

39 Parkholme Road By Nancy Harrison



Solar water heating tubes mounted on south-facing roof.

June 2010. Photographer: James Wright. Other images: Rogan Macdonald

Efforts have been made in recent years to ensure that new-build housing produces less carbon dioxide, the most significant greenhouse gas affecting climate change. However, the government estimates that one quarter of all carbon dioxide emissions in the UK come from its 26 million existing houses and of these two-thirds are expected still to exist in 2050. So, what can be done to minimise the carbon footprint of existing homes? Hackney architect James Wright was keen to experiment with his own home to determine if it was possible to incorporate exemplary levels of sustainability into a Victorian terraced house.

Built in 1893, and within the Graham Road and Mapledene Conservation Area, 39 Parkholme Road is typical of much of the housing in Hackney. The major remodelling of the house was completed in 2009. The façade was restored without alteration, while the rear of the house was redesigned to incorporate a kitchen and dining space connecting to the west-facing terrace and garden. The simple box form in copper defines the new addition to the original building.

The building envelope was completely stripped internally to allow optimum levels of insulation to be installed to roofs, walls and floors, reducing the heating requirements significantly. Other key features include a state-of-the-art, weather compensated boiler with zoned under floor heating, solar water heating, low-energy lighting and a grey water recycling system. These features yielded an Energy Performance Certificate rating of B (81) – the equivalent of a new-build home under 2010 Building Regulations. The restorations also took into account future climate change predictions, ensuring that future modifications could be made to respond to warmer, wetter and more unpredictable weather patterns.

Materials for much of the remodelling were sourced as locally as possible, including the recycled copper cladding from Hackney Wick, coppiced chestnut fencing from Sussex and Welsh slate roof tiles. Local craftspeople were employed, from smaller tasks such as the restoration of the stained glass windows in the front entrance and the bathroom, to the major job of project management. Many tradesmen arrived at the site by bicycle.

Wright's completed home demonstrates that it is possible to retain our historic buildings while sensitively achieving high levels of sustainability through good design. Macdonald Wright Architects are working on a number of other low energy homes – two of which are in Hackney.

39 Parkholme Road participated in the Hackney Design Awards in 2010, and was awarded a Commendation. The house has featured in a number of architectural and interior publications recently, and has participated in London Open House in 2010 and 2011.

The house will be open for a Hackney Society tour on 15 October (*see Events on p04 for details*).

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Building Watch

The Lee Valley: Green Lung or Brownfield? **By Laurie Elks**

The Lee Valley Regional Park is the brainchild of a former Mayor of Hackney, Sir Lou Sherman. He was the fixer who secured political agreement for the creation of a Park Authority charged with the task of ‘developing and preserving’ (note the contradiction) the Lee Valley as a ‘green lung’ and a place of leisure and recreation for future generations of Londoners.¹

The Lee Valley Regional Park Authority was established in 1967 and has had a rather mixed record since then. In or near Hackney we can ‘thank’ the Authority for green facilities including the lovely nature reserves at Middlesex and Essex Filter Beds and Walthamstow Marshes (albeit the latter was only secured following an epic environmental campaign in the 1980s). The Park Authority’s built facilities include the Springfield Marina, the execrable ice rink and the riding stables and Waterworks interpretation centre at Lea Bridge. Most Lee Valley aficionados would agree that one thing the Park Authority has singularly failed to do is to create a proper awareness and appreciation of the Lee Valley as a green lung – to weld it into one ‘great regional reservation’ as envisaged in Professor Abercrombie’s visionary blueprint, his Greater London Plan of 1944. Even today there are great open spaces close by Hackney including the Walthamstow Reservoirs and Low Hall Farm which are little known and hard to reach.

The Park has a number of structural problems which have contributed to this rather unsatisfactory outcome:

- As an ‘edgeland’ lying on the margin of several local authorities (including Hackney and Waltham Forest), it lies at the periphery of vision of local politicians.
- As a regionally funded body (paid for by council tax payers throughout Greater London, Essex and Herts), the Park Authority feels compelled to produce mega-facilities appealing to a regional consumer base – and considers generally that open space satisfies a more local requirement.
- As a bureaucracy, the Park Authority appears to be constantly hungry for development to satisfy its own sense of mission – sometimes at the expense of its mission to preserve a green lung.

