The Hackney Terrier 82

The Friends of Hackney Archives Newsletter

Autumn 2009

New staff, new opening hours

I wrote in the last Terrier that we would soon be welcoming a new member of staff to the Archives team and extending our opening hours. I am happy to be able to report that both of these things have now happened. Our new Customer Services Assistant, Edmund Lyon, who introduces himself below, arrived at Hackney Archives at the end of August.

In addition, on 22 September, we established our new opening hours, which are as follows:

Monday: **closed**
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday: **9.30am – 1pm, 2 – 5.30pm**
Friday: **9.30am – 1pm**
Saturday: **10am – 1pm, 2 – 4.30pm**

This represents an increase to 30 hours per week on the previous arrangement, and re-introduces Saturday opening at the Archives, after a break of some years, although at the expense of the late opening on Tuesdays. So, do please come and visit us on Saturdays if you can!

Libby Adams
Principal Archivist

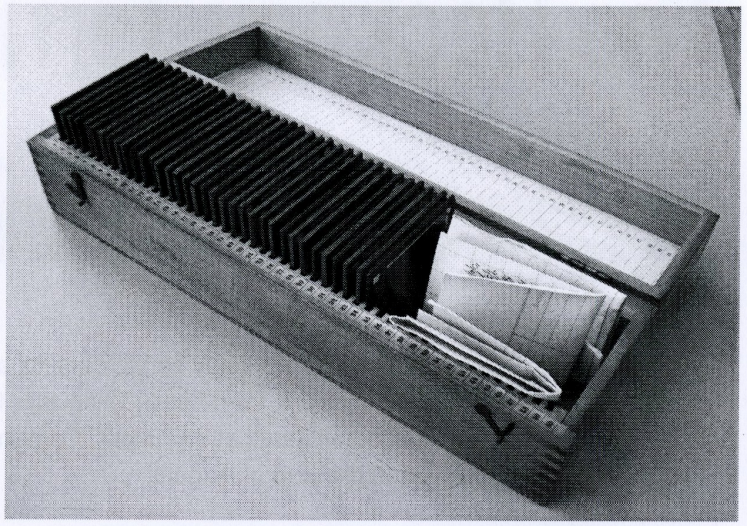
Hackney Archives' new member of staff introduces himself:

I've been at Hackney Archives for a month now, so I've still got a lot to learn! But I've been made very welcome by my colleagues, and found the readers and Friends I've met very pleasant.

I've always been interested in history, studying it at UCL, and I'm in the middle of a librarianship qualification so working in an archive, and especially one with the reputation of Hackney, is a dream job! As a long-term Hackney resident, I've more than an academic interest in the area, and I'm looking forward to finding out more about the area and about the archive.

