

The Hackney Terrier

The Friends of Hackney Archives Newsletter

115



Summer 2023

Ritual, Execution, Gold Coins, Gas – in Shoreditch

The latest volume of the *London and Middlesex Archaeological Society Transactions [LMAS]*¹ carries an article on a significant Roman gold and silver coin hoard found during excavations in Hackney. A subsequent LAMAS lecture² filled in more details about what is a multi-period site with other notable finds.

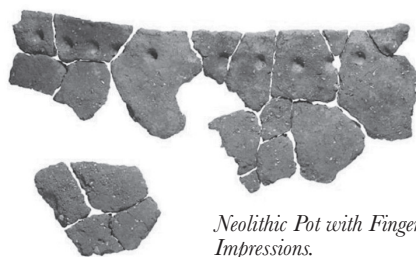
The site is bordered by Worship Street (and the City boundary) to the south, Curtain Road to the west and Norton Folgate (the Roman Ermine Street) to the east. It lies in an area of springs and streams that fed the Walbrook, one north-south tributary of which roughly divides the site in half. It had further been crossed by railway viaduct brick arches.

Neolithic ritual

Despite later redevelopment, some parts of the site have good archaeological survival. The earliest finds were, unexpectedly, a cluster of stakeholes and four pits containing 348 Neolithic pottery sherds from at least 28 vessels as well as 200 struck flints including flakes, scrapers and an axe fragment. Detailed analysis of the ceramics shows they were handmade, decorated with stabbed finger impressions, dragged decoration and with impressions from a deer hoof.

Newly-available lipid analysis of the liquids absorbed by the pottery shows that the vessels had undergone sustained use either for processing

1. 'An early 5th-century Roman coin hoard from London's northern cemetery: Principal Place, Hackney', Julian M C Bowsher, *Transactions LAMAS* 72, 15 - 48
2. 'Excavations at Principal Place, Hackney', Andy Daykin, MOLA, LAMAS Lecture 9th May 2023 (LAMAS post their lectures on their YouTube channel some months after they are delivered). A full excavation report is in preparation.



Neolithic Pot with Finger Impressions.

meat from sheep, cattle and pig, or for holding dairy products. These traces were carbon-dated to 3520-3360 and 3635-3380 BC.

The evidence shows that some 5,500 years ago peoples appear to have been camping by a stream and using livestock. This is the time in which the transition from a mobile nomadic society to settled farming communities was underway. At this time, the placing of artefacts in pits seems deliberate and could be interpreted as a ritual act, perhaps when leaving a campsite. Neolithic material and 'placed deposits' are rare from the City and Hackney but are found on better-known sites up and down the Thames Valley.

Roman burials including execution victims

The site lies some little way from the Roman city walls. Early ditches, roughly parallel or at right angles to Ermine Street, show the area laid out as fields. Roman burials were made outside town boundaries, particularly along the roadsides, and spread in extent over time. Large numbers have been excavated to the City's

north, including some 174 from the Spitalfields Market site.

At Principal Place the burials lay east of the Walbrook stream, west of Ermine Street, in two areas bounded by ditches. In total there were 44 inhumation burials and five cremations, mostly dated to c. 240-400 AD. Those to the north of the site were oriented north-south, parallel to a ditch. The larger number lay to the south with the majority aligned to an east-west ditch. Of note was one late 2nd-century cremation burial in an *amphora*; there was also a *bustum* burial – a fire pit in which the body was laid for cremation. Only two others are known from London. Most burials were of adults, but there were four juveniles. There were traces of coffins in some cases. Objects placed in the graves included a complete early flagon, a later Roman dish and a colour-coated beaker hunt cup showing a stag pursued by dogs.

Graphic evidence came from a cluster of three burials, all of which appear to have been executed by the sword, with distinctive blade injuries to the jaw or upper vertebrae. One other burial had had the head removed and placed between the legs. Such 'decapitation burials' are known but in this case does not seem to show signs of how the head was removed. The significance of such burials is debated.

continued overleaf..



Three Roman *solidi* (obverse and reverse) AD 364-375 of the Emperor Valentinian from London's Northern Cemetery: Principal Place, Hackney.

Ritual, Execution, Gold Coins, Gas – in Shoreditch *continued*

Late Roman Coin Hoard

A small pit had been dug amidst the graves, but possibly after the cemetery had gone out of use. It lay in whatever traces an early boundary ditch would have left, perhaps just a slight depression in the ground. The pit contained a cluster of coins, probably originally contained in an organic material bag that left no trace. It comprised 19 gold *solidi* dated 364-392 AD, and 114 silver *siliquae* dated 355-402 AD. The gold coins were in good condition but the *siliquae* were worn and had been clipped – considered characteristic of the first decade of the 5th century, suggesting a deposition date of *c.* 410 AD.

Such coin hoards are not uncommon in Britain, but this is only the second from London – the other being found at the Tower of London in 1777. The date of its deposition coincides with the likely time of the collapse of direct rule from Rome and gives rise to much speculation about the end of Roman Britain, and particularly of London. The value of the hoard is the equivalent of about 12 years of a Roman soldier's pay, and presumably placing it outside the walled city in a perhaps disused and overgrown cemetery area possibly screened from

the main road by hedges, means that there was an intention to recover it. The clipping of the silver coins is likely to have been to melt down the fragments to form fake coinage at a time when silver bullion supplies from Rome had ceased. The *LAMAS* article gives much detail on the coinage context. The hoard is highly indicative of the times of stress that must have ensued at the end of Roman rule, and of a time about which we have little reliable history. We can only speculate on the fate of the person who hid it.³

Post-mediaeval suburb

In the mediaeval period the site lay between the priories of St Mary Spital and Holywell and seems to have been open land with two water-management ditches, one lined with timber posts and the other canalising the Walbrook tributary, partially lined with wattle.

Building development commenced in the late 17th century, fronting Hog Lane (later Worship Street) on the south and Norton Folgate/Shoreditch High Street to the east. Building traces included 18th-century brick walls and floors and

3. A much more recent example of a hoard and the context in which it was buried is: 'Stoke Newington's double eagles: the story of the 'Hackney Hoard'' Ian Richardson, *Hackney History*, 17, 38 – 46.

incorporated re-used, hard-wearing Dutch paving bricks. These were associated with barrel- and brick-lined wells, a brick cesspit and drains.

The Gas-Light and Coke Company Works

Extensive remains of the Gas-light and Coke Company Works, founded by Parliamentary Charter of 1812 (and known as 'The Chartered')⁴, one of the earliest gas works, were found to survive. These included the chimney base, retort area, well-made brick tanks, and various flues. Cowan firebricks from Newcastle upon Tyne were used. This was described as probably the best excavated gas works in London; and the excavators were surprised at the lack of contamination there. A number of pioneering processes were inaugurated at the works, by Frederick Accum, a German chemist, and later Samuel Clegg who patented them. Eventually, in the 1860s, the property was sold to the railway company to construct their viaduct.

Robert Whytehead

4. For a history of the gas works see: 'Curtain Road: an early London gasworks', Paul Chadwick, *Hackney History*, 7, 11 – 15. Also: 'Shoreditch Local Government, the Infrastructure of 19th Century Shoreditch', Justin More, *Hackney History* 21, 25 – 33.

Hackney: The Official Guide (Fifth Edition) 1929

The *Official Guide* lists 119 categories of Hackney advertisers, from Auctioneers to Zinc and Copper Roofing Contractors. Amongst the 267 separate entries are: Boiler Covering Manufacturers (Ashby Warner, Lee Conservancy Road), Bone Brush Manufacturers (W R Speer, 215 Dalston Lane), Dairymen and Milk Purveyors (Webb's Dairy, 1 West Side, London Fields), Dart and Dartboard Maker (B A Storer 47B Mare Street), Embroidery Manufacturer (B Cohen Morning Lane), General Timber Benders (Watling Bros. Homerton), Gramophone Horn Manufacturer (George Callow, 25 Lea Bridge Road), Hat Dyers and Cleaners (F J Tripp, 112 Lansdowne Road), Marquetry Cutter (C W Faulkner, Albion Works, 34 Westgate Street), Motor Tyre Dealers

(H Emmanuel, 37A Balls Pond Road), Pickle Makers (A&S Heiser, Reading Lane), 'Sit-at-Ease Upholstery' (52 Brooksbys Walk), Steam and Engine Fittings Makers (Green & Boulding, 162A Dalston Lane).

The *Guide* states: 'Those whose good fortune it may be to live in Hackney may be inspired by a glance through the advertisement section of the publication to give the greatest possible share of their custom to Hackney traders. By doing so they will encourage local enterprise and assist in the shopping and business development of the Borough.'

Looking through the listings, it is clear that Hackney was largely self-sufficient. There would, indeed, be very little reason to travel beyond its

boundaries to fulfil most needs. It is remarkable how many manufactories and businesses were located in what are now exclusively residential streets.

François S. Frémont
IVORY, BOXWOOD, HORN AND BONE
TURNER FOR ALL TRADES & PURPOSES

J. DUKES & SONS
Coal Merchants
26 CHARNOCK ROAD, CLAPTON, E.5

I Eleanor Bowyer Fisher

*I Eleanor Bowyer Fisher of 3 Hackney Terrace
 bequeath in the County of Middlesex her estate to William Harper of 3
 Hackney Terrace in the County of Middlesex all the property she
 possessed of whether arising from the sale of Negroes in the Island of
 Antigua or from the sale of a house there to be received by the said William
 Harper in the County of Middlesex for the lawful*

I Eleanor Bowyer Fisher of 3 Hackney Terrace [modern 24 Cassland Road] in the County of Middlesex bequeath to William Harper of 3 Hackney Terrace in the County of Middlesex all the property I die possessed of whether arising from the sale of Negroes in the Island of Antigua or from the sale of a house there to be received by the said William Harper of 3 Hackney Terrace in the County of Middlesex for the lawful discharge of all Bills paid by him for me and I do hereby appoint the aforesaid William Harper of 3 Hackney Terrace in the County of Middlesex my sole executor and this I declare to be my last Will and Testament made in sound state of Mind In Witness whereof I sign my Name Eleanor Boyer¹ Fisher Witnessed in our presence the 4th day of October in the Year of our Lord 1819 Mary Story Common House Hackney Esther Cowper Common House Hackney.

Proved at London 19th June 1821 before the w[orshi]pful Samuel Rush Meyrick Dr of Laws & by the Oath of William Harper the sole Ex[ecut]or to whom Adm[inistrat]ion was granted being first sworn duly to administer.²

The ‘Legacies of British Slavery’ project under the aegis of University College, London,³ has allowed historians to redirect the narrative of slavery from a Parliamentary to a local focus. We now know that under the terms of the *Slave Compensation Act* (1837), 23 Hackney residents received payment for slaves they had held in British colonies before the *Slavery Abolition Act* (1833). The total received in Hackney was £66,225 – the equivalent of £5,980,727 at today’s valuation.⁴ In 1837, 2,380 slaves were held by Hackney citizens. The largest total sum was paid to John Amos of 12 Chatham Place who held 363 slaves, receiving a payment of £7,418 – the equivalent today of £669,904. It was a woman however, Sarah Gray, née McKillop, who received the highest single payment of £5,235 – £472,762 at today’s values – for 304 slaves. It was not exceptional for a woman to be the ‘owner’ of slaves and to be able to bequeath them as chattels. At Eleanor Bowyer Fisher’s death, emancipation was still 12 years away. Whatever William Harper – described in the Hackney 1821 census as a City wine merchant – did with her bequest, his name does not appear in the Compensation Registers in 1837.