Additionally, the fact that London’s population is now perceived to be on a firm upward trajectory (with an expected 1¼ million more souls by 2030) creates a requirement for local authorities to meet ambitious housing targets imposed by the Mayor of London, leading to a relentless

search for developable ‘brownfield’ sites. This creates disturbing ambiguities. At Lea Bridge Road for instance there is a large site occupied by filter beds from Victorian times to the 1970s, now used by Thames Water as a storage depot but designated as Metropolitan Land. Thames Water are keen to develop the site, which they would classify as ‘brownfield’, whereas environmental activists argue strongly that this site has never been built upon and forms a vital piece in the green jigsaw which the Lee Valley Park is supposed to represent. In its current review of its statutory Park Plan, the Park Authority takes a studied ambiguous position proposing to ‘identify options for a development of the Thames Water site that will bring this site into a Park compatible use.’² Meanwhile, the proposition that such sites are ‘brownfield’ would no doubt be vigorously supported by the inhabitants of Little Snoring opposing the government’s proposed new National Planning Framework and keen to protect their own patch of Arcadia. We inner-city environmentalists must be careful in the allies we choose!

A big set-piece planning battle has concerned the Essex Wharf site, directly across the Lee Navigation from Millfields. This story starts with John Prescott’s decision to overrule the decision of Hackney Council and permit a seven-storey development of the former Latham’s site – close by the Lee Navigation but just outside the Regional Park. That development became a precedent used by Waltham Forest Council to permit development on a similar scale at Essex Wharf just across the Navigation and inside the Regional Park. Essex Wharf in turn has been cited by Thames Water as a precedent justifying development at their site across Lea Bridge Road – truly a malign domino effect. This tale is not yet over, however, as the Park Authority (after some pushing and shoving by its ‘friendly critics’) is applying for judicial review of the Essex Wharf planning consent. The final outcome will have to await a future edition of *Spaces*.

But meanwhile, there are many secret and lovely places in the Lee Valley to explore, and



hopeful initiatives too such as a proposal to make over the Walthamstow Reservoirs for public enjoyment as ‘Walthamstow Wetlands’. Discover and enjoy.

Hackney Society members interested in the Lee Valley can find further information (and become involved) through the Lee Valley Federation Website at www.leavalleyfederation.org/. The Federation’s leaflet on the Lower Lea Marshes can be found on their ‘Links’ tab. The Hackney Society has organised an exploratory ramble through this area (see Events for details).

1. I have written a brief history of the Park Authority and Sir Lou’s role for *Hackney History*. The article is on the website of the Lee Valley Federation at www.leavalleyfederation.org/

2. At the time of going to press, the Lee Valley Federation is challenging the adoption of this form of words.

Upper Clapton United Reformed Church

By Julia Lafferty

A recent planning application to demolish the United Reformed Church at 85a Upper Clapton Road and replace it with three blocks of seven, six and five storeys incorporating residential and religious use has been refused by LBH Planning Department. The Clapton Conservation Areas Advisory Committee has asked to be kept informed of any future application for this site in view of the historic nature of the area. Four locally listed buildings are located on Upper Clapton Road in close proximity to the United Reformed Church site, and nationally listed Grade II Clapton Library and World War II ARP Shelter are located near to the rear of the site on Rosendale Road.

Although Upper Clapton retained its semi-rural character until well into the 19th century, from the late 18th century labourers' cottages began to cluster around the eastern end of Kate's Lane (now Northwold Road) and in short streets built after 1790 on Conduit Field in the lane's northern angle with the main road.

By the beginning of the 19th century, Clapton had become the focus of non-conformist activity. Richard Price of the Old Gravel Pit Chapel and other eminent liberal dissenters had founded Hackney New College in Lower Clapton in 1786. This college became a hotbed of religious and political radicalism. By 1812 the Upper Clapton home of John Rumbal, a prosperous local farmer, was being used for Congregational services. Rumbal and his fellow Congregationalists leased land on Conduit Field from landowner William Parker Hamond and a Congregational meeting house was built and opened in 1816. Rumbal also undertook other development on the site and was responsible for building 83 and 85 Upper Clapton Road, which lie immediately to the south of the present United Reformed Church. These two buildings remained in the ownership of the Rumbal family throughout the Victorian era and into the early part of the 20th century. