

# The Hackney Terrier

*The Friends of Hackney Archives Newsletter*

# 110



Autumn 2021

## Dear Friends,

We're excited to be presenting a course of talks on Zoom encapsulating the history of Hackney over some nine weeks. We hope that members will be able to attend the talks and find much of interest.

We're grateful to Lucy Madison and Sean Gubbins for putting this course together. Whilst these talks are a one-off they may be repeated in future.

We hope that Zoom delivery will allow members outside London to attend and believe that they may have an appeal to a wider audience. However we do look forward to meeting in person again soon.

## Robert Whytehead

Chair, FoHA

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## HACKNEY HISTORY COURSE

Hackney History is offering a course on the history of Hackney, including Stoke Newington and Shoreditch, from pre-historic days to the present. The course will consist of nine weekly zoom sessions on Wednesday evenings from 7-8pm:

1. October 13th, 7pm: Hackney from Stone Axe to Ermine Street
2. October 20th, 7pm: Rural Villages – Mediaeval Hackney
3. October 27th, 7pm: A Home for Courtiers – Tudor Hackney
4. November 3rd, 7pm: Hackney gets Radical – Hackney in the 1600s
5. November 10th, 7pm: Institutions, Plants and Dissenters – Hackney in the 1700s
6. November 17th, 7pm: Suburban beginnings – Hackney 1800-1850
7. November 24th, 7pm: Industry and Poverty – Hackney 1850-1900
8. December 1st, 7pm: Surviving Two World Wars – Hackney 1900-1965
9. December 8th, 7pm: Hackney 1965+

The course will be given by six members of Hackney History, all with a fascination for and expertise in the history of Hackney. Each session will consist of a 50-minute presentation followed by time for questions and answers.

The course sessions cannot be block-booked: each of these nine sessions can be booked separately via Eventbrite one week in advance at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/hackney-history-course-34583963913>

Alternatively go to the Eventbrite website (<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/>) and search for 'Hackney History'. The first session on 13 October will not be available to book until 6th October.

These sessions are **FREE** for members – who are being notified first about how to book – and non-members alike. The number of registrations is limited and it is anticipated that all places will be booked up quickly. If you register for a session **PLEASE DO ATTEND OR, IF YOU CAN NO LONGER MAKE THE DATE, PLEASE RELEASE YOUR PLACE SO SOMEONE ELSE CAN ATTEND.** You can cancel free tickets to an event before the event starts. Go to "Tickets," select your order and choose "Cancel Order".

## The 'Poor Palatines': 18th Century Refugees

Behind the name Palatine Road, running west from Stoke Newington Road, lies an unusual episode from the 18th century which has left lasting marks and also has uncomfortable parallels with the present day.

The Palatinate is a region of south-west Germany which suffered badly from French invasions around 1700. Persecution and poor harvests prompted thousands of people to look for opportunities abroad. A trickle became a flood in 1709 when the British Government held out the prospect of free land in the then American colonies. The migrants quickly became known as the 'Poor Palatines': there were some 12,500 of them at a time when the population of London was perhaps 600,000.

Initially, they met with a warm welcome. Queen Anne herself provided financial support for the first hundred and a government commission to help included the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Chancellor. Accommodation was organised in tents and huts in south London.

As we sometimes see today, the sudden arrival of quite a large number of people from abroad caused tension. Local people worried about jobs and disease and the Palatines also found themselves caught up in wider political controversies. The Whig party, in government at the time, saw immigration as a chance to increase the workforce. By contrast, the opposition Tory party pointed to the burden which migrants were putting on the country and also worried about the impact on the Church of England.

One prominent supporter of the Palatines was local resident Daniel Defoe who wrote a pamphlet in 1709 entitled *A Brief History of the Poor Palatine Refugees*. He refers to successful migrations and to Christian duty and says of the doubters that:

... some muck-worms are so weak and silly as not to understand the great and valuable blessings of being the general asylum or place of refuge for distressed industrious Protestants.

