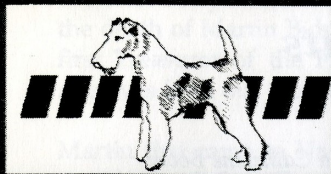


THE HACKNEY TERRIER



HACKNEY ARCHIVES NEWSLETTER

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New to Hackney Archives

Acquisitions, loans and deposits

The Law Photograph Collection

In the last Terrier we announced that new to the Archives was a large set of photographs from the 1930's. The photographs were loaned from Brian Law whose family lived in Hackney and Bethnal Green. The photographs were taken by his father Walter Henry Law, an artist, who wanted the photographs for new source material. The background to the Law Collection and some of the photographs are in this issues feature section on page 4.

Brian has been back to Hackney Archives and was impressed by our work on his photographs and the Hackney on Disk image system. He has now very kindly loaned the paintings and drawings that were generated from the photographs. Brian's father was primarily an artist as the range of work clearly demonstrates; the paintings having been executed in a beautiful graphic style with a great attention to detail and an obvious love of the subject. While there will not be the challenge of identification, as there was with the photographs, I look forward with relish to re-photographing and digitising this work for our image collection.

Brian has also contributed a short biography on his father which we will include in the next Terrier.

Local History Library

Recently acquired publications include:-

London's Lea Valley: Britain's Best Kept Secret, by Jim Lewis (Phillimore 1999)

Discovering London Plaques, by Derek Sumeray (Shire Publications 1999)

Blood & Fire: William and Catherine Booth and Their Salvation Army, by Roy Hattersley (Little, Brown 1999)

Marie Lloyd: The One and Only, by Midge Gillies (Gollancz 1999)

William and Catherine Booth, and Marie Lloyd were great nineteenth century figures with Hackney connections. A less well known figure from the sixteenth century is the subject of a biography published in 1827 which we have just acquired. This is Sir Julius Caesar, Master of the Rolls under James VI & I, who lived in Hackney in 1634, probably in the house on Homerton High Street which had previously belonged to Lord Zouche.

Lastly we have acquired the latest volume of *The Victoria History of the County of Middlesex, volume XI: Early Stepney with Bethnal Green* (OUP 1998). Users of HAD will know how useful the volumes for Hackney (volume X) and Stoke Newington (volume VIII) are. Now we have an equally useful secondary source for the neighbouring borough.

Archive Holdings

Sutton House has passed to HAD some material deposited there by a Mr Newnham, a former employee of Berger Paints. The deposit includes Mr Newnham's reminiscences of his half century in the technical department with Bergers'. There are also two albums of photographs and advertisements. This small deposit will provide an interesting supplement to our main holding of Bergers' archives.

Martin Bidmead

We were sorry to learn before Christmas of the death of Martin Bidmead, who was the first Treasurer of the Friends of Hackney Archives from our inception in 1985.

Martin first came to Hackney in 1973 after working with Stan Tongue (Hackney's first Borough Archivist) at the Palestine Exploration Fund. He mentioned to Stan that he needed a temporary job to fund his next dig in Israel, and this led to his working in LBH Libraries, first at Stoke Newington and then at Mare Street until 1976.

After giving up archaeology in 1978, Martin worked at the Partnership Office in Hackney before joining Central training where he remained as a training officer until 1995.

Martin got his BA from Columbia University in New York, his MA from London University and had worked at the Institute of Archaeology in London and Jerusalem until ill health forced him to abandon his PhD.

During the last year of his life he worked as a training officer in Bath, working with employers to ensure that the Disability Discrimination Act was being applied correctly to organisations in the Bristol and Bath area.

Martin died at home on 7 November 1999 at the age of 51.

FHA would like to express their condolences to Christine and Maria.

LARC

We are pleased to announce that Borough Archivist David Mander has been elected Chair of the London Archives Regional Council (LARC) which formally came into existence on 1 April.

David was previously Chair of the shadow body which preceded it.

Regional Archives Councils are being set up

across the country under the aegis of the National Council on Archives to liaise between the repositories on the ground and the new national authority for our sector, "Resource", the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries.

Hackney History Mini-Fair

Following our successful Open Day last year, Hackney Archives Department has decided to run another this year, but on a slightly larger scale.

The East of London Family History Society, the London & North Middlesex Family History Society and the Hackney Society have agreed to run book stalls. Hackney Museum will be participating and will be demonstrating some of the displays they will be using in their new premises in the Technology and Learning Centre (TLC) in Mare Street. We hope that our conservator, Jacqueline Bradshaw-Price will be able to demonstrate some of her work.

