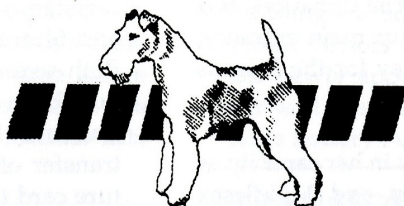


THE HACKNEY TERRIER



Number 46

Spring 1998

NEWSLETTER FROM THE HACKNEY ARCHIVES

HACKNEY ARCHIVES GOES TO THE HOUSE

Hackney Archives Department was to the fore at the launch of *Our Shared Past: an Archival Domesday for England* at the House of Commons on 30 March. *Our Shared Past* is a report compiled by the Public Record Office in association with a number of other archival bodies and is based on detailed questionnaires sent out to record offices all over England. David Mander was asked to comment on the returns for the London area, and was expecting to be a guest at the event, but nothing more. However we were asked by the Public Record Office to bring along and demonstrate the *Hackney on Disk* project to show that record offices are also forming part of the world of new technology.

We were able to extend the invitation to our other business partners, ADLIB, whose software will be used soon to catalogue archives and local history sources at Hackney. The report was launched by Geoff Hoon MP, Parliamentary Secretary in the Lord Chancellor's Department, whose speech included a reference to Hackney as an example of "the imagination which archivists are showing in applying the latest technology". On the evening we were able to demonstrate the software to Geoff Hoon, and other guests, including Tony Benn MP. More developments on our new software are given below.

Although the information in the returns was not made public, we can reveal that HAD's scores in the survey took us into the top end of responding local authority offices in London;

in our case the scores were boosted by our high proportion of records listed out of our total holdings and our IT projects. Conversely we will have to hope that effectiveness in some areas will not tell against us in the long struggle to obtain new premises.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Marino Petrou, the principle *Hackney on Disk* project worker, left Hackney on 4 April, having obtained a permanent job which will eliminate commuting. Marino came to us 'on loan' from the National Trust just under two years ago to work on the project and has put in the vast majority of the 9000 or so images now held on the database. A small part of his contract remained and the funds assigned to this will be added to extend Michael Kirkland's project work.

Magda Byland has joined us for a period of voluntary work of three days per week, undertaking a variety of searchroom duties.

Those readers whose association goes back to the early 1990s may remember Sue McKenzie, HAD's assistant archivist from 1990-1995, who is now working job share as Archivist of LB Lambeth. Sue began the Society of Archivist's professional correspondence course while at Hackney, and has just heard that she has passed her exams and is now a qualified archivist.

IN THE SEARCHROOM

For once this has been a period without major alterations. There is a new notice board in the

catalogue room (the former exhibition lobby) and we have moved the large picture of the Thames to allow us to put more shelves behind the searchroom desk. The donations box has been moved to adjoin our main entrance, and there will be new display for the Friends above it.

Our thanks to Lilian Gibbens in her capacity as Chair of the North London and Middlesex Family History Society, who has arranged the deposit of the 1881 Middlesex Census name index. The index, which is on microfiche, is stored on open access in the drawers in the microfilm room.

Readers will recall that an edited version of our service standards was produced in an abbreviated form, and that this was the subject of criticism from the Chair of the Friends. Now our Customer Charter has been taken as the base for a full version of our service standards, expanded to take in the new developments in information technology. The new illustrated leaflet will be out soon as one of the first of a new series of service standards across Hackney Council.

ACQUISITION AND LISTING

Our thanks to all Friends who sent donations to help support the purchase of the Braddock negatives. The collection has been carefully repackaged, and all the evidence on the old and disintegrating negative sleeves noted. Listing has been completed (D/F/BRD) but it has been a far longer process to match the negatives with existing Braddock prints in the visual collection and in various albums. Once this process is completed, any unmatched negatives will be printed up and the prints catalogued. Other recent acquisitions include a collection of First World War letters between the Dyall family of Knightland Road and their son, serving in the British Army and reported missing in action in 1917. The collection also includes family photographs. We have also had a deposit of papers concerning a dispute between the tenants of Fermain Court and Pioneer Concrete in 1987-8.

Thanks to Stephen Parks of the East of London Family History Society for spotting a useful cache of records in the store of Hackney Council's Registrar of Births, Marriages and

Deaths. These are a series of vaccination registers for Shoreditch from 1904-1918, which also serve as duplicate birth registers. With the registers were mortuary records for Hackney and Shoreditch Second World War casualties. Both series were transferred to HAD and have now been listed (S/R for the Shoreditch material and H/RE for the Hackney). Another transfer of council records has given us aperture card (a jacketed 35mm negative) copies of the majority of plans of Hackney's schools. As yet these are unlisted, but they will form a very useful source on school buildings in future years.

