

THE HACKNEY TERRIER



HACKNEY ARCHIVES
NEWSLETTER

No. 57

Spring 2001



At the front in this issue:

New to Hackney Archives:

Acquisitions & Deposits

Projects & Office News

Features:

The Home Guard 1940-41

Friends' Interests:

Family History connections

New to Hackney Archives

Acquisitions, loans and deposits

Archives

The Superintendent Registrar has now deposited a series of Marriage Notice Books. These record advance notice of marriages at register offices and non-Anglican places of worship, including nonconformist, Roman Catholic, Jewish and Islamic ceremonies.

The following registration districts' are covered:

Shoreditch	1837-1965
Stoke Newington	1930-1979
Hackney	1920-1977

Shoreditch registration district was merged with Hackney in 1965.

The Shoreditch volumes have been listed and are available to the public. Work continues on the other two registration districts and we will announce in the Terrier when they are available.

These volumes will be a useful source for those family historians who have been unable to trace the marriages of non-Anglican ancestors.

Also included in the deposit are volumes of notifications of births to the Hackney Metropolitan Borough Public Health Department. These will also be listed in due course.

Local History Library

One of our users, Professor James Stevens Curl of The Queen's University of Belfast has donated a copy of his latest book, *The Victorian Celebration of Death* (Sutton Publishing, 2000). Professor Curl sets the creation of Abney Park Cemetery, among oth-

ers, in the context of the national development of the garden cemetery, and also discusses the elaboration of funerals in the nineteenth century.

A kind, but anonymous, donor has also given us a copy of McCoy's *British Massage Parlour Guide No. 6* (McCoy's Guides, 2000), a national publication which includes reviews of gentlemen's relaxation venues in Shoreditch and Lower Clapton. A useful source for the social historian in future years!

1831 census index

The latest in the East of London Family History Society's series of census indexes will shortly be published. This is the index to the 1831 census of Hackney parish. It was compiled by Friend and former employee of Hackney Archives, Jean Chaudhuri, with a Forward by Martin Taylor.

Its format is a booklet containing four microfiches. The cover is a reproduction of George Hawkins' 1830 water-colour of Hackney Grove, scanned by Michael Kirkland. The index costs £5.00 including postage, £6.00 overseas by surface mail. Cheques should be made payable to East of London FHS and sent to: Richard Chapman, 37 Ravel Gardens, Aveley, Essex, RM13 4NS.

Charles Booth's Poverty Survey Online

Documents and maps from Booth's famous survey can now be found on the internet at: www.lse.ac.uk/booth

Office News

There has been some change in personnel. Gaëlle Nevins, who spent seven months with us scanning images onto HA2000, returned to Belgium on 27 March. The Friends presented her with an honorarium of £80, and we would like to record our gratitude to Gaëlle for her hard work, enthusiasm and good humour throughout this period. It is a quieter, duller place without her!

Stepping into the role of administrative assistant, till at least the end of July, is Hayley Leybourne, on secondment from the Directorate core team. As well as undertaking many administrative functions, Hayley is proving invaluable in the search room.

The budget for the Department for 2001/02 has now been set. It has not been cut, and includes a small inflationary increase. The continuation of enhanced pay for Saturday working is still under review, but we hope that, given the number of people who use the service, the Council will retain the payments as being "productivity related."

The Heritage Lottery Fund has approved the London and the Wider World bid in the Access 2 Archives programme. This will finance the conversion into digital format of a number of archive catalogues for publication on the world wide web.

A number of Hackney catalogues form part of this bid, including Bryant & May, Berger's paint and Casella. Martin has been trained in marking up the lists for inputting and work will begin on this shortly.

New Projects

WW2 - Bomb Damage in Hackney

We have recently joined forces with the Hackney Building Exploratory, a local educational resource of interactive exhibitions and models that explore and promote the built environment, to digitise the bomb damage photographs for one of their new projects.

Some of the photographs were featured in the books Hackney at War and A Hackney Century, but the main part of the collection is accessible to the public only in photocopy form. It has long been our intention to digitise the photographs and include on Hackney on Disk, but with the total collection being 600, we have been waiting for the right time and resources.

The joint project is an ideal solution and of great benefit to both sides; the Building Exploratory will provide the project worker, Lizzie Buckmaster, to do the scanning and will get copies of the digital files for their GIS mapping project which will show how the Blitz radically changed the built environment. Michael Kirkland will coordinate the project at HAD.

