mr. Gammage had been there since 6.0 am and already digging a trench. There was the Kingsland Road incident when Gammage opened a trench in the wrong direction in spite of a protest from Mr. Fergusson. Gammage couldn't manage such a large job and it was not his fault that the costs were so high, that was the responsibility of the Works Department. Mr. Russell, the Chief Engineer, informed the committee that he was perfectly satisfied with the work done by the Works Department and the Contractor. The contractor had made an offer to lay conduits at 8s. 6d. or 9s. 8d. per yard, without specifying which street, although he did not think they could do the High Street for that sum. Thus the 'expert' witness was referring to estimates for the whole of the work, where costs would be averaged over easy streets and difficult streets. The implication here was that the Works Department had done the more difficult, and this the more expensive part of the work.

Major Wenbourne had the task of drafting the report. The question was to compare the Contractor's work to that of the Works Committee and therefore to show the extra cost of employing their own labour. But the work was not identical. The Works Committee had laid 3-way rather than 2-way conduits over half the length, and under more difficult conditions. Still, supervision had been lax, therefore it could have been less expensive - 'there was a loss through superfluous labour being employed' - and a considerable length of trench was opened in error, so that much work was wasted. For this reason it should not be hastily assumed that no Board can do its own work profitably, Major Wenbourne concluded. 'It is solely a question of management and direct interest in the exercise of care and economy. If employment is given as 'relief' in any sense, or if supervision is lax, the attempt will fail'. His final words in the report being - 'The experiment under *absolutely similar conditions* has yet to be tried'.

Sybil Shine

FRENCH REVOLUTIONS AND HACKNEY REACTIONS Part One

The impact of the Revolution of 1789 soon extended far beyond France itself. The new ideas which it nourished were spread by writers like Tom Paine and Richard Price throughout Europe and America, exciting radicals and dismaying the establishment. Their effect was soon felt at a local level. In Hackney branches of radical clubs were set up and the London Corresponding Society held an open air demonstration, probably on Hackney Downs, in 1793.

Few records of these groups survive, whereas the establishment response to this perceived threat is far more fully documented. The prime source for this in Hackney is the Dobree Papers.[1] purchased in 1978. Samuel Dobree of the Grove, Hackney was involved with the Hackney Association for the Preservation of Peace Liberty and Property, and subsequently served as a captain in the Loyal Hackney Volunteers. His papers primarily document the activities of these two organisations. Other sources used for this article include pamphlets and sermons in the local history library and press cuttings.

The Hackney Association was one of the many 'loyal associations' that were set up in response to the widespread popular enthusiasm for the revolution in France. Their aims were to counter the radical arguments being put forward and to reassert the nation's belief in king and constitution. With the declaration of war with France this ideological conflict became an actual one, and many loyal associations also set up their own corps of volunteer militia to counter, as they perceived it, the twin threats of foreign invasion and internal revolution.

The Dobree Papers are interesting not simply for the information they give on the Hackney Association and its Volunteers, but also for the insights they give into the local radical response to the events in France, and the extent to which this was seen as a threat by the Hackney establishment. The Association was undoubtedly an establishment creation; the rector and vicars of St. John at Hackney together with important landholders like the Powell, Rhodes, Graham and Norris families dominated the committee throughout. The first meeting in December 1792 'not convened by public notice, but from the communication of a few friends with each other .... was attended by nearly a hundred of the most respectable and independent inhabitants. Their immediate subscription to a declaration of their principles and views was followed at their next meeting by many hundreds more, uninfluenced by any motive but their own fears and apprehensions'.[2] This contemporary description gives us a good idea of the composition and attitudes of the association. Their declared aim at their first meeting was 'the preservation of peace and the defence of our constitution, our liberty and property, against the combinations and designs of wicked or deluded men'. It was decided that the committee would meet twice a week 'to receive information' of any attempts to pervert the minds of the local population with revolutionary ideas.

