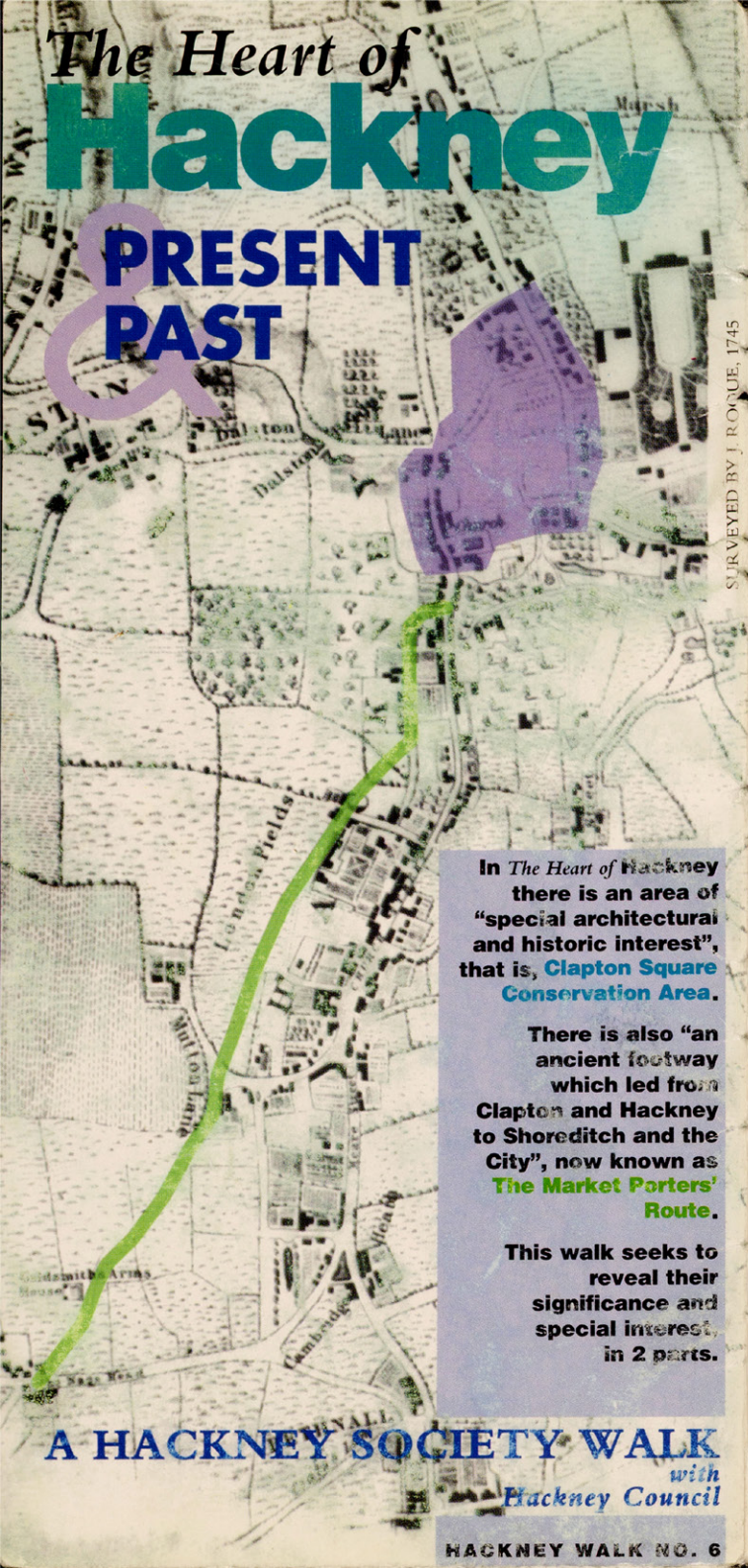


The Heart of Hackney

PRESENT & PAST



In The Heart of Hackney there is an area of "special architectural and historic interest", that is, **Clapton Square Conservation Area**.

There is also "an ancient footway which led from Clapton and Hackney to Shoreditch and the City", now known as **The Market Porters' Route**.

This walk seeks to reveal their significance and special interest, in 2 parts.

