

The Hackney Terrier



HACKNEY ARCHIVES NEWSLETTER

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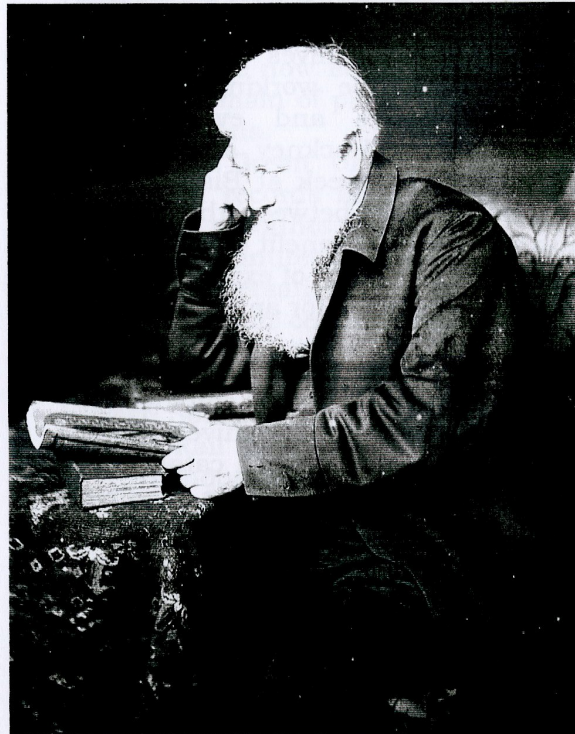
A Good Read

Right: Andrew Pritchard (1804-82), treasurer of The Newington Green Unitarian Chapel. Studio portrait, June 1869. He was responsible for the rebuilding of the chapel in 1864, was a noted microscopist and in 1824 designed the first diamond microscope.

Still Smouldering

Below: Fire hoses pour water into Bishopsgate Goods Depot from Bethnal Green Road on 5th December 1964.

New photographs from recent accessions, details within.



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New to Hackney Archives: Acquisitions, New Projects. **Features:** Totty & Tilly - 'Eminently Victorian', A Christmas poem for Wick Road. **Reviews:** Builders of Repute - The Reader Bros.

New to Hackney Archives

Staff and opening hours

Welcome to Catherine Taylor, who joined us on 16 September in the new post of archivist (Bishopsgate Institute and Hackney Archives Department). Catherine will be working on Mondays, Tuesdays and every other Wednesday at Hackney and the remainder of the week at Bishopsgate. The partnership between the two institutions should benefit both and give Catherine a mixture of experience and duties. The post is for an initial twelve months.

Catherine was previously employed by London Metropolitan Archives, where she had been working on cataloguing hospital records, Catherine qualified from the Aberystwyth course in 1998, where she improved both her archive knowledge and footballing skills. She then joined British Rail, appraising financial planning records and rail plans, managed by Ted Rogers, who once again has become her manager. Catherine is enjoying the variety both jobs provide - and the public service duties at Hackney.

The addition of a part time member of staff has enabled us to review the opening hours and we are pleased to announce that for a trial period of four months from 2 January 2003, we will be introducing a late evening opening on the first and third Tuesday of each month. On those days, the Department will stay open until 8pm.

The late evenings will be by prior appointment, though there will be a full service. Last orders for the production of items from the strongroom will be half an hour before closure as on other days.

There will also be another change to our existing pattern of open hours.

Mondays have been the quietest of our current open days, and we are going to close on that day and open on Wednesday instead. So the new open hours will be:

Mondays. Closed Tuesdays: 1st & 3rd 9.30-1pm, 2-8pm 2nd and 4th: 9.30-1pm, 2-5pm

Wednesdays-Thursdays 9.30-1, 2-5pm. Fridays 9.30-1pm.

We have also reviewed another aspect of our service delivery, and only pencils and lap tops can now be used for note taking in the searchroom, whatever source material is in use.

Welcome back to Peter Kent, who re-joined us on 31 October after a three month absence. As some visitors will know, Peter's wife Dawn gave birth prematurely while they were in Italy in July. The baby was brain damaged at birth and despite operations in Rome, subsequently died. Peter and Dawn would like to thank all who sent messages of support.

The Christmas closure period this year will be from 1pm on 20 December 2002 until 9.30am on Thursday 2 January 2003. Despite our week closed from 23 September, Peter's period away has posed problems in ensuring that staff are able to fit their leave entitlement in, and some of this will now be used up over Christmas.

Discussions are taking place on whether HAD can begin to plan to move to vacant space in Hackney's Technology and Learning Centre.

Projects - present ...

The service plan for the financial year 2003/4 is now in preparation. Hopefully we shall be in the throes of publicising the New Opportunity Fund projects 'Tudor Hackney' and 'Ten Generations'. David Mander was one of those appearing at *Electronic London*, the successful London Archives Users Forum annual conference on 2 November

last at the Public Record Office, with a talk including some images from the developing web site, and an early stage of the virtual reality rectory house. We expect to have an initial site live by the end of December 2002. Two launches are planned for Tudor Hackney - one at the Public Record Office in March 2003 and the other after Easter at a venue in Hackney.

...and New

As this issue was in the last stages of preparation, we heard from the Heritage Lottery Fund that our *Hackney Webcat* bid for a net figure of just over £71,000 has been successful. The eighteen month project will see all the local studies library catalogue entries added to our ADLIB software, the re-cataloguing of the Stoke Newington collection and new cataloguing of un-accessioned material. We have already obtained an online search engine, and this will enable us to make both our library catalogue and the electronic part of our archive catalogue available via our part of the Council's web site. We hope to develop a new front end to our screens in the searchroom, with better web access to relevant sites during the coming financial year.

Books

No customary book launch this Christmas. David is still working on *The Highways of Hackney* for Breedon Books. This work, intended as a combined street name book with some reference to famous persons, and a cross reference work for the many vanished terraces and changed road names, is now due to reach the publishers in April 2003. Sutton Publishing have just confirmed that they will reprint David's three illustrated borough histories in a single hardback edition price £14.99, intended for release in March 2003.

Accessions

Since June 2002, new acquisitions

have included:

Charles Scott (deceased) Research into the Mobbs family c1991-3

Mary Wilson. Papers relating to the LCC School Care Committee in Hackney, Shoreditch and Stoke Newington c1950s-60s

Hackney Trades Union Council minutes 1995-2002

Alfred Braddock. Additional 36 quarter plate negatives additional to our earlier purchase now listed as D/F/BRD but in the main of pictures already in the collections.

Newington Green Unitarian Church. Additional records including minutes 1811-49, accounts from 1748-1869, the early minutes of the Newington Green Conversation Society 1843-59 and some 19th century lantern slides of church subjects.

Plans for the area around Arthur Street, South Hackney 1828-1925

British Rail Residuary Board. Files on the Bishopsgate Goodsyd fire of 1964; Hackney track diagrams 1930s-60s, BR financial planning records for the Hackney area 1960-85, North London Railway Benevolent Society minutes and North London Railway rent books (both early 20th C).

Chris Dorley-Brown. Digital copies of photographs of Hackney-based artists in local studios 1984-90. The Friends' have donated a copy of the facsimile re-print of Pinks's History of Clerkenwell.

Books: *A private view*, a contemporary work of fiction with some local settings, Edith Scott's *Happy with my lot* (reminiscences), a new history of the North London Railway by Dennis Lovett, Richard Morris' delightful *The Powells in Essex and their London ancestors* (Loughton and District Hist. Soc, 2002) and some selections from the London City Mission magazines for the Hackney area 1855-70s, obtained as a result of a visit by David to the Mission's archives in July.

A review of Richard Morris' book will appear in the next issue.