Edmund Lyon
Customer Services Assistant

Lantern slides and other accessions

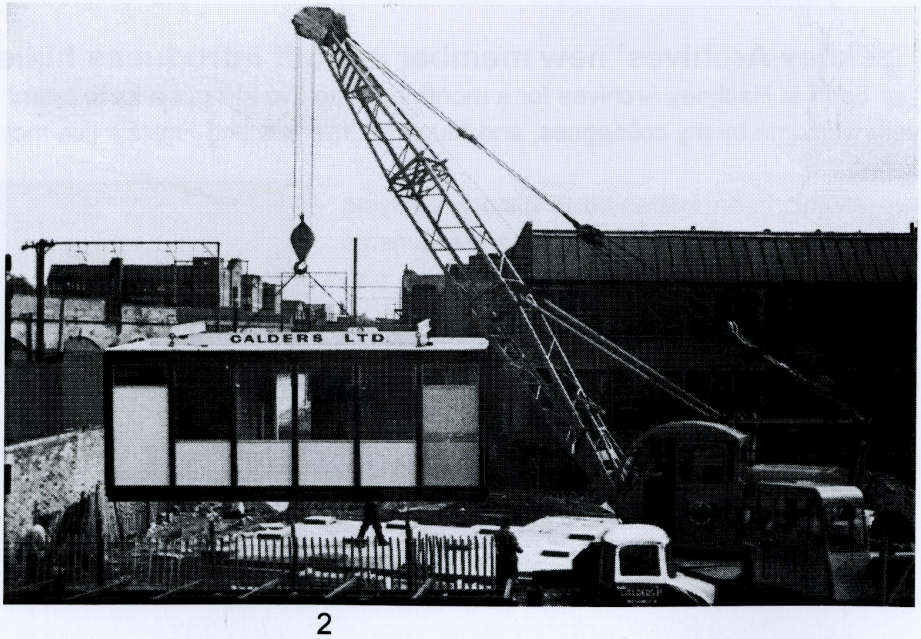


A few weeks ago a gentleman walked through our doors and gave us a new addition to our collection which really brightened up my day. It was a wooden box containing 35 glass lantern slides. They each have the location and date carefully written on them. The dates show that they were taken between 1886 and 1904, and the locations are all from the Clapton area. The images all look really clear and in focus, and very beautiful. It is very unusual for us to receive a new collection of images from this sort of date and I was (and still am) delighted. Our donor kindly gave the whole collection free of charge, so that it can be preserved and used here by researchers.

Magic lanterns or lantern slide projectors were an early form of slide projector. Lenses and a light source (which might be fuelled by gas or oil) were used to project an image from a glass plate on to a suitable surface. These slides are about 3 inches square. Unfortunately we don't know who the photographer was, but we're really pleased to have ended up with his images!

(We hope to find a way to get all the images digitised, so that the glass slides do not have to be handled too often – watch this space for further news.)

Thanks also to Bill Hall for the photographs he has kindly given us, including this great one showing a pre-fab being installed on Lamb Lane after the War. If any other Friends out there have Hackney-related records which they think might be of historical interest, please don't hesitate to let us know!



The Lesney Factory

Anyone walking along Homerton Road where it crosses the River Lea Navigation will have seen the old Lesney factory building. Lesney Products & Co. was best known for their highly successful 'Matchbox' series of toys. The die-cast miniature vehicles were allegedly invented when one of the founders' children was told that any toys they brought into school had to be small enough to fit inside a match box.

The Matchbox brand was sold off in the 1980s when the company ran into severe financial difficulties, but the factory building still stands, at least for the moment. It is owned by Telford Homes, who hope to replace it with housing. However in June this year they were kind enough to give myself and some colleagues from Hackney Museum a guided tour.

It was a fascinating visit. Enough of the production machinery survives (including the large melting vats) to give some idea of its former use, and our guide was very knowledgeable. The building dates from 1969, and originally faced more Lesney buildings across the road, spread out along the west bank of the Navigation. These have long since been replaced by housing.

It was rather peculiar wandering through a deserted building with half of its insides removed but half still there, and with odd touches – like the notice boards, still filled with leaflets and posters – giving the impression that it had only just been deserted. The tour finished off with a visit to the roof, with the most impressive views over Hackney. We really could see for miles. And the cars looked as if they could have fitted into matchboxes...

Siân Mogridge
Archivist

View from the top of the factory. Looking out over the housing built on the site of the Lesney factory buildings south of Homerton Road.