A HACKNEY SOCIETY WALK
with
Hackney Council

HACKNEY WALK NO. 6

CLAPTON SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA

was designated in 1969 and extended in 1991. The development of this area can be safely traced back to the mid-18th century villages of Hackney and Clapton of the then Parish of Hackney. Main roads have remained the same, and original paths and footpaths have determined the current street pattern. The only surviving buildings that existed in the mid-18th century are St. Augustine's Tower (late 13th c.) and Sutton House (1535). There is also a 17th century garden wall within the Churchyard. The earliest terrace is Sutton Place, south side (1808) followed by the building of Clapton Square, both examples of early (1770-1820) limited scale systematic development in London. The last two decades of the Georgian period showed a preference for detached, paired dwellings rather than terraces. Nos 6-8 and 10-12 Lower Clapton Road are the earliest examples of this trend in the area.

1 THE ROUND CHAPEL, or Clapton Park United Reformed Church, is a testimony to Hackney's tradition of religious tolerance. It was commissioned by a group of Congregationalists who had originally moved to the Old Gravel Pit Chapel and was built in 1869-71. Its impressive design, one of Henry Fuller's, reflects the assertive mood in the non-conformist world of the 1860s and 70s. Nowadays, services are held in the **SUNDAY SCHOOL**, in Powerscroft Road, which was added in 1887 to the designs of James Cubitt. The Hackney Historic Buildings Trust commissioned work in 1994 to restore and use the Chapel as a Performing Arts Centre, which will re-open its remarkable interior to the general public.

2 CLAPTON PASSAGE contains **HOLLY VILLAS** built in 1882 and **IVY VILLAS** built in the late 1890s to replace large detached houses.

3 CLAPTON SQUARE was laid out on Clapton Field in 1816. The Field was bounded by Clapton Passage to the north, Clarence Road to the west, and Lower Clapton Road to the south. It was part of the Tyssen-Amhurst Estate and was sold by auction in lots, which explains the piecemeal fashion of the development as can be seen in the variety of houses that still exist. As with all London Squares, the **GARDENS** were originally private and solely open to residents of the Square. The gardens here became public in 1923.

A few earlier houses at the north-east corner of the Square were demolished in 1900 to make way for **CAVENDISH MANSIONS** and **ST. JOHN'S MANSIONS**. Nos 2-6 of the original houses and those on the east side were unfortunately lost as a result of second world war bombing. Nos 2-6 were replaced shortly afterwards with **CHURCHWELL COURT**.

Of the original houses along Lower Clapton Road, to the west of the Square gardens, only **NO 17** still exists much altered and with a new shop on its ground floor. This building bears a plaque inscribed **CLAPTON SQUARE**. To the east of the Square gardens, the late 19th century **'ELEPHANT'S HEAD'** pub, at no 43 Lower Clapton Road, has replaced 'The Portland Arms' which was probably contemporary with the Square and had stables and a skittle alley at the back. The terrace on the other side of Hackney Baths, **NOS 21-35 LOWER CLAPTON ROAD**, was originally known as Clapton Place. Three of its houses have been replaced with Hackney Baths, whereas the shops at the forecourts of those houses remaining are Victorian additions.



4 Hackney Baths, 1910.

4 HACKNEY BATHS, now known as the King's Hall Leisure Centre, opened in 1897 following Acts of Parliament in 1846 and 1878 encouraging the establishment of Public Baths and Wash Houses for the "Health, Comfort and Welfare of the inhabitants". The Baths, designed by E. Hamor and E. Pinches, provided 1st and 2nd class Men's and Women's baths and a laundry as well as facilities for clubs, schools, and entertainment artistes. A removable timber platform over the pool transformed the Baths to the King's Hall with a seating capacity of 1500 people.

5 NOS 2-28 LOWER CLAPTON ROAD, stretching from St. John's Churchyard to Urswick Road, started as Portland Place, a row of 7 detached villas of paired semi-detached houses, built in the 1820s and 30s. Nos 2-4 were replaced in 1904 with the **POLICE STATION**, an Arts and Crafts movement building, designed by John Dixon. Nos 18-24 were replaced in 1924 with the Art Deco style **ELECTRICITY SHOWROOMS**, also fronting onto Urswick Road.