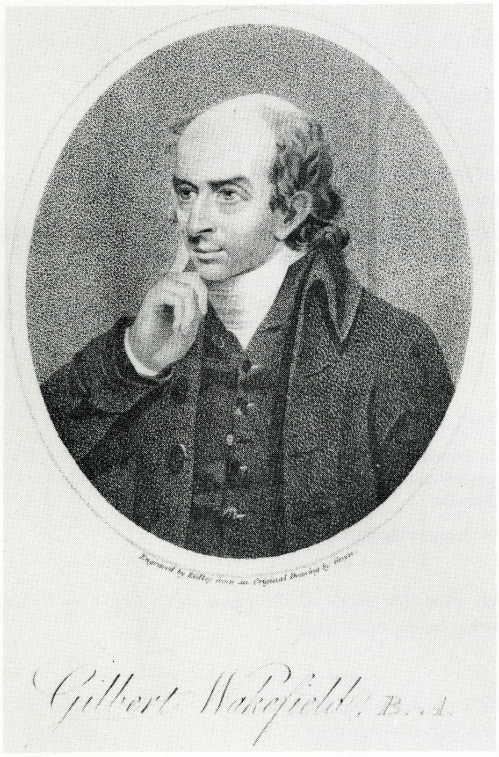
A HACKNEY MEETING

In spite of the activities of the Hackney Association, Hackney was regarded as a politically radical place. Gilray's cartoon, A Hackney Meeting, *satirises a meeting of the Middlesex Freeholders held at the Mermaid in 1796 to oppose the passage of the two Sedition Bills; these banned meetings of more than 50 people and made the publication of seditious literature a treasonable offence. (Gilbert Wakefield was prosecuted under the second Act in 1799). The cartoon shows George Byng addressing the crowd, while his fellow M.P., Charles Fox, holds his hat for him.*

Many radical thinkers lived in Hackney at this period, and a good proportion of them were attached to New College, the non-conformist academy at Lower Clapton. The contributions of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley to the debate on the French Revolution have already been well researched. Another New College tutor and Hackney resident made a later contribution. Gilbert Wakefield wrote a pamphlet replying to the Bishop of Llandaff's views on the events in France. He commented that the poor had little to lose from any invasion, in fact their poverty 'will render the chance of any change desirable' and he went on, 'I believe from my soul that within three miles of the house where I am writing these pages, there is much greater number of starving miserable human beings than on any equal portion of ground throughout the habitable globe'.[3]

Wakefield then cited Aesop's fable of the sensible ass 'What is it to me who my master is since I shall but carry my panniers as usual?' This was written in 1798. Price was dead and Priestley had fled to America. Pitt's government had suspended Habeas Corpus, passed acts which banned seditious publications and political meetings, and had tried and imprisoned many prominent members of the radical clubs. Central government wished to present the image at least of a unified nation confronting a common foe, and was prepared to use coercion if necessary. Wakefield's apostrophes on class division and the millenarian vision that concluded his pamphlet were not part of that unity.

'We sons of peace see, or think we see, a gleam of glory through the mist which now envelopes our horizons. Great revolutions are accomplishing; a general fermentation is working for the purpose of general refinement throughout the universe'.



Gilbert Wakefield was a tutor at New College, Hackney. A teetotal and a vegetarian, his early pamphlets on religion and classical greek scholarship were seen as further evidence of eccentricity. But the 'incendiary' political views in his 'Reply to the Bishop of Llandaff' were taken sufficiently seriously to draw a prosecution under the Sedition Act and two years in prison.

Wakefield was tried for seditious libel and saw out the century in Dorchester Goal. There he contracted the typhus from which he died shortly after his release in 1801.

New College, Hackney was always a by-word for revolutionary opinion and the London press was jubilant when the academy had closed down in 1795. 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen' sang one paper, while another saw the event as 'a striking proof that the people of this country are not disposed to encourage modern philosophy in their attempts to undermine the constitution'.

The Hackney Assocciation undoubtedly viewed New College with mistrust, as much for its religion as for its politics, but it is questionable whether the college was seen as part of the local revolutionary threat which the Association was determined to combat. Price, Priestley and Wakefield were contributing with writers like Edmund Burke to the national debate on the events in France. Their publications were restricted to an educated readership both in terms of their language and their price. Wakefield wrote about the poor people within three miles of his house, but he was not writing for them, neither could they afford to read him.

More alarming for the government and for the loyal associations was the publication of Tom Paine's *The Rights of Man.* Part one had appeared in 1791 at the safely inaccessible price of three shillings. Part Two, published in 1792 simultaneously appeared in a cheap sixpenny edition; for the first time revolutionary literature was accessible in all senses of the word. Copies of Paine's work were undoubtedly available in Hackney. However, little survives of the locally published works of 'those clubs and societies formed with views and conducted on principles the reverse of ours' that the Hackney Association wished to combat.