Agapenomite Church

The Sutton House Society has organised a visit with the Friends of Hackney Archives to the Agapenomite Church, or Church of the Good Shepherd as it is now called. The visit is on 24th June at 2.30pm and includes a talk on the unusual history and architecture of the church and an organ recital. The cost is £6.00 and any proceeds will be split between the Society, Friends, the church and organ fund. To reserve a place, please contact Mike Gray on 020 8525 9672

F E A T U R E S

The Home Guard in 1940-41 'Anxious Days'

by Ken Neale

In his Foreword to Peter Finch's excellent record (1) of the Essex Home Guard, the then Lord Lieutenant of Essex, Colonel Sir Francis Whitmore, referred to the 'anxious days of 1940'. That was when, with what was until then the most powerful army in history the German Wehrmacht, poised on the European mainland opposite the Essex coast and Britain facing sustained air attack by the Luftwaffe, the Home Guard was formed.

The Secretary of State for War, Anthony Eden, in a B.B.C. broadcast called for men between the ages of 17 and 65 to enlist in a new force, the Local Defence Volunteers, to prepare to defend the country. There was an immediate and massive response not least in Essex and London.

I was one of the volunteers and reported for duty with the Hackney L.D.V. Until then there had been a well-founded reliance on the Royal Navy's ability to defend the island from sea-borne attack: as one famous Admiral had once said regarding the possibility of an invasion 'I do not know how they will come; I only say they will not come by sea.'

But the Blitzkrieg in Western Europe had shewn us that the terms of modern warfare had changed. Although we had an efficient and gallant air force the formidable German parachute and air-borne forces posed an unprecedented threat.

We lost most of our army at Dunkirk despite a stubborn rear-guard action

against overwhelming odds. A rapidly mobilised, even if ill-prepared, defence force to support what was left was essential. So the L.D.V. - later to be called the Home Guard - was hastily organised. Thus was the paradox of its dual image of 'loyal and devoted patriots' and 'Dad's Army' created. Both of these simplistic perceptions were valid and rooted in reality.

Up until that stage of the war my modest contribution had been in civil defence (2). In the Home Guard those roles were to continue alongside the preparations for armed defence. Because of the developing organisation and deployment of the emergency defence force, I was at first attached to the Home Guard in 'J' Zone which included Hackney and was affiliated to the Essex Regiment under our Zone Commander Colonel Stuart Mallinson of Woodford.

Later we were re-mustered as the 8th City of London (Hackney) Battalion (Royal Fusiliers). Our Headquarters was at the Drill Hall in Hillman Street just behind the Hackney Town Hall, though we met at unit level for training and operational purposes at the United Services Club in Powerscroft Road, Hackney.

At first, in common with 'Dad's Army' in general we had virtually no weapons, uniforms or equipment and things only improved very slowly. We were initially issued with arm-bands to wear with civilian clothing. Later we had battle-dress, a rifle and a few rounds of '303' ammunition which we kept at home. Regimental insignia and badges of rank followed. Although we had instruction in using automatic weapons we had none at that time apart from the demonstration issue.

For transport we relied on borrowed vehicles (though petrol was a problem), motor-cycles and pedal cycles. Most of our N.C.O.s were 1914-18 war veterans but our battalion Commander, Stephen McAdden, was a local business man and Hackney Councillor. He was able, industrious and a likeable personality. (Later in the war, when I was in the Royal Navy, he came to our wedding and I was still in touch with him after the war ended).

We worked hard and with commitment. On most nights we were out on civil defence duties during the aerial bombardment of London. It was an intensive period. Ordinary work in the Civil Service carried on by day, though even that was interrupted by air raids. On the streets at night there was very little sleep. The dreary darkness of the 'black-out' would be illuminated soon after the warning sirens sounded, by burning buildings and the noise of exploding bombs, anti-aircraft fire, the rescue operations, ambulances and fire engines.

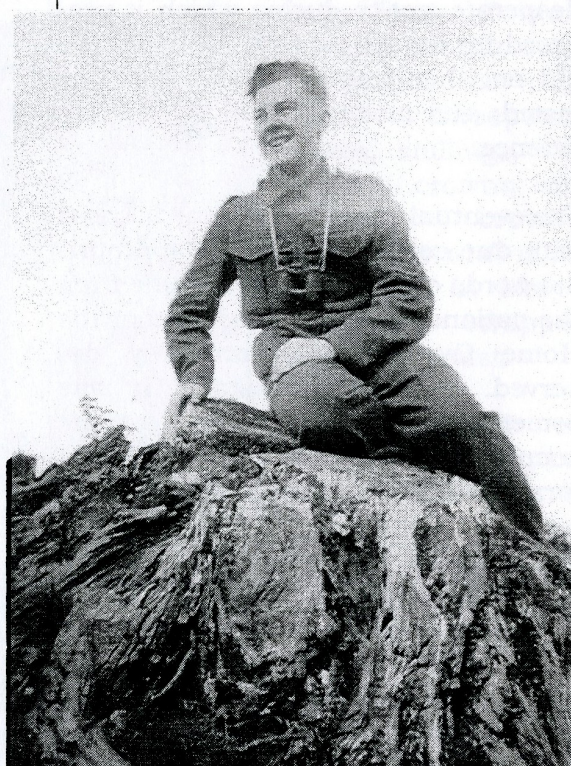
One particularly dramatic incident was when Berger's paint factory in Well Street, Homerton was bombed and consumed in a violent conflagration. I can remember it was like daylight that night in Well Street and there was considerable chaos.

