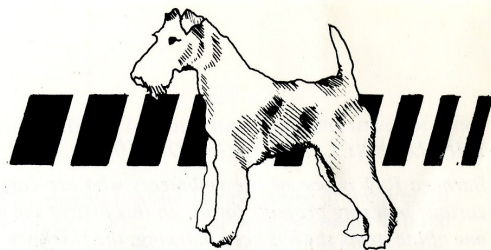


THE TERRIER



THE NEWSLETTER OF HACKNEY ARCHIVES DEPARTMENT

No.3

June 1986

EDITORIAL

My apologies for the month's delay in producing this edition of the Terrier. We had no clerical staff from January to May, which caused us severe problems.

Happily, we are now much better off for staff. Sandy Louis is with us for six months as a clerical assistant on the Youth Development Scheme. Jennifer Dacres has been temporarily seconded to us for two days a week, also to do clerical work. Between them they are making dents in the backlog but there is still a great deal left!

Another member of staff who is with us on a temporary placement is a librarian, Robert Morgan. He is also tackling a backlog - the cataloguing of the local history library.

We welcome all three, and hope they will enjoy their stay here.

We also welcome Ian Luff who is now working in partnership with our conservator, Graham Bignell.

Jean Wait
Editor

NEWS IN BRIEF

A Pleasant Paradize

Our major exhibition on the history of gardens and gardeners in Hackney will be on view at the Department until the end of June. We hope to produce a publication based on the exhibition.

A Striking Success

Our exhibition on the history of Bryant & May Ltd. is on view at the Heritage Centre, Kingston upon Thames, during June. It then travels to the East Midlands and Merseyside for the rest of the year. There is a strong possibility that it will be seen at the Science Museum next year.

Newington Green Unitarian Church

In April we took deposit of the records of this important congregation, which had its origins in the 1660s. The first chapel was built in 1708. Ministers have included Richard Price and Rochemont Barbauld, whose wife Laetitia was an important literary figure.

The minutes of the Chapel Committee and the Congregation date from the 1850s, and there is a wealth of material for the later nineteenth century, including records of the Sunday Schools and numerous clubs and societies. Records for the earlier period are more sparse, but there is a register of baptisms, marriages and burials for the period 1841-1889.

A New Photocopier

Hackney Archives Department is about to acquire its own photocopier. The good news is that it will be actually in the Department, and searchers will be able to make their own copies of printed non-fragile material on the spot. Archives and fragile material will still be copied by staff, but in most cases we will be able to do the copying before you go.

The bad news is that the cost of photocopies may have to be reviewed. This is still because the machine we are getting is a special one which has been developed for use with archives. Firstly, the light it gives out does not contain ultra-violet, and therefore does not damage the documents. Secondly, it has a V-shaped cradle to hold volumes while they are being copied, to avoid damaging the spine and to give a better copy. We hope you will think these advantages worth the extra cost.

Congratulations!

Jon Newman and Mandy are proud parents of Elinor May, born on 17th March.

THE HACKNEY CUTTINGS BOOK⁽¹⁾

Barbara Ray is one of the volunteers who are carrying out various indexing projects for us. In this article she describes one of the items she has been indexing, the Hackney Cuttings book.

The Hackney cuttings book is a collection of extracts from local papers and magazines from 1684 until the middle of the last century. As one would expect, it is full of information, all of it fascinating, much of it amusing and some of it horrifying - a peep-show into the past.

Important issues of the day are probably much the same in any age, so it is no surprise that so many of the cuttings are concerned with law and order and particularly robbery with violence. The lonely traveller across Hackney Marshes was obviously at risk from footpads, though highwaymen seem to have operated nearer the town and safety in numbers was by no means guaranteed. In 1750 a stagecoach, two gentlemen's coaches and a chaise were all robbed at the same time by a single highwayman between Shoreditch Church and Mare Street.

The robber on this occasion was 'exceedingly well-mounted' and the 'gentlemen of the road' image seems to have been a popular one, even amongst footpads, who returned some of the loot as beer-money to one victim and in the case of another, who had only a few halfpence in his pockets, actually gave a shilling. (1750).