Features

Ken Neale's A Hackney Notebook (4)

TOTTY AND TILLY Eminently Victorian

At the other end of the social spectrum of Lytton Strachey's 'Eminent Victorians' Totty and Tilly were, nevertheless, eminently Victorian¹. Born in 1862 Julia Hannah - Totty - was a dominant figure in the Gibson family. Matilda Emily - Tilly - the younger sister born in 1864, was an energetic motivator. They were born at No 1 Well Street, Hackney and christened at St James the Less, Bethnal Green. Their parents, Richard and Hannah (Milbourne) Gibson, ran a fishmonger's business at 227 Well Street.



"Tilly" - Matilda Gibson circa 1925

The Gibson family originated from Aberdeen and their Scottish attributes were evident in Totty and Tilly. Sadly Richard Gibson was killed at the age of

39, in a fall from his horse in Median Road in 1876. The intrepid widow, Hannah, brought up their five children and as the eldest girls, Totty and Tilly played their parts in family duties. Hannah, so small she stood on a hassock to make the pastry on the kitchen table, ran the fish business, drove the horse and cart, fed the children and paid off the mortgages on the houses the Gibsons had bought in Hassett Road and Ballance Road: one for each of the children.²

All this dour and industrious Gibson personality and Milbourne pride endowed the early experience of Totty and Tilly with a sense of domestic responsibility and social standards that characterised the rest of their lives. They were both devoted to the church of St Barnabas at Homerton and active in its religious and social life. By the 1920s and 1930s their house seemed to me like a time capsule. In most houses of the period domestic and furnishings had changed after the First World War, in response to changing social and economic circumstances - just as they were to do again in the years after 1945.

It was not like that at No 30 Hassett Road though. The house was a humble but authentic Victorian tableau. As a small child I found it fascinatingly different from the other homes I knew. It was an experience, for there was no frivolity and no waste. We had to be on our best behaviour, properly dressed and to speak the King's English - or we were corrected.³ The house itself was replete with its Victorian idioms. Lots of lace, heavy tasselled curtains, austere dark tablecloths, dried flowers, peacock feathers, the obligatory upright piano, mahogany furniture, the bird aviary, the music box, dull patterned wallpapers and, naturally, the family bible. Numerous small dust-gathering ornaments were everywhere, often displayed on velvet cloths.

As children we were treated kindly but

firmly by Totty and Tilly, who remained spinsters to the end of their lives. So we shared a little in the Victorian philosophy that defined their lives - I think to advantage. The limits of our indulgence in that Gibson residence were feeding the birds in the aviary, playing - quietly - with Nell the dog, and jam sandwiches. Totty had set me on the right road in 1922 by insisting that I be christened at St Barnabas, though I was not a parish resident. No-one could say 'No', and I have no recollection of being consulted on the matter either! Constrained by contemporary religious attitudes and the boundaries of social behaviour, Totty and Tilly saw it as their duty to the family to 'set a good example' and to make sure we followed it.

stow's Mayor, Alderman Dorothy Wrigley, who was regaled with a lecture on Totty's personal beliefs in which allegiance to the Church of England and the Conservative party were foremost, closely followed by a castigation of the decline in the standards of British life since the death of the great Queen Victoria in 1901. There was the obligatory photograph for the Walthamstow Guardian - 'I can't think what all the fuss is about' whispered Totty - and a nod to the support that the Labour controlled council had given her in recent years.

Totty died later in 1962. She was my great aunt - and memorable!

Kenneth Neale 2002

¹*Eminent Victorians* by Giles Lytton Strachey (1918)

²Both roads were laid out in the grounds of Sidney House - Ballance Road was laid out in 1869 and building work was under way in Hassett Road in 1871.

³I was told that this was a family discipline inherited from Hannah Milbourne

Postscript:

Totty was Julia Hannah - and in the family there had been a tradition that one female member should always be a Hannah which went back to at least the 18th century. As such Totty was the custodian of Hannah's Jug, a small but charming little pale blue and white Wedgwood-style vessel that has passed from Hannah to Hannah over the generations. The present Hannah - Sophie Hannah - is a scientist at Edinburgh University.

