



THE HACKNEY SOCIETY

SPACES 2026

News and views about Hackney's built environment

Issue 91 Summer 2026 // ISSN 2047-7465

The 300-year story of the shops and trades in Hackney's historic shopping street

By Carolyn Clark, community historian



Above, Parkes Drug Store, 345 Mare Street, c1935. Credit: The Boots Archive. Right, Front cover of *Tales of Central Hackney Shops and Trades – 1670s-1970s*. Credit: Carolyn Clark and Alison Palmer

Early in 2022, Hackney Historic Buildings Trust commissioned me to develop Hackney Time Travel – a series of exhibitions and activities in St Augustine's Tower.

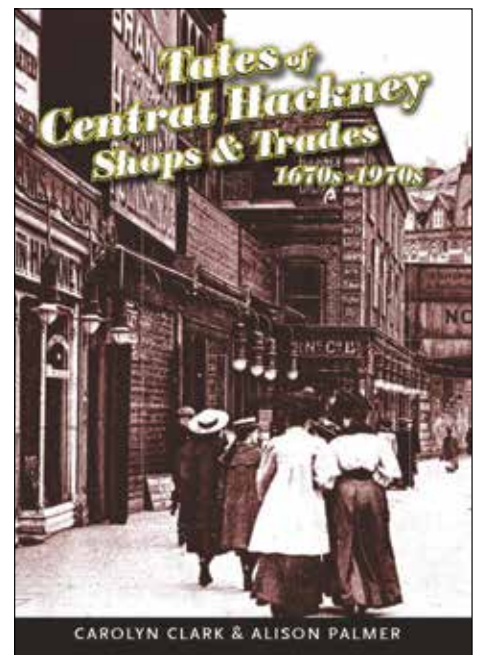
Alison Palmer helped with the research, creating an extensive and comprehensive spreadsheet of the history of each building on Mare Street from Dalston Lane to Paragon Road. This was combined with historical accounts from numerous sources, together with information from archives, newspapers, maps, and oral histories, to tell the intriguing, often surprising story of how Hackney village's thoroughfare and side streets evolved into a major high street serving Northeast London and beyond.

This Hackney Shops and Trades exhibition in the Tower was small but very popular. Visitors added their own knowledge and memories to the mounting collection of material. The resulting book was launched at the Hackney History Festival in May.

Tales of Central Hackney Shops and Trades 1670s-1970s by Carolyn Clark and Alison Palmer shows how linen drapers developed department stores, bespoke furniture makers became suppliers to Hackney's large furniture emporium, opening a branch in Oxford Street,

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and highly skilled grocers, specialist bakers, butchers, and dairies diversified and evolved into chain stores and supermarkets.

Discover how shop buildings, many familiar today, developed alongside transport and road changes to create a centre providing for every need. Learn about the lives and skills of traders, apprentices, and shop workers, and how shopping itself has changed with the times.

Help support our work by joining the Hackney Society.
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www.instagram.com/hackney_society/

Continued overleaf



Clockwise: Parnell department store, 365-371 Mare Street, c1910. Credit: Carolyn Clark. Marks and Spencer's third Mare Street shop, 1930s. © Estate of Abram Games. Henry Clogg trade card, c1900. Credit Carolyn Clark.



Chapters cover the early years, drapers to department stores, clothes and shoes makers and sellers, 20th-century chain stores, food, eating out, entertainment, homes and homeware, furniture, books, printers and stationers, photography and photographers and street trading. As well

as the means to trade with tokens, to hire purchase, to financial institutions.

The new book is published by the Hackney Society and follows the style of my previous works: *The Shoreditch Tales*, *The Lower Clapton Tales*, *The East End Canal Tales*, and *Tales of Old Ford, Bow*. It is

lavishly illustrated with 280 images, many not published before, and several maps.

Tales of Central Hackney Shops and Trades 1670s-1970s is on sale for £10.95 in local bookshops, and online from www.hackneysociety.org and www.shoreditchtales.com

Old St Mary's seeks funds

A campaign has been launched to save the Grade II* listed St Mary's Old Church in Stoke Newington from closing and the loss of a treasured community venue.

The team behind London's only surviving Elizabethan church need to raise £30,000 for urgent replacement of its ground toilet drain and other repairs and they're urging the public to donate. Without the work, it could close.