More distressing was an incident near to our duty post at London Fields station when some houses in Mentmore Terrace were destroyed by a high-explosive bomb on 9 September 1940 and among the dead was a little girl. There were many worse incidents in Hachey that we were involved in but that was particularly sad.

Although we carried out a fair amount of training for our defence roles the Blitz dominated our priorities. I began as a 'volunteer' but was soon promoted to Sergeant to take charge of the Guides Section (3). Its task was to

conduct reconnaissance operations from the Outer London Defence line (4) and maintain communications between the posts along that line (there were no radios).

My Section's pill-box was on the corner of Pudding Lane and the Abridge Road by Chigwell. In the event of an invasion we were to proceed to that post; meantime it was a week-end duty. We slept on the concrete floor inside the pill-box and, thanks to the scouting experience of some of us, conjured up reasonable hot meals.



Ken Neale on Home Guard duty at Chigwell 1941

The water for tea and cooking we obtained from a house on the opposite side of the main road; it is still there, though the pill-box was demolished some years ago. We did once fire, without effect, at a low-flying German bomber (5) but that was the only occasion when we attacked a live target.

When an Intelligence Section was formed I was selected to take charge of

that and promoted to Intelligence Officer. For me that was a change of function but one that I found interesting and satisfying; it came to an end when I went into the Royal Navy.

As the war progressed and the danger of an invasion diminished, the Home Guard was gradually equipped with weapons and auxiliary resources to a level that would have enabled it to offer worthwhile resistance alongside the main land forces.

The inspirational days, however, were the early phases of its existence - the desperate weeks during which it prepared for the heroic task for which we did not then know it would never be tested; and made itself useful in civil defence.

The eventual 'stand down' was marked with due ceremony and the appropriate words of praise and gratitude from the national and local leaders that the Home Guard had thoroughly deserved. But, at that stage, it was something of an anti-climax for the compelling urgency of the threat it was formed to confront was gone.

The war was being won far from our shores - it might not have been possible if Britain had not stood firm in the 'anxious days of 1940'. I was abroad with the Royal Navy then; but in the end along with my other war medals I received the Defence Medal which is a valued reminder of the Home Guard.

Notes

- (1) Warmen Courageous: Peter Finch (1951)
- (2) v. 'A Hackney Notebook' (1) pp.3/4
- (3) Letter, S.McAdden 4.10.1941
- (4) Maps a & b Essex Defence lines
- (5) v. 'A Hackney Notebook' (1) p.4

378 Kingsland Road

Following the article on a section of Kingsland Road in Hackney History Vol.6, at the end of last year we heard from Mrs Gill Bassett, who has an ancestral home among the buildings mentioned. Her father and grandfather told her much about their life and times in Hackney and she also sent us some copy-prints. The story of the Moss's shop starts below and continues in the next Terrier.

Edwin Moss (born 1866 in Bethnal Green), bought 378 Kingsland Road in 1890. He was a bootmaker by trade, married Mary Ann Jerring (born 1864 in Mintern Street Hoxton in 1888), she the daughter of tool makers Herring and Sons who had a factory at 71a Newington Green Road, Islington.

As grandmother was female she had no involvement with her father's business, her brother Edwin John inheriting the firm, so Mary's father Thomas gave a settlement to her in 1890. With this money I was told Edwin Moss acquired 378 Kingsland Road, one side a hairdressers and barbers the other a tobacconist.



Mary Ann Moss, aged 60, in the upstairs 'best room', 378 Kingsland Road, Dalston, 1926.

Although Edwin had never cut hair he soon learnt by employing an assistant Mr Errington, who taught him the trade. Edwin had the premises at 378

from 1890 until his retirement in 1935. He and his wife and two daughters, Lily and Vera, then moved to Granham Gardens Edmonton.

Edwin and Mary Moss moved to 378 Kingsland Road with their one year old son Edwin in 1890. During their 45 years at 378, twelve children were born. Mary Ann had a miscarriage in 1893, a still born in 1897. Between Arthur born 1899 and my father born 1903 she took penny royal and gin and managed to abort a baby. Mary's last child Vera was born in 1907. All nine children survived to adulthood

well padded bosom; a very dangerous occupation.