The pressures in London meant that the government tried without success to disperse the Palatines more widely around the country. Most did not stay long in Britain in the end, getting their wish to go to America.

Those who remained in England included a small number in Stoke Newington, where their presence has left a lasting legacy.

In 1709 the parish decided to welcome, in the words of the vestry meeting, 'four families to the number not exceeding 20 persons, at a rate of £5 a head – provided other parishes do the same' and later 'to build four homes in the parish field.' In the event, nine houses were built by the mid 18th century on what came to be known as the Palatine Estate. Residents over the years included John Wesley and Anna Sewell, the author of *Black Beauty*. Sadly nothing is known of what



St. Mary's Old Church, Stoke Newington



happened to the four Palatine families who lived here. Maybe their descendants are still in the locality – we don't know. If any reader has any information please contact the *Friends*. (Our email is on page 8.)

The Palatine experience did leave its mark not just in the road name, and the pub on the corner, once called The Palatine, but on the church's finances.

To this day, funds at St Mary's Stoke Newington include a sum known as the Palatine fund, helping with the upkeep of the parish church.

The history of the Poor Palatines has some uncomfortable parallels with experience today. Desperate people will risk everything to escape poverty, war and persecution. The Palatines found shelter from St Mary's: recently St. Mary's has been part of a community sponsorship group supporting the resettlement of a Syrian family who arrived in 2019. Now – as then – such support can run into opposition: by 1711, the Tories were in charge and passed a motion in Parliament describing the invitation to the poor Palatines as 'a scandalous misapplication of the public money ... of dangerous consequence to the constitution in church and state.'

The survival of the Palatine name shows clearly which side 18th century Stoke Newington took.

**Andrew Hudson**

## Isabella Massie: Anti-Slavery Campaigner

*The London Morning Post* of April 16 1857 carried a death notice for Isabella Massie. The notice read ‘On the 14th inst. At Upper Clapton, aged 63, Isabella Grant, the wife of the Rev J.W. Massie DD LLD’.

The use of her own name follows Scottish custom but it is also a fitting mark of the woman who independently campaigned against slavery. It was from her home in Upper Clapton that Isabella joined the campaign of public education that help bring the horrors of slavery in the United States to a British audience. Her letters from Clapton to prominent abolitionists in Britain and the States, digitised by Boston Public Library and available on the Digital Commonwealth website<sup>1</sup>, give us a valuable personal commentary on the anti-slavery movement in both countries coinciding with the first London edition of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in May 1852. That publication had a profound impact in turning public attitudes against the evil of slavery and created fertile ground for Isabella’s campaigning.

She kept open house for visiting American abolitionists such as Samuel Ringgold Ward who had escaped enslavement and had become a Congregationalist minister in Canada. His book *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro*, (London, 1855) strongly influenced public opinion in Britain in favour of the abolitionist cause. In the preface to his book Ward gives equal credit to James and to Isabella and observes that “*her zeal and constancy in behalf of the American Slave are well known on both sides of the Atlantic. Nor is there, I believe, a more earnest friend of my kindred race than is her husband.*”

Isabella’s early adult life, however, was lived far from the comforts of Upper Clapton. The engraving of her held in the National Portrait Gallery – seemingly dainty and rather fragile – belies the inner strength required to withstand the rigours of a life spent in India with her missionary husband. I have been unable to discover how Isabella ended up in India but in January 1825, at the age of 31, she married 26

1. [https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search?utf8=%E2%9C%93&search\\_field=all\\_fields&q=isabella+massie](https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search?utf8=%E2%9C%93&search_field=all_fields&q=isabella+massie)



After Thomas Charles Wageman stipple engraving, before 1869 ©.NPG D42507

year-old Massie at the Arcot Mission in Southern India, a notice of the marriage appearing in *The Asiatic Journal* giving her place of birth as Aviemore.