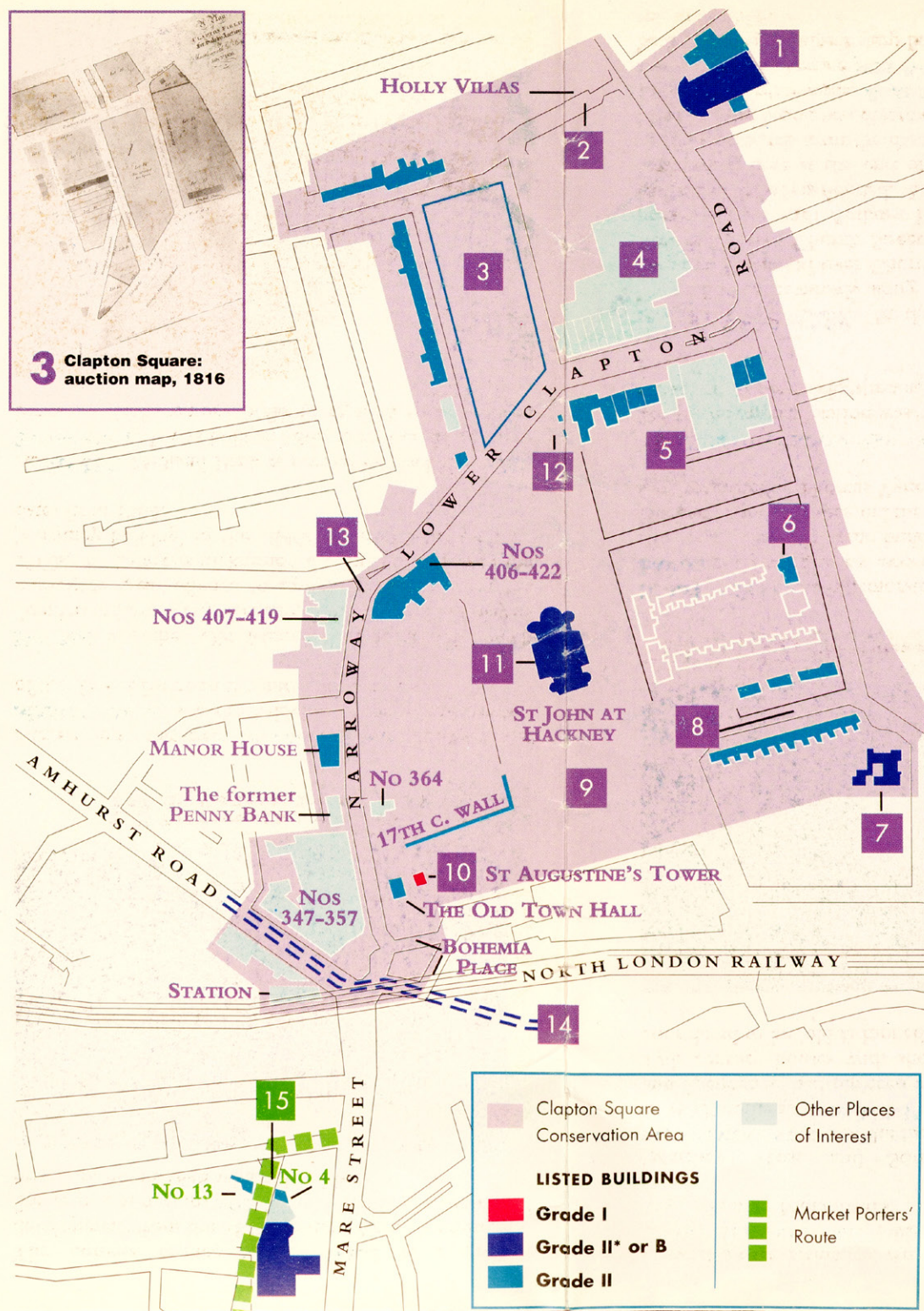
6 NOS 5-7 URSWICK ROAD, a large detached pair of dwellings with characteristic Doric porches, dates from the 1830s. Urswick Road commemorates **CHRISTOPHER URSWICK**, the 16th century Rector of the Parish of Hackney.

