

Grange Hall By Jim Richards*



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Grange Hall on Evering Road is a former West Hackney National School. It is locally listed, being one of only two ecclesiastical buildings that survive in the Parish of West Hackney. Construction of the school began in 1837 and was built for the newly formed West Hackney Parish that included St James' Church, rectory and burial ground.

It is believed that the use of the building as a school ceased in the 1960s and had been occupied by an engineering component merchant for over 35 years until it was purchased by our developer client, Cubitt Greystock, in 2013.

It is an impressive example of late Georgian architecture but was in a very poor state of repair both internally and externally, and it was decided that the building would benefit greatly from careful restoration and reuse. We have preserved and augmented the historic character of the existing fabric through the respectful addition of modern features using high quality materials and detailing in a complementary yet contemporary manner.

Our proposed careful approach to reuse was well received by the London Borough of Hackney, and the conservation officer in particular was involved in much of the initial discussions on the proposals. This dialogue was continued through the detailed

design process in order that the use of new materials, where needed, was appropriate to both the existing fabric and the overall architectural vision.

We have respected much of the original footprint and layout of the existing building, and utilised existing doorways and generally built the individual dwellings around each of these existing entrances. Architectural

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Whither Shoreditch? By Kirsty Styles

In Portrait of a Community I have offered a brief history of Shoreditch 'Tech City' but also I have expressed reservations about its future.

Certainly there is an impressive cluster, world class even, of IT companies. But how securely rooted is it for the future? Its companies are footloose and mobile, restless in pursuit of the best advantage, and Shoreditch maybe doesn't have quite so many 'unique selling propositions' as its cheerleaders suppose. Office rents are rising and skills are permanently in short supply. The attractions of the UK for IT geni are diminishing with the shadow of Brexit and our schools and colleges have conspicuously failed to provide the pool of talent required by IT start-ups. I pointed out that even within the UK, many of the newest generation of start-ups are building their business far from Shoreditch. I didn't want to overdo the note of caution but these things need saying!

Since writing this piece I have become one of the 'boomerangs', those hopeful souls who headed from the North down to London, only to find their former homes, or maybe the cheap house prices, calling them back. In 2013, I had made Hackney home, as it turned out temporarily, having already set to work as a journalist documenting the rise and rise of East London's Tech City. I sought as a tech journalist to point all of these things out and to draw attention to the fact that many of our latest would-be Bill Gates were complaining of high rents and high business rates.

On the news that Uber lost its licence to operate in the capital last month, and with the head of its operations here quickly

handing her notice in too, I couldn't help feeling like I'd decided to quit the Klondike just before bust. As a journalist, I'd long been critical of how eagerly the UK had imported Silicon Valley products and business models to offer one-tap services at the expense of workers' rights and public safety, largely to the benefit of far-flung venture capitalists hungry for personal data (see, for example, <http://www.wired.co.uk/article/tech-city-morality>).

And now Transport for London under the helm of Labour Mayor Sadiq Khan found: 'Uber's approach and conduct demonstrate a lack of corporate responsibility in relation to a number of issues which have potential public safety and security implications'.

London is not the first city to add up the value of importing innovation and found it wanting – Uber, Airbnb, Google and more have met fines, protests and bans across the world – but this marks the city's first proper stand for workers and against tech giants.

I'm not saying that the boom is over. A group called 'Future 50', which describes itself as 'A powerful network of the UK's fastest growing, late stage tech companies', many based around Shoreditch, has recently announced that its members have already attracted \$1 billion of investment raised in 2017 in London. And it's said that a new tech business is formed every single hour in London and so it's no surprise the capital has more than 300,000 tech workers, five times as many as its nearest neighbour in the North West, that's Manchester. Even so there must be some soul-searching on what it means to run a tech firm in London today.