The records of Brownswood Church have also been listed (D/E 213 JOH 2), but major listing projects and cataloguing of local history material is in abeyance as we hope to start new cataloguing using the ADLIB software shortly.

THE STOCK TAKING CLOSURE

During our two week closure period we were able to check the two main sequences of the visual collection, and two of the most heavily used parts of the local history library. The work of this and the last stock taking period were consolidated into a new locations list - which we will hope will ensure that we can continue to meet the standards for document, book and visual production in the searchroom.

COMPUTING MATTERS

The ADLIB software was installed on our network at the end of March, though it will not be brought into use until after a training session in late April. As promised the new software consists of two paired databases, one for library material and the other for archives. Users can key in a common search term, which will allow both library and archive databases to be searched. As part of a test exercise we passed to ADLIB the data entries for the Hackney religious writings collection catalogued by Philip Plumb and funded by a British Library. The transfer proved successful and this will form the first accessible part of our collections. The ADLIB system will be available on the same terminals as *Hackney on Disk*. We will be seeking for the funds to convert all the existing catalogues on to both databases, and ultimately our catalogues will be available via the

Internet. Customers will be able to get to a catalogue entry and in a phase of development to follow, be able to order up the item directly, sending a document request to a terminal on the searchroom supervisor's desk. But it will be some considerable time before we are able to use the full potential of the software and for the time being manual lists and catalogues will remain.

The transfer of the *Hackney on Disk* software to a network proved to be a trying process for Ken Laing of Information Sciences and us, and caused some delay to the process of adding images and data to the system, but the process is now complete and we have five working terminals in operation - four in the searchroom and one reserved for the operator in the office. The revisions to the software are also well underway - changes to the subjects have been introduced, though some new linking is still to be done, while improvements to the way maps are accessed are all but complete. Work is going ahead steadily at Sutton House on a narrative based on the diary of William Evans and life in Victorian Hackney.

On the external customer front, LB Redbridge have completed their Heritage Lottery application, while Barking and Dagenham are well advanced with theirs. Sandwell and Birmingham City Archives have both placed orders for the system, while the software is installed in North Devon Museum at Barnstaple, with additional terminals in an educational centre, a heritage centre (where it will tell the story of Victorian Barnstaple using touch screens) and in the branch record office/local studies library. Interest from other local authorities continues unabated, with demonstrations averaging one a week. We continue to be the only combination of local authority and software producer to offer advise to other Heritage Lottery Fund applicants putting in bids using our software - something that is proving popular with potential customers.

On the wider front the *Hackney on Disk* software will feature prominently in a forthcoming review by the Library & Information Commission of digitisation projects in the UK and has formed the basis of two presentations given by David Mander recently - one to the Quality Services Forum organised by the Public Record Office on 11 February and the other

at the South West Region of the Library Association's Members Day in Taunton on 26 March. The last talk was on Heritage Lottery Funding - a talk helped by contact with two recent visitors to HAD; Catherine Cassarchis, the newly appointed Archives Lottery Advisor and Stephen Green, adviser to the Heritage Lottery Fund on archives and libraries.

TRANSFORMING HACKNEY

The new year saw the launch of a new structure for Hackney Council, with a management board of the Chief Executive and four Executive Directors. The old directorates were abolished and replaced by new service directorates. HAD comes within the Leisure and Learning Directorate, headed up by Service Director Kevin Crompton. Line management has disappeared and in its place come performance management, accompanied by greater control by service heads, who in turn will need to make a clear link between their assigned budget and what their service has to deliver.

In practical terms HAD will experience less change than some services. There is a 2% cut in our budget in the new financial year of 1998/9 compared with 1997/8, but providing we continue in our very active programme of income generation, there should be no material effects on service delivery. However there is no potential for growth either, so projected improvements in financial management inside Hackney Council will be very welcome for a small service like ours, where time saved on support duties can always be put into the aspects of service delivery that do make a difference to all our customers - lists, catalogues, and other guidance on using the sources we hold.

PREMISES

The Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts has changed the way it recognises record offices as places of deposit. Previously recognition was for the deposit of specific types of record; in future an office will be recognised for the totality of its services and standards of storage. Record offices have to make an application to the Commission, who then send out officers to survey the applicant.