Life in India took a toll on the lives of missionaries’ wives. If they survived the gruelling four-month journey by sea from England to India, they often succumbed to a range of tropical diseases or died in childbirth. This

was the fate of Massie’s previous wife Mary who had died less than four months after their arrival in Madras in 1823. Isabella accompanied her husband on an arduous 900-mile journey overland across India from Madras through Bangalore, Mysore to Bombay – described in James’s book *Continental India* which details the oppressive heat, monsoon rains, tropical diseases and occasional encounters with venomous snakes, tigers, wild boar and marauding elephants.

The couple left India for England in 1827 eventually moving to London where James became Secretary of the Home Missionary Society. Once on British soil, beyond her campaigning against slavery Isabella took up other causes such as the provision of co-educational opportunities for boys and girls and the need for political reform. Her view was that the British people had been “ruled by an aristocracy who make laws to suit themselves”. Her husband had been called ‘a tornado let loose’. His wife proved no less a force.

**Julia Lafferty**

### Short Notices

#### Conference

Of local interest is a Youtube talk from the 2021 Archaeology Conference:

*The Priory of the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist* (Holywell Priory):

*An Augustinian Nunnery from Foundation to Dissolution: An Archaeological Perspective.*

Matt Edmonds from Pre-Construct Archaeology speaks about several years worth of excavations at Holywell Priory.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P04LDZwFzK4>

#### Youtube links

The *London & Middlesex Archaeological Society*, LAMAS, now has its own YouTube Channel with a selection of recent talks on history and archaeology:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC165iliNt8UZgfQzDutxK\\_Q/videos](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC165iliNt8UZgfQzDutxK_Q/videos)



## John Passmore Edwards in Hackney: Part 2



Two rungs on Edwards's 'ladder' – reading and education, books and a lamp – as depicted above the entrance to Hoxton Library. The figures are by Frank Lynn Jenkins.

In *Terrier* 109 we saw something of the spirit that drove Passmore Edwards's philanthropic activities. He was responsible in whole or in part for the funding of some 70 major buildings – libraries (17 in London), hospitals, schools, a hall of residence at the London School of Economics, convalescent homes and Whitechapel Art Gallery together with its adjacent library (now part of the Gallery). In London, he also provided eleven drinking fountains.<sup>1</sup> His philanthropy was spread throughout London and the Home Counties as well as in his native Cornwall.

