



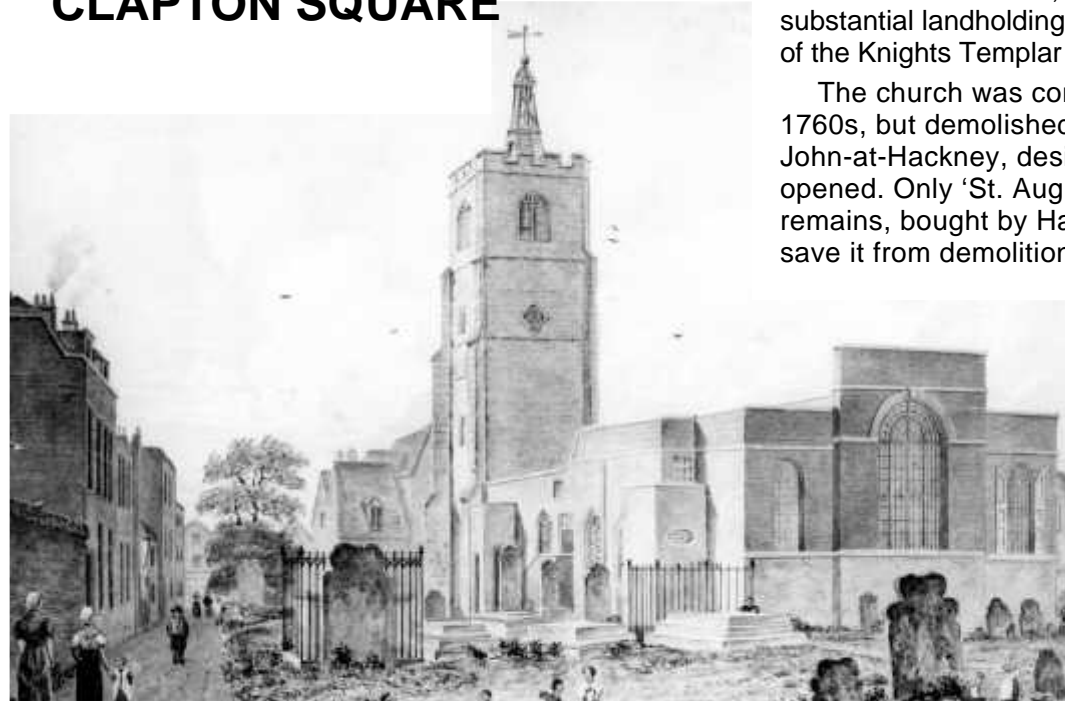
Above: St. Augustine's Tower behind a London plane and horse chestnut, looking towards Mare Street (the Narrow Way).

Before 1850, Hackney was a rural settlement close to the city of London and home to courtiers and wealthy Londoners. It has long been associated with radicals and dissenters.

St. John's is the heart of the old village and parish of Hackney, with remains of a medieval church. Sutton House, next to St. John's Churchyard, dates from about 1525 and is Hackney's oldest surviving domestic building.

Near to Mare Street is the site of St. Augustine's Church, Hackney's earliest place of worship. It was built in 1292, probably by the Knights Templar – an order of military monks who owned land in Hackney (including Temple Mills at Hackney Wick). Rebuilt in C16, possibly using some of its original fabric, it was rededicated as St. John's c.1660 after the Order of

ST. JOHN'S CHURCHYARD & CLAPTON SQUARE



Courtesy Hackney Archives Department.

St. Augustine's Church, built 1292, was rededicated as St. John's c.1660. This painting by John Varley shows the east end of the church shortly before it was demolished in c.1797 (when the new St. John-at-Hackney Church was completed). The houses facing the churchyard stood where Bohemia Place and the bus station now is.

FURTHER READING

David Mander, *St-John-at Hackney: The story of a church*, 1993. Published by Hackney Society.

David Solman, *Loddiges of Hackney: the largest hothouse in the world*, 1995. Published by Hackney Society.

See also: St. John's Churchyard, Its Trees & Monuments in this series.

This leaflet was prepared by Anne Woollett and Mike Trier with assistance from Ian Graham and Friends of St. John's Churchyard and Tower. For more information about St. John's and activities there, see

www.stjohn-at-hackneychurch.org.uk

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Based on Collins mapping - www.collinsmaps.com

St. John of Jerusalem, based in Clerkenwell with substantial landholdings, who acquired the property of the Knights Templar when they were suppressed.

The church was considerably enlarged in the 1760s, but demolished c.1797 when the new St. John-at-Hackney, designed by James Spiller, was opened. Only 'St. Augustine's Tower' (*above*) now remains, bought by Hackney Council in 1929 to save it from demolition (the position of the nave is

marked out on the ground). The bells remained there until the new church had been reinforced to support them in 1854. Some fine old graves and monuments were also transferred to the new building.

Between St. Augustine's Tower and Mare Street was Hackney's first Town

Hall. It was replaced in 1866 by a larger building, on what is now the garden in front of the present Town Hall, and in 1936 by the current Town Hall.