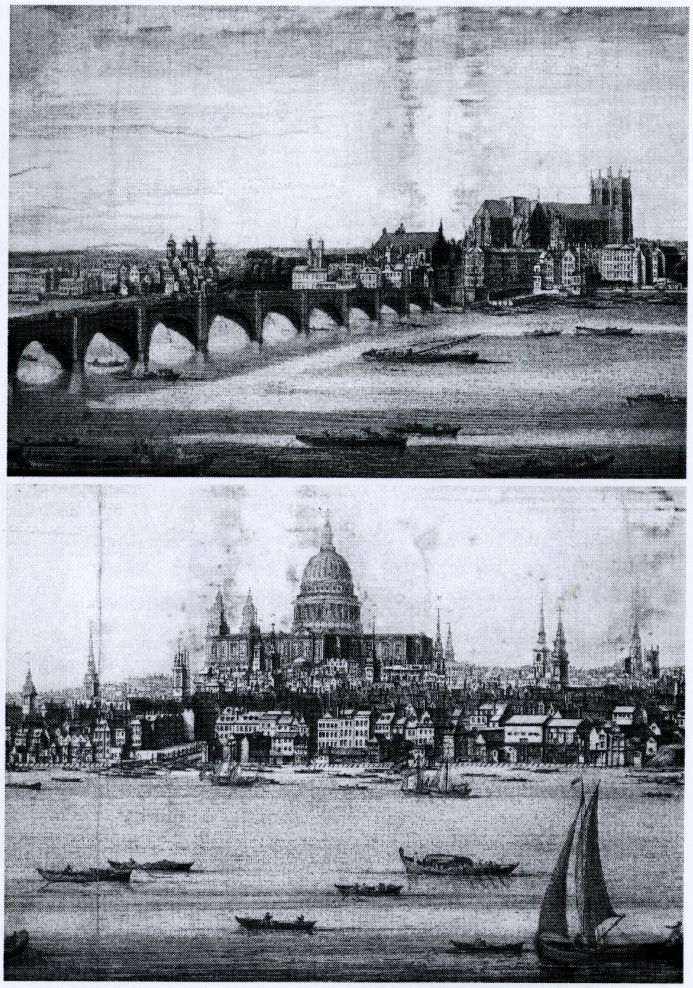
Twenty mystery men of Homerton

The postcard-sized photograph above, recently donated to the collection, was bought on E-bay. The photographer was T. S. Robinson, who had premises in Homerton High Street around 1912, but nothing is known about the sitters.or the occasion. Though they seem to have dressed formally, the atmosphere is relaxed and sociable. Some appear to be smoking, and some are wearing elaborate insignia, not all of the same kind, in their buttonholes. Readers' ideas as to who they were and what the context may have been would be very welcome.

'Buck Views'

About a year ago Stoke Newington Library contacted Hackney Archives about a miscellaneous selection of Ordnance Survey and Post Office maps that they had come across in a drawer. In amongst them were five copper-engraved, hand-coloured London cityscapes which are something of a gem, as they were engraved by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck. The Buck brothers were well known for touring England and Wales between the 1720s and 1750s recording medieval architecture, especially abbeys, monasteries and castles. In the 1740s they also completed around 100 town-and cityscapes. Their engravings, of which there are more than 400, became known as 'Buck Views'. Although they are not great works of art they are very important records of local buildings, many of which no longer exist.

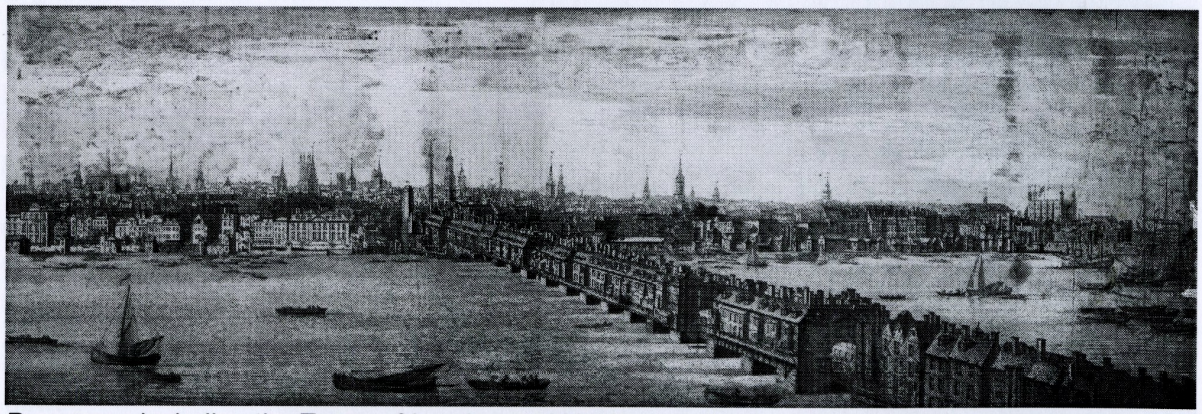
Samuel Buck was born in Richmond, Yorkshire in 1696 and was only 15 when his first engraving was published. In 1724 he moved to London where his younger brother Nathaniel joined him. Based in Warwick Street, the pair spent the summers drawing and the winters producing the plates and engravings. Samuel survived his brother by many years dying – destitute – in 1779, at the age of 83.