Servants on their masters' business and often carrying money were particularly vulnerable, as were the Penny Postmen who all carried watches, which made easy pickings. One postman, however, on his way from Hackney to Clapton also had his dog with him which was more than a match for his master's attackers and saw off two of them with badly torn legs and no booty. (1750).

Lost and stolen horses figure frequently and sometimes suffer at the hands of inept sportsmen, as did the poor creature who lost an eye, when someone shooting birds on Hackney Marsh missed his target. The offender was made to pay half-a-guinea to the poor of the Parish as well as recompensing the owner of the horse. (1764).

Sometimes local farmers or merchants offer rewards for information leading to horse and cattle thieves, but one farmer seems to have done some rather bizarre detection work to track down a missing cow. The animal was apparently possessed of a very remarkable hide with unusual markings, which the farmer happened to see hanging up in Leadenhall Market. He was able to trace it back to the butcher in Fleet Market, to whom the cow had been sold and he in turn produced the thief, who was duly prosecuted. (1764).

Not many petty criminals were so easily brought to justice, but sometimes retribution was swift and certain, as with John Day, who was made to stand in the pillory in Kingsland Road for an assault on a child in 1763.

Surprisingly, John Ward Esq., a gentleman of some substance also suffered this indignity, for fraud in 1727, through in the slightly more up-market venue of Palace Yard, Westminster, where he was supported on the pillory by his footman.

Rough justice of a more immediate nature is recorded in 1750, when a man who had been married for some time to an 'industrious and agreeable young wife' set about her with a knife in one hand and a halter in the other, swearing that he would 'hang her instantly or rip her up'. The cause of his rage was apparently that the poor woman was about to give birth, which he felt 'would bring a great expense upon him'. However, the woman's cries brought several neighbours to her aid and the ruffian was dumped in the nearby Brook, a coachman from the adjoining stand holding him down whilst the others pumped him up and down until he was thought to be near his last gasp.

The river, or Hackney Brook played an important part in the daily lives of local people, providing the means of baptism, personal ablutions, recreation of all kinds, suicide and endless drowning accidents. Seven deaths by drowning are recorded in 1750, 'besides others whose bodies are not yet found'. Local ponds, especially those near Public Houses seemed to be more popular for suicide attempts, like the one near the 'Nag's Head' chosen by a lady who had been strolling about in a 'melancholy and desponding way' in 1761, 'a man in his nightgown with three guineas and three shillings in his pockets' in 1728, and a lady disappointed in love in 1736.

If fishing, bathing and boating were amongst the popular pastimes, there were also plenty of other sporting opportunities. In 1733 there were horse races on Hackney Downs, some women competed for a Holland Shift⁽²⁾ valued at sixteen shillings by running from Tyler's Ferry to Temple Mills in 1749, and a baker walked five miles on the Hackney Road for a wager, carrying three quartern loaves on his head and completing the course in two minutes less than the hour allowed him. (1755). In 1749 there was also a prize given at the Annual Florists' Feast for the best six 'whole-blowing' carnations, after which the Company made a grand procession through the streets of Hackney.

Hackney's reputation for providing schools for the sons and daughters of gentlemen is well known and advertisements abound, from those offering the minimal supposed requirements of young ladies 'carefully educated in English and all sorts of needlework' (1772) to those outlining the rigours of M. Naudin's French Academy, where young gentlemen are instructed in no less than fourteen subjects, as well as being required to speak French at all times. Local worthies are named as referees and absolutely nothing is left to chance. (1775).

Newcome's, well known for its associations with the nobility regularly announces its Old Boys' Meetings with a roll-call worthy of Debrett. (1767, 1770, 1771).

Hackney School is renowned for its dramatic performances and a Prologue to 'Cymbeline' in 1786 suggests, in witty verse, that Shakespeare provides longer-lasting pleasures than the current fashion for hot-air ballooning.