Plantations on Antigua were almost exclusively devoted to sugar production.⁵ Emanuel Bowen’s *Map of Antigua* of 1747 shows the divisions of the island with the English names

1. The name is given by the clerk at the head of the will as ‘Bowyer’. The name in the will itself – in a different hand – is spelled ‘Boyer’.
 2. National Archives: PROB 11/1644/274
 3. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/search/>
 4. Bank of England Inflation Calculator: <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>
 5. Sylvester Hovey, *Letters from the West Indies*, New York, 1838, p 42.



Emanuel Bowen, *A New and Accurate Map of the Island of Antigua or Antego taken from Surveys, and adjusted by Astronomical Observations. Containing all the Towns, Parish Churches, Forts, &c., London 1747.*

of the numerous owners clearly marked, the dominant one being Sir William Codrington whose family endowed ‘The Codrington’ the now-renamed All Souls’ Library, Oxford. Each plantation was largely self-sufficient as a production unit. An account by the American abolitionist James Thome dating from 1837 gives this description: ‘At short intervals were seen the buildings of the different estates thrown together in small groups, consisting of the manager’s mansion and out-houses, the negro huts, boiling house, cooling houses, distillery [presumably for the production of rum], and windmill. The mansion is generally a commodious building, pleasantly situated on an elevated spot, and commanding a view of the estate and surrounding country.’⁶

The method of production is described: ‘We found the sugar works in active operation: the broad wings of the windmill were wheeling their stately revolutions, and the smoke was issuing in dense volumes from the chimney of the boiling house. Some of the negroes were employed in carrying cane to the mill, others in carrying away the trash, or *megass*, as the cane is called after the juice is expressed from it. Others, chiefly the old men and women, were tearing the *megass* apart, and

6. James Thome, *Emancipation in the West Indies. A six months’ tour in Antigua, Barbadoes and Jamaica in the year 1837*, New York, 1838, p 23.

strewing it on the ground, in order that it might become dry and fit for fuel. It is the only fuel used for boiling the sugar.⁷

It goes without saying that this would be the life and these the conditions under which Eleanor Fisher's slaves would have worked.

The conditions under which the slaves lived before emancipation are described in detail in a number of contemporaneous printed sources – Thome, for example, was building a case for the freeing of slaves in the United States. Even more telling is a series of letters by an Englishman, John Luffman, who lived for three years on Antigua from 1786-1788,⁸ a period during which Eleanor Bowyer Fisher would have owned the plantation. His is a strangely honest account of experiences, clearly distinguishing the lives of the enslavers and the enslaved. He talks of his house – 'this *rus in urbe*' – and of his mornings spent 'reading, writing, or walking' but only before 'the thermometer of Fahrenheit [reaches] ninety degrees'. He talks of the 'avocado pear', 'the orange (China as well as Seville)', of 'sappzudula, granadilla, water lemon, pomegranate, melon, guava, mangoe, cocconut', and 'cashew nuts and apples, which are one fruit' the apples of which are best used emerged 'into a bowl of punch' perhaps drunk after amateur dramatics such as a production of Thomas Otway's 1680s *Venice Preserved*. There were, of course, 'troublesome mosketos, sand flies, scorpions, centipeds, snakes, chiggers' to worry about. The general security and comfort of the white colonists were, however, assured by five companies of militia – remembering the slave uprising of 1736.

The life of the slave was entirely different. Luffmann watches the latest shipment of slaves at St John's harbour being brought up at 8 a.m., chained in couples, with newly-shaven heads from 'the stench and vermin' between decks.

7. Thome, p. 32.

8. John Luffman, *A Brief Account of the Island of Antigua, together with the Customs and Manners of its Inhabitants, as well White as Black ... in Letters to a Friend. Written in the Years 1786, 1787, 1788*, London, nd.

The chains are 'absolutely necessary for the well-doing of this nefarious commerce [lest] a spark of Heaven-born liberty should inspire them with revenge against their enslavers.' A drummer is sent round town to announce the upcoming sale. Individuals are inspected 'as a butcher at Smithfield market when dealing for sheep. ... The cargoes average from thirty-seven to forty pounds sterling⁹ per head.' One detail is particularly plangent and telling. They are 'walked off to the plantations ... where the hoe is ... put into hands, hitherto unused to labor, and as soft as the finest lady's in Europe.' With the hoe the ground was prepared for the planting of the sugar cane. The heat which Luffman avoids is the heat in which the slaves labour – along with the 'mosketos', scorpions, snakes and chiggers. Thome reports that before emancipation, overseers 'took it for granted that negroes could never be made to work without the use of the whip.'¹⁰ Luffman talks of the punishments and controls: 'The bilboes, [shackles] severe floggings, and sundry other methods of torturing these unhappy people, as best suits the caprice or inventive cruelty of their owners'¹¹ though slaves were seldom hanged 'it being the interest of the owner ... to get them off.'¹²

Luffman concludes: 'the traffic to Africa for human flesh and blood [is] the most abominable ... of any species of commerce ... it is a disgrace to those excellent laws we boast and to the enlightened age we live in. It tends to the corruption of morals and is totally repugnant to the immediate order of the Creator ...'¹³

Clearly such a conclusion would not be shared by the interested parties – John Amos, Sarah Gray and Eleanor Bowyer Fisher and the twenty others – in far-off Hackney.

Iain Bruce

9. £40 in 1786 is equivalent to £5,000 in 2023.

10. Thome, p.42.

11. Luffman, p. 105.

12. Luffman, p.107.

13. Luffman, p.125.

From Sir John Cass's Foundation to the Portal Trust



The growing public awareness of the trafficking in and commodification of human lives through the slave trade of the 18th century has impelled a number of organisations to assess their histories. In Hackney, the Ironmongers' Foundation of Sir Robert Geffrye has been renamed from the Geffrye Museum to The Museum of the Home – though controversy still surrounds Geffrye's statue above the central door. The other significant change affecting Hackney is the renaming of the Sir John Cass's Foundation as The Portal Trust. The Cass Student Hall of Residence is now Well Street Hall. The annual commemoration service in Cass's own church – St Botolph Without Aldgate – has been abandoned and his bust removed.

The Portal Trust has recently published a monograph it commissioned from Professor Miles Ogborn of Queen Mary

University of London. Entitled *Sir John Cass, the Royal African Company and the Slave Trade, 1705-1718*, it emphasises Cass's role not simply as an investor in the Royal African Company but as one 'active [in the] management of the slave trade'. The Ogborn study is available to download as a pdf from the Portal Trust website at:

<https://portaltrust.org/about-us/resources/sir-john-cass-and-transatlantic-slavery>

The foreword by the Trust's chief executive states: 'We are not trying to erase nearly three centuries of custom and practice. But we are trying ... [to] focus on present injustices as we define our priorities for grant-making and thereby develop further our educational support for institutions and individuals.' The impressive range of the Trust's work may be seen on its website.



The new exhibition at the London Metropolitan Archives is:

Unforgotten Lives – Rediscovering Londoners of African, Caribbean, Asian and Indigenous Heritage 1560-1860

Unforgotten Lives presents the stories of Londoners of African, Caribbean, Asian and Indigenous heritage who lived and worked in the city between 1560 and 1860 and are recorded in London's archives. Exploring a range of experiences, these multi-layered stories speak of love, enterprise, wealth and family life; discrimination, hardship, resilience and resistance. The content of the exhibition has

been informed by their ongoing research project 'Switching the Lens' and developed in partnership with Northeastern University, London.

The exhibition is available to visit during normal opening hours until 27 March 2024. An events programme relating to the exhibition will take place throughout the year. Please see the LMA Eventbrite page for more information.

Windrush 75 in Hackney

This year marks 75 years since HMT *Windrush* arrived at Tilbury Docks.

Check out the *Windrush 75 calendar* to find out what's happening in the Borough and beyond to celebrate this year - includes a free recipe book!

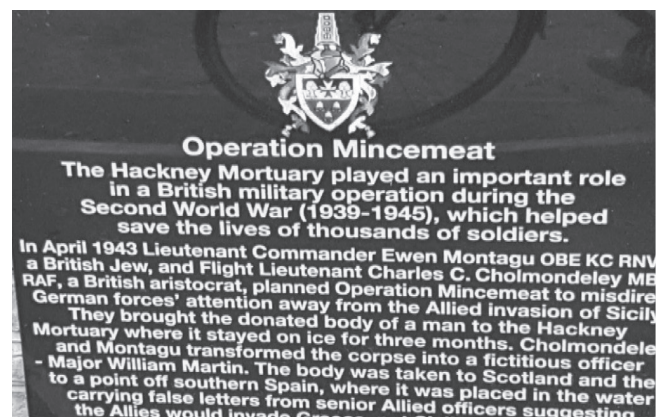
WINDRUSH 75

<https://www.lovehackney.uk/windrush-generations-festival>

The Man Who Never Was – Still Missing

On Sunday 24 April 2022 an unveiling ceremony was held outside Hackney Mortuary. The eye-catching black stone with gold text surmounted by Hackney's coat of arms records the part the Mortuary played in one of the most remarkable acts of bizarre trickery in the Second World War. In preparation for the Allied invasion of Sicily a decoy was proposed. The body of a supposed Royal Marines officer – Acting Major William Martin – was floated off the south-western coast of Spain near Huelva after a supposed air crash in the hope of being found. 'Martin' carried supposed top-secret documents showing that the imminently-expected southern allied invasion of 1943 would be through Greece rather than the intended route through Sicily. The body was found. The trick worked. The Germans were fooled and tanks and troops were misdirected to Salonika in Greece. Allied soldiers' lives were saved – though the Italian campaign still took a very heavy toll.

The plan was devised and executed by two British officers, Ewen Montagu and Charles Cholmondeley. The idea for the ruse may have come from Ian Fleming, then working in naval intelligence and later to write the James Bond novels. Fleming is played in the latest film by Hackney resident Johnny Flynn. In 1953 Montagu published an account with the title *The Man Who Never Was* though elements were withheld because of the Official Secrets Act. The story intrigues. Based on Montagu's book, it has been told in two successful films. The 1956 'The Man Who Never Was' starred Clifton Webb as Montagu; in 2021 the story was retold as 'Operation Mincemeat' in which Colin Firth played Montagu and Matthew Macfadyen, Cholmondeley (absent from the 1956 film). The Hackney stone records



The memorial stone at Hackney Mortuary.

that a body was 'donated'. In the 1956 film we see the grieving Scottish father played by Moultrie Kelsall agreeing that in the national interest he should give his son's body. Montagu and Cholmondeley did make 'feverish enquiries' – not to trace the parents to seek their permission but, rather, to establish that there were no living relatives who might claim the body.

The body in question was that of Glyndwr Michael from Tonyandy. How or why he came to London is not known but by the end of his life he was a rough sleeper, dying from phosphorous poisoning in an abandoned King's Cross warehouse. It could have been a case of suicide or it could have been through accidentally eating food contaminated with rat poison. If the word 'donated' on the stone has any meaning, it must have been Sir Bernard Spilsbury, the forensic pathologist based at St Pancras Hospital but also responsible for Hackney Mortuary and his colleague Bentley Purchase, coroner for north London, who were the donors. Spilsbury had been approached by Montagu and was on the look-out for a suitable body. Glyndwr Michael fitted the bill. He was found alive on 26 January 1943 but died two days later in St Pancras Hospital when he was

continued overleaf..

The Man Who Never Was – Still Missing *continued*

taken to the mortuary there and kept at +4°C to slow decomposition. Freezing the body or placing it on ice would have damaged the tissue and shown the enemy that death was not caused by air crash or by drowning. Bentley Purchase gave three months as the limit of the body's usefulness. There is uncertainty about when Michael's body was brought to Hackney. Denys Smith gives the 1 April 1943 while Ben MacIntyre gives 17 April.¹ There is no doubt, however, that it left Hackney on the 17th for its destination of Greenock, there to be placed in the submarine HMS *Seraph* for its journey south to the Gulf of Cadiz. The Hackney stone is, therefore, wrong both when it states that it lay at Hackney for three months and also that it was 'kept on ice' rather than being placed in the super-cold room there, again at +4°C.