7 SUTTON HOUSE is the earliest surviving residential building in Hackney. It was built in 1535 and takes its name from Thomas Sutton, the founder of Charterhouse School and Hospital in Clerkenwell. Thomas Sutton was thought to have lived in the house between 1605 and his death in 1611, but in fact he had lived in an adjacent house, originally known as the Tanhouse. Sutton House retains remarkable features from the 16th, early 17th and early 18th centuries. Recently restored by the National Trust in partnership with the local community, the building is open to the public.

8 SUTTON PLACE, south side, **NOS 1-16** dates from 1808 and is the earliest speculative residential development in the conservation area. Opposite, the 3 detached pairs **NOS 17-22** were added in the 1830s. Sutton Place continues into St. John's Churchyard.

9 ST. JOHN'S CHURCHYARD contains a number of 18th and 19th century chest tombs. To the west, headstones placed in rows line the north and south boundaries of the Churchyard. Those at the north lie in front of a late **17TH CENTURY WALL**, probably the remains of the garden wall of the Old Rectory, now lost. The **OLD PARISH STOCKS** are found at the northern end of the Churchyard by Lower Clapton Road. Within the Churchyard:

10 ST. AUGUSTINE'S TOWER is all that remains from the Old Parish Church, which existed in the late 13th century and was largely rebuilt in 1509 on the initiative of Christopher Urswick. The Church was, again, heavily repaired in 1720, but was becoming too cramped for the growing population. As a result, the close of the 18th century saw the demolition of the Old Parish Church and its replacement with St. John-at-Hackney Church. The



10 St. Augustine's Tower



11 St. John at Hackney



5 No 8 Lower Clapton Rd.



13 Nos 407-419 Mare St.

TOWER survived to house its peal of eight bells, which remained there until the 1850s. By then, parishioners had regretted the loss of their Old Church, and the Tower was subsequently saved from demolition. The **TOWER CLOCK** dates from the turn of the 17th century. The Hackney Historic Buildings Trust has recently succeeded in restoring it to working order.

11 ST. JOHN-AT-HACKNEY was designed by James Spiller and built in 1792-97. The tower and the semi-circular Ionic porches were added in 1812 to the designs of Robert Streater. The change of the local patron saint from St. Augustine to St. John is usually attributed to the local importance of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, which took over the landholdings in the parish from the Knights Templar after this Order was suppressed. These were both orders of military monks founded to protect pilgrims in the Holy Land.

12 THE TWO TELEPHONE KIOSKS, at the corner of Lower Clapton Road and Churchwell Path, are of the 1927 'K2' type, designed by Giles Gilbert Scott.

13 THE NARROWAY: West of the Churchyard starts the Narrowway, as that part of Mare Street north of the railway bridge is commonly known. This point also marks the top end of the mid-18th century Village of Hackney, a ribbon development along what was then Church Street and beyond it, reaching as far South as the Mare Street Triangle. Mid-18th century Hackney was where ordinary Londoners would come to escape "the stench of Westminster and the City, whether they took a house for the season or merely a coach for the afternoon." Until the beginning of the 19th century, Hackney remained a large village with local-shops. By mid-century, Church Street had become a sophisticated and fashionable shopping centre.



13 The Narrowway: nos 406-422 (left) and 407-419 (right), in 1853.

The convex terrace **NOS 406-422** is a gradual development from the 1840s to the 1860s. Opposite, the fine terrace and shops **NOS 407-419** replaced a substantial private house in 1848 which dated back to 1710.



13 The Narrowway: nos 387, 387A, B, while still the Manor House.

Further down the street, **NOS 387, 387A, B**, known as the **MANOR HOUSE**, was the residence of the manor steward of the Tyssen Estate in the mid-19th century.

No 364 was the 'Old Mermaid', a local pub which "tended to have seedy clientele, from the strolling players who gave great offence to upright parishioners in the 1760s, to characters nicknamed the 'human hog' and the 'Hackney bulldog' in the 1840s". The present building dates from 1864.

At **NO 354**, Midland Bank is housed in Hackney's **OLD TOWN HALL**. It was built in 1802 to replace the Church House, a 16th century building reputed to have been



13 The Narrowway: nos 347-357, in 1900.

Urswick's own residence. An early bank in the street, a **NATIONAL PENNY BANK**, was established in 1875 at **NOS 359-361**, now McDonald's.