The church and vicarage from the south. The headstones against the perimeter wall are from the old churchyard, which was declared full in 1859, grassed over, and converted into open space in 1893.



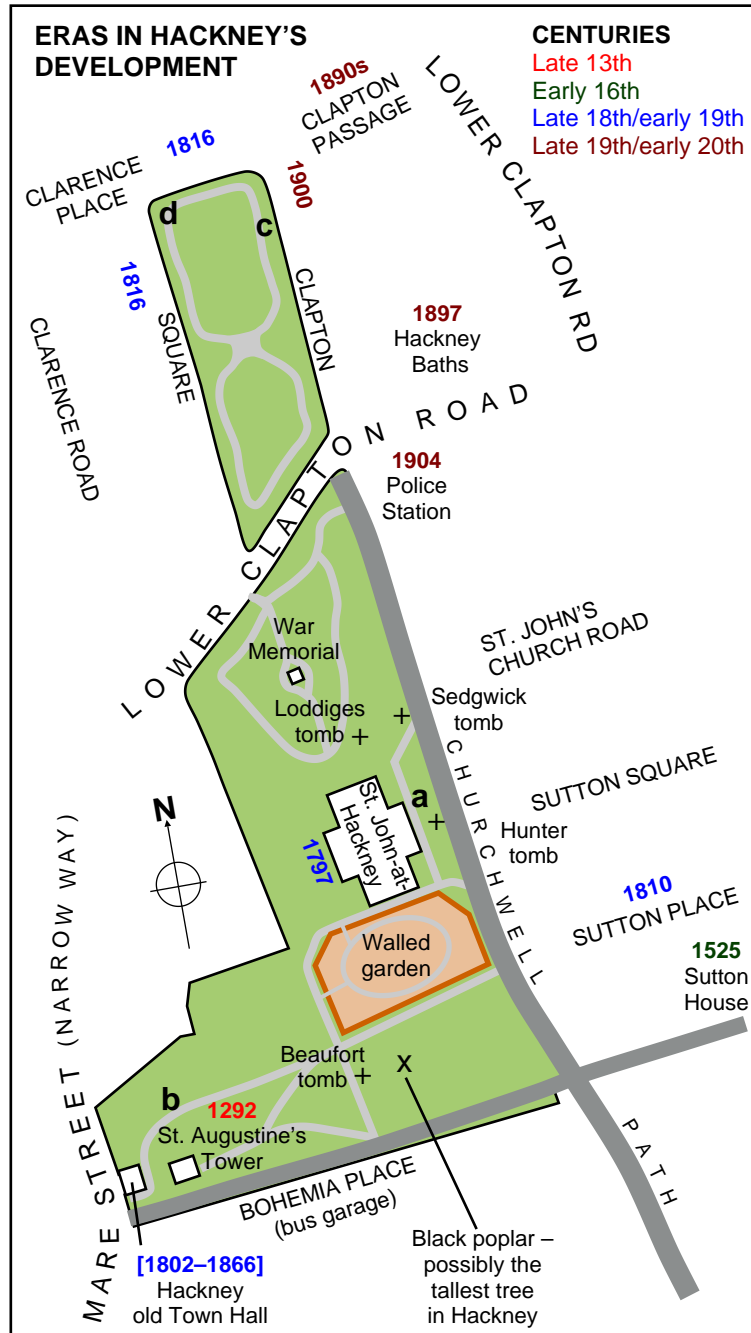
View of St. John-at-Hackney Church from Churchwell Path with an acer in autumn colour.
Bold letters a–d refer to locations on the map.

CLAPTON SQUARE

Clapton Square, to the north of St. John's Churchyard, was laid out in 1816. Some houses remain on the north and west side (including one visited by Lenin) and along Clarence Place, which connects Clapton Square to Clarence Road; Clapton Passage (1890s) connects it to Lower Clapton Road. The other C19 houses were



One of two true service trees in Clapton Square: this one, on the north-east corner, bears pear-like fruit; the other has apple-like fruit. The houses to the right behind the tree are new, reflecting the line of original houses. To its left is a mansion block, built in 1900.



The present St. John-at-Hackney Church was completed in 1797 and became the centre of Hackney, with houses built in the 1810s and Clapton Square laid out in 1816. In 1825, Hackney was split into three parishes: Hackney, South Hackney and West Hackney.



Spring crocuses by St. Augustine's Tower. Bohemia Place and the Narrow Way are in the background.

replaced by a mansion block in 1900. Hackney Baths (1897) and Police Station (1904) are near by.

At first the gardens in Clapton Square were private but in 1924 they were acquired by LCC (London County Council) and transferred to Hackney Council who now manage them.

There are some fine trees in the Square. Two true service trees *Sorbus domestica* (SE & NE corners) probably came from Loddiges Nursery – for many years the principal supplier of this rare tree. These two varieties have fruit like apples and pears; delicate leaves, in rows along the stalks, turn bright red in the Autumn.

Other trees include golden rain, manna ash, native black poplar, Plymouth pear, pride of India, Persian ironwood and Italian cypress.

Horse chestnut tree in flower in Clapton Square, with some of the old houses on the west side in the background.

