

The Hackney Terrier

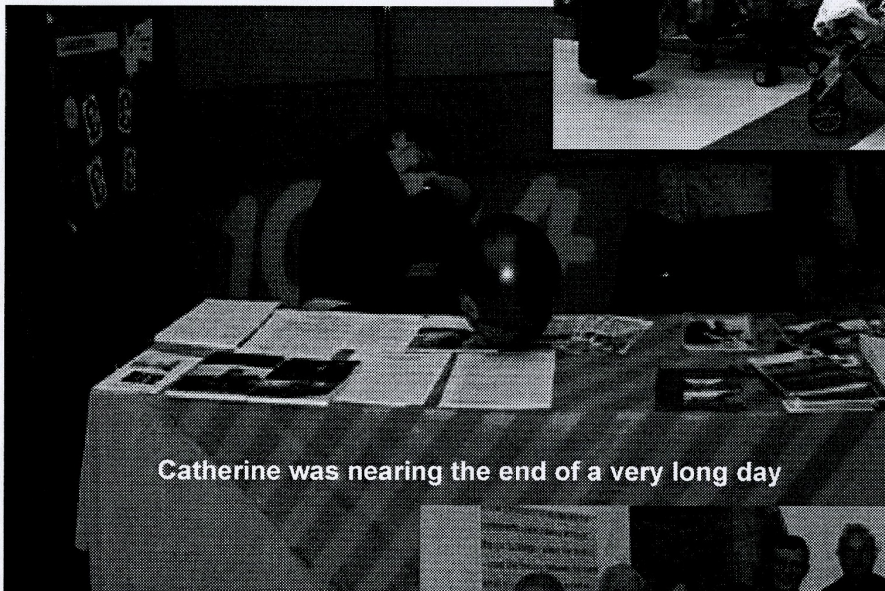


The Friends of Hackney Archives Newsletter

No. 67 Winter 2004

A Busy Month for the Archives!

A local and family history stall at Dalston Kingsland Shopping Centre and the CAAP Launch held at the Hothouse in Hackney.



Catherine was nearing the end of a very long day



The speakers at the CAAP Launch including Geoff Taylor, Speaker of Hackney

Inside this issue: Betty Gough's reminiscences of life during the Second World War; The conclusion of Joan Potter's article on the Hackney singers and more Webcat treasures!

News

Since the last full edition of the Terrier in the Department has had a busy few months with a number of different events taking place.

Staff

We were joined in late September by Janine Phillips who is working with Sally on the Webcat project. Janine says:

"I qualified as a Librarian at the University of South Australia in 2000. In 2002, I travelled to London, and was employed at English Heritage for several months as assistant to Sally England. Since then, I have worked as a temporary Librarian in Public Libraries in various locations across London, including Acton, Brixton and Lewisham. I hope my new role as WebCat Assistant Librarian at Hackney Archives will give me not just the opportunity to participate in a worthwhile project, but will also enhance my own skills and professional development as a Librarian."

Premises

Further discussion on improving our premises is still taking place and various options are under consideration.

Archives Awareness Month

We have been involved in a number of events as part of this autumn's Archive Awareness Campaign coordinated by the National Council on Archives.

Our first event was to hold a family and local history stall in Dalston Cross Shopping Centre on the Kingsland Road on the 15th and 16th October. This was a successful event with interest from around 90 members of the public, the majority of whom had no prior knowledge of our holdings or existence. Hopefully we will see some of them visiting us in the future.

The 16th October also saw us at the London Maze, an annual Family History Fair held at the Guildhall another

successful day with a lot of interest shown and a brisk trade done in our publications.

Open Day

The following Saturday, 23rd October saw our Open Day. Unfortunately the weather was not the most inviting but despite that we had over thirty visitors who enjoyed tours of the strongroom and a conservation demonstration as well as



seeing some of our publications and holdings. We were particularly pleased to welcome Councillor Geoff Taylor in his role as Speaker of Hackney.

CAAP

On the 28th October both David Mander and Catherine Taylor were speaking at the launch of the Community Access to Archives Project (CAAP). We were joined by representatives of the Council and the Archive world for an afternoon of speeches from participants in the project. (See Winter 2003 edition for further details of this project).

Features

Wartime Reminiscences of a Friend

I listened to and watched many of the programmes commemorating the 60th anniversary of D-Day, and if you are as old as I am you could not help being taken back into a very different world.

I have always lived in Stoke Newington at the outbreak of the Second World War I was evacuated with my school out of London, and so I missed the horrors of the Blitz. I earnestly prayed every night for my family, tacking on the end – “Scruffy the dog and Joey the parrot”, in case God needed reminding who they were. Your family is not complete without your pets.