'Matthew Rose and Sons', Hackney's premier **DEPARTMENT STORE** of the turn of the century, was built in 1868 on the site **NOS 347-357**, now occupied by Marks and Spencer. It had replaced a row of late 18th to early 19th century houses with shops, which by then were considered to be 'old fashioned'.



13 The Narrowway: nos 347-357, in 1830.

BOHEMIA PLACE commemorates the **BLACK AND WHITE HOUSE** and its legendary association with the Queen of Bohemia. A timber frame building, this was one of Old Hackney's grand houses and the home of the 17th century City magnate Sir Thomas Vyner.

The **NORTH LONDON RAILWAY** arrived in Hackney in 1850. The original Station was by Bohemia Place, but was moved to its present location at the west side of the street in 1870.

14 HACKNEY BROOK: In the mid-18th century, the brook flowed eastwards along the line of what is now Amhurst Road and over Church Street (Mare Street) by Bohemia Place. Church Street, then only forded at its present corner with Amhurst Road and similarly on its east side, was often flooded. A bridge over the ford was constructed here at the end of the 18th century, using building materials from the demolition of St. Augustine's Church. The brook was diverted through a culvert in the 1860s. Soon afterwards, **AMHURST ROAD** was laid out, and the present terrace **NOS 1-19** on the south side was built. Gibbons furniture shop has been established on this site since 1898.

B ON THE MARKET PORTERS' ROUTE TO THE CITY

Until the 1830s, much of Hackney's economy depended on agriculture and market gardening. Market gardens and nurseries lined both sides of Hackney Brook. **RHUBARB** was first grown in England in Hackney, and the nurseries north of Morning Lane were reputed to have been the first in the country to have farmed **WATERCRESS** systematically. They were replaced in about 1875 with Chalgrove Road. The **LODDIGES NURSERIES** occupied 15 acres of land in the area where Loddiges and Darnley Roads now meet. These were the most famous of all Hackney's nurseries, and introduced many new species to British gardens. Their collection included all the known varieties of rose, and palms, orchids and other exotic plants from all over the world. Having operated for almost a century, the Loddiges Nurseries closed down in 1854.

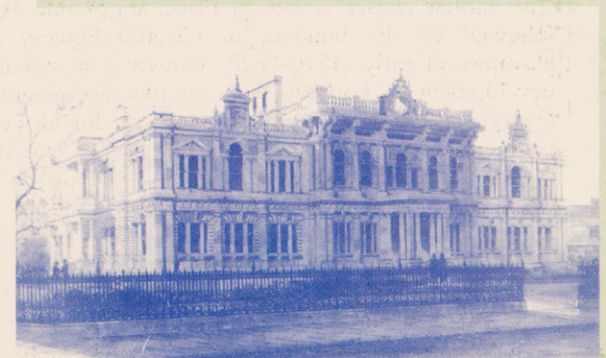
Produce was transported to the City along the "Market Porters' Route", originally known as **CHURCH-PATH**. The Church-path provided an open causeway between Clapton, Hackney and London for the transportation of merchandise by "hand burthen" or by porters. Two bequests in the early 17th century reveal its importance and antiquity: in 1616 Margaret Audley left £4 a year, in her will, for the repair of bridges, stiles and rails made at her own cost between Clapton, Hackney and Shoreditch; in 1633 David Doulben left £30 "to the poorest of people maintaining their livelihood by carriage of burthen to the City of London, ...for continuing and repairing of the causeway or footway leading from Clapton and Hackney Church unto Shoreditch."