In view of the increased scale of the event, we have decided to christen it the Hackney History Mini-Fair. It will take place at the Archives Department on **Saturday 1 July 2000**, from 11am to 4pm. The day will conclude with the Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Hackney archives at 4pm.

Friends will receive further details of the event nearer the time. We will also publicise it as widely as possible. The aim is to bring both people who are familiar with the Department, and people who have never heard of use, into the Mini-Fair. We want to increase our profile as much as possible.

We hope that many Friends will be able to attend, and see our work. We will also need three or four Friends to act as greeters and stewards for the Mini-Fair. If you are willing to undertake these far from onerous duties, please get in touch with Martin Taylor at the Department.

The Law Photograph Collection

As mentioned in our New to Hackney Archives section and the last Terrier, we been loaned a large collection of photographs from Brian Law. The photographs were taken by his father during the 1930's. Some of the photographs had locations on the back or were easily identifiable. The rest went through the Hackney Archives identification process, ie Borough Archivist, Chair of the Friends and finally (to sort out the really tricky ones!), Martin and myself armed with maps, directories and the existing photo collection.

And we were rewarded for our painstaking research with some real finds. Some photographs of mid-Victorian houses, semi's and terraces awaiting demolition, kept us busy for some time; not part of the slum-clearance in Homerton, not other 1930's public housing in former middle class areas like Clapton Common or Woodberry Down, maybe not in the borough at all (Brian's father was also active in Bethnal Green). In the end, it turned out to be Gascoyne Road, where the houses gave way to the very striking and stylish brick-built blocks on the east side of Well Street Common. It happened one night as I was driving down a road in Hackney that seemed strangely familiar but different! The next morning Martin provided the necessary research to support the theory.

We also located shops on Morning Lane, side streets off Homerton High Street, the lanes and gardens in and around Little Hill by the Lea and a urinal in Ponsford Street! Other firsts for the Hackney Archives collection include the Lyme Grove/Loddiges Road/St Thomas's Square area, Link Street, Homerton Terrace and shops and buildings on Upper Clapton Road, Well Street and Wetherell Road.

Overall it turned out be a fantastic addition to our collection and for a crucial historic period, the late 1930's; as mentioned certain areas were already being re-developed for public housing and of course a greater clearance of parts of Hackney was about to be unleashed.

A few from the River Lea area remain unidentified for now. Approximately ninety images from this loan have been added to Hackney on Disk and the majority of these were also scanned to a high resolution for future professional reproduction/enlargements.



Left: Upper Clapton Road, west side at the junction with Brook Road.
Above: Hackney Church and old houses in the Churchyard.
Photographs by Walter Law c1935

A HACKNEY NOTEBOOK

'All the fun of the fair': Amusements and leisure in the 1920s and 1930s

by Kenneth Neale

One of our Friends, Kenneth Neale, has kindly written a series of reminiscences of his early years in Hackney. This is the first of these articles.

This essay seeks to recollect those aspects of the social scene concerning leisure pursuits that relate to the years of my boyhood in Hackney. In particular it is concerned with the ways in which my generation enjoyed the fraternity of the streets and open spaces of the borough.

Most people would, I suppose, envisage Hackney then, indeed now, as peripheral to the authentic East End of London: especially in regard to the departed but once hideous idioms of life on the mean streets of the 'Jago'. That notorious locality, immortalised by Arthur Morrison (1), has been, despite its proximity to Shoreditch Church was part of Bethnal Green.

However, Limehouse, Stepney, Poplar and the Thameside precincts are the authentic heartland of the old East End and its distinctive cultures. Hackney, Shoreditch and Bethnal Green made up a contiguous and overlapping hinterland and shared broadly similar cultural traditions, although these were diluted and modified by local topography and the social mores and aspirations of their own fringe communities.

Conspicuous influences on the leisure dimensions of life for those who lived in the crowded streets of the borough were its principal open spaces, namely, Hackney Marshes dedicated to the public in 1894 - and Victoria Park: we shall come to those. The most evocative and dramatic manifestations of amusement and leisure for us were the Bank Holiday fairs held

on the marshlands at Lea Bridge just over the river on the Essex side (Leyton), but essentially they belonged to Hackney in substance and in spirit.(2)

Almost everything else went on day by day, week by week. The periodic fairs were something to look forward to and to relish. Against that background it is obvious that the varied and sophisticated pastimes now enjoyed by our contemporary and relatively affluent society, were then in the distant future and beyond the turmoil of a major world war. Allowing too, that we are concerned here only with the young there will be nothing of the pubs, the clubs and the greyhounds!