I came home for the Easter holidays in 1941, and each night slept on a platform at Manor House Station with my mother – the only place she felt really safe. I woke up one morning and realised it was my 15th birthday and felt that lovely thrill of excitement that birthdays used to bring. I gazed round at the station, surrounded by hundreds of sleeping people and thought I should never forget this strange situation. Shelterers had to be clear of the station by 7 a.m. except on Sundays when a “lie in” until 7.30 was allowed.

I came home for good at Christmas 1941 and started work after Easter. The Blitz having ended the previous May, air raids were erratic and all over the country. During 1943 there were vocal demands being made for “a Second Front now”. With constant news of the strengthening of Hitler’s Atlantic Wall, I could not see how it would be possible to cross the Channel and get back into Europe. But as 1944 progressed, the build up to invasion visibly increased. We heard that landing craft were being built to carry troops and tanks, and as men and materials were moving into southern England, I saw the roads inside Finsbury Park packed bumper to bumper on both sides with military vehicles.

I remember the excitement that went around my office with the news “It’s started” – it was D-Day. The importance of the invasion at that time for the people

of south-east England was blissfully unknown to us. Twelve days later, on Sunday 18th June, my mother and I were rudely awakened by an ear-splitting screaming sound followed by a most tremendous explosion. Startled, we saw that there was a space where our bedroom window had been – and beyond, the bright blue sky of a sunny morning. The rear of the house was where the impact had been and my thoughts went to Scruffy, who slept in a nook in our kitchen. Picking my way through the rubble I was relieved to find her curled up in a tight ball asleep. I scooped her up and took her back to our bedroom, where my mother carefully removed the eiderdown from the bed, shook the glass and plaster off it and I put Scruffy down in the middle. She had never been allowed on a bed before, and promptly went back to sleep.

Fearing what I would see, I slowly made my way to the corner of Londesborough Road down which people were staring. There was a huge mound made of brick, wood, stone etc. in place of the terraced houses I had known. We did not know what had hit us – or rather, just missed us. We went to stay with my Aunt and Uncle at Eastcote in Middlesex, and soon learnt that it had been a V1. These “doodlebugs”, an expression coined by the Americans and immediately used by everyone else, became regular callers. We soon learnt that if you could see one was

not heading for you, you were probably safe, as they travelled in straight lines until the fuel ran out, when they would drop from the sky.

As air-raid warnings were going on all day, it was

impractical to go to the shelters in the basement of my office building. So a rota of volunteer roof-spotters was made who worked in pairs. When the siren sounded they would go onto the roof armed with



binoculars, while everyone else got on with their work. Our seven-storey building gave a good view at that time. If a doodlebug got dangerously close they sounded the fire alarm, and we took cover under our desks, emerging when the danger had passed.

At Eastcote, my Uncle refurbished the neglected Anderson shelter in the garden and we slept there every night. We soon realised that the doodlebugs had a limited range and were unlikely to penetrate West London. It was because of their short range that the launching ramps were spread out along the French coast, to be as near as possible to their target of London. At the time we did not know that the anti-aircraft guns and any spare barrage balloons were brought in from all over the country to south-east England, in an effort to bring down the V1's before they reached a built up area. Nothing could stop these weapons from exploding, but dropping in the open country could minimise the damage that they did. So the invasion forces, once established after D-Day had the task of overrunning the launching sites as well as heading for Berlin. Practically a year of fighting every inch of the way lay ahead of them.

Sometime in September, the doodlebugs were no more and we came in from the Anderson and slept in our beds. One evening in October we heard a very distant, but very large explosion. Word went round that it had been in Chiswick. Authority said that a gas main had exploded, and so the unexplained explosions that followed were referred to as flying gas mains. My impression is that we were very soon told the truth – this was the “German Victory Weapon” – the V2. The size seemed incredible. I remember roughly pacing it out in my department at work; it was practically the width of the large room. With a nose cone packed with high explosive it was stood on its end and fired into the air then curved over and back to earth. It was a rocket! My mind went back to our enjoyable pre-war bonfire nights with lovely fireworks, when occasionally; in a milk bottle half sunk into a flower bed a rocket was placed. A “responsible adult” would “light the blue touch paper and

retire immediately”, and we all gazed up to watch the effect. The V2 rocket launch pads were set well back into Europe. The speed with which this new weapon descended into the world meant you never saw or heard it – just the awful explosion – and there could be no defence. It made the V1 seem positively friendly in comparison, spluttering through the sky where you could keep an eye on it. Our nerves probably went up a few ratchets but we carried on life as usual. I used to catch the last workman's train from Eastcote each morning which arrived at Moorgate Station at 8.15 a.m., so I had a leisurely walk up to Finsbury Square for an 8.30 a.m. start. It provided a quiet time for musing, and into my head one day came the words of a hymn:-

*At thy feet O Christ we lay,
Thine own gist of this new day,
Doubt of what it has in store,
Makes us crave Thine aid the more;
If it prove a time of loss,
Mark it Saviour with Thy Cross.*

*If it flow on calm and bright,
Be Thyself its chief delight,
If it bring unknown distress,
Good is all that Thou canst bless;
Only hear us when we plead,
Thy compassion and our need.*

It became a daily prayer.