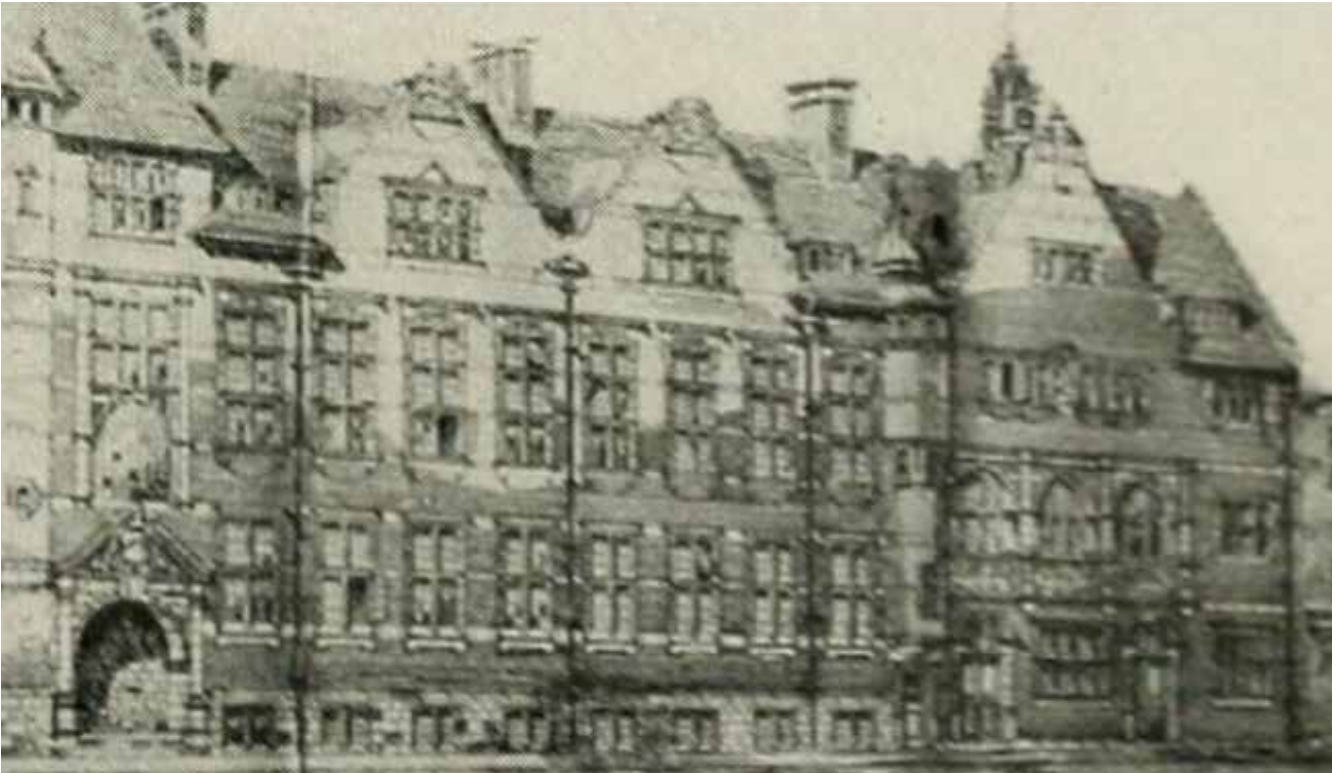
He concentrated his philanthropy generally in areas of greatest economic and social need. His phrase 'funding the ladder' sets out his ambition that through reading and education an individual's full potential could be realised.

In Hackney he contributed funds to three libraries. The most splendid of these architecturally is the Hoxton-Shoreditch Library on the corner of Pitfield Street and Bowling Green Walk built in 1897-9. Now occupied by

the Court Theatre Training Company, its Grade II listing describes its 'modified Renaissance style' in red brick with terracotta dressings to which Pevsner adds its being 'in a style derived from Shaw's New Scotland Yard', in turn derived from Dutch and Flemish precedent. Its architect Henry Hare was a Yorkshireman who relocated his practice to the capital in 1891 and architectural sculptor Frank Lynn Jenkins (1870-1927) was a regular collaborator in the decoration of his buildings. Hare designed a number of libraries, though more often in a neo-baroque classical style.<sup>2</sup> Like the 'People's Palaces' elsewhere, it offered the finest of buildings in which to achieve, and to bring, as Edwards put it, 'the stored wisdom of ages and nations within easy reach of the poorest citizens.' Of the three libraries, this was in the most deprived Hackney area as designated on Booth's Map of London Poverty – so to the library were added a Swimming Bath and Wash-house comprising slipper baths and laundry facilities. Both were demolished by National Car Parks in 1962 following war damage thereby reducing the building to a third of its original area.

1. For his life and works see the comprehensive and generously illustrated: Dean Evans, *Funding the Ladder: The Passmore Edwards Legacy*, Francis Boutle Publishers, 2011; or consult Edwards's autobiography *A Few Footprints*, 1906 – available in various reprints.

2. See A. Stuart Gray, *Edwardian Architecture – a Biographical Dictionary*, London 1985 pp.204-8



*The original façade of the Library, Baths and Wash-house. Only the three left-hand bays remain.*

On the rear and side walls of the Library building, however, can be found a patch of elaborate green foliate tiling together with a long run of white glazed tiles both likely to have been part of the now-demolished buildings. The exterior wall on Bowling Green Walk running down to the former Shoreditch Electricity Generating Station has brown glazed tiles that match those surviving on the Library. The Generating Station is now the National Centre for Circus Arts but originally provided the hot water for the baths by refuse incineration as a by-product of the steam turbines used to generate electricity. The total cost was £20,000 of which Edwards contributed £4,500. If you were to walk along Bowling Green Walk into Hoxton Square, you would find a drinking fountain. In his autobiography *A Few Footprints* Edwards lists eleven London drinking fountains seeking: ‘to place drinking water within reach of many of the poorest’. Its bronze plaque, however, declares more blandly: ‘Erected at the cost of J. Passmore Edwards, Esq. ... thereby [to] add to the enjoyment of visitors to this garden.’

The Haggerston Library at 234 Kingsland Road was a branch of Shoreditch (as is clearly stated on its frieze). Constructed in Portland stone c.1880 as a house – ‘a fine tall palazzo’ according to Pevsner. By 1892 it had become the offices of the Gas Meter Company. 1893 saw its conversion for use as a library. Architecturally, it rises above its surroundings. Booth’s map shows the area to be more socially-mixed than that of Hoxton, but the presence of a gasworks on the other side of the North London Railway line at the back of the property may explain why the house was available for conversion so soon after having been built. The overseers of St. Leonard’s Parish asked the ratepayers to fund the library. They voted three to two for a three-

farthing addition to the rates to convert the vacant offices of the Independent Gas Company. and its garden along with the neighbouring house. Passmore Edwards gave £5,000 to cover both the purchase and conversion as well as 1,000 books. Opened in 1893, it was an immediate success. 51,000 books were borrowed in the first year. A temporary readers’ shelter was erected in the garden before the original three-bay building was extended to the five bays we see today at a cost of £2,000 paid for by Edwards who is commemorated grandly in the added broken pediment over the entrance enclosing a tablet announcing ‘Passmore Edwards Public Library’. The Library, begun as a house, has reverted to its original use, though now converted into flats as the street frontage of a newbuild residential block.

The third library with which Edwards is associated is Stoke Newington at 186 Stoke Newington Church Street, in an area that Booth’s map shows to be considerably more affluent than either Shoreditch or Haggerston. The finance here was raised by the Vestry. £4,000 was borrowed – £1,000 for the site to be repaid over 50 years. In this case, Edwards made no monetary contribution to the buildings, donating instead 1,000 books which, according to the report of the Library Committee in 1900, ‘were a very helpful addition to the books we then had, numbering five thousand in all.’ Edwards was invited to open the new building, designed by Bridgman and Goss, which he duly did on July 23rd 1892. The same report announces that in the eight years since the opening, 748,297 volumes had been issued.

The last two Passmore connexions with Hackney are two further drinking fountains: the first is in the garden of

*Continued overleaf..*

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*Continued from overleaf..*

Albion Square and is still in *situ*. On the basins you can see the lead which would have secured the chained cups. The other is something of a mystery. Passmore's autobiography states that he commissioned one at 'Stalbridge Common, Hackney' but there is no such place in the Borough. A few hundred yards to the west of Albion Square, however, marked on the 25 inch OS map from 1913-6, is Stonebridge Common on the south eastern corner of which is marked a fountain. Might a slip of the mind or of the pen have transmuted Stonebridge into Stalbridge? Whatever the case may be, there is no trace of a fountain now. Similarly, a Passmore Edwards fountain on Hackney Road is no more.

There are in Hackney traces both grand and small of the philanthropy of John Passmore Edwards. He twice refused a knighthood but gained a more substantial and lasting recognition through his works. In the words engraved on the trowel used to lay the foundation stone of the Nunhead Free Library: 'Good deeds live on when doers are no more.'

**Iain Bruce & Ann Hunte**



*Haggerston Branch in its three-bay form*

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## Eric Walrond: an Afro-Caribbean Writer



**ERIC D. WALROND  
AUTHOR OF  
TROPIC DEATH  
1898-1966**

If you are strolling around Abney Park Cemetery, following the unspoken protocols of the *flaneur* or the *flaneuse*, and if fortune smiles, you might just alight on the stone commemorating Eric Walrond. The memorial is not exactly where Walrond was buried which (as it happened) was in an unmarked common grave. But it's close by and the sentiment is properly generous. His has a fetching memorial, produced by the Abney Park Stone Carvers' Group. The information it imparts, though, is sparing.