Editor's note. The shopping poem, Sound Advice, reproduced on the next page, came from the Hassett Road household, though the authorship is unknown. DM

"Totty" - Julia Hannah Gibson circa 1950



On Totty's hundredth birthday, there was the much prized telegram from the Queen. She was then living with another sister and a cousin in Clarendon Road in Walthamstow - Tilly having died in 1941. The celebrations of the day included a visit from Waltham-



SOUND ADVICE

This isn't a tract, it's a leaflet-
To show you the best way to shop,
So when you go shopping for
Xmas, Just walk to Wick Road
and then stop.

You've no need to go to a market-
You've no need to wander up
West- For just here- in Wick
Road, South Hackney- There's
clothes, food and drink of the
best!

Where could you beat Frank Pitts'
Bloaters? Where could you beat
Cuthberts Beer? Where could you
beat Georges' "Haircuts?" Why
nowhere! the best is right here!

What are you buying for Xmas?
That season of mirth and good
cheer! Whatever you want come
to Wick Road, You're certain to
find it right here!

A sirloin of Beef or a Turkey
With Sausage meat Stuffing the
Breast? Don't go wrong-go to
"Wright"- that's the Butcher Who
sells nothing else but the best!

For pudding you'll want plums
and currants, And sugar, some
peel and some spice, Right next
door is "Chaney's-he's got them-
The best you can buy at the price.

For Flour there's "Langford"--
Com Chandler Or else "Watts"-
near the top. Well Street way-
They'll both "give you beans" if
you ask them- Try their Mixture
to make your fowls lay!

Down the road, in the other direc-
tion, Alf. London has got a milk
shop; He's the laziest? man in the
district- But his milk's thick with
cream on the top!

And just round the comer, in
Church Road, Lloyd's dairy you
quickly will find, For eggs, butter,
cheese you can't beat him,
Everything is the best of it's kind!

And then there is "Breeson"--
greengrocer, Good fruits he will
quickly supply: He won't say
"Yes! We have no Bananas!" He's
got them! The best you can buy!

If good fish is scarce, and you
want it- Don't go into Well Street
and fail- Here's Frank Pitt -
Fishmonger, right here, sir! He'll
sell you a Whelk- or a Whale!

And the fish that he fries is so
tasty, It will bring quite a smile to
your face; I don't want to "cod"
you at all, sir, But for fish sup-
pers this is the "Plaice"!"

And what about "Bremmer", the
Baker! For one thing we'll give
him his due- Though he (k)needs
all the bread that he bakes for
himself, He's willing to sell it to
you!

New Clothes! Well, there's
"Whiting" and "Beaver," They
make trousers and jacket and
vest, At prices that "suit" you
exactly, You'd pay double if you
went up West!

For boots go to "Blue" or to
"Bolton," Whose goods are of
leather so stout, Though you
MAY say you WON'T wear them
indoors, It's certain you CAN'T
"wear them out!"

For Ready- made Clothes- Sheets
or Blankets- Outfits for
wife.daughter or son- I'll tell you,
at once, where to get them, And
the easiest way it is done!

Hassett Road! 58, is the number,
And Edward E. Coleman the man!
"Pay as you Wear" is his motto,
And "Weekly Instalments" his
plan!

For Newspapers, pop into
"Chapman's," The place where
you get "all the news!" He sup-
plies the best brands of tobacco
To smoke or to eat, if you "chews,"

Don't forget to call on "George,"
the Barber, Any time-moming-
eve-afternoon! For you'll never
look smart till you visit- The
"Prince Edward" Toilet Saloon.

His "Electric Massage" is deli-
cious, His Shampoos- well they're
simply "great!" And the best thing
of all, when you go there, You
never have long to wait!

You've good choice of Sweets for
the ladies, And the babies like
toffee and 'chocs," You'll get them
at "Dixon's" in Church Road, Or
of "Brown" at the "Chocolate Box."

When the weather is cold, wet or
frosty, A good fire's the best
friend you've got! Get coals from
J.Johnson, Coal Merchant, In
Bentham Road -right on the spot!