'...no oil skin ours, inflated like a ton
Sailing from Hackney Marsh to Islington'.

'...We'll show you one that dares a nobler flight,
One that can face all winds, so tight, so clever
Equalled by none - SHAKESPEARE'S balloon for
ever!'.

Considering how closely young ladies of the period were guarded in their educational establishments, a surprising account appears in 1802 of a 'foreigner' being arrested for trying to sell indecent prints in several girls' boarding schools. He said he had been asked to supply pictures of 'game birds' but when shown them, 'the ladies said these were not such as they meant'.

Surprising too to read of a young lady driving herself, and alone, in her 'chariot' on the New Road across Hackney Marshes. What was she up to one wonders? She had cause to wonder, too, when stopped by a party of sailors who surrounded her. Being 'greatly terrified' she offered them her purse, which 'the honest Tars' refused, requiring her only to 'tip her daddle'. The meaning of the expression being explained to her, they all 'had the honour of shaking the lady by the hand and went away highly satisfied' - to her profound relief, I have no doubt. (1763).

Sunday last Mr. George Williams, a Timber Merchant at Shadwell, was married to Miss Townsend of Hackney, an accomplished young Lady, with a handsome Fortune.

1755

LOST on the great Road going from London to Hackney, a Gold Repeating Watch, Name Daniel Torin, No. 2850, with an enamel'd Dial (no Gold Case) but a green Shagreen Case studded. Whoever brings it to Daniel Torin, Watchmaker, at the Dial, in Middle Moorfields, shall have Eight Guineas Reward. If offered to be pawn'd or sold, pray stop it, and shall have the same Reward.

No greater Reward will be given.

1756

Wednesday last died at Hackney, Joseph Pearce, Esq; a Captain belonging to the Royal Train of Artillery.

1756

Yesterday a Man throwing a Net into the River at Hackney, near Brasier's Ferry, he fell in, and was drowned.

No such discomfiture for this 'member of the lower orders, however:

'To such a degree has the extravagance of the present fashion taken hold that a young woman offered herself to a Lady, for the place of chamber-maid, wearing a satin calash'(3). (1778).

The more gruesome aspects of eighteenth century life are to be found in the medical reports (usually in the obituary columns) as in the case of poor Mr. Stacy, whose dying request was that his body should be opened to ascertain the cause of his suffering over so many years and in the bladder was found a pear-shaped stone weight three ounces. And whatever our complaints about the National Health Service, surely no one can tell a story as sinister as this one:

'Yesterday the head, arms and some other parts of a human body were found in a ditch on Hackney Marshes. The body is supposed to have been in the hands of a surgeon'. (1775).

Some of the later extracts from local papers dated in the 1830's owe more to the gossip columns than the news. To have come to the notice of Paul Pry or Bo-Peep in the small community of those days must have been as shaming an experience as the pillory in earlier times. Certainly there can have been no thought of libel laws in 1838:

'William Harding of Goldsmith Row, enjoying himself at Dove Row every evening would do well to go home earlier, use his wife better and not black her eyes above once a week'.

Last Saturday was married at Hackney Church, Mr. Thomas Hanby, of Foster-Lane, to Mrs. Sewell, of Hackney.

1755

WHEREAS several Horses have been lately stolen out of the Parish of Hackney in Middlesex, as supposed, by Richard Adcock, a middle-sized Man about five Feet eight Inches high, strong made, very round shouldered, had on a light-coloured Frock with flat Silver or Metal Buttons, a Leicesterhire Man, talks in that Country Dialect, was formerly a Waggoner on that Road, and in his Speech talks or mutters many Words to himself, has a down Look, wears a Rapped Hat, is about forty Years of Age, and is fresh-coloured. Whoever will apprehend the said Richard Adcock, so as he may be convicted, shall on Conviction receive a Reward of Four Guineas of Jacob Grant, at the Blanket Warehouse, Grace-Church-Street, London, of Abraham Judah at Hackney, over and above the further Reward or Five Pounds, given by the Parish of Hackney for Apprehending of Felons.