Deirdre Malynn, Director of the Old Church, said: "This building is such a gem – it's a beloved space. In the past year we've put on more than 160 events. But we're at imminent risk of closure if we can't raise these funds. The joints between the Victorian clay pipes which run from the venue into the graveyard have dropped, causing sewage to back up ... Now it has become critical."

"We would like to keep the church going for the next generation and to see it reach its 500th birthday. There is something very special about the acoustics in this building

and the gardens and graveyard outside are a haven for wildlife and a place for people to sit and be still."

If the funds are raised, expert contractors will work to sensitively excavate the site and replace the crumbling pipework. They'll also repair the water supply, replace a damaged ramp and repair other damage caused by the broken pipes.

The church dates from 1563 with an 1827-9 restoration by Charles Barry. It reopened after Covid in 2022 as an arts centre, supporting grassroots community events. As well as being a consecrated church, it's also a community space and music venue hosting everything from Baroque and folk to techno.

The church has wider problems with its fabric as well as the plumbing. It is already on the Historic England Heritage at Risk register as under "immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; no solution agreed".

We hope to write more about these issues in a future Spaces.



Picture Peter Alhadeff

To donate, visit www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/save-the-old-church

Navarino Mansions: what's in a name?

All over London there are streets and places named after 19th century military engagements and Hackney certainly has its share, like Trafalgar Mews and Talavera Place. Heroes like Horatio Nelson and the Duke of Wellington (in these cases respectively) were greatly venerated. But have you wondered why Hackney also has Navarino Mansions, Navarino Grove and Navarino Road?

The battle of Navarino in 1827 was last major naval battle in history to be fought entirely with sailing ships. British, French and Russian vessels defeated the Ottoman Empire in the battle in Navarino Bay in the Peloponnese peninsula in Greece. It is regarded in Greece as a major step towards its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1830.

It was a time when there was a great romantic attachment to Greece in the rest of Europe. The poet Lord Byron died there



Left, British memorial in Navarino bay - picture Martin Saunders. Right, Battle of Navarino memorial in Pylos, Greece - picture Paul Bolding

in 1824. Philhellenism was strong in Britain, and the public and press celebrated the battle as a victory for freedom and Christianity over tyranny. In addition, Britain wanted to reduce the chances of France and Russia gaining influence when Greece became independent.

Such is the respect Greece feels towards its allies in the battle that a triangular



obelisk stands in the town of Pylos, facing the bay, remembering the three admirals, including the British commander Sir Edward Codrington. In the battle, 75 British sailors lost their lives and they are remembered in a separate memorial on the islet of Chelonaki in the bay.

Paul Bolding

Holborn Studios in administration

Holborn Studios, housed in a former Victorian industrial complex in Hoxton, has gone into administration and the business has closed. The move follows a 14-year struggle by the family owners against planning permission for redevelopment, including three High Court decisions in its favour. (Spaces passim)

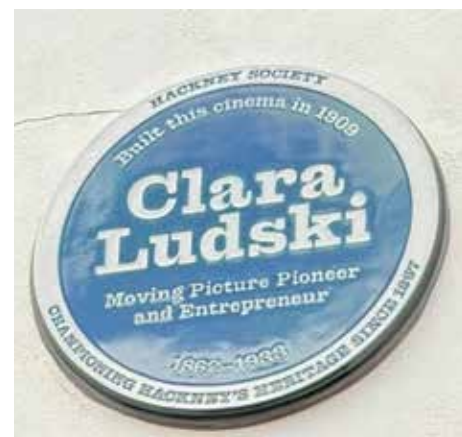
Over its 37 years' existence, celebrities like David Bowie, Kate Moss and David Beckham were photographed there by star photographers, among them Helmut Newton, Annie Leibovitz, Clive Arrowsmith, Terence Donovan and David Bailey.

Co-owner Billy McCartney told the *Hackney Citizen* there was a "historical debt to HMRC that triggered the insolvency proceedings". The closure also means the loss of two associated businesses, the floating Caravel restaurant and Studio kitchen, and a total of 33 jobs.

"The landlord obviously wanted us out of the building," McCartney told the *Hackney Citizen*. "They want to redevelop it. So with us out the way, it makes things a lot easier."

The site includes a historic chimney at the rear of the Shepherdess Walk site by the Regent's Canal.

