



THE HACKNEY SOCIETY

# SPACES 2012

News and views about Hackney's built environment

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## Clapton Girls' Academy

**Clapton Girls' Academy was the first school in Hackney to be updated under the Building Schools for the Future programme. The architects Jestico & Whiles were responsible for the redesign and Mansell Construction for the building.**

In 1906 the school opened in Cassland Road as County Secondary School for Girls, South Hackney, and moved to a new building on its current site in Laura Place in 1916. During the war it was evacuated to Bishop's Stortford. In 1947 it was renamed The John Howard School (after the prison reformer, who was born in Clapton). The Laura Place site was extended in 1975, when the school joined with Clapton Park School to become Clapton Secondary School for Girls. The school was awarded Technology College status in 1999, becoming Clapton Girls' Technology College, and gained academy status in 2011 when it took its current name.

Consisting of 40 per cent new buildings and 60 per cent refurbished buildings, the

redesign provides an enhanced physical environment with particular respect to the historic architectural features of the original 'Pankhurst' Building (named after Emmeline Pankhurst). Most notably, the historic oak staircase has been restored and the entrance hall transformed to provide a more welcoming space.

The redesign includes a modern Learning Resource Centre, nine refurbished and modernised science laboratories and a new dining area with glass doors opening onto the original courtyard. A dedicated Sixth-Form area is housed in a new building together with the Applied Learning, Additional Learning and ICT departments. A new assembly hall opens onto a landscaped courtyard.

The architects resolved overcrowding and circulation problems by strengthening movement between the new and existing buildings. They designed solar shading to the new build façades, to echo the horizontal projections of the existing dormer

windows of the main Edwardian building. Sustainable features include highly insulated walls, integrated solar protection, exposed thermal mass, natural ventilation, sedum roofs and daylight-responsive lights. As a result, the design of the school has been awarded a BREEAM rating of 'Good'.

Not only was Clapton Girls' Academy a winner of the Hackney Design Awards 2012, but it was voted by the public as the People's Choice that year.

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# Building Watch

## Corsham Street

By Laurie Elks

The streets of Shoreditch are a jewel in Hackney's crown. Many physical elements contribute to its vibrancy: the explicit industrial character of its buildings; the prevalence of traditional materials such as stock brick; the consistency of its low rise elevations; and the intimate and unexpected pattern of its streets. All of these elements have made Shoreditch not merely cool but economically dynamic with a strong service economy, a range of light industrial activities and an emerging high tech sector around the so-called 'silicon roundabout'. Corsham Street, close by the said roundabout, exemplifies all of these elements – an entire uninterrupted street of pleasing early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial buildings, all of stock brick at a consistent four-storey elevation, and hard to find in a tight cluster of streets.

An organisation called INTO University Partnerships, which specialises in infrastructure joint ventures with educational bodies, applied to Hackney Council for permission for a scheme to demolish the entire south side of Corsham Street, through to neighbouring Brunswick Street. They proposed to build accommodation for 541 students, with ancillary restaurant use, in a development featuring 'shoulder blocks' of 5–7 storeys, and four 'pavilions' of 8–11 storeys.

The application came to committee in February supported by officers and by the Design Review Panel who stated that they were 'convinced by the height and massing of the proposal and felt it appropriately responded to the emerging context of the tall 10 East Road (8–17 storeys) development and the existing context (4–6 storeys)' and that it 'adequately responds to the existing townscape'.

English Heritage, whilst not formally objecting, saw the scheme as a missed opportunity. They suggested that although the buildings are not individually listed, and are not part of a Conservation Area, the Council should view them as 'heritage assets' as defined by the relevant National Planning Policy Statement. EH said that the buildings 'have good street elevations in a stripped Classical idiom ... [and] form a coherent and pleasing streetscape with the warehouses on the north side of Corsham Street.' EH also noted the continuity between the townscape of Corsham Street and neighbouring streets including Bache's Street and Chart Street. It noted that 'the area is interspersed with characterful buildings' and suggested that



'a 'heritage-led regeneration' of the site' be considered – a view which appears to have been supported by the conservation officer tasked to consider the application.

Despite officer support for the scheme the first planning committee deferred the decision to allow for a heritage assessment to be undertaken. Things now took a bizarre turn for the Council elected not to rely on its own heritage assessment but to adopt an assessment commissioned by the developers and reviewed by Ray Rogers, Hackney's erstwhile Head of Conservation.

The developer's assessment – scarcely disinterested – concluded that the buildings were an 'unimportant example of a common building typology of its age' – a view adopted by officers recommending the scheme. As for the Council's conservation officer, who had the temerity to express a different view, the planning committee minutes record the response of the Head of Development Management that 'this was a personal opinion of a member of staff and did not reflect the views of the planning service'. It is understood that this officer has now left the Council's employ. And so the proposal was approved.