Although Michael's name does not appear on the Hackney stone – he is merely 'the body' – it does, ironically, appear in Spain. 'Major William Martin' was buried with military honours at Huelva, his death recorded on the stone as 24 April 1943. In 1997 the Commonwealth War Graves Commission added the words: 'Glyndwr Michael Served as Major William Martin, RM'.

Michael's service may have been involuntary and *post mortem*, but the words speak, doubly, nothing but the truth.

Iain Bruce

Further Reading: Ewen Montagu, *The Man Who Never Was*, various editions and on Kindle.

¹ Ben MacIntyre, *Operation Mincemeat*, Harmony Books, 2010. Denys Smith, *Deathly Deception: The Real Story of Operation Mincemeat*, Oxford University Press, 2010.



Hedgehogs and Polecats: the Prequel

In *Terrier* 114 the question was posed: 'Why would the Church Warden at St John's in 1795 be buying four polecats and four hedgehogs for use by the parish?' Two Friends reply: 'Rabbits and slugs' on which those purchases could feast. A further discovery in the Archives¹ show that there had been an earlier purchase of six hedgehogs, on August 11 1792, at a price of 4d each – the same rate as in 1795. Polecats make a less happy appearance twice on the same page in the account book. On July 30 the appropriately-named Sarah Fox received 8d 'for destroying a Pole Cat'

– though a fox is more likely to run from a polecat than *vice versa*. (The entry for 9 July on the same page shows that Fox had received a salary from the parish of 14s 3d for the quarter – though presumably for services beyond pest control.) A further payment is made on 10 September – though to whom is not stated – for 'destroying a Pole Cat' again at a cost of 8d. Three years later, those two polecats would be replaced by four more. Culling had clearly proved too hasty.

1. HAD: P/J/CW/30

July 2	Paid William Trulock Quarters Salary	7	10	2
9	Paid Sarah Fox	"	14	3
30	Paid D ^o for destroying a Pole Cat	"	"	8
	Paid James Griffiths Quarters Salary	6	5	2
Aug. 11	Paid for Six Hedge Hogs	"	2	"
	Paid for 4 acts Parliament	"	1	10
Sept. 10	Paid destroying a Pole Cat	"	"	8

Elizabeth Green: The Formation of an Archivist

Prompted by my recent appointment to Senior Archives Officer, I have been musing about my many years at Hackney Archives, thinking about the many different people I have worked with and what has kept me here so long. Having trained as an archivist in South Africa, I really struggled to find work in the field when I first came to Britain, so for many years I did other work in the library and information field. When I was made redundant from an information officer post, I decided to try once again to find work in the archives sector. Living in Hackney I thought a good place to start would be to find out more about its history. I signed up for one of Sean Gubbins's walks. As it happened I was the only person who turned up for the walk (how things have changed!) and I was very impressed that he still did the full walk despite having only one 'customer' that day. He also advised me that the best way to get into Archives was to volunteer. I promptly signed up as a volunteer at Hackney Archives and when a vacancy came up applied for the job and was successful.

I started in the era of David Mander who had done so much to put Hackney Archives on the map and then for many years I worked on a team with Libby Adams, Sally England and Siân



Mogridge. Together we undertook the massive task of compiling an inventory of the entire collection to facilitate the move from the Rose Lipman building on De Beauvoir Road to our current building in Dalston. I can still remember the hours we (assisted by many different volunteers) spent measuring and recording the size of volumes, folders etc. so that we would know how many shelves of different sizes we would need in the new building. My current colleagues think I'm mad, but I still get a thrill of satisfaction when I find an item from our collections from a shelf especially designed to suit its size and shape.