1755

On Friday last an old Man, a Contractor with several Parishes of this City for maintaining their Poor, was convicted at Hicks's Hall of dropping a Female Infant in the Parish of St. John, Hackney, and sentenced to be fined and imprisoned.

1755

'There is no harm in Napthyn of the Black Boys, Well Street, wearing silks and furs, but it would be more becoming in her first to allow her mother a few shillings a week to keep her from going into the Union Poor House'.

There can be little to be amused at either, then or now, in:

'Things That Make Us Laugh:
Jack Morgan's big head
Jem Webster's new wife
Mr. Holmes's bandy legs
Daniel Loggy's squint'

and if these were hidden meanings, they were probably even more personal and cruel.

Barbara Ray

- (1) The Hackney Cuttings Book, H.A.D. Ref: 900.2
- (2) Holland: a linen fabric. Shift: a chemise. OED
- (3) Calash: a woman's hood supported with loops and projecting beyond the face. Formerly much worn. OED

OFF THE SHELF

The letters from Japan and Formosa in the records of the British Xylonite Co. Ltd.

The first plastics in this country were manufactured in Hackney; from 1866 at the Parkesine Works at Hackney Wick, and then from 1874 at the Xylonite factory in Homerton. The story of the development of the plastic, and the early history of the British Xylonite Company, is told briefly in my article in *East London Record* No. 6 and in more detail in Mr. Peter Ashlee's thesis *Tusks and Tortoiseshell* which can be consulted at the Archives Department. The early records of the Company are held at the Department⁽¹⁾ and besides the usual records of a manufacturing company they include a series of letters from Japan and Formosa.

Xylonite was an improved version of the original Parkesine; the American name for the same substance was Celluloid. It was made from cotton or paper broken down with acid and then dissolved with camphor to make a soft pliable material which could be coloured and moulded to the desired form. It was originally used as a substitute for luxury materials such as ivory and tortoiseshell.

Camphor, a resinous substance distilled from the wood of the camphor tree, could only be imported from Japan or Formosa (Taiwan). In 1895 Japan conquered Formosa, and was therefore in a position to impose a monopoly. In 1897 the British Xylonite Company was sufficiently worried to engage the services of an agent to visit Japan and Formosa, to report on the present state and future prospects of the camphor industry there.

The man they chose was C.A. Mitchell, a shareholder in the Company who had a knowledge of chemistry. He was a considerable globe-trotter - he happened to be in Italy when the Company wrote and asked him to go to the Far East. He agreed to make the trip for a fee of 150 guineas and his expenses.

Travelling via San Francisco, Mitchell reached Tokyo in the November of 1897. He wrote numerous letters during his journey, both to the managing director of the Company and to another director who was a personal friend. In Formosa he also kept a diary, and on his return copied out extracts which he sent to the Company.

In his first letter from Tokyo he described a visit to a tea-house; beautiful as the geishas were, 'sitting on the floor soon tires a man from the west, and, alas, so does the whole entertainment!' However he made it clear that he was spending most of his time trying to meet professors of chemistry and other important people, trying to find out about the camphor industry without asking direct questions. He remained in Japan until February, and sent back a detailed report on the method of distilling camphor there. He also learned to use chopsticks, and developed a taste for Japanese food.

On 13th February he sailed for Formosa from Nagasaki. His 'cover' was that he was collecting butterflies, and in fact he brought back more than 600 specimens. He took with him from Japan a 'boy' called Eno, who had caught butterflies before, and had the 'appropriate apparatus'. They arrived at the town of Keelung, 'a filthy, miserable hole of a place, built on a sort of swamp no wonder the place has the reputation of being a hotbed of fever; I am only surprised that people can live here at all'. He remarked that many of the girls and women had their feet bound, and that giant hogs walked about in the streets, a sight unknown in Japan. 'Dear old clean, smiling Japan, I shall miss you'.