Leaving Mare Street behind it, with the 'Cock' pub to its left, the Porters' Route turned into

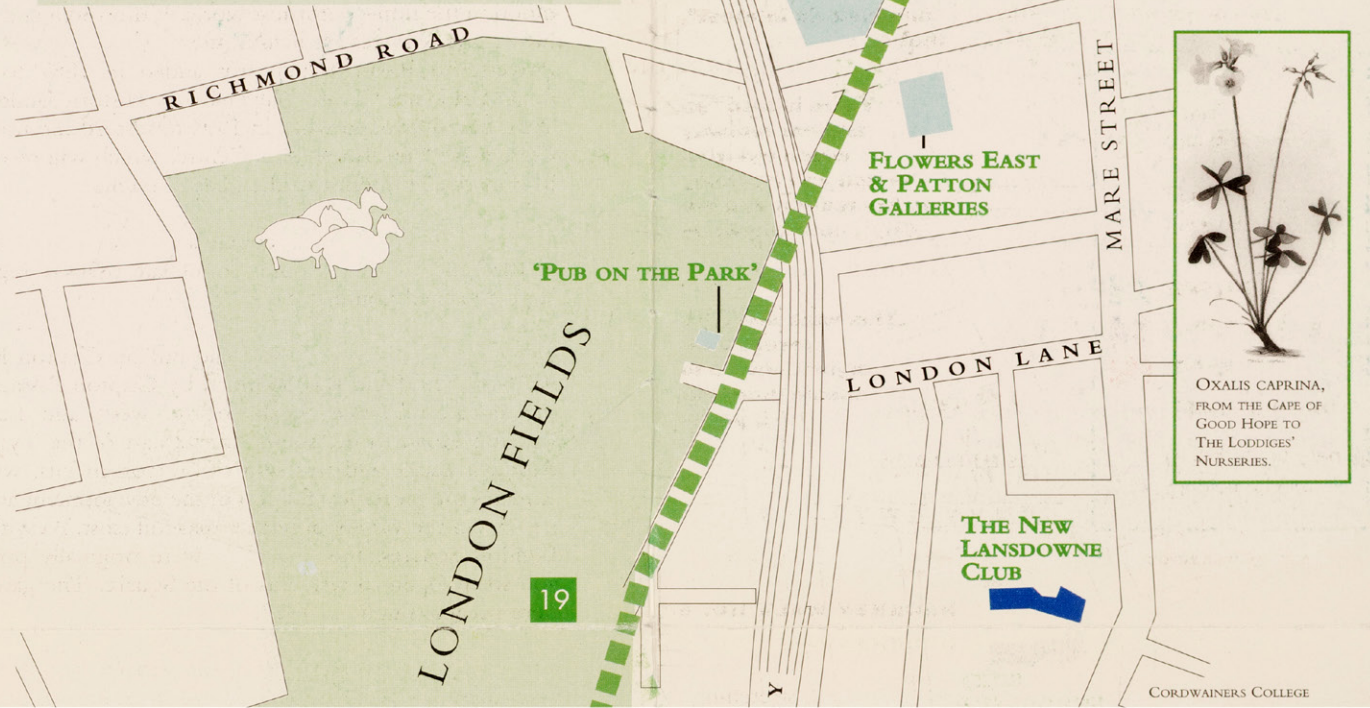
15 SYLVESTER PATH: Here, **NO 13** on the west side is an early 18th century building, partly rebuilt, with a 19th century doorcase. It was once the premises of the Jewish Workers' Circle. The warehouse to the south occupies the site of the former **SPURSTOWE'S ALMSHOUSES** which were established here in 1689. After being rebuilt in 1815, the Alms houses were moved in the 1960s to new accommodation in Navarino Road after protests that their location opposite a pub was hardly appropriate. On the east side, **NO 4** is a mid-late 18th century terrace house, with an early 19th century front. Next door, the **'OLD SHIP'** has replaced a 19th century or even earlier pub on this site, with a passage onto Mare Street now covered.



15 Sylvester Path:
Spurstowe's Almshouses, in about 1845.



17 The Hackney Town Square:
Hackney's second Town Hall.



OXALIS CAPRINA,
FROM THE CAPE OF
GOOD HOPE TO
THE LODDIGES'
NURSERIES.