But the leisure outlets for those growing up were actually not as restricted as all that might imply. At the upper end of the spectrum of amusements was the Hackney Empire with its seasonal pantomime, Dick Whittington, Cinderella, or one of the other old favourites. A poor second to that annual feast of delight was the occasional visit to the cinema an amenity with which Hackney was well endowed. Most of the younger generation was familiar with the Rink, The South, The Kenninghall and, especially 'the two-penny rush' on Saturday mornings at the Castle in Brooksby's Walk.

These amusements, along with the professional sports, football and speedway at Hackney Wick, were shared with parents and adult friends. One much prized initiative was introduced by the Clapton Orient football club to encourage the support of enthusiastic local boys. We were let into the group and without charge for the last ten minutes of a match to cheer and admire our soccer heroes. One of these was 'Woody' the goalkeeper though, given the evidence of Orient's modest record and status he must have enjoyed that adulation more from sympathy than approbation. Orient played at the now demolished stadium in Millfields Road having been founded in 1888; in 1946 they moved across the Lea and have since been known as Leyton

Orient, but their old and long-suffering supporters still call them the 'O's.

On the streets we played cricket using a lamp post for a wicket, and football on the roadway. Those who had them rode bicycles, scooters, and terrified pedestrians by their antics on roller skates. However, the traditional pastimes were what one might call the pavement games, which were popular with the younger people at least up until the war. There was a surprising repertoire of which the favourites were marbles, hopscotch and conkers. Various ball games and chasing games like tag and leapfrog were played though did not command the supremacy of the authentic pavement games. The essential attributes of those were individual prowess and the ready availability of inexpensive 'props' - marbles, chalk, stones and chestnuts.

At home I played chess with my father but, more generally, it was the popular board games such as draughts, ludo and snakes and ladders that predominated in our circle. What a far cry it was from the computer generated games of today. Television was still, although invented by then, beyond our experience, though many homes had a primitive wireless set (radio) and a gramophone by 1939.

We also had a magic lantern which smoked when the oil lamp with which it functioned was ignited. This minimal light source projected the mundane images on glass slides onto a screen, or the wall, and kept us amused. There was thus plenty to do and little by way of idle hours. But the Victorian hey-day of home entertainment and ebullient family amusements had already slipped into the maw of social history. In any case we always wanted to be out and about when not busy with reading, homework or the minor household chores that we were expected to do.

It was thus that our playgrounds were the Millfields and the Hackney Marshes for football and a general frolic during the haying, and there were sheep on the

marshlands then. We also enjoyed the considerable amenities in Victoria Park (3) and the jolly little Springfield Park. There was also a pretty little niche in the urban sprawl at Clapton Pond with its flowers, ducks and trees. At Upper Clapton there was a larger pond, in a rather sparse environment in comparison, but there we could sail our model boats and paddle in the water which was not allowed at Lower Clapton. Even more exciting was fishing, with net and a handy jam jar for tiddlers (sticklebacks and minnows) in the feeder that ran alongside the Lea Cut by Pond Lane Bridge (formerly Cow Bridge) at the bottom of Millfields Road.

Thus was the general range of our leisure time, though, after I went to the Grocers' School, there was not much of that as we were expected to do 2 hours, or more, of homework every evening; a task that our boyhood friends did not have to address. But, to conclude this brief account, I must return to the Lea Bridge fair which, as I have said, was the highlight in the annual calendar of amusements in pre-war Hackney.

It was not, of course, in fact a fair in the strictly historical sense. Its predecessors were essential to the economies and commercial life of the then predominantly rural communities though, even then, the fairs had a strong element of entertaining and spectacular events and characters. The Lea Bridge fair of the 1920s and 30s was largely a fun fair though it did have its marketing functions as well. Soon after it arrived and the great vans and trailers disgorged their intriguing and elaborate paraphernalia alongside the dreary banks of the Lea, there would be a gathering efflorescence of light, colour and sound that was at once garish, raucous and exciting.

It attracted very large crowds, which though not devoid of the petty crime that is always prevalent on such occasions, was generally well behaved and in festive mood. Swings, roundabouts, helter-skelter, gushing steam engines, games of

chance and skill, toffee apples, shrimps and winkles, roasted chestnuts, lemon fizz, strange even bizarre performances and unimaginable 'miracles' were some of the exuberant ingredients of these riverside attractions. After dark the flares cast an exciting flickering light over the encampment and its concomitant stalls and structures. To us it was of magical quality.

It was possible to spend, or lose, quite a lot of money at the fair. But we enjoyed it all with just a few coppers and even, by the third day nothing to spend (looking cost nothing), it was the greatest free show in-town. There was so much activity, the scene changed from minute to minute in a kaleidoscopic display of flashing lights and frenzied fun. There was nothing like it in the normal experience of the rest of the year.