Hackney has made an application for the new recognition and has been inspected. Some improvements will have to be made to the main store, largely to enable the early detection of external water in the strongroom.

We will also have to ensure that we can continue to provide storage for new accessions that meet the Commission's standards. Neither of our out-stores are capable of being upgraded to this standard, so our most cost effective option would appear to rent space for a period of years from a repository that is able to meet the standards. In the first instance we would move out classes of records that have been microfilmed or are closed for public access, to enable us to release space at HAD for new accessions. There are cost implications in this strategy, but without action of some kind we will be unable to continue to accept any new source material in the very near future.

PUBLICITY

David Mander has had two recent radio appearances, one on LBC to publicise *Look Back, Look Forwards* before Christmas - a piece which ranged rather wider than just matters to do with Stoke Newington - and on the local Sound Radio. This was one of the temporary radio stations broadcasting for the last two weeks in February and David's piece was on *Hackney on Disk* - not the easiest thing to describe for a radio programme!

The LBC piece was repeated and we received some positive responses from listeners. The oddest response came from a woman who had once lived in Holmleigh Road and claimed she had been told that a bomb had landed at the back of houses on the north side into a Roman bath! The Museum of London's Archaeology Service has no record of any Roman remains in that area and David was puzzled as to how the witnesses of the time had known the resulting bomb crater had once been a Roman bath. Whatever the real story, any remains are firmly under the concrete of a Post Office yard.

FRIENDS AGM

The annual general meeting, to which all subscribers and new members are welcome, takes place in the searchroom at Hackney Archives

at 4 p.m. on Saturday 20th June 1998. As usual the business will be to elect the committee for the forthcoming year and to receive the accounts for 1997. There will also be an opportunity to see the latest developments on Hackney on Disk.

A special item this year is that the Committee is considering registration with the Charity Commission, which will involve adopting a new constitution. This makes it an appropriate time to take stock and discuss the future focus and activities of the Friends. Please come along and let us have your views on this.

Committee nominations, ideas and suggestions should be sent to: Isobel Watson, Chair of the Friends, 29 Stepney Green, London, E1. Email: rolandho@ndirect.co.uk

MARTIN TAYLOR - FIRST IMPRESSIONS

It is now over three months since I moved from a county record office to Hackney Archives Department. My first impressions, a blur of new people and procedures, have become more defined. A number of differences between Hereford and Worcester Record Office and Hackney Archives Department have become apparent.

Firstly the size. As Friends may remember from the last issue of the *Terrier* I worked at the St Helen's branch of the Worcester Record Office in Worcester city centre. This was only a third of the operation, there being another public branch at County Hall outside the city, as well as a records management unit. There were about twenty staff over all, each unit dealt with a different set of customers (St Helen's visitors tended to be local historians and academics), and until local government reorganisation began to make its presence felt, we all tended to run along our separate grooves.

It was quite a shock then to begin work with three or four people only, with everyone doing a bit of everything - search room supervision, listing, document retrieval, records management and so on. The number of visitors is about the same as we got at St Helen's, and there are naturally far more administrative

tasks to be done. Any one who thinks that archives is a nice quiet job should come and work at HAD!

As a London borough office, HAD's records are somewhat different from those in the custody of Worcester Record Office. Quarter sessions records and parish registers are the traditional mainstays of county offices, neither of which we hold. Nor is HAD as rich in estate archives, although we have a far greater number of important business collections. If I miss anything about the records I was dealing with at Worcester, it would be the medieval material.

However there is much that is familiar to someone coming from a county record office background. The scale of operations may be smaller, but the scope is much the same. Both offices provide a search service and benefit from a conservation facility and an active Friends organisation. HAD is committed to providing a wide range of public services and records management, comparable with what Worcester Record Office aims to do. HAD has the advantage of being able to obtain resources to develop IT to improve these services. The customer base - family and local historians, students and school children, and council officers - is also much the same.

My experience at Worcester suggests that HAD, although with fewer resources, is successfully doing much the same range of work.

PICTURE FEATURE

While locating photographs on the maps on Hackney on Disk recently, I came across this George James photograph (below) from the 1880's, which was originally catalogued as Clapton Common in the card index. First of all we thought the house was situated in the area that was to become the corner of Castlewood and Rookwood Roads. But closer inspection of the maps and other photographs proved this to be incorrect.