Undaunted by the unrest in the country, where the Japanese soldiers were still meeting fierce resistance from the local rebels, Mitchell travelled towards the mountains where the camphor trees grew. He sent back a photograph, explaining that it showed 'my expedition, the chairs, and coolies, not forgetting the gendarmes The fellow next to me is Eno, the butterfly boy; the bearded party is Don Roderigues Dos Santos, the interpreter'.

In his diary he gave more information on Santos: 'A Macao man. Sugar merchant at Tainan once, camphor buyer then photographer. Now with the help of Jap concubine, runs a small store in the prostitute's quarter of Bauka'.

From Toaho, Mitchell wrote that he was staying with a camphor dealer, 'sleeping on the floor, and having for companions the fowls, the pigeons and the rats, not to mention those insects which I did *not* bring with me My 'chow' I get from the village restaurant, and as I don't see it being cooked, it tastes all right. It is much more to European

taste than Japanese food is' Of his travels, he remarked that the Japanese authorities, alarmed for his safety, always sent gendarmes with him, to guard him and make sure he did not stray into 'savage' country. Nor was that his only problem. 'One has to cross narrow shaking bamboo bridges, trip along over stepping stones and wade knee-deep across rapid torrents the gulches are like the fern-house at Kew, filled with a most imposing vegetation. The tree ferns are large and beautiful, bearing fronds often twelve feet long This sort of forest is impenetrable to a jaded Londoner'. He found that camphor-distilling in this remote region showed great promise, despite the difficulty of transporting it to the nearest town. Further South, near Chip-Chip, he found to his surprise that the new Japanese style of camphor-stoves were being used. He also sent back another lament on his lack of comfort. 'Chinese houses are, like our own, furnished with tables, chairs, bedsteads, cupboards, drawers, etc. But I would willingly exchange all these luxuries for the plain, clean mats of a Japanese house, where one can count on a good bath of semi-boiling water and an insect-proof mosquito net'. However, after a gruelling walk in the hot sun, he found 'boiling hot tea, as served by the Chinese, without milk or sugar, a fine restorative and thirst-quencher'.

In some ways Mitchell can be seen as a typical English traveller of the imperialist age. Of his short expeditions he wrote 'On these little journeys I take a coolie with me to carry the tiffin basket as well as my coat and waistcoat.

He likewise carries me on his back across any streams that have to be forded'. On longer journeys he travelled in a chair carried by three coolies. He hated walking across the rickety bamboo bridges, but was 'too proud' to cross them on all fours as Santos did. However, he had taken the trouble to learn how to use chopsticks, to the relief of the crew of the steamer which took him to Formosa - they would have found it difficult to provide knives and forks. And he did make an effort to comply with local custom as this diary entry shows: '24 Feb. Ceremonious call from Bungo Hashiguchi San. Try to receive him Nippon style, but no good; cannot hide away the soles of my feet - too stiff in joints'.

He seems to have had a great affection for Japan and its people, and although his comments on the primitive conditions in Formosa are forthright, he does not make disparaging remarks about the population as such.

Despite the unrest in the island, which prevented him from visiting some of the camphor producing areas, Mitchell managed to obtain sufficient information for a full report, *Camphor in Japan and Formosa*, which was privately printed on his return. His visit to Formosa was brought to an end by a severe fever, which attacked him and all his companions. As soon as he was recovered he returned to Japan. Here he made some final enquiries on the selling of camphor, viewed the cherry blossom, and then sailed for home via San Francisco. His last observation in Japan was a few rods of imported Xylonite.



The photograph of himself and his party which Mitchell sent back from Formosa. Note the proud (but mis-spelt) name of the studio, and the 'prize medals' in the best tradition of late nineteenth-century Europe.

After his return, Mitchell continued to keep an eye out for items relating to Xylonite or camphor in the newspapers of the Far East. Where appropriate, he sent cuttings and explanatory letters to the Company. In 1900 he came across a report that the Japanese government might grant the camphor monopoly to 'Samuel Samuel a direct of the famous 'Shell' Transport & Trading Co. now working oil in Borneo'.

Jean Wait

(1) These records were deposited at Hackney Archives Department by BXL Plastics Ltd.