### **Wikimedia**

You might never have heard of, and very probably never read, *Tropic Death*. In all likelihood, come to that, the name of the author may not mean much either. When in 2016 the memorial stone was erected, friends of the Cemetery organized a warm and convivial gathering, comprising formal talks in Abney Hall followed by readings by the graveside. Diane Abbott, on the point of becoming Shadow Home Secretary, accepted the invitation to speak. It turned out that she didn't know much more than anyone else, although her heart was in the right place. I suspect the only person present who really knew anything at all was a young scholar from Brooklyn, James Davis, who'd just published a magnificent biography.

Walrond was a mystery when his memorial was unveiled. He was a mystery when he died. He was walking down Oxford Street when he suffered a heart attack. No-one knows for sure how he came to be buried in Abney Park. And as it turns out, for much of his life he was, too, a mystery.

He was born into a respectable, black middle-class family of Plymouth Brethren in British Guiana in 1898, moving on with his family to Barbados and Panama. As a young man he was drawn to journalism, which took him to Brooklyn and Harlem. He gravitated to the teachings of Marcus Garvey (Amy Ashwood, Marcus's wife, was a neighbour in Panama), and he became an electrifying writer for the Garveyite press, although his allegiances to fiction proved stronger than his affiliation to political agitation. He was sceptical of the Garveyite dedication to the ethics of 'uplift', preferring more profane ways of being; nor was he persuaded by Garvey's call for 'Back to Africa'. In 1926 he published his super-slim *Tropic Death*, which at the time was (and still is) rightly regarded as sensational, testifying to the power of a vernacular black modernism.

*Tropic Death* was lauded, earning him a brief but substantial income from philanthropic foundations. But that proved the height of his powers and celebrity. He moved to Paris, and then London, active on many fronts. But his capacity to negotiate social life slipped away. He was arrested. He moved from job to job. *He might* have joined the RAF during the war. He certainly had long spells in mental hospitals. His political and aesthetic ambitions remained high but life turned against him. This maestro of the black avant-garde, who'd rubbed shoulders with the greatest, ended up alone and forgotten in Hornsey.

He was a Caribbean man of stupendous promise. In life as in death he remains a mystery, a late casualty of the Black Atlantic. We should welcome his memorial in Abney Park with gratitude.

**Bill Schwarz**



## Achives Update

### An Viet



*Etienne and a representative from the steering panel wearing full PPE to look through the An Viet collection*

The project to rescue and secure the future of the An Viet Foundation archives is fully underway at Hackney Archives. We welcomed Project Officer Diana Le to the team. Archives Manager Etienne Joseph and one of the project’s steering panel members had a great time last week donning some serious PPE to work through some of the most damaged material in the collection.

Thankfully, the vast majority of the collection doesn’t require masks and goggles for access, and the practical side of the project – working together with Diana, specialist conservators, Hackney Chinese Community Services, representatives of Hackney’s Vietnamese communities and a number of interested organisations to preserve and assess the material – has been exciting. The next important stage is finding the collection a suitable permanent home.

We’ll be reporting regularly on progress in *The Terrier* and on Hackney Archives’ social media channels. Stay tuned for more developments.

## Announcing Archives Basics!

Join the Archives team for hints and tips about getting the most out of our collections in our new *Archives Basics* series of events. Designed as a beginner’s guide to Hackney Archives, they are a free, relaxed and friendly online introduction to using the collections. Join us for a live tour around the searchroom and explore what’s in our collections in our *Strongroom to Searchroom* event or learn more about getting the most out of your search on the catalogue with *Using Our Catalogue*. Don’t forget to bring your questions along!