Someone would call out 'Shop' and Mary Ann would shuffle out to sell the smoking goods. They sold pipes of all descriptions, cigars, cigarettes and for the poor light and dark returns, children (including Moss's sons) collected dog-ends off the street, they stripped the cigarettes and put the light tobacco in one jar and dark in the other. The dog-ends under trees were not used as they were fouled by bird droppings. Neither were wet cigarettes used. The shop's money was kept in a large block of wood scooped out into compartments for coppers, threepenny pieces, shillings, sixpences, crowns and half crowns. Sovereigns and notes were kept in Mary's bag she strapped round her waist.

Grandma had no problem shopping because the market in the waste was just outside with stalls to buy fish and vegetables. At number 382 was a butcher and next door the other

side at 376 was a baker, so no problems feeding her large family. They were open all the year round including Christmas Day. I have inherited the glass fronted mahogany barber's cabinet from Edwin's hair-dressers'.

Across the road all the Moss children attended Enfield Road School. It opened in 1894, later in 1915, the school moved up to Tottenham Road School off Balls Pond Road because the old premises were commandeered to house the injured soldiers. An extension in fact to the Metropolitan Hospital, as Enfield Road School



378 Kingsland Road, 1908. Mrs Bassett's Grandfather's shop with her father in the doorway in his sailor suit.

and seven of them into old age.

While Edwin worked haircutting and shaving, Mary Ann served in the tobacconist shop. She was either in the parlour or the shop. The kitchen range was always on the go with a bubbling stew-pan on the top. The parlour had fitted cupboards, a table, chairs and a dresser. The family came and went at different times. The stew was dished up with dumplings and big chunks of bread cut by grandma clutching the loaf to her and cutting towards her

premises were next door. My father and brothers often played truant from school to go fishing and swimming in the River Lea two miles away. The school board man called into the shop informing grandfather of the truancy. Without hesitation Mr. Moss took his leather strop for sharpening his open razors and layed about his sons, but not too heavily. They soon went back to school! All grew up honest and hard working citizens.

There were 4 rooms over the shop, two on one floor and 2 more on the top. The first floor front was the best room. My grandmother is in that living room in the picture on page 6. Edwin and Mary's bedroom was behind. On the top floor the four girls slept in the front room, the five boys in the back. Edwin the eldest in one bed, Henry, Albert, Arthur and my father Fred in a double - two at the top and two at the bottom. The toilet facilities were out the back. Luckily there were public toilets in the waste which were well used by the Moss clan.

To be continued in the next issue of the Terrier

Friends' Interests

East London Papers was a scholarly journal of 'History, Social Studies and the Arts' published twice yearly by University House, London, E2. The first edition was produced in April 1958 and the last one I have is volume 12, number 2, winter 1969-70. My series is lacking volume 2, number 1, 1959. I have duplicates of volume 6, numbers 1 and 2 (1963). I am hoping a reader might have a spare of the volume I am seeking. I would happily

exchange the two duplicate volumes from 1963. **Melvyn H Brooks, email: brooks@netvision.net.il**

Following demolition of the Wood Green Library in 1973, the Clock was to be temporarily looked after by the Hackney Technical College. According to the local press at the time it was intended to then bring 'the areas best known local landmark' back to a new site in Wood Green, hopefully a library by 1976. If any Friends know what happened to the clock or have any ideas on where to look next, please contact **Roy Hidson, 117 St Thomas' Road, Finsbury Park, London, N4 2QJ**

Photographs of Love Lane and Nightingale and Oakfield Roads, before the building of the Nightingale Estate in the 1960's, are sought by: **Sean & Raina Bolan, Drive Cottage, Campden House Estate, Chipping Camden, Gloucestershire, GL55 6UP raina@rbolan.freeserve.co.uk**

Any information on George Wright (b1834) & Son (William Robert, b1854), timber/veneer merchants c1870-1900 in Hoxton, Shoreditch area. Also Williams' wife, Lilian Sarah Elizabeth Payne (b1856 St Luke's, m 1874 at St Peter's, DeBeauvoir) and her father Joseph Payne, book-binder, sought by **Mrs Cathryn A W Kiff, 19 Southborough Way, Porton, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP4 0NN**

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. The Terrier is a quarterly newsletter distributed free to members of the Friends of Hackney Archives. Membership of the Friends is open to all. The subscription is £10 for each calendar year, (plus £2 for each additional member at the same address) or £20 (in sterling) for overseas members. Membership also includes a free copy of the annual journal, Hackney History.

 **Hackney**