Both David and I checked the maps for large houses at other open spaces, Stoke Newington Common, Hackney Downs and Well Street Common, but to no success. So any suggestions would be most welcome. Some clues to its location maybe the posts and chain fence, which is very particular (and not Clapton Common) and there is another large building (although difficult to make out in this reproduction), at an angle to the house, behind the trees on the right.

Michael Kirkland



NEW BOOKS

Famous Women of Hackney
by the Hackney Society

The Hackney Society has recently published a revised edition of their booklet, *Famous Women of Hackney*. The content has essentially remained the same but the production is greatly improved. The previous A4 format has given way to A5, which feels more substantial and is more manageable to handle.

The presentation is improved in all ways: the bigger font, clearer headings and layout all make it much easier to read. The photographs and illustrations are of a much better quality benefiting from the advances of copying and printing technology in this decade. And that is the feel that this revised edition has; of being a modern publication.

It remains a useful and informative booklet, a first stop for those new to Hackney's history and students researching women's issues and local history. Hackney's most famous women are of course, all present (Edith Cavell, Marie Lloyd and Catherine Booth), and relevant information on buildings, refuges and societies (the Ayah's Home and the Asylum for Deaf and Dumb Females). All are usefully located on a map of Hackney and for a bit of a laugh you have the 1728 Daily Post extract where Ann Field of Stoke Newington challenges Elizabeth Stokes (European Championess) to a boxing match for ten pounds. Unfortunately, we are not told who was victorious.

Michael Kirkland

HENRY FAWCETT

David Blunkett has become a familiar parliamentary figure in recent years. Whether seen debating or walking with his dog, he is the most prominent visually impaired politician of our time. Henry Fawcett, MP for Hackney from 1874 until his death in 1884, was also visually impaired and rose to a prominent position in government. He was a successful and much respected campaigner for a fairer deal for colonial India and became Post Master General in Gladstone's second government.

Henry Fawcett was not from Hackney. He was born in Salisbury, Wiltshire on 26 August 1833, the son of a gentleman farmer with no significant background. Fawcett was educated at Kings College London and Trinity Hall Cambridge where he was later elected Fellow of his college.

He studied mathematics, economics and law and had political ambitions. A Liberal and friend and follower of John Stuart Mill, he was always keen for political discussions and debates with his colleagues. The pinnacle of his academic career was reached in 1863 when he was elected Professor of Political Economics. He had planned to join the legal profession, which if all went well would act as a springboard for Parliament. But he never achieved a career in law due to an accident that deprived him of his sight.

Accounts of his accident vary, but it seems the awful truth was that while out shooting he was shot in the face by his father, who was himself suffering from poor eyesight due to cataracts. Fawcett was instantly blinded and an operation proved unsuccessful. He was 25 years old. Unable to read, a career in law would be impossible, but he believed his political ambitions could still be fulfilled.

Fawcett had support from Mill, who thought his blindness could be used to his advantage, aside from the obvious difficulties. Fawcett got round his lack of being able to read by memorising documents and particularly financial and statistical data. He proved able to debate economic affairs without the aid of notes, unlike his sighted colleagues and opponents. But there was still a chorus of opposition to him because he was visually impaired (and therefore disadvantaged) and there was a fierce debate in both parties and in the press.

Against the odds, it seems he showed incredible determination to achieve this goal. One of his own Liberal party managers apparently commented 'Unknown, blind and not rich, was there ever such a madman?' But the response to him in public meetings was always positive, probably a combination of his reforming social policies and his obvious ability to overcome his lack of sight.

He confidently presented written papers and in debate his quick wit dealt with any tricky or insulting questions. His first campaign in Southwark in 1861, ended when he decided to stand aside for another Liberal candidate; probably a tactical move, having made good progress, learned much about campaigning, and likely to lose!

But he still had a bumpy road to parliament. In Cambridge he contested, but failed to take the seat in the General Election of 1862, also failing in Brighton in 1863. He seemed to be permanently part of a divided opposition. But he had another chance at Brighton in 1865 and took the seat with a large majority.



Henry Fawcett

Fawcett's concern with India centred on the blatant unfairness of the administration of the Indian budget. He first publicly protested in 1867 on the issue of royal gifts and entertainment being paid for out of the Indian revenues and therefore by the Indian taxpayers. This was a political minefield and many on his own side urged him not to protest, including Mill who was anxious that further abuses and embarrassments would be uncovered. The poverty, and at this time famine, suffered by the Indian people made the situation for Fawcett intolerable and he presented a petition of protest from Europe and India to the House

of Commons forcing a debate.