The last rocket fell I believe in March 1945 as the Allies overran the last launching pad. We were getting near the end. The Home Guard was stood down, and no-one bothered to call me up although I had reached the right age. V.E Day in May then V.J. Day in August finally brought the Second World War to a close. I felt happy inside that the killing had ceased. But life became even harder, food rationing seemed to get tighter and everything was in short supply, and only eased very gradually over the following years.

We didn't know until much later that millions upon millions of people had died around the world. I have always felt grateful to have survived, and I have a soft spot for the Allied Invasion Forces, who did what I had thought would be

impossible, and got back into Europe on D-Day and in time to prevent the near obliteration of London.

Betty Gough

WAR TIME MEMORIES OF SUTTON HOUSE

Did the D-day celebrations bring back memories of life in Hackney during the war?

As part of a project to explore the last 100 years history of Sutton House we are looking for people with memories of Sutton House and the surrounding area from during the war and the years shortly after.

We think that Sutton House was used as an ARP base and suffered damage from a bomb that landed nearby. If you know anything else we would love to hear from you.

**Please contact Kathleen Patterson at
Sutton House on 020 8525 9055**

SINGING IN HACKNEY: a brief history of the Hackney Singers. Part 2

During 1977 a few of us, having failed to get in to see a concert taking place on the Thames at the old St. Katherine's Dock, stopped by the Tower of London and amused ourselves by singing "The Silver Swan" (Orlando Gibbons), one of the many English madrigals in our repertoire. However, this seemed to attract the attention of some passing tourists who no doubt thought we were buskers - well, we were rather tired and dishevelled looking, so perhaps had we put down a collecting box we might have had a successful evening after all!

Our old friend Edward Horton offered us a spot in the 1978 Hackney Festival, which we were delighted to accept and decided to present a Victorian Evening at Stamford Hill Methodist Church, for which we unexpectedly received £63 from the Council to cover our expenses, a gesture which, unfortunately, was not

repeated when we presented a similar concert at Chats Palace in Homerton.

The 1979 visit to Wanstead was for another "Messiah" concert, followed by a return to Chats Palace when the programme included Beatles and Gilbert & Sullivan songs specially arranged by James Young for our female voices (we had by then given up all hope of getting tenors and basses).

Once again membership dropped to 5 and the class was under threat of closure. However, we managed to survive by "fixing" the attendance register until numbers increased. We retained the names of people who came only once, but marked them in each week so that should an inspector call we could tell them that such people had left during the tea break, fortunately such a situation never arose. It was at this time that we decided it would be more appropriate to call ourselves "The Hackney Singers" (the title which remains to this day) as we were still enrolled as "Hackney Choral Society"!

In 1980 we joined the Wanstead choir for Bach's "St. John Passion" and the following year we returned to Chats Palace for a mixed programme which my diary recorded as "very good but not many there". James Young had now left us, the new conductor being Lillian Wilson, a rehearsal pianist with English National Opera, and we gave several local concerts under her leadership, including a programme of early English music before an audience of 55 in Hackney Town Hall during the October Festival. In December 12 of us performed Britten's "Ceremony of Carols", complete with harpist, at the Ufton Centre De Beauvoir, before an audience of no more than 10! However, by the time we repeated this concert at St. John of Jerusalem Church in South Hackney in January 1983 the size of both choir and audience had grown quite considerably.

At this time I left the Hackney Singers to join Islington Choral Society who performed larger choral works, but when I returned to Hackney for 18 months in 1989/90 I was amazed and delighted to

see how the choir had grown (and with lots of men!) In February 1990 we sang



A little earlier than Joan's times! A musical soiree in 1855

Messiah" at Hackney Empire before a nearly full house, the balcony having to be opened to accommodate all the people. Prior to the concert I was able to publicise the event on LBC Radio when I pointed out that Hackney was just as capable of providing musical talent as found in say Hampstead or Highgate with the conductor, some of the soloists, orchestra, and most of the choir living in the Borough, a similar comment was addressed to the local newspaper when they failed to report on the concert, only to be told that "the people of Hackney are not interested in that sort of music". How wrong this proved to be, and as a founder member of the choir in 1973, I am delighted to see that from those 5 members of over 30 years ago it has grown to a choir of 100 plus, with large audiences hearing such mighty works as Verdi's "Requiem" and Elgar's "Dream of Gerontius", so perhaps now it is time they should consider reverting to the original title of Hackney Choral Society!