We are also launching our online *Archives Basics 1-1 sessions* – an opportunity to chat to one of the Archives team one-to-one for 20 minutes. They are a great way to get bespoke tips for your research needs. With three sessions per month, book early to avoid disappointment.

To book onto any of the *Archives Basics* events or to explore our other events and digital offers please visit our Eventbrite page: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/hackney-archives-30909670649>.

## Rio Exhibition Coming Soon!



*Locals help push an ice cream van out of the mud at the Hackney Downs Show, 1987*

If you’ve missed the much talked-about Tape/Slide exhibition at Hackney Museum, fear not – coming soon to the Archives are some of the display panels, with the others being hosted at the Rio Cinema itself. The exhibition featured a selection of images taken by unemployed young people in the 1980s who were taught photography and sound-recording skills. The images capture an alternative perspective of life in Hackney that contrasts with the bleak and dismal representation featured in the mainstream media of the time. They also pick up on themes, events and organisations already in our collections.

We are also working hard with Andrew Woodyatt from the Rio cinema and Alan Denny – both authors of the wonderful *The Rio Tape/Slide Archive Radical Community Photography in Hackney in the 80s* – to bring all 12,000 images to the Archives. Alan has painstakingly digitised all the images, adding contextual information about the people and places featured. Keep an eye on our social media and newsletter for future updates.

## Illuminated by the Sun: Pioneers of deaf education

*This case study is from Isobel Watson's researches in the Sun Insurance archive holdings in the London Metropolitan Archives.*

This case study is from Isobel Watson's researches in the Sun Insurance archive holdings in the London Metropolitan Archives.

Before Thomas Braidwood of Edinburgh took up the cause, it had not been generally understood that the deaf, who were often treated as unable to speak, could learn, let alone read. In 1783 Thomas and John Braidwood (John was Thomas's son-in-law, and a relative) brought the school south, to Grove House, Hackney, a substantial detached villa in what is now Chatham Place. Here they took out insurance policies on their goods and chattels with the Sun Insurance Office. The insurances from 1786 relating to each of their first residences in that area (including in each case a modest sum for printed books) deal with the contents of the main establishment, in Thomas's name, and of John's smaller house at 'Pleasant Row' nearby; they were discovered more or less at the same time as a closely-researched account of Braidwood's life and legacy was published. Later, there were two Braidwood establishments in Hackney, one run

by Thomas and the other by his daughter Isabella, widow of John Braidwood.

The school specialised in the education of the deaf children of the wealthy (both boys and girls). Its success led indirectly to the establishment of a charitable school for the deaf children

of the poor, in Grange Road, Bermondsey, through which Braidwood's teaching methods, which emphasised the importance of understanding and communicating language, in part through a manual alphabet, became more widely known.

Sources and further reading: LMA CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/339/522069 and 552070; Raymond Lee, Braidwood & c (British Deaf History Society Publications, 2015).



*Sun Insurance Company wall plaque*

### Book Notice:

**Never Knowingly Undersold: A 19th century price deal...**

SIR,

BEING ordered by the NEW RIVER WATER COMPANY to wait on you to counteract mis-representations that are industriously circulated to their prejudice, I take the liberty of requesting, you will have the goodness, if any applications should be made to induce you to change your supply of Water, not to consent thereto until I have had the opportunity of seeing you; I am directed also to say to you, the NEW RIVER COMPANY are determined to make a sacrifice, and meet their opponents on any terms they may offer.

I am, SIR, Your obedient humble Servant,  
Collector

7th November, 1811

**Taken from: *London's Water Wars*, John Graham-Leigh, pp. 135, Francis Boutle Publishers, 2000.**

Graham-Leigh was Regulation and Policy Manager at Thames Water. He has mined the company's extensive records to bring the story of the fierce competition in the nineteenth century between water companies – including the New River Company – how customers were frequently left without water, how companies would dig up others' pipes, how reduced price deals would be offered and how some companies were brought to the brink of ruin.

*The Hackney Terrier* is published by the **Friends of Hackney Archives**,  
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