Are you Insured? If not, why not?
You must not neglect that, you
know! You ask Harry Cooper, the
Agent, He'll jolly quick tell you so!

The renowned "Royal London's"
his office, And 2 Brampton
Road's his address- Insure with
him now-It's as well sir, To be
worth something dead you'll con-
fess!

Do you know "Trinick," the
Chemist? He's got quite a smart
Druggist's store! Where you can
get pills.draughts and powders,
And Toilet requisites galore!

And if buying things makes you
thirsty, There's "Cuthberts" old
comer "pub" near, With fifty
years' sound reputation, For
Whiskies, Good Wines and Good
Beer!

They sell the best glass of Stout,
sir, You'll find if you travel all
day; But if you prefer Mann and
Crossman's, There's the "Eagle"
just over the way!

In Wick Road, if you should go
shopping, There's only one thing
you can't buy! At present, we've
no Undertaker, So shop here,
and never say die!

The original document was of too
poor a quality to reproduce, but
has been recreated here complete
with decorative christmas border.
Author and date unknown but
probably around 1912-14; some
traders listed in 1914 Hackney
Trade Directory. DM

Book Reviews

'Builders of Repute: the story of Reader Bros', by Josephine Boyle.

The Suitable Press, 55 Monkams Avenue, Woodford Green, Essex. Hard-back, £18.50 (plus £2.20 p & p).

This is both a family history and the biography of a business, tracing the development of the Reader dynasty from early 19th century Clerkenwell. The founding brothers Richard and Thomas Reader learnt plumbing and gas-fitting in the 1890s, branching out as developers, contractors and indeed architects in the burgeoning suburbs north and east of London. Richard's three sons were to carry the business forward until their retirement in the 1970s. Ultimately Edgar Reader's daughter inherited the business's archive and constructed this readable and unusual book, in which the family dynamic is treated with a light touch.

Most histories of building firms are commissioned corporate puffs. This has quite a different flavour, bringing the personal hinterland both of family and workforce into the foreground, though the backbone of the book remains the development of the business and its legacy of building. The Hackney interest takes several dimensions. From an early residence in King Edward's Road, Readers lived for many years in Christie Road, and eventually established works at Marsh Hill. One early foray was on the Craven Lodge estate at Upper Clapton, and they built Hackney Borough Council's earliest post-WW1 housing estate at Gunton, Clevelys and Casimir Roads. There were air raid shelters for the Council in the late 1930s, and repairs to South Hackney rectory and the local almshouses after WW2.

But this is a London-wide (or at least a north of the river-wide) story, and affords entirely original insights into the functioning of a medium sized building contractor of the time, especially one that took pride in the quality

of its product. (The builders had the confidence to live among their customers on their own estates, and in Chingford houses for sale are to this day advertised as Reader-built: sometimes even when they aren't.) The author writes with authority and passion about the inter-war house, and residents of these from all over London, as well as students of the workings of the building world, will have cause to be grateful that she has deposited the firm's records, on the advice of the British Records Association, in the London Metropolitan Archives.

Isobel Watson

Information by email

As some of you know, we are maintaining a list of Friends' e-mail addresses, so that we can let you know about events which would otherwise miss a 'Terrier' because we are given short notice of their happening. Some of the e-mails are returned, either because people have changed their e-mail arrangements or because the address has been mis-recorded (all too easy). If you would like to be added to the list, or think you should have been but have never heard from us, please send an e-mail to:

friendsofhackneyarchives@hotmail.com.

Sorry, no Friends' Interests this issue.

Credits & Contacts

The Hackney Terrier was produced by Michael Kirkland and David Mander. *The Terrier: Hackney Archives Newsletter*, is distributed free to members of the Friends of Hackney Archives. Membership of the Friends is open to all. The subscription is £10 for each calendar year, (plus £2 for each additional member at the same address) or £20 (in sterling) for overseas members. Membership also includes a free copy of the annual journal, *Hackney History*.

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