Westminster and St Pauls

Hackney Archives is still considering where the permanent home of the prints should be.

Jacqueline Bradshaw-Price
Conservator



Panorama including the Tower of London and Hackney in the far background

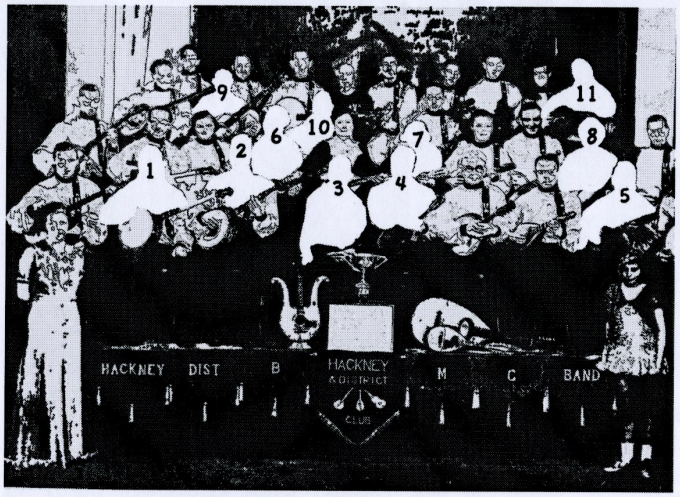
Banjos redux

You may remember that in *Hackney Terrier 80* we asked if anyone knew any of the people in a couple of photos we'd recently been given. The photographs both showed banjo bands, and while we've still had no success with the earlier photo, we've had several people get in touch with us about the later one (reproduced here). We've been given two possible dates for it, November 1937 and 1938, so it seems pretty definite that it's from the late 1930s. As you can see, we've also been told the names of quite a number of the people shown.

The photos were found at a solicitor's office in Rochester, along with a certificate for an 'H. Ashford'. It turns out that one of the members of the Hackney District Banjo, Mandolin and Guitar Band was a Mr Ashford, so it seems likely that both the certificate and photos belonged to him. We have no idea what they were doing in Rochester.

Thank you very much to Harry Hasler, Vera Ward and Dr Melvyn Brooks for getting in touch. If anyone has any further information, it's never too late to let us know!

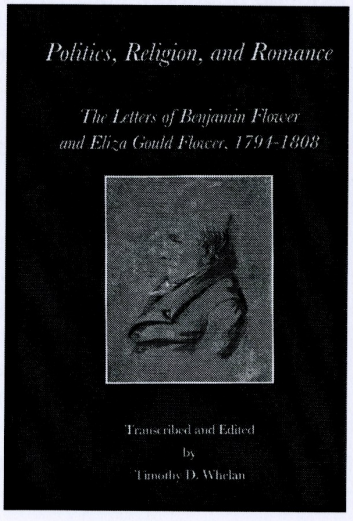
Siân Mogridge
Archivist



1 *Ted Fearn*
2 *Harry Keen*
3 *Harry Davis (conductor and founder)*
4 *Ernest Tyrell (lead mandolin and founder)*
5 *Michael Ronga*
6 *Mrs Fournaise*
7 *Florence (Ernest Tyrell's sister)*
8 *Mrs Fuller*
9 *Guido Ronga (twin brother to Michael Ronga)*
10 *George Sagrott*
11 *Harry Hasler*

New additions to the Local Studies Library

Many thanks to the Friends for donating a copy of *Politics, Religion, and Romance: the letters of Benjamin Flower and Eliza Gould Flower 1794-1808*, transcribed and edited by Timothy D. Whelan (National Library of Wales, ISBN 1-86225-050-02, £19.99). Writer, printer, and newspaper editor Benjamin Flower was a vocal radical during the late 18th century. In 1827 the widowed Flower and his two daughters moved to Dalston, where they became members of the New Gravel Pit congregation. (Shelved at 920 FLO SR)