Paul Bolding



Clara Ludski plaque unveiled

The Hackney Society has unveiled a plaque for cinema pioneer Clara Ludski at the Rio Cinema in Dalston.

As part of the society's plaque programme, this recognises the women who helped shape the borough, and Clara Ludski's role as founder of the then Kingsland Empire makes her an essential part of Hackney's cultural story.

Dalston has long been a place for creativity, independence and new ideas. Clara Ludski's legacy is part of that continuing story, reflected in the life of the Rio today, with the RIO FOREVER billboard currently overlooking Gillett Square.

Julian Harrap to restore Bowie home

Hackney-based practice Julian Harrap Architects is to work on restoration of David Bowie's childhood home in southeast London. The house at 4 Plaistow Grove, Bromley is due to open to the public in 2027 as part of the 10-year commemoration of his death.

"Acquired by the Heritage of London Trust and curated by Geoffrey Marsh, the project will see Julian Harrap Architects carefully return the house to its early-1960s appearance through detailed investigation of original materials, finishes

and layouts," the practice said on Instagram.

The restored home will feature never-before-seen archival items, immersive spaces and creative workshops for young people, supported by funding from the Jones Day Foundation and contributions from Bowie's friends.

David Bowie in 2002 - picture Adam Bielawski, Wikimedia Commons



Painting the town



10FOOT tag on the Hackney Central railway bridge



Orsman Road art in 2020



Caravaggio's Bacchus reimagined on 100 Mare Street by Pete Barber of Global Street Art for the London Mural Festival 2024



The ROA hare in Hackney Road - picture bixentro on Flickr under CC BY 2



The Illusion of Democracy at Dalston Kingsland station

Is it graffiti or is it art? Whatever it is, you can't miss it. Probably no one finds tagging acceptable (think 2WINS or 10FOOT) but street art like the ROA "rabbit" (actually a hare) in Hackney Road (now gone) to Stik and Banksy, has largely been accepted into the mainstream.

Hackney has more than its fair share, though Spitalfields (Tower Hamlets) has vastly more, much of it clearly art and some also straying into advertising.

One of the more notorious tag artists is 10FOOT, whose real name is said to be Samuel Moore. He is seen as an anarchist, but he was profiled in the Financial Times in 2023 and even edited an issue of the Big Issue in 2025. His tag can be seen, at least four years after it appeared, on the railway bridge over Mare Street.

The artist 2WINS is especially prolific in Hackney, leaving their "rollers" (tags applied with paint rollers rather than spray cans) at street level and high up on buildings.

Stik has a high degree of acceptance, from Hackney Council at least. He started painting his iconic stick figures on the streets of east London in the early 2000s. His four-metre high bronze sculpture of a couple, "Holding Hands", was erected in Hoxton Square in September 2020. The council's publication Hackney Today featured the work on its cover in the same month and thousands of copies were allegedly stolen to be sold online.

The council's policy is to remove graffiti but its website says if it's on your property and you want to keep it, you have to tell them. However, it appeared in 2010 that it was a petition and public pressure that saved the huge black and white "rabbit" on a wall in Hackney Road by Belgian artist Rao after the council threatened to remove it. It disappeared anyway about 2018 through redevelopment.

The council requires anyone planning a mural or street art to contact it to check that it doesn't conflict with the graffiti policy. It says it will remove "street art or graffiti if we believe it spoils the local environment or stops people enjoying the area". It's not clear if that test is what saved the 10FOOT tag on the railway bridge. More likely, it was too difficult to remove safely.

But the line isn't always clear.

Take "The Illusion of Democracy", a huge cursive text mural that towers

over Dalston Kingsland station. It's accompanied for no obvious reason by the Australian Aboriginal flag. No one seems to know who did it. Or why. Since it appeared in 2019, it has been defaced at the bottom with a cartoon figure and a couple of small tags. The graffiti is actually on the wall of an apartment building at 57 Kingsland High Street, at the opposite end from several tags, including the ubiquitous 2WINS.

Many admire the work of another artist, Ben Eine, who specialises in giant lettering in extravagant fonts like the one illustrated in Ebor Street, Shoreditch.

One of the more tasteful is a Banksy-style stencil depiction by artist Stewy of women's rights campaigner Mary Wollstonecraft that can be seen on the side wall of Newington Green Unitarian Church since at least 2014.