Looking back now, after 70 years, it was not an easy time and we had no great expectations especially after the war clouds loomed. Nevertheless, we were happy and the hard grind was compensated for by the games we played, the amusements we enjoyed and all the fun of the fair.

Notes

(1) *A Child of the Jago* - A.Morrison (1896) - in reality the Jago of Morrison's novel was known as the Nicholl which, before its demolition and re-development was a disgraceful slum, its people riven by disease, crime and violence.

(2) The fair's only rival as a colourful spectacle and popular delight for us was Chatsworth Road market during the evenings at Christmastide.

(3) *A Pictorial history of Victoria Park* (1996) P.Mernick.

A Norman Conquest

In August 1999 the Society of Genealogists made available the Norman Collection. These are the papers of Miss Gwendolin May Norman (1915-). Miss Norman grew up and spent most of her life in Hertford Road, De Beauvoir Town. The collection, as one would expect, is mainly about her genealogical researches. Both sides of the family originated from Cambridgeshire.

What makes the collection interesting for non-Normans is the story she tells of herself and her family. The onset of Parkinson's Disease in 1989, perhaps made her want to record her life and those of her family before it was too late.

On her father's death in 1949 Miss Norman inherited the family linen goods manufacturing business which she ran until her retirement in 1975, although this is rarely mentioned in the collection. She is almost painfully honest describing herself at one point as being "quite a Plain Jane" and referring to her difficulties with her mother. She also talks about two special male friends, although she never married. At times it is curiously moving, for the collection illuminates the tragedies (the killing of a cat by a neighbour) (*sic*) and pleasures (her fun loving father) of an ordinary family in an ordinary street. The collection is well illustrated by many family photographs.

We should all perhaps consider leaving such a life story behind to our descendants and anybody else who might be interested in the times we lived in and the lives we lived. The Society of Genealogists would be pleased to take such life stories especially if they were part of a wider genealogical study.

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Society of Genealogists
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London EC1M 7BA
(0207 251 8799)

Friends' Interests

We are very pleased that our members interests feature has proven to be so successful and that you are still responding. Thank you, and keep them coming!

LAMBERT Samuel (c1785-1834) Tobacco Pipemaker at Kingsland High Street, Hackney from 1809 to 1834. **Mr & Mrs E Blackman, Coombe Barn Cottage, With-eridge, Tiverton, Devon, EX16 8PT.**

EDWARDS in Hackney 19/early 20C
KERRISON in Hackney 19/early 20C
HERRTAGE in Hackney early 20C
DIGGONS in Stoke Newington 19/20C
Miss S A B Johnson, 10 Grosvenor Court, 6 Suffolk Road, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 5SX

WICKS Henry & Thomas (father) c1851, Doll Maker, Shoreditch
WICKS James c1831, Hackney
Mrs L M Kicks, 2 The Roses, Salway Hill, Woodford Green, Essex, IG8 9BN

BOSTON Joseph (1808-1861) Veterinary

Surgeon in Hackney and Ann (nee Stan-ner) **Mr Terry Boston-Marsh, 21 London road, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 8LN**

POLSTON James & Ann (nee Andrews) VACHE Georgiana (1809-1895) Silk Weaver, both pre 1842.
BAUGH Thomas c1831 Shoreditch
Mrs E Morley, Thwaites, Fersfield, Diss, Norfolk, IP22 2BP

If you share an interest in any of the families or subjects above, why not get in touch with the Friend who is advertising, and pool information?

If you would like to make public your subjects of research, please drop a line to Martin or Michael, giving your name, contact address and your specialised interest. We have decided it is better not to advertise people's telephone numbers, but we would be happy to include e-mail addresses. Please state whether the family you are researching lived in Hackney, Shoreditch or Stoke Newington.

Friends of Hackney Archives Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Hackney Archives will take place at Hackney Archives Department at 4.00 pm on Saturday 1 July 2000.

This will follow on from the Hackney History Mini-Fair, which we hope as many Friends as possible will be able to attend.

Once again we are asking for volunteers to join the Committee. If you are willing and able to become a member, please drop a line to Isobel Watson, Chair of the Friends at 29, Stepney Green, London, E1 3JX.

Credits & Contacts

The Hackney Terrier was produced by David Mander, Martin Taylor and Michael Kirkland of London Borough of Hackney Archives Department at 43 De Beauvoir Road, London N1 5SQ. Tel 020 7241 2886. Fax 020 7241 6688; e-mail archives@hackney.gov.uk. Additional contributions came from Isobel Watson. The Terrier is distributed free to members of the Friends of Hackney Archives. Membership of the Friends is open to all. The subscription is £8 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)