

FRANCIS ASKEW – HULL'S FIRST LABOUR ALDERMAN

Now remembered only in the name of a primary school and a street in the west of Hull, Francis Askew was an unusual politician. He was born in Bethnal Green, London, in 1856. The family moved to Dartford in Kent, where Askew was apprenticed to the printing trade. In 1877 he married Lydia Chivers and came to Hull, where he worked at first as a printer and compositor. By 1881 the couple lived at 1, Ellis Terrace, Southcoates, with their two young sons. Ten years later they were at 47, Blake St., Sculcoates.

His involvement with politics began with the Friendly Society movement, which provided working class people with their only means of securing insurance. Askew was also prominent in the United Ancient Order of Druids, and was a member of the Baptist Church. He was elected to the Hull City Council in 1897 for South Newington ward, and in 1908 he became the city's first Labour Alderman. In 1916 he became Lord Mayor.

Tadman's "Hull's Who's Who" of 1935 lists a large number of committees and causes, both local and national, to which Askew gave his time. These were mainly concerned with health, education and pensions, a reflection of his devotion to improving the lives of ordinary people. In 1933 he was awarded an honorary doctorate by Leeds University. He died in 1940.