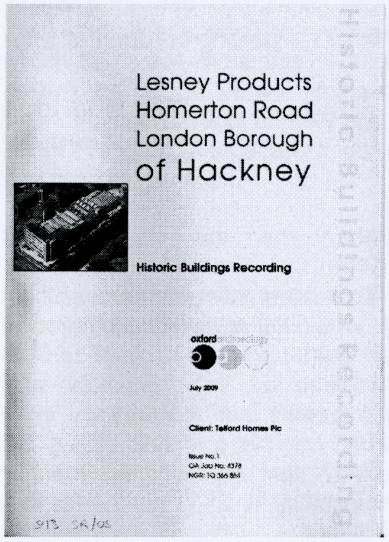


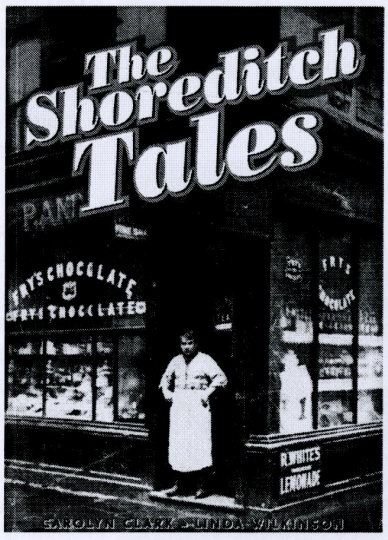
Thanks also to Dr Melvyn Brooks for sending a copy of the now out-of-print *EastEnders: the inside story.* This includes illustrations of Fassett Square, part of the inspiration behind the creation of the fictional Albert Square. (Shelved at 900.24 SR)

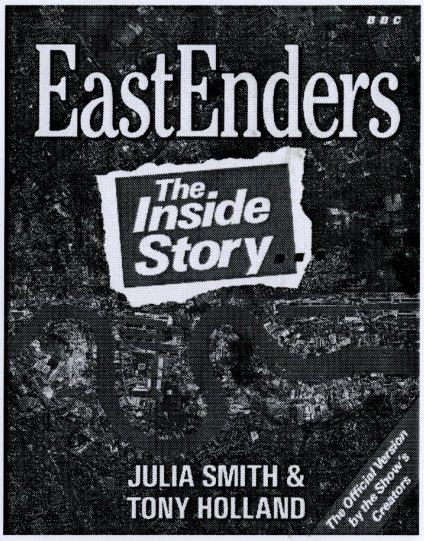
Elsewhere in this issue, archivist Siân Mogridge describes a visit to the site of the Lesney toy factory in Homerton Road. Coincidentally a recent addition to the library's collection of archaeological reports was one undertaken at the Lesney factory by Oxford Archaeology. (Shelved at 913 SR/OS)

A very welcome addition has been *The Shoreditch Tales* by Carolyn Clark and Linda Wilkinson (The Shoreditch Trust, ISBN 978-0-9563222-1-0, £9.99). Hackney Archives will soon be selling copies of this collection of personal stories and historical documents of life in Shoreditch past and present – more news in the next *Hackney Terrier.* (Shelved at 908.2 AS)

Sally England
Local Studies Librarian







'Hackney Today' history page

Hackney Archives contributes a regular history page to the Council's fortnightly free newspaper *Hackney Today*. This looks at stories and events both past and present using material from the Archive and Local Studies Library.

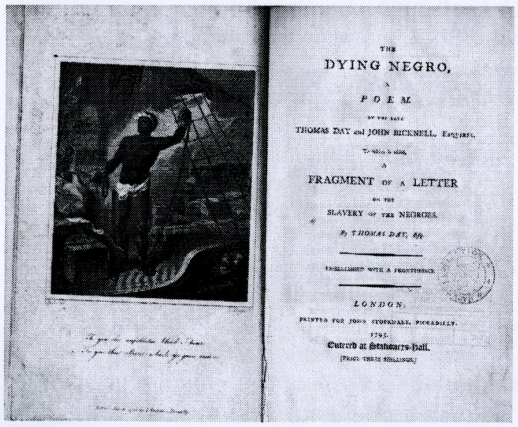
Friends living outside the Borough may be interested to know that an electronic copy (in PDF format) of the latest issue of the paper is available online at http://www.hackney.gov.uk/w-hackneytoday.htm, while back issues can be accessed by clicking on the tab to the left. Here are details of some of the most recent articles published. We're usually on page 23 of earlier editions, page 25 of later ones.