He came under ferocious attack from the Under Secretaries of State but this was just the beginning for Fawcett. His mastery of economics made him the perfect protagonist on this issue. He carefully studied the whole Indian Budget and financial relations between England and India. By 1870 he had won the commitment from Gladstone for the debate on the Indian Budget to be moved forward in the parliamentary session and for a committee on Indian Finance to be set up. Contrary to the warnings of unpopularity that his Indian policy would bring, Fawcett's stand on this issue made him much admired and liked by the public at home, abroad and in India and he acquired the nickname 'the Member for India'.

When Disraeli won the general election of 1874, Fawcett lost his Brighton seat but was back in parliament just two months later as member for Hackney. It was a sign of his growing popularity and he found the opposition benches could be just as good a platform for his campaign for India.

Gladstone won the 1880 General Election and made Fawcett Post Master General in the new government. Fawcett now had what he always wanted; real power in government. But the position was outside the cabinet, it seems Gladstone kept him out of the cabinet because of difficulties due to his blindness (a challenge that David Blunket has been able to meet one hundred years later).

But Fawcett was not held back and was responsible for important and significant reforms in the postal service. He introduced the parcel post, he reformed the Post Office Savings Bank, introduced postal orders and an array of postage stamps. Fawcett, as an academic economist, could see how the Post Office could bring wider economic and social benefits. With his administrative expertise he was well equipped to lead a properly planned, fast and efficient service that was also forward thinking.

The parcel post was introduced on the 1 August 1882 and Fawcett himself was very excited by 'the extraordinary variety of objects posted' and 'the smartly painted red vans'. There had been opposition from the railway companies

and doubts as to its profitability from the Treasury and the new service was not immediately a financial success. But by the end of the first year things were picking up and over 20 million parcels had been posted. By 1886, two years after Fawcett's untimely death, the original targets and estimates had been achieved.



THE MAN FOR THE POST.

Fawcett with his 'extraordinary variety of objects posted' from Punch 15th April 1882

The Post Office Savings Bank had existed since 1859 but Fawcett's reforms gave it a new role. Small deposits could now be made, in the form of stamps, providing a savings service for the low paid and small investor. The service was immediately popular with a million new depositors in the first three years and significant for encouraging the participation of the poor, through the savings scheme, in the State, which also benefits. Fawcett made another service more readily available for the working class by lowering telegram prices to a sixpence minimum charge. He was also keen to expand the service to small towns and rural areas.

He promoted the ideas of partnership between the public and private sectors, approving the telephone companies expansion with new exchanges. He also allowed small shops to sell stamps. The smaller reforms were also impor-

tant in establishing an organised and efficient public service. The number of pillar-boxes was increased, the reply paid postcard was introduced and services at railway stations and on trains were increased. Fawcett introduced a great many features of the postal service that future generations would take for granted, he was even responsible for those little indicators on pillar-boxes that show the time of the next collection.

Fawcett was a remarkable man and when he died at the age of 51 he was one of those rare politicians who had risen above the usual party political battles to gain respect all-round. He was certainly popular with the people of Hackney who had re-elected him in increasing numbers. His obituary in *The Hackney Gazette* is full of praise and sorrow and with the dramatic journalistic style of the time, opens with the lines: 'A sore bereavement has befallen the Borough of Hackney, Fawcett is no more.'

Fawcett's name lives on in Hackney and although I've yet to find confirmation in the Archives (and please write and let me know if I have assumed wrong), it must be that Fawcett Estate at Clapton Common is named in his honour. The Estate was part of the 1930's housing developments on Upper Clapton Road and Clapton Common, and was extended during the 1950's. Although not an un-attractive block of flats, the estate unfortunately replaced Champion Place, the substantial detached houses dating from 1825, which lined part of the west side of Clapton Common. Other material on Henry Fawcett at Hackney Archives includes biographies, portraits, letters and speeches including his 1874 General Election Address at Hackney.

Michael Kirkland

The Hackney Terrier was produced by David Mander and Michael Kirkland of The London Borough of Hackney Archives Department at 43 De Beauvoir Road, London N1 5SQ. Tel 0171 241 2886. Fax 0171 241 6688; e-mail archives@hackney.gov.gov.uk. The Terrier is distributed free to members of the Friends of Hackney Archives. Membership of the Friends is open to all. The subscription is £6 for each calendar year, (plus £2 for each additional member at the same address and £12 for overseas members (if paid in sterling) Back numbers are available from the Friends at 29 Stepney Green E1 3JX (large sae for details).