Few Banksys survive in Hackney but one, sometimes called Balcony Family, of the royal family waving, dating from 2003, can be seen at 129 Stoke Newington Church Street. It was created for an album cover for Blur and hit the headlines after Hackney Council partly painted it over in 2009. Alan Laing, the Hackney council cabinet member for neighbourhoods, said the council removed all graffiti regardless of artistic value. "Hackney Council does not make a judgment call on whether graffiti is art or not; our task is to keep Hackney's streets clean," he was quoted as saying by the Guardian.

That policy appears to have changed since.

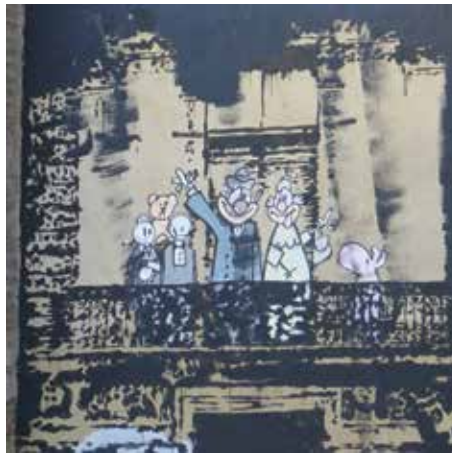
The Council has teams that remove graffiti when they can reach it. However, one of the operatives told a passerby recently they get insulted when people see them doing it.

As ever, street art's in the eye of the beholder.

Spaces would like to write more on this topic, perhaps on individual artists. If you would like to contribute, please get in touch.

Pictures by Paul Bolding except where credited.

Paul Bolding



Banksy's Royal Family Waving in Stoke Newington Church Street in 2014



Mary Wollstonecraft by Stewy



Ebor Street Shoreditch in 2022, by Ben Eine



Holding Hands by Stik



London Fields covid message in 2020 - picture Kirsty Norman

Third Hackney History Festival a great success

Many members will have attended at least some of the 113 events throughout May that comprised this year's Hackney History Festival and no doubt have their own favourites.

For me, a particular highlight was Hackney's Community Orchestra playing music by Mary Dering, who features in our Women from Hackney History book, in front of footage of Hackney in film, at a packed out Round Chapel. I also particularly enjoyed Rob Briggs's outline of the Society's history and certainly learned a lot. That talk is now on our YouTube channel and we hope to add elements of it to our website, a Wikipedia article and potentially a booklet.

Shabna Begum's talk on Bengali Squatters and Sylheti Lascars was both inspiring and illuminating, and I loved Daniel Rachel and Andrew Harrison's discussion on the Rock against Racism concert, particularly when members of the audience joined them on stage to reminisce about the day. Lucy Madison's quiz was fascinating (if hard!) as always.

I loved the Strike Songs Singalong at the Archives and the accompanying theatre

performance. Jessica Crowe's Every House in Hackney Has a Story. What's Yours? was wonderful and has inspired me to find out more about mine. Tom Hunter's Hackney's Squatters, Punks and Ravers was so popular we're planning a follow up as part of Chat's Palace's celebrations in September, as well as a Hackney Society book.

The History of Premises Studio was fascinating; Viv Broughton has certainly had an amazing life and is a great raconteur so the YouTube recording is definitely worth checking out. I was glad we managed to get into some other new buildings this year, and particularly enjoyed the guided tours of Azizye Mosque, St Mark's, and the Georgian Church, (and thank you to Julia Lafferty for explaining the history of the latter).

The festival launch featuring Charlie Peel's amazing maps of Hackney and short talks about their presentations from many of the speakers at Bootstrap and Dalston Curve Garden was a great start and something I hope we can repeat next year.

I was really gratified that so many people donated their time to the festival – the amazing speakers who spent so long researching hidden areas of Hackney's History and the ever patient volunteers who checked people in and dealt with queries. I'm also particularly grateful to WorldWrite, whose trainees filmed the talks so professionally this year.

We're already planning for next year, so if you have ideas of what you'd like to see – or if you feel you have a talk in you – please get in touch. There will be an evaluation coming your way shortly (with a chance to win prizes!) Or email me direct. And please save the dates.

Hackney History Festival 4 will run throughout May 2027, with the two main weekends as follows:

Hackney Archives Sat 8th

Sutton House Sun 9th

Round Chapel Sat 15th

Chat's Palace Sun 16th

Looking forward to it already!