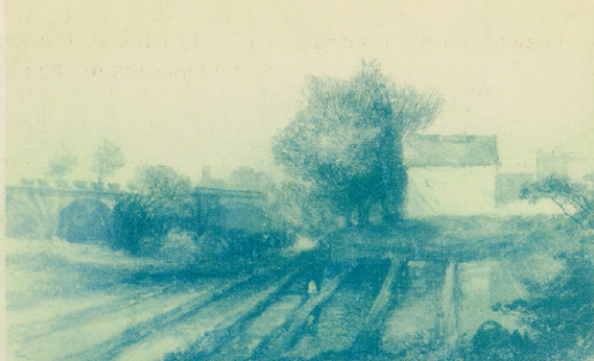
16 THE HACKNEY EMPIRE THEATRE with its main facade and entrance onto Mare Street, was designed by Frank Matcham for Oswald Stoll's Empire Group and built in 1901. A red-brick building with buff terracotta dressings, the Hackney Empire is in Victorian Baroque style and is noted as one of Matcham's most exuberant interiors in the whole of the country. The side facade of the building looks onto

17 THE HACKNEY TOWN SQUARE: The **CIVIC GARDENS** with their bronze Art Deco Lanterns have replaced the **SECOND TOWN HALL** erected here in 1866, after the Old Town Hall in the Narroway proved to be too small for the needs of the local administration. The present **TOWN HALL** was designed by Lancaster and Lodge, and was built in 1934-37. The **CENTRAL HALL** and **HACKNEY CENTRAL LIBRARY** on the east side of Mare Street complement the impressive street scene. The Central Hall, now housing the Hackney Museum, was designed by Gunton and Gunton and built in 1924 as the Hackney Wesleyan Methodist Mission. Next door, Hackney's first Library, designed by Henry Crouch, was built in 1907 and was one of the many funded by the philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. South of the Town Square the Porters' Route continued into

18 HACKNEY GROVE: **NO 33** and **NOS 25-27**, on the west side, are notable early 19th century houses. Until Richmond Road reached Mare Street in 1843-67, the Porters' Route continued uninterrupted into what is now Martello Street. Today, **NOS 199-205** and **282** Richmond Road are homes to two commercial art galleries: **FLOWERS EAST** and **PATTON GALLERY, LONDON FIELDS**. Past the late 19th century **'PUB ON THE PARK'**, the Porters' Route continued through London Fields.

19 LONDON FIELDS, like much other common land, has been used as **PASTURE LAND**, subject to Lammas Rights. By customary law, after Lammas Day (1 August until 1752, 12 August thereafter) the Fields could be used by the tenants of the Manor and Parishioners of Hackney for grazing their cattle throughout the winter, (until 6th April). During the remaining four months the Lord of the Manor, the freeholder, enjoyed the land for his own benefit. That London Fields was used for grazing remains evident in nearby thoroughfares bearing names such as Lamb Lane, Sheep Lane and Mutton Lane, as Lansdowne Drive and Westgate Street were originally known.





Watercress Nurseries north of Morning Lane, 1851.

Useful Information

- **BROADWAY FLOWER MARKET:**
Broadway Market, E8. Open 8am-4pm Sat.
- **CLOWNS INTERNATIONAL GALLERY & ARCHIVES**
1 Hillman Street, E8. Open 1st Fri of each month,
11.00am-4.00pm, other times by appointment. Admission free.
- **FLOWERS EAST:** 199-205 Richmond Rd., 282 Richmond Rd., E8
(0181 985 3333). Open 10am-6pm Tue-Sun. Admission free.
- **HACKNEY ARCHIVES:** 43 De Beauvoir Rd, N1 (0171 241 2886).
Open by appointment: Mon, Tue, Thu, 1st and 3rd Sat in month,
9.30am-1pm, 2-5pm.
- **HACKNEY EMPIRE:** Box Office 0181 985 2424.
- **HACKNEY HISTORIC BUILDINGS TRUST:** 115 Eleanor Rd., E8.
- **HACKNEY MUSEUM:** Central Hall, Mare Street, E8 (0181 986
6914). Open 10.30am-12.30pm, 1.30-5pm Tue-Fri. Admission free.
- **HEART OF HACKNEY PROJECT TEAM:**
Hackney Town Hall, Mare St., E8 (0181 525 3515).
- **PATTON GALLERY, LONDON FIELDS:** 282 Richmond Rd., E8
(0181 986 3409). Open 11am-6pm Tue-Sat.; noon-6pm Sun.
Admission free.
- **SUTTON HOUSE:** 2-4 Homerton High St., E9 (0181 986 2264).
Historic rooms open Wed, Sun and Bank Holiday Mon, 11.00am-
5.30pm, Sat. 2.00-5.30pm. Last admission 5.00pm. Closed Dec
and Jan. Admission charges. National Trust members free of
charge. Shop, cafe, gallery open all year, free. Events Wed. to
Sun., please contact Sutton House for details.