THE INVENTION OF TRADITION

Recently I learnt, not without amusement, that there is a good case for believing that the Highland kilt, far from being a garment of ancient origin, was invented in the mid-18th century by one Thomas Rawlinson, an iron-founder from Lancashire. The same book⁽¹⁾ tells us that a great deal of the pomp and ceremonial surrounding royal state occasions goes back no further than the coronation of Edward VII. His royal advisers set about creating rituals they felt would help to restore the popularity of the monarchy and bring it out of the gloom that Victoria's long retreat into widowhood had cast upon it.

In the first example, a later age has, in effect, romanticised a thoroughly practical factory-worker's garment into a national symbol. In the second, political considerations have contributed to the conscious presentation of new ceremonies as old, and their absorption into popular tradition.

What, you may well ask, has any of this got to do with Hackney? Well, in their own way, I believe that neighbourhoods, perhaps unconsciously, invent their own local traditions. The examples that come to mind seem to arise out of the perfectly natural desire to explain a striking local feature, or a puzzling place-name.

For example, Shore House, the old mansion known originally as Shoreditch Place and later as Shore Place (which stood roughly where the modern Shore Road meets Tudor Road) is said - in a sceptical tone, admittedly - by John Strype, in his 1720 edition of Stow's 'Survey of London', to have been the home of Jane Shore, supposedly the favourite mistress of Edward IV.

This tradition, he says, the occupants of his own time sought to keep alive by hanging her portrait there. Now there is no evidence at all of any association of this lady with the house or the area. It is known, however, that from about 1324 onwards, lands in this part of Hackney, and also Lower Clapton, were accumulated by Sir John Shordych and his wife Elena, and the 'manor of Shoreditch place' remained associated with his family until the late 15th century (when it passed into the hands of St. Thomas's hospital).

At the time Strype was writing, living memory would have entirely forgotten the Shordych family, and the curious would be casting around for an explanation of the name Shore Place. Who can blame them for wishing to associate the beautiful - and more famous - Jane (whose real name, apparently, was Elizabeth!) with their own locality?.

(Indeed, the lady seems to have been a particular focus for pleasant inventions of this kind. Not only have later ages tried, without apparent justification - to claim her as a resident of Shoreditch; Edward IV's biographer⁽²⁾ mentions a legend, dating from 17th century, that she was responsible for saving Eton College from suppression - for which there appears equally to be no identifiable factual basis).

There are other, much more mundane examples. I know of one street in which the story circulated that 'there had once been tunnels from the houses' to a point on the far side of the road, nobody could quite say where Because building in the area dates from around that period, there came to be a further elaboration, that the 'tunnels' had been something to do with the Napoleonic wars' The fact is there were cellars to the houses, opening onto the basement area and lying under the street. Some of these had evidently been reduced in size by quite crude infilling, giving the appearance (if one is inclined to romantic speculation) of a secret passage, mysteriously closed The simple 20th century necessity of preventing double-decker buses from thundering through the cellar roof, by filling in so much of the cellar as underlay the road, is of course far less attractive as a 'solution' to such an appealing mystery .

And yet there are other stories, appearing to bear little relationship to fact, but which may be shown, on investigation, to be the keeping alive of memories of things now largely forgotten. In Hackney Terrace (20-54 Cassland Road) one is sometimes assured that 'the front entrances to the terrace used to be at the back'. At first sight this seems absurd. What could the builders have been up to, putting their austere, formal facade, complete with heraldic pediment, on the street frontage, if that was to be merely the back door? Yet the gardens in the terrace seem to have been designed to be the focus of each house, as the sun comes up on the left and spends the day in the garden before going down on the right; and there is a school of thought that the rhythmic Georgian bows on the garden side of the building make it much more attractive than the front. When one discovers that before the 1890's, when Meynell Crescent was built, each house had a gate of its own into a private garden, and through that access to Well Street Common, the apparently absurd story takes on a different aspect. It is a faint echo of what may well have been a local preference, to come and go from and to one's home through pleasant open space, rather than on the dusty unmetalled road

So not all apparent romantic investigations are necessarily groundless. Do readers have similar stories of ancient, or indeed more modern times, circulating in a neighbourhood -with or without a convincing explanation? And ceremonies and rituals - are there special local ones, and what is their origin? I for one would be delighted to learn of other examples. So I imagine, would the Editor!.