One of the highlights of my various roles at Hackney Archives has been and still is, working with volunteers, something that I had never done in other jobs. I have always been really moved by the enthusiasm and commitment of the many volunteers – from work experience students to

pensioners. There are far too many to name them all here, but the two Joans (both now sadly passed away) stand out for me - they came in so regularly, were always willing to learn new skills and scanned many of the images that can currently be viewed on our image database. Currently Kate Starling is continuing the good work on the image database and has done an extraordinary job of packing over 500 boxes of Gibson negatives into freezers for long-term preservation. Charlene and Nikola are also providing invaluable assistance with various cataloguing projects I am working on.

Another aspect of the work I enjoy is the way small repetitive detailed work can make a big impact. I am happy to be working on a new team with Lydia Julien and Lisa McDermott, which, under Etienne Joesph's skilful leadership, is moving towards an Archives that is relevant and has a dynamic relation to Hackney today.

Over the years Hackney Archives has been a haven for me in which I had the freedom to explore my own relationship to the past and what it means to me. I am excited to be part of a team dedicated to creating a space where others can do the same.

Elizabeth Green

Working at Hackney Archives (2nd instalment)

Much has changed since my inaugural piece in the Winter 2019 *Terrier*. And no, I'm not referring to that peculiar global blip when we all had to stay home, and online work and socialising became the norm.

After three temporary stints with the Archives, I have finally been made official, and brought on board on a permanent basis. It's a very exciting time to be a part of the fantastic team and wider community connected to Hackney Archives.

Aside from a bit of new signage and furniture arrangement, the main change I've noticed at the Archives is the further widening of our scope, our reach and our engagement with the community.

Not so long ago, the word *dusty* was an unavoidable descriptor of archives in general. *Inspiring*, *diverse*, and *entertaining* were not part of the heritage lexicon (not mine anyway).

From working with the An Viet and Collins collections, to partnerships with Xenia, the TCCA, Immediate Theatre, the Newington Green Meeting House and the Abney Unearthed Project,¹ our involvement with an ever-expanding range of partners has brought into the Archives more interest, a broader mix of visitors, and a steady programme of well-attended events.

1. For more info you'll have to look these up. I've got a limited word count! Check <https://hackney.gov.uk/projects-events-and-exhibitions>

In a word, this makes the Archives fun. OK, a few more words: relevant, current, meaningful. I take great pleasure in looking out at the searchroom

when it's busy (which it normally is these days), at all the various people and activities going on. I also take great pride in contributing to this very special service, and if you haven't been in for a while, I highly recommend a visit. I look forward to seeing you soon!



Lisa McDermott, (*No longer Acting*)
Archives and Local Studies Assistant

Become a Contributor If you have a special interest and you would like to see your research published, please get in touch with me, Iain Bruce, at oxibruce@blueyonder.co.uk. As Editor, I'm always keen to receive new material and will be happy to offer any guidance that you may require. The *Terrier* articles are normally 500-800 words in length (though short notices are also welcome). There are

three issues a year. Contents over the years have ranged very widely indeed. A near-complete collection can be found at: <http://hackneyhistory.org/terrier-newsletters/>
For longer articles of around 5,000 words, we have the annual *Hackney History* which is usually published in January. A near-complete run of *Hackney History* is now available at: <http://hackneyhistory.org/hackneys-histories/>

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting will be held in the Hackney Archives on Tuesday 31st October, 2023 at 6.00 pm. The Agenda will include: Election of Officers, Reports from the outgoing Chair, Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Publications Editor. The Committee will seek approval for an increase in Membership Subscriptions.

The AGM will be followed by a Talk (speaker and subject to be announced).

A Note From The Treasurer

FHA's bank, HSBC, has introduced a 40p charge (their charities rate) for every cheque deposited. Last year these charges (and others) amounted to £81.62. If all Friends were to pay by bank transfer when renewing their subscription, our funds would get a boost, albeit modest.

These are the details you will need to do this:

FHA's Bank: HSBC

Account Name: Friends of Hackney Archives

Account No.: 01210815

Sort Code: 40-02-17

Subscriptions are eligible for Gift Aid relief, which I claim each year. I shall write shortly to all members who have not yet completed a Gift Aid form to encourage you, if you are a tax-payer, to sign up. Every little helps!

With thanks,

Sean Gubbins

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