As a late resident of Hackney I would suggest that Hackney Society urges caution on Hackney Council when it seeks to tear up streets and places to feed the restless behemoth of Shoreditch Tech. The 'elephant in the room' is that IT companies and IT workers can go as fast as they come. Over 1/3 of tech workers are from overseas, and their loyalty to London is sorely tested by soaring rents and unaffordable houses. We need to hold on to what makes Shoreditch special (and which attracted the IT start ups in the first place) in case Tech City moves on.

And as a re-born Northerner I would point out that the North relies far less on international workers, only around 6% are from outside the UK, and that the North offers many advantages – affordable housing, relaxed commutes and gorgeous scenery that young Londoners have given up dreaming about. As someone whose job it now is to campaign around jobs in the North, it's hard not to believe Shoreditch must look to its laurels.

Grange Hall continued

features – including rubbed brick lintels, stone copings, and stepped brick coursings – are retained, refurbished and celebrated, and the existing timber A-frames roof structures within the main spaces have been adapted and retained to provide central features within the main living spaces.

Existing window openings have also been retained along the frontage, with new two-storey glazed openings formed along the main longitudinal elevations punched in between the existing masonry piers. New angled dormer windows have also been inserted in the large roofscapes and mimic the remains of existing dormers that were previously incorporated within the valley of the roofs, and ensure that these previously concealed spaces have been brought back

into use. Where obvious contemporary insertions have been made, such as terraces, balconies, gates and fences, these have been undertaken in a robust yet respectful manner, and also provide a hint of the 'personality' of the architect.

The strategy for working with the existing fabric was to replace all existing timber windows, as well as introducing new thermally efficient composite and aluminium windows to new elements. The existing masonry was upgraded internally with insulation fixed behind new wall linings. New concrete floors were laid throughout, thereby allowing new waterproofing and increased levels of insulation to be installed at low level. The existing roof was also stripped, with increased levels of insulation and breather

membrane installed as part of a new slate roof covering.

Grange Hall has been a labour of love for our practice, the extended programme could have led to a disjointed process between design and construction, but the team has continued to review and assess each detail, particularly as the construction phase threw up many technical and logistical challenges. Our desire to retain the overall architectural vision was maintained throughout as well as being consistently championed by our client. The result is a collection of unique contemporary dwellings that are embedded within the historic fabric, without the need to resort to gimmickry or pastiche.

*Jim Richards is a director of Nissen Richards Studio.

Picture from a *Portrait*: Hackney Wick Stadium By Laurie Elks

Our 50th anniversary publication, *Hackney: Portrait of a Community 1967-2017*, has just been published. In our next few editions we'll be publishing some of the great photos from the book.

Portrait commemorates Hackney's two dog tracks: Clapton, which closed in 1974, and Hackney Wick, which limped on until 1997. No trace of either stadium remains. It is a lost world of cloth caps and fags, working class, 'the traditional East End at its best'. Berris Conolly's superb portrait shows an afternoon meeting at the Wick in 1987. By this time, the only point of the race was to provide a live TV feed to off-course betting shops. Only a handful of punters turned up, sustained by plenty of strong stewed tea and the perpetual hope of outfoxing the eternal enemy, the bookmaker.



Hackney Society News

Do you still renew your membership by Standing Order? ACT NOW

We wrote to all members at the start of the year to advise that we were changing banks and to encourage all members to move to Direct Debit or PayPal, to make any future banking changes and administration easier in the future. If you have yet to amend your standing order please visit <http://hackney.hk/directdebit> for more details. Signing up for a direct debit is quick and simple and needs doing only once.

Mind the Gap: We aim to do some analysis of Hackney Council's standards in dealing with applications for 'gap sites' (sometimes known as 'garden grabs') – where permission is sought to build on garden sites abutting on to the street. We would be very interested to hear from members about examples – good and bad – they are aware of. Please contact info@hackneysociety.in in the first instance with a brief outline (and a planning reference number if known) and your contact details.

Hackney Society Events

Hackney Society AGM preceded by a tour of Holborn Studios

Tuesday 14 November 2017,
6pm for 6.30pm tour; AGM at 7.30pm
Meet at 49/50 Eagle Wharf Road, N1 7ED.
You will be able to book online via hackneysociety.org

Hackney: Portrait of a Community 1967-2017

Monday 27 November 2017, 7pm

Talk with Laurie Elks, Julia Lafferty and Ian Rathbone

Join authors of the latest Hackney Society book to celebrate its publication. Laurie Elks will speak about the North London Line, Julia Lafferty on Murder Mile and Ian Rathbone on betting shops in Hackney. Meet at Pages of Hackney, 70 Lower Clapton Road, E5 0RN.
Booking essential. Book via Pages of Hackney: <http://www.pagesofhackney.co.uk>

Hackney: Portrait of a Community 1967-2017

Wednesday 29 November 2017, 7pm

Hackney's post-war history: battles fought, battles won, and battles lost

Talk with Ken Worpole and Margaret Willes

Join these authors of the latest Hackney Society book to celebrate its publication. Meet at Broadway Bookshop, 6 Broadway Market, E8 4QJ.
Booking essential. Book via Broadway Bookshop: <http://www.broadwaybookshophackney.com>

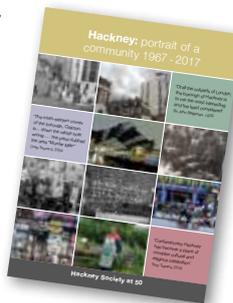
Festive Social

Tuesday 5 December 2017, 7pm
Meet at 7pm at St Augustine's Tower.
See website for further details.

Publications

Hackney: Portrait of a Community 1967-2017

edited by Laurie Elks marks the 50th anniversary of the Hackney Society. Its 50 chapters cover social, political and cultural issues in the borough over the past half century. Hackney Society, £18 (£16 to members of the Hackney Society).



The Last London: True Fictions from an Unreal City

by Hackney writer Iain Sinclair documents a series of solitary walks and collaborative expeditions to make a final reckoning with a capital stretched beyond recognition. Travelling from the pinnacle of the Shard to the outer limits of the London Overground system at Croydon and Barking, from the Thames Estuary to the future ruins of Olympicopolis, Sinclair reflects on where London begins and where it ends. Oneworld, £18.99.



East London: An Opinionated Guide

by Sonya Barber with photography by Charlotte Schreiber is a love letter to Hackney and beyond. It provides over 50 suggestions for where to eat, sleep, shop and drink. Hoxton Mini Press, £9.95.



Noticeboard

RIOgeneration

The Rio has raised £125,743 for a second screen and repairs to the exterior. RIOgeneration is a capital project to improve, sustain and expand the work of this much loved community cinema.

Abney Park Chapel

The chapel in Abney Park Cemetery has been restored. Designed by William Hosking and completed in 1842, the non-denominational chapel was gutted by fire and vandalism in the 1980s. Work, which included a new roof, was funded by Hackney Council and Historic England. On 3 August a ceremony was held to celebrate the improvements. The chapel had been on the buildings at risk register since 1991.

Green Flags

Hackney now has 23 Green Flags – awards for well managed green spaces. Woodberry Wetlands, which opened to the public in April 2016, won a Green Flag in July. Recent winners of the award are Stonebridge Gardens (aka Snake Park) and Kynaston Gardens.

Vittoria Wharf

The group Save Hackney Wick is campaigning to prevent the demolition of Vittoria Wharf, which is home to many artists. Site owner London Legacy Development Corporation has approved an application to replace artists' studios with two new bridges connecting Hackney Wick and Fish Island.

Springfield Park

Hackney Council has received £3.3million from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery Fund for the restoration of Springfield Park, which opened as a public park in 1905. The project will include: refurbishing the park's buildings; upgrading the footpaths, play equipment and gates; and working to preserve and enhance the park's landscape. In addition, the stable block will be restored so that it can host small businesses, and the derelict glass houses will be replaced with a new community space. Plans for the park were developed in consultation with Springfield Park User Group.

Thanks to Kopykat for sponsoring this issue

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