Isobel Watson

(1) *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, Cambridge, 1983.

(2) *Edward IV*, by Charles Ross, Eyre Methuen, 1974.

SPACE AND STORAGE AT THE ARCHIVES DEPARTMENT

In the last issue of the Terrier we examined some of the problems associated with one of the resources, the local history library. This is not the only problem facing the Department: both our strong room and searchroom are crammed to capacity. There is no more room on the Rose Lipman site to put new collections of archives, and the increase in map provision, microfilm storage cabinets, catalogue drawers, etc. have reduced the room available to searchers. Plainly a mere ten years after moving from Shoreditch Library we have outgrown our new premises. This article examines the background to our present plight and looks forward towards some possible remedies.

Rose Lipman Library was a creation of the 1960s, and the space allocated to the Archives Department reflected the view of our role, and the size of our collections, at the time. At that time it was the intention of the Council to build new council offices which would have held the records of Hackney Council departments. Consequently space in the basement of Rose Lipman Library did not have to take account of post-1965 council records that would in future be worth permanently preserving, as archives - nor of records series that would retain an administrative function such as the drainage and building plans. Even so, the amount of storage that Stanley Tongue asked for was reduced by the architect and in the event the Department was able to put up 865 metres of shelves. Of this about 574 metres was in use for the archive collections in 1985 - the remainder being used for the local history library, visual collections and the museum collection.

In the event the new council offices for modern record storage were not built, and up to 1982 council departments made sporadic transfers of groups of records. The largest transfers were made up of the minutes of the pre-1965 councils and their committees. Certainly up to 1982 there was some space for deposits, though the advent of our largest and most significant business collection, Bryant and May, took up much of the spare shelving.

A crisis was looming in 1982 through, and this was only averted by a major exercise of boxing up portions of the collection that had previously only been shelved. Together with some cataloguing and destruction of duplicate records and printed material this staved off the inevitable for another three years. But during that time the Department substantially increased its activities and is now paying the price. An additional 12 metres of new mobile shelving squeezed in at considerable cost has been filled almost immediately. A small out store in one of the Town Halls is full, and some 7,000 plans have had to be stored most unsatisfactorily in the basement of other council offices. And this is only our current problems - many more records are waiting to come in.

In part this stems from our decision to launch a records management programme for the Council. Records management provides a service that identifies those records that are not in day to day use but are still required for legal, statutory or administrative reasons; stores them as economically as possible; provides them to the departments who produced them when they are required for council business; and assigns them a retention period. The vast majority of records are not worth permanently preserving, but records management systems also identify the proportionately small part of all records generated that should be kept - and become archives. Without a records management programme no archives department can hope to preserve records. Either vast caches of files find their way to 'limbo' stores (one up from dumping them on the floor!) or departments clear old files wholesale, without any attempt to assess whether there are records that the authority may still require - never mind any potential historical value.

We are still in the early stages of setting up a computerised system for the borough and this will form the subject of future Terrier articles. However our work so far had brought about some major transfers of records - for example council and committee minutes for the London Borough of Hackney, and the drainage plans mentioned above. The survey of departmental records completed so far would seem to indicate that there are a potential 800 metres of records currently held by departments that will require transferring to the Archives Department for permanent preservation. This does *not* include files which are still in administrative use and would become part of the records management system, nor does it take account of any records transferred to Hackney as a result of the abolition of the G.L.C. Currently the District Surveyor's office is beginning to microfilm some of its own records and the originals -worth keeping in paper form - are to be transferred to the Department at the end of June. The first batch will take up some 30 metres, and there is absolutely no space to put them. And in case this would seem to place the blame for the lack of space only on council records, even the two and a half metres of shelving that the records of Newington Green Unitarian Church take up was hard to find.