This shabby decision bodes ill for Shoreditch. It is surely a matter of urgency that the boundaries of the Conservation Areas be reviewed since the logic of the officers' recommendation dictates that no protection will be afforded to any of Shoreditch's industrial streets outside Conservation Areas. However, that will in turn require the Council to engage additional conservation staff - all Conservation Area appraisals are currently on hold Borough-wide due to shortage of staff, a situation which seems unlikely to change in the near future.

The decision in Corsham Street reflects a systemic pro-development consensus in the planning department and it is surely a scandal that the views of the Council's

own Conservation officer were overridden in such a cavalier fashion. It must be a task for the Hackney Society to challenge this consensus for the future. Otherwise, a future generation of conservationists will be nurturing fragments of industrial architecture in Shoreditch in the future, as they do in Hackney Wick today.

Meanwhile, members are recommended to go and see what is being lost before the wreckers' balls move in.

## London Fields

The park keeper's lodge in London Fields is under threat. Hackney Council intends to seek planning permission to demolish it, maintaining that the building is no longer required for the management of the park. London Fields User Group had hoped the building could be saved and used as a café.

## Clapton Cinematograph Theatre

An Ethiopian church, which owns 229 Lower Clapton Road, has submitted a planning application to alter the façade of this historic former cinema. The plan, which is strongly opposed by local residents, will result in the building resembling the Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion in Axum.

## Threat to Listed Buildings

The 2012 budget announced the withdrawal of VAT relief on approved alterations to listed buildings. This unexpected decision came as a shock to the heritage sector. Due to come into force on 1 October 2012, the measure would add 20 per cent to the cost of alterations approved under Listed Building Consent.

*Thanks to Kopykat for sponsoring this issue*

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# The Lea Bridge River Heritage Centre

By Julia Lafferty

## Background

It is proposed to establish a River Heritage Centre in the former St James's Mission School located in Hackney's Lea Bridge Conservation Area. The Conservation Area also includes a number of early industrial buildings grouped around a cobbled yard and a water feature which follows the course of an inland dock which served the surrounding industries.

The Victorian Mission School is a stone-built Grade II listed building which has been on English Heritage's Buildings at Risk list for a number of years. Vision Homes, who were responsible for the Paradise Park residential development in the Conservation Area, have offered the building to the Clapton Arts Trust for the purpose of establishing the centre on the basis that the costs of restoration and refurbishment are met by the Trust.

## History

Vision Homes' Paradise Park development took its name from the area of land on the banks of the River Lea originally known as Paradise Field. The eminent architect and surveyor William Hurst Ashpitel (1776-1852) owned Paradise Field and was responsible for the design and construction of an inland dock at Lea Bridge in the early 19th century. This provided the focus for the growth of a riverside community

whose children were catered for by the establishment in 1846 of St James's Mission School by the Anglican Church.

Religious institutions played a key role in providing education for the children of the poor in the days before education for the young was both compulsory and free. The Education Act of 1872 and subsequent Education Acts, which laid the foundation for the modern state school system, reduced the need for such provision and the Mission School had closed by the early 1880s. The building then became St James's Mission Hall which held regular services and Sunday schools until its closure in 1922 when it was purchased by the Eclipse Glass Works Company, and thereafter used for industrial purposes.

## Bringing History to Life

A key objective of the centre will be to bring to life the daily existence and experiences of the area's Victorian inhabitants whose livelihoods depended upon the River Lea. The lives of local families such as the Radleys who operated a boatyard at Lea Bridge for over one hundred years is well documented, and, in conjunction with Hackney Archives, it is proposed to make this information available online for visitors, students and local residents. This will develop the research and heritage skills of those involved as well as an awareness of

local history amongst the wider community. By holding special themed events hosted by a project leader/teacher in period costume, the Mission School will act as a 'living exhibition' for children and adults alike, who will be able to experience a Victorian schoolroom at first-hand or try their hand at traditional narrowboat painting.

Utilising the Mission School and the historic river and marshland environment around it, activities and guided tours will be developed in partnership with Hackney Museum, the Hackney Society and local user groups. As part of the long-term development of the centre, it is proposed to acquire a narrowboat which will be equipped to enhance the experience of riverside life and heritage and provide a link to other attractions along the River Lea, such as the Markfield Beam Engine at Tottenham and the proposed Walthamstow Wetlands project currently being developed by a partnership of surrounding London Boroughs in conjunction with Thames Water, British Waterways, English Heritage, Lee Valley Regional Park Authority and other agencies.

In addition there will be scope for promotional events, exhibitions and location work in what is a traditional stone-built Victorian schoolhouse building in an atmospheric and historic riverside setting.



## Hackney Society Events\*

### Hackney Through the Centuries: I

Tuesday 15 May 2012, 7pm

#### Talk/walk with Juliet Gardiner and Ann Robey

Join authors of the latest Hackney Society book, *Hackney: An Uncommon History in Five Parts*, to celebrate its publication. Following a talk by Juliet Gardiner, Ann Robey will lead a walk in the area near the bookshop. Return to the shop for discussion and a glass of wine.