Joan Potter

Webcat treasures...

William Frend and the duckpond

William Frend lived in Daniel Defoe's former home in Stoke Newington Church Street from 1817. He tutored Lady Byron in mathematics and was involved in her daughter Ada's education. A brilliant mathematical mind, Ada, later Countess

Lovelace, is credited with writing the first ever computer programme, designed for Charles Babbage's analytical engine.

Frend appears to have possessed an impulsive and rather hot-headed brand of chivalry, as evinced by the following anecdote from his granddaughter Mary de Morgan¹:

'Stoke Newington, at the time of his residence there, was surrounded by fields, and one evening, on returning home across a lonely path in company with Mr. Woolgar, a scientific friend, the two gentlemen came upon a girl followed by a man, who had been giving her serious annoyance. On her appealing to the newcomers against her persecutor, my grandfather took the law into his own hands, and bidding his companion take the offender by the feet, himself took him by the shoulders, and carried him to an adjacent pond, to be chastised.

The culprit entreated that his coat might be spared, but my grandfather, perceiving that its damage would be the most complete punishment, chose a green corner of the pond, covered with weed, and, at his instigation, the unhappy man was ducked therein. As Mr. Frend was close to seventy at the time, and his companion well advanced in life, the encounter was creditable to their muscular powers, if not to their prudence.'

Recent library acquisitions

Among the new books recently added to the local studies library collection are a couple on family history research, a biography of local interest and a survey of C18th houses containing a wealth of information about Kingsland Road:

Mark D. Herber's *Ancestral trails* (Sutton,

¹ Threescore Years and Ten: Reminiscences of the late Sophia Elizabeth de Morgan, ed. Mary A. de Morgan. London, 1895.

0750924845, £19.99) offers a guide to the many sources available to the family historian, providing usefully advice for both the amateur and more experienced researcher, whilst Peter Christian's *The genealogist's internet* (The National Archives, 1903365465, £10.99) gives a clear pathway through the often bewildering resources available online. Full of useful tips, it also covers the 'netiquette' of creating your own online family history site.

Dark horse: a life of Anna Sewell by Adrienne E. Gavin (Sutton, 0750928387, £20.00) is the first biography of the author for 30 years. Although *Black Beauty* was written after Sewell left the area, Gavin's book describes how the author's life and experiences – including her crippling accident – whilst living in Dalston and Stoke Newington exerted a powerful influence on her only novel.

Peter Guillery's beautifully illustrated *The small house in eighteenth-century London* (Yale University Press, 0300102380, £40.00) is a fascinating social and historical survey, full of information and very readable. The section covering Kingsland Road (See also Hackney History 6) may change the way you look at your surroundings next time you pass along the street, and indeed get you spotting London's vernacular architecture all over town.

Once in a lifetime opportunity! (again...)

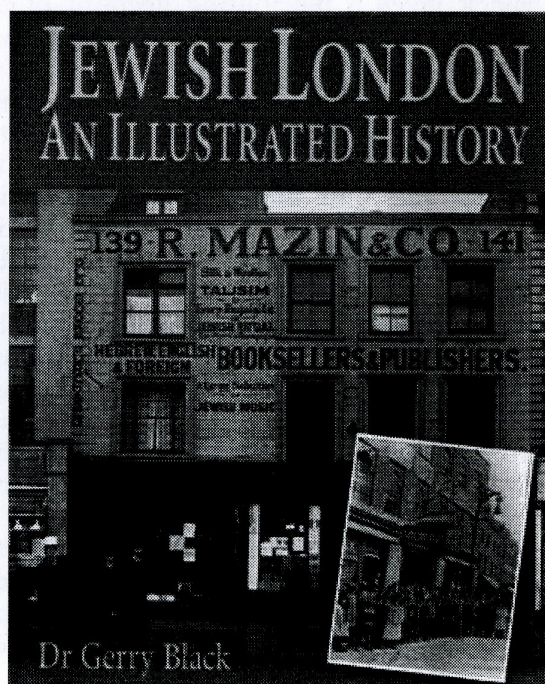
Long-standing Friends may recall that in the summer of 1999 HAD held a one-off unrepeatable sale of items over and above our requirements for duplicate stock. Now, through the integration of various holdings as part of the Webcat project, we have identified a number of duplicate items and also titles which are not relevant to the local studies library collection, so are once again able to offer the opportunity for Friends to bid for unwanted items. These will range from small pamphlets to antique leather-bound books, and each will carry a reserve price. Watch this space for details of the items and prices involved!