It is conceivable that we might have to turn down a deposit because there would be no room for it - unless we started to use the searchroom for a record store. If this ever happened we would not be able to stay open for public enquiries, and searchers would not be able to consult any of the records in our care.

Not that there is much space left in the searchroom. Elsewhere in this issue is the good news that we should be getting our own photocopier soon and thus searchers will be able to copy books and pamphlets for themselves. But the new machine can only be accommodated in our exhibition lobby and will effectively put one of the three cases out of action for the future. We are precluded from putting out any more books through lack of wall space. Users are often crowded together and disturbed by the needs of users and staff to move through the room. These pressures are not confined to the public areas: the office is used by the Archivist and staff, including any typists who work for us, and also doubles up as current periodical store, computer room and administrative area. Our conservation workshop also has to act as an exhibition preparation and storage area and a box store. If our Bryant and May exhibition has to come back for any length of time for attention then our conservation work will be severely restricted. In short, in all areas we have now exhausted the capacity of the space. The planning of the 1960s seemed far sighted at the time - but it was not far sighted enough and it has taken us just ten years to find out its limitations.

What are the solutions? In the short term we are trying to find and fit out a large out-store, which will take the majority of those council records that will need to be transferred to us, and may also have to house new deposits. Of course some of the records we will take over would not be made available for immediate public consultation under the normal thirty year arrangements. Some would be potentially useful and could be made accessible - assuming the staff time to list them. But undoubtedly there will be records that will have to be transferred to such an out-store that searchers will have to order a considerable time in advance, perhaps as such as a month, before they are able to view them. A potential store has been identified, and a report will go to the Council's Leisure Services Committee making recommendations. If these are accepted the immediate crisis will pass - but the long term problems of storage will remain, and of course there will be no improvements in the facilities that we can offer in the searchroom. Not will the conflicting uses of limited space be eased.

For these a bold imaginative response is called for. The Borough needs a new repository so that the current level of service can be maintained and envisaged improvements introduced. These would include a lecture room for use with school groups, local societies and for talks and lectures, a proper sales area for the increasingly popular range of publications produced and stocked by the Department,

adequate access for the disabled, proper facilities for the increasing number of parents who bring their children with them, a place for searchers to leave their coats and bags in safety and for them to eat and drink, and adequate space for exhibitions and displays put on by the Department. The new repository would also need proper box stores, a larger conservation area, areas where document collections can be received and checked for mould, insect damage, etc. (the Abney Park records had to share space with the conservator before they were despatched to the Public Record Office for cleaning and fumigation), and above all enough space to last for far longer than ten years. Transferring the Department to yet another library, or even the residue of the space remaining at Central Hall (next to Hackney Library in Mare Street) will not suffice. Ideally the Department requires a warehouse, capable of conversion to offer a potential storage capacity of between 10,000 and 15,000 metres, and to have a full floor for searchroom services, including the local history library, a map consultation area, and some of the facilities outlined above.

In the current economic climate this may seem to be ridiculously out of touch with reality. But what are the alternatives? In the last three years we have tried to improve the service and have now come up against the constraints of our present premises. Short term planning may give us an extra out-store - but we would be very shortly in a situation where over *half* of the archive collections would be stored away from the Department and would be correspondingly difficult of access. A new repository is not going to happen overnight. But the planning must begin now, and be realistic so that the mistakes of the 1960s are not repeated. The alternatives are an increasingly ineffective service and a real risk that collections may not be saved for the future.

David Mander

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE FRIENDS

On Thursday 26th June there will be a tour of St. John at Hackney Church, Lower Clapton Road, E5, led by Mr. Piesse. Meet at the Church at 7 pm.

After our summer break, there will be a meeting on Tuesday, 2nd October. Mr. Alan Ruston will be talking on 'Unitarian Nonconformity in Hackney', including the history of both the Gravel Pit and Newington Green congregations.

We hope to issue to our Friends a separate programme of the coming year's events with the September issue of the Terrier.

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