#### Booking essential

Broadway Bookshop  
6 Broadway Market, E8 4QJ

FREE to all

### Hackney Through the Centuries: II – Housing Questions

Wednesday 16 May 2012, 7pm

#### Talk/walk with David Garrard and Margaret Willes

Join authors of the latest Hackney Society book, *Hackney: An Uncommon History in Five Parts*, for an examination of how the district's population has been housed over the past five hundred years, from the Tudor courtiers' residences to the mass housing of the 20th century and beyond.

The event includes a walk looking at some of Lower Clapton's remarkably varied housing stock. Return to the shop for discussion and a glass of wine.

#### Booking essential

Pages of Hackney  
70 Lower Clapton Road, E5 0RN

FREE to all

### Clissold House

Saturday 16 June 2012, 2.30

#### Tour with Richard Griffiths

The architect Richard Griffiths, who was responsible for the restoration of Clissold House, will lead a tour of this Grade II\* listed building.

#### Booking essential

Clissold House  
Clissold Park, N4 2EY

FREE to members, £5.00 non-members

### Annual General Meeting

Saturday 22 September, 7pm

The AGM will be followed by a tour of this Victorian terraced house, by Macdonald Wright Architects. The house has been restored and remodelled to create a flexible

home for the changing needs of a growing family. Insulation, passive solar heating and grey water recycling help to achieve a high level of sustainability. The rear of the house was redesigned to incorporate a terrace, kitchen and dining space connecting the west-facing garden to the existing house.

#### Booking essential

39 Parkholme Road, E8 3AG

## Noticeboard

### Hackney Hear

Hackney Hear is a smartphone app that provides a way to explore and rediscover London Fields through the stories of residents, local writers and musicians. It includes Iain Sinclair on the history of the area, performance poet Shane Solanki on the Lido, and photographer Tom Hunter on the 1980s squatting scene. Audio is triggered via GPS-location. The app may be downloaded at [www.hackneyhear.com](http://www.hackneyhear.com).

### Leyton Marsh

Hackney residents are among those protesting against Waltham Forest Council's decision to allow the Olympic Development Authority to build a temporary basketball court on Leyton Marsh. They object to being deprived of valuable green space, and are concerned about the risk to health from asbestos contamination on the site.

### Haggerston Estate



Andrea Luka Zimmerman is to make a film about this estate, which is to be redeveloped this summer. Zimmerman, a resident on the estate, is part of the artistic collective Fugitive Images, which created the public art project 'I am here'. This project involved covering boards on windows of empty flats with photographs of residents.

### St Mary's

Victorian box pews in St Mary's old church are to be replaced with modern seating. The church is to be redeveloped as a community arts centre and flexible seating would allow the whole building to be

used for performances, workshops and exhibitions. Plans to remove the pews have been opposed by English Heritage, the Church Buildings Council, the Georgian Group and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

### Street Art London

Hackney locations are featured in a smartphone app from Street Art London and Geo Street Art. At launch, the app includes almost 600 images from Street Art London's archive and features the work of over 90 street artists. GPS functionality enables the street art to be located.

### Stoke Newington CAAC

The Stoke Newington Conservation Areas Advisory Committee is looking for new members. The group comments on planning applications and monitors developments in the area. Meetings are held in the rear Committee Room of Stoke Newington Library on the first Monday of the month (except bank holidays) from 6.30pm to 8pm.

For more information contact Emma Green ([emma-louise-green@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:emma-louise-green@hotmail.co.uk)).

## Publications

### Acquired for Development By...

edited by Gary Budden and Kit Caless is a collection of 25 short stories and poems set in Hackney written by authors who have lived or still live in the borough. It features writers such as Lee Rourke, Gavin James Bower, Molly Naylor, Siddhartha Bose and David Dawkins. The cover illustration is by Laura Oldfield Ford. Influx Press, £11.99. To be reviewed in the next *Spaces*.

## Hackney Society News

### Funding

Discover Hackney has awarded the Hackney Society a grant for events to celebrate the Hackney Society's new book, *Hackney: An Uncommon History in Five Parts*. Contributors to the book will lead walks and give talks at the Broadway Bookshop on 15 May and at Pages of Hackney on 16 May (see Events section for details).

**Spaces** is published by the Hackney Society. Views expressed in the articles are not necessarily those of the Society.

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\* Please check our website for up-to-date information and additional events that are organised throughout the year. Most of our events are free to Hackney Society members and £5 to non-members. For special and joint events there may be a charge for members. To avoid disappointment please book a place as some events have a limited number of places. To book email [events@hackneysociety.org](mailto:events@hackneysociety.org) or phone 07771 225183.