

[OBITUARY OF INTERNATIONALLY FAMOUS HACKNEY DRIVER CYNTHIA HAYDON FOR *THE DAILY TELEGRAPH* – by Michael Clayton (former Editor of Horse and Hound) 22.9.12

CYNTHIA HAYDON - leading Hackney driver

Cynthia Haydon, the most renowned Hackney Horse driver of the postwar years, has died aged 94.

For more than 40 years Mrs Haydon and her late husband, Frank Haydon, dominated the Hackney showing world, continuously winning championships at major horse shows in Britain and in North America with superb examples of these high-stepping horses and ponies which they had bred or produced.

Cynthia had outstanding ability in handling the high-spirited Hackney. As well as winning prizes, she captivated packed houses at the Horse of the Year Show at Wembley with demonstrations of her skill at handling teams of Hackneys in a cramped, indoor ring. She had a charming, genial personality which won many friends as well as admirers of her driving skills.

During her Wembley displays there were gasps and applause from discerning equestrian audiences when she drove a four-in-hand team of Hackneys in extraordinarily tight circles, with the carriage revolving on the spot.

In competitive show classes Cynthia, in her distinctive green felt hat and smiling broadly, would be summoned into the judging line-up where Frank Haydon, a tall, immaculate figure in bowler hat and suit, held the heads of her Hackneys so that they showed at their best. Invariably they took they received the winning red rosette and trophy.

The Hackney became a spectacular showy trotting horse through 18th and 19th century breeding from two immediate ancestors, the Yorkshire Hackney and the Norfolk Roadster, both tracing back to the Darley Arabian, a progenitor of the Thoroughbred. The breed requires considerable skill and experience in training and handling.

Cynthia May Haydon was born on May 4th 1918, daughter of the professional Hackney trainer Robert Black. She learnt the specialized techniques of training and driving Hackneys in her father's yard at Maiden Erleigh, near Reading, and exploited them through her immense talent as a driver. Bertram Mills, the

circus owner, allowed her to drive his four-in-hand coach, and he taught her to drive tandem.

Frank Haydon was the son of a successful butcher, with a group of shops, who kept Hackney horses as a hobby, but died in a road accident when Frank was 16. He took over his father's Hackneys and stabled them in Robert Black's yard where he met Cynthia. They married in 1939 when they were 21, and after he returned from war service as a Lt.Colonel, Frank and his wife set up the Hurstwood Stud of Hackneys near Uckfield in Sussex. They moved to Shovelstrode, East Grinstead in 1958, and built a remarkable international reputation, selling high-class Hackneys to clients in Britain, Europe, North America, Japan and Australia. They kept up to 90 Hackneys in their yard, having bred many themselves.

"I was always the gaffer and Frank was the businessman," Cynthia joked.

Sports Illustrated reported that after Mrs Haydon jetted in from Britain after winning at the Royal Richmond Show in 1961 she competed in the Devon Horse Show, Pennsylvania, when a fierce storm broke.

"She was atop Mr Stillman's park drag, a private coach and four, handling the fractious Hackneys with the no-nonsense look of the Headmistress of St Trinians. 'It rains in Britain too' Mrs Haydon announced. 'Let's get on with it'."

Amid thunder and lightning and a heavy downpour, Cynthia performed intricate movements with the Hackney team between painted barrels – and duly collected the winner's trophy.

Frank Haydon sold the butcher's business in the late 1960s, and in 1973 the Haydons moved to the Cotswolds, first to Manor Farm, Lower Slaughter, then from 1980 to Adlestrop, where they continued in business until retirement in 1995. They were Presidents of the Hackney Horse Society; honorary members of the Coaching Club; and judges for the British Driving Society and driving trials.

Cynthia Haydon was a member of Britain's gold medal winning team in the European Four-in-Hand championships in Germany in 1972. She was awarded MBE for her services to driving.

Frank Haydon died in 2005, and Cynthia continued to live at Adlestrop where she was visited by many friends in the horse world. She is survived by her son, Michael Haydon.

Cynthia Haydon, born May 4, 1918, died September 16 2012.