Janet Chapman

hackneyhistoryfestival@gmail.com



Daniel Rachel and Andrew Harrison speaking about Rock Against Racism in Victoria Park



Isidora Benthell and the society's merch



Rob Briggs on stage

Ecclesiastical Heritage at Risk



St Chad's, Dunice Street, Hoxton (built 1867-69, Grade I listed)

Faint hope for Disinfecting Station By Rob Briggs

The inclusion by the Victorian Society of the Hackney Borough Disinfecting Station on Millfields Road in Lower Clapton in its Top Ten Endangered Buildings list for 2026 at the end of April came as a welcome surprise to the Hackney Society's Buildings at Risk Group (BARG), which has been monitoring its plight since late 2024. Never before have I received texts saying an at-risk heritage asset in Hackney had just been mentioned on Radio 4's Today programme.

The Vic Soc urged Hackney Council, as the Disinfecting Station's owner, to enable its revitalisation "through a sensitive sale and reuse", and there are already signs of movement towards this goal.

The building was a municipal disinfecting station, built and opened in 1901 by the then-new Metropolitan Borough of Hackney as a means of countering disease outbreaks and pest infestations by disinfecting people and their possessions. Those treated were able to stay on site temporarily in purpose-built accommodation. Unsurprisingly, various improvements in housing and healthcare provision in the 20th century saw the Disinfecting Station's importance decline and its buildings be repurposed: some enduringly, others not. It is for these and other reasons that the Disinfecting Station is believed to be the only complete example of such a facility extant in England. Readers are referred to Tim Walder's excellent article in *Hackney History* Volume 21 for a full account of its history and architecture.

The appellation Disinfecting Station is interchangeable between a descriptor of the entire site, which is comprised of three Grade II listed buildings plus associated structures and spaces, and the building in which chemical and steam treatments were conducted. This building happens to be the one in by far the worst condition nowadays, partly roofless and overgrown with trees, and so has been a mainstay of Historic England's (HE) Heritage at Risk Register for more than a decade. Although set well back from Millfields Road behind tall steel security fencing, its appalling state of repair can be appreciated from outside the site (especially from the upper deck of the 242 bus).

Of the other two listed buildings, the Shelter House, the original temporary accommodation, remained in use until recently, inhabited by live-in guardians who provided proxy security for the site. BARG has been informed that the sealing shut of a rear exit means the building no longer complies with fire safety regulations and consequently it has been vacated — a concerning backwards step for the fabric of the building, irrespective of the presence now of 24-hour security on the

site. The third building, the Caretaker's Lodge, fortunately remains in excellent condition thanks to it being the home of the charity WORLDwrite, although its lease is due to expire in only a few years.

Hackney Council marketed the Disinfecting Station (retitled the Millfields Road Hygiene Depot) through HE's Heritage Investment Prospectus for 2025, "seeking partners to identify a viable way forward which could include affordable housing or mixed-use development". There are spaces within the site that could take new buildings without causing excessive harm to the settings of the listed buildings — an exciting blend of old and new would seem to be achievable. More recently, BARG learnt in March 2026 that the Council had appointed property consultants to advise it on the options for the future of the site. This is not the first time such work will have been conducted and the previous exercise led nowhere.

The Vic Soc's high-profile intervention has proved both timely and catalytic. At the end of April, the Council offered to sell the Disinfecting Station site to The Hackney Society for a nominal sum, in the hope this would lead to the devising and eventual realisation of plans for restoring the decayed historic buildings and finding a blend of uses delivering long-term financial viability. The Society is not the right kind of organisation to take on such a project, whereas Hackney Historic Buildings Trust is, and it is understood to be keen to explore the basis of this offer further with the Council.

Arguably the main difficulty affecting any regeneration of the Disinfecting Station site is that, unlike the listed houses and still-consecrated churches that dominate Hackney's Heritage at Risk Register entries year after year, it cannot simply be restored to continue serving its original purpose. That *raison d'être* ceased to apply decades ago. It is a unique site that needs — and deserves — a unique solution to secure the long-term future of its constituent buildings. The developments of recent months indicate it may now be ever so slightly closer to that solution. Time will tell whether this cautious optimism is well founded or not.