The one exception is a handbill put out by The Society of the Friends of Liberty. It takes the form of resolutions passed at a meeting at Shacklewell in July 1795, and is signed by the Chairman and Secretary. We do not know if the Society really existed and met at Shacklewell, or whether a local writer used the format of published minutes to give added credibility to his views. A note at the bottom requests that those readers 'who wish to promote the welfare of the community will, perhaps, after perusing [this] take pleasure in recommending [it] to the attention of others'. The handbill is a precis of Paine's views. It gives a lengthy list of grievances: the patronage of the Crown, the power of the church, the control of M.Ps by the landed interest, the settlement laws, the Test and Corporation Acts and the expense of a standing army, by all of which 'the honest poor have been driven to acts of outrage at which their minds would revolt in happier circumstances'. The solution to this dilemma, and the solution that was being proposed by all the radical groups, was universal suffrage, 'the only effectual means of redressing all their wrongs and of procuring all their rights'.

The handbill concludes with appropriate toasts that the society drank after dinner: 'May peace and plenty succeed war and poverty', 'May the tree of Liberty overshadow the earth and the industrious poor find shelter under its branches', 'May England be speedily divided into small farms, by which the industrious poor may live, and monopolising be done away with'.

Clearly this was an example of those 'attempts to inflame the minds of the people by seditious language, handbills or other publications that have a tendency to disturb the peace of the parish' that the Hackney Association was anxious to root out. One of its immediate aims was the production of its own counter - propaganda. At the first meeting in December 1792 the committee discussed, 'the distribution of tracts that will inform and teach the Lower orders their duties as well as their rights, to counteract those publications that are dispersed among them to deceive them with false hopes'. Hard on the heels of that discussion came the Association's first piece of propaganda, *'Equality as consistent with the British Constitution, in a dialogue between a master manufacturer and one of his workmen.* Printed by order of the Hackney Association, 1792'. The publication date is interesting as it suggests that either the Association had a team of hacks capable of turning out a twenty page pamphlet in four weeks or, more plausibly, the publication was already in existence and was made available to the various loyal associations to put their name to. It is known that Secret Service funds were made available to loyal associations in the 1790's for propaganda. Certainly the price, one penny each or ninepence per dozen, suggests that it was heavily subsidised.

The pamphlet takes the form of a delightfully naive conversation between John and his master. It may not have made many converts, but it is very instructive as to how the political establishment viewed the arguments of radical groups. John arrives to tell his master that he cannot come to work today, for 'it is to meet the friends of liberty that I am going'. John has been reading his Paine and recites the familiar litany of radical complaint. 'Provisions are too high, liberty is too low, and we would be free and equal as they are in France'. The master admits to seldom reading 'except in my Bible and my ledger' but agrees to sit down with John and argue the case.

The master's argument is that in England men are already free and capable of arriving at wealth; he cites his own example.

'I was the son of small farmer whose condition was little better than that of a common labourer. I had learned to read and write at a charity school. I was first porter, then clerk, and afterwards partner in the house I entered into. I am now fifty years of age and am worth £30,000.'

We have recently become accustomed to regarding such attitudes as the prerogative, if not the creation, of the Victorians; here we are reminded they have a far longer pedigree.

In a similar vein he dismisses John's argument for universal suffrage; the vote is not a right, but something to be struggled for 'Instead of working only five days a week, work six, and in six years you will have gained money enough to purchase a vote'. He then turns to discuss the situation in France, again from personal experience. He has been to Marseilles to retreive a business debt; while walking in the street 'in a new coat, with handsome steel buttons' he had been mistaken for an aristocrat, and was about to be hung from a lamp post when he was saved by his banker who happened to be passing, who assured the mob he was a good patriot. This horror story coupled with the threat of French invasion is sufficient to convince John of his own folly.

'Right master, I thank you for explaining all this to me, and instead of going to the liberty club, I will begin my work; for I should not like to see a Frenchman lie with my wife, or take the bread out of my children's mouths'.

The Hackney Association did not report back on the success of its pamphlet, but by February 1794 it had weightier matters to discuss. Britain was now officially at war with France, and the radical clubs at home were now part of a larger threat of a foreign enemy fomenting internal revolt and threatening invasion. France had already proclaimed its doctrine of revolutionary war, and was sending its armies to 'liberate' Belgium and parts of Germany. The response in Hackney was to set up a volunteer militia.

Jon Newman

1. D/F/DOB/1-39
2. A Sermon preached at Hackney on Thursday April 23 1795 on the presentation of the Colours of the Loyal Hackney Volunteers. Rev. J. Symons
3. A Reply to the Bishop of Llandaff. 1798.

Part Two, the story of the Loyal Hackney Volunteers, will appear in the next issue.

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