Book Review

***Jewish London: An Illustrated History* by Dr Gerry Black (Breedon Books Publishing, 2003 – ISBN 1 85983 363 2 - £16.99)**

Dr Gerry Black is a well-known chronicler of London's history and her Jewish population in particular. In *Jewish London: An Illustrated History* Dr Black leads us in successive chapters from the arrival of the first Jewish Londoners in 1070, through their expulsion from England in 1290, their subsequent re-admission by Oliver Cromwell in 1656, and right up to the present day.

The eighteenth century saw London's Jewish population, still centred in the East End and around the City, grow and prosper. The years 1800 to 1880 brought emancipation, and the gradual movement of the wealthy into the West End and northwards to Finsbury, Islington, Maida Vale and the environs of Swiss Cottage. The longest chapter, unsurprisingly, deals with the years 1881-1914 when Tsarist persecution and pogroms led to the mass exodus of about three million Jews from Eastern Europe. About 150,000 settled in Britain, mainly in the East End of London. This was an area that offered them synagogues, schools,



**"HOW THE ANTIQUARIAN MAY BE A
PHILANTHROPIST PROFITABLY**

In 1455, a school was established at S. Andrew's Holborn, and, in 1696, this institution, and its endowments merged into those of the existing parochial school.

The Admission Register is perfect from the early eighteenth century, and other records of hundreds of names of local gentlemen, and of worthies engaged in philanthropic work still exist.

S. Andrew's School has also a Fresh Air Fund, that provides *for every child seeking it* a fortnight's holiday at the seaside for four shillings.

If you send half a crown we will search our records for one name. If you send two thousand pounds we shall not need to ask any more subscriptions for a while.

**W. E. Moore, Head Master, 43, Hatton
Garden, London E.C."**

From London Citizens in 1651, being a transcript of Harlien MS 4778. Edited with notes and index by J C Whitebrook aided by the invaluable assistance and research of W Whitebrook. Published by Hutchings & Romer, 39 Gt Marlborough St, London W.

It has been suggested that the last two sentences might be appended to our current friends membership form - Ed.

familiar trades and kosher food. There was also an effective system of welfare organisations, supported by the existing Anglo-Jewish community, to supplement and replace the general Poor Law system.

Black gives a fascinating account of the stresses that this "avalanche" of poor, strangely dressed, foreigners with no English placed on the established Jewish community in relation to religious observance, religious education, the use of Yiddish and medical care. Alongside the development of a rich and active Yiddish culture which included a Yiddish theatre and press, the teaching of English and the acquisition of British ways of life were actively promoted. The community helped set up a network of clubs and societies for adults and the young such as the Oxford and St. George's Club founded just before the First World War.

Between the wars Jews began leaving the over-crowded immigrant areas to go north to Dalston and Hackney and beyond, and to northwest London. Of specific interest

are several references to Hackney and its environs: the centre of the cabinet-making trade in Shoreditch, the founding of the Victoria boys' and girls' club in 1901, the founder of Tesco - Jack Cohen's beginnings selling NAAFI foodstuffs from a stall in Hackney, Jewish schools in Stamford Hill after World War Two and the Four Per Cent Industrial Dwelling Company's flats in Stoke Newington.

Black brings us up to the present through the settlement in the 1930s of Jewish refugees from Nazi Europe, who were mainly middle class, liberal and well educated.

The book contains a wealth of contemporary accounts from books, social surveys, and local and Jewish newspapers. Black's use of illustrations from contemporary sources, and photographs, many from the end of the nineteenth century, supplements the eminently readable and informative text. There is a bibliography for further reading and a full index. I heartily recommend the book as a useful and entertaining addition to the literature on the history of the Jewish community in London.

Julia Hoffbrand

A message from the Treasurer

Thank you to all those friends who sent last year's membership renewals in on time, especially to those who included a donation with their renewal. This is much appreciated and will go towards the work of the Friends. The notice for the 2005 subscription accompanies this issue; again, returning it promptly would be greatly appreciated.

Credits & Contacts

This edition of the Hackney Terrier was produced for the Friends by Catherine Taylor. The Terrier is distributed free to members of the Friends of Hackney Archives at least 3 times a year. 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. Members receive a free copy of the annual journal Hackney History.

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