Acknowledgements

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Apart from grazing cattle, London Fields was host to a variety of **OTHER EVENTS**: rocket firing experiments (Sept. 1794); drill manoeuvring by soldiers (June 1798); cricket matches; drill and field manoeuvring by the East India Company's Volunteer Regiment (in the summer-time); the loyal Hackney Volunteers Parade (Sept. 1804); a running on stilts contest (July 1813) and casual prize fighting matches, ie. boxing.

With population growth, the use of the Fields had intensified to the extent that the four month close-time was not enough for the grass to re-establish itself. By the 1860s grazing in Hackney was limited to Millfields and Hackney Marshes. The same period saw the beginning of a process by which common land was acquired by Acts of Parliament for public open space. In 1884, London Fields was bought from the Lord of the Manor by the Metropolitan Board of Works and in 1973 was passed to the London Borough of Hackney. South of London Fields, the Porters' Route carried on through

20 BROADWAY MARKET: The modern '**CAT AND MUTTON**' to the east has replaced an earlier pub which stood on this site from at least the early 18th century. Here, for a short time, the weekly attraction was greasing the tail of a pig after which contestants would attempt to swing the animal around their heads, a sport that had disappeared by 1800. To the west side of Broadway Market, **NOS 75-77** and **79-81** are early 19th century buildings with later alterations and shops on their ground floors. No 77 is a perfectly preserved Georgian small shop. Off to the west, **LANSDOWNE DRIVE**, **DERICOTE STREET** and **CROSTON STREET** are lined with remarkable, early 19th century residential buildings. These streets and the east side of Broadway Market as far south as **DUNCAN ROAD** were the earliest to be developed in the area and were completed by 1831. Until then, the Porters' Route continued to run through open fields. The development of the area south of Duncan Road is later but was completed by 1843. The **BROADWAY MARKET CENTRE** was built by 1870 as a pub. By the end of the 19th century, the Broadway London Fields, as Broadway Market was then known, was one of the chief markets in Hackney. The present **BROADWAY FLOWER MARKET** is a new Saturday market.

21 THE REGENT'S CANAL arrived here in 1820, connecting Limehouse Basin to Paddington and offering a more economic alternative to transportation, until then carried through turnpike roads. The Porters' Route continued over the bridge appropriately named the Cat and Mutton Bridge, through Goldsmiths Row to the

Nag's Head in Hackney Road. **ACTON'S LOCK**, west of the bridge, is named after the local landowner.

22 THE MARE STREET TRIANGLE: On the way to reaching the southern-most tip of the mid-18th century village of Hackney, a brief note on the area enclosed by Mare Street to the east, Hackney Grove, Martello Street and London Fields to the west, and Westgate Street to the south:

In mid-18th century Hackney, only 3 thoroughfares crossed this area, 2 of which, **LONDON LANE** and **LAMB LANE**, still exist. By 1870 new streets had been laid out south of Lamb Lane. In the 1860s, Almshouses for the Sephardic Jews were founded, where Darcy House now stands. Other Almshouses stood east of Triangle Road. After the arrival of the Great Eastern Railway to Enfield in 1870, the new streets north of Lamb Lane were laid out and Pembroke House and grounds to the south of Lamb Lane were replaced with Sidworth and Bayford Streets. Industrialisation brought about by the railway, bomb damage during the second world war, and new industry has long since changed the character of a once pleasant residential area, until the beginning of the 19th century still home to the wealthy. Pembroke House and the New Lansdowne Club are typical examples of homes once occupied by the wealthy, later vacated and passed on to Institutional use. From 1818 until its demolition in 1870, **PEMBROKE HOUSE** was a Lunatic Asylum for employees of the East India Company who were certified insane whilst serving in India. From 1860 to 1912, the **NEW LANSDOWNE CLUB**, an early 18th century private house, was known as the **ELIZABETH FRY REFUGE** and was a home for discharged women prisoners. This building still stands at **NO 195 MARE STREET**.