Issue 213, 3 August

'Signs of the Times': Siân Mogridge looks at photographs in the Archives of shop fronts. The images show James Munn's Newsagents and Tobacconists, Gainsborough Road (the date on the Daily Mirror is Tuesday January 13th 1914)

Issue 214, 24 August

'Roots of revolution': to mark the planting of a tree on Stoke Newington Common to commemorate the work of people who campaigned for an end to the transatlantic slave trade, Sally England writes about those who lived in the area and supported the campaign against the trade, including the writers Thomas Day, author of 'The Dying Negro' and Anna Laetitia Barbauld.


THE
DYING NEGRO,
A
POEM.
BY THE LATE
THOMAS DAY and JOHN BICKNELL, Esquires.
To which is added,
A
FRAGMENT OF A LETTER
ON THE
SLAVERY OF THE NEGROES.
By THOMAS DAY, Esq.
ILLUSTRATED WITH A FRONTISPIECE.
LONDON:
PRINTED FOR JOHN STOCKDALE, PICCADILLY.
1793.
Entered at Stationers-hall.
[PRICE THREE SHILLINGS.]

Issue 215, 7 September

Libby Adams talks about the outbreak of war in September 1939 and how Hackney, Shoreditch and Stoke Newington responded.

Issue 216, 21 September

'Country Classic': Sally England looks at the lives and work of local authors Mary and Anna Sewell. See also pages 8-9 for 'Personal Pasts' - an illustrated feature by Siân Mogridge on local community observers.

Pre-Christmas party

Come to Hackney Archives between 6 and 8.30 on Tuesday 24 November and help us inaugurate the festive season with drinks and nibbles. There will be a chance to see *Hackney at War*, which is being re-issued by the History Press, as well as new publications from the Hackney Society and other local organisations. But please let us know beforehand (contact details below right) that you are coming, so that we can make suitable catering provision.

Other events at Hackney Archives

'Survival': Black British History and Culture 1945 to the Present

Saturdays, 2 – 4pm, until 12 December

An 11-week course run at Hackney Archives by Birkbeck College.

For full details, including course fees see the Birkbeck College website at http://www.bbk.ac.uk/study/ce/modules/FFHI312H4.html.

Exploring Hackney's Past:
A Step-by-Step Guide to Hackney Archives

Wednesday 4 November, 10am – 12 noon
Wednesday 20 January 2010, 10am – 12 noon.

Have you ever thought about exploring the history of your house, street or area, but didn't know where to find out about it ? Come and learn about how to research your local area using the collections at Hackney Archives. Free, but please call or email to book a place.

Events elsewhere

The Friends are affiliated to the London & Middlesex Archaeology Society and members are welcome to attend their meetings.

The annual **LAMAS Conference** takes place on 21 November at the City of London School in the Barbican. The theme is '**Open Air London – Pleasure, Parks and Protests**'. Details from www. lamas.org.uk. Tickets are £10.

LAMAS lectures, held at the Museum of London 150 London Wall EC2Y 5HN, at 6.30 p.m on Tuesdays, include the following -

8 December - Rebels and Infidels: the radical collections at Bishopsgate Library
by Stefan Dickers, Special Collections Manager

9 March 2010 - The new Medieval Europe Galleries at the British Museum
James Robinson, Curator

13 April 2010 - London Stone: making a myth
John Clark, formerly of the Museum of London

Hackney Street Photographs 1978-2008
by Alan Denney
is an exhibition (until 22 November) at
Chats Palace Arts Centre,
42 Brooksbys Walk E9 6DF

For details see www.chatspalace.com
or ring 020 8533 0227

Your next mailing, later this year, will include a copy of this year's edition of *Hackney History*

On 4 August 2009 at 11 p.m., Jacqueline Bradshaw-Price, the Hackney Archives conservator, became a 'plinther' – one of the participants in the Fourth Plinth project in Trafalgar Square.

You can watch her hour on the plinth at

http://www.oneandother.co.uk/participants/Jacqueline_B

The Friends of Hackney Archives

constitute an independent charity (no. 1074493) and membership is open to all: the subscription is £10 in the UK (plus £2 for each additional member at the same address) and £20 sterling overseas.

The *Hackney Terrier* is compiled by Sally England.
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