Caretaker's Lodge showing the crest of the Metropolitan Borough of Hackney - April 2026
photo by Rob Briggs



The Disinfecting Station seen behind piles of council bins April 2026 - picture Rob Briggs



Disinfecting Station about 2020 - picture Hackney Council

CAACs get together

By Fiona Darbyshire, chair of the Kingsland CAAC

The latest in a series of initiatives to coordinate the efforts of the borough's Conservation Area Advisory Committees (CAACs) has taken place under the auspices of the Hackney Society.

CAACs are voluntary bodies —including local residents, architects, heritage experts and others—that advise local planning authorities on planning applications and development within conservation areas. They provide essential local knowledge to ensure the preservation and enhancement of historic areas.

When I first joined the Kingsland CAAC in 2008, Hackney Planning Department organised annual meetings of the CAAC chairs and, depending on the space available, some of the committee members. These provided an opportunity to discuss problems, explore better ways of dealing with applications and be advised on changes to Planning Regulations and the status of Locally Listed Buildings, new Conservation Areas and Hackney Planning documents. The Department also organised several training days for all CAAC members.

In 2016 Hackney Planning launched a quarterly newsletter aimed at keeping everyone updated on all things to do with planning in Hackney. Six editions were published covering topics such as the London Plan, Article 4 Directions*, Building Control, Locally Listed Buildings and the number of planning applications received by the Department and the percentage determined by the target date. The last edition was issued in March 2018 and there were no CAAC general meetings during those two years.

In 2023 planning officer Adam Dyer published the inaugural edition of an annual newsletter for CAACs and the Hackney Society Planning Group (HSPG) in which a meeting between the Conservation, Urban Design and Sustainability (CUDS) Team and the CAACs was promised for the autumn. It didn't materialise and no mention was made of it in the 2024 issue. Adam left the Department and his role as newsletter editor was taken over by Lucy Morrow and the latest edition was issued in March of this year.

The newsletter is very useful but it doesn't have the advantages of a general meeting of the CAAC chairs and committee members. The Hackney Society recognised this loss and Janet Chapman, the HS Chair, organised a meeting in late

March 2026. It was held at the Pembury Centre and attended by 15 members from five CAACs - Clapton, Kingsland, Stoke Newington, Dalston and Central and South Hackney. Lisa Shell from HSPG, Rob Briggs from the HS Buildings at Risk Group and Matt Payne and Lucy Morrow from Hackney Council's CUDS Team.

We discussed our concerns and what might be improved, the website and IT issues, proposals for local and national listing and the council's Heritage Champion. We asked for better clarity on how our responses are used and how we can help the process and how to tackle the inconsistency that we sometimes observe in decisions. We agreed that there was a general lack of awareness of being in a Conservation Area and that most people tend to know little about the much stricter controls of Article 4 Directions*. This sadly can result in loss of heritage features and while we bring potential breaches of planning to Enforcement there is often no news on progress which can be frustrating even though we appreciate that it can be a slow process.

We all agreed that the meeting had been very useful and the Hackney Society are organising another one on 9 September. At the moment it seems that each CAAC does things its own way and there is a need to get some consistency and up-to-date knowledge across all CAACs on changes, from national to local level. A workshop with officers would be particularly helpful in this regard. All but Kingsland CAAC need new members and Shoreditch CAAC, which was not represented at the meeting, is without a chair and currently in abeyance.

Anyone with an interest in the planning process can join a CAAC.

If it appeals to you, please contact info@hackneysociety.org.

* An Article 4 Direction is an order made by a local planning authority that removes "permitted development rights," meaning planning permission is required for certain minor developments that normally would not need approval.

Ageing incinerator to carry on

An incinerator providing power to north London will remain in use well beyond its lifespan, as progress slows on its replacement.

The facility will now remain operational up to and beyond 2030, well past its design life, according to North London Waste Authority (NLWA), which runs Edmonton Eco Park, where the incinerator is based.

The NLWA is controlled by councillors from Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Islington and Waltham Forest, and burns waste from the seven boroughs.

A replacement energy facility was initially slated to begin operation in 2027, and while construction is under way, its completion date is unclear.

Hackney Society Events

Wikipedia training

Our monthly Wikipedia training sessions are at Hackney Archives between 2 and 4pm on the first Saturday of the month – all welcome and all training given. Registration at <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/hackneyhistoryfestival/2199174>

Festival videos

Many of the talks from the Hackney History Festival are on YouTube. Enter "HackneyHistory Festival" in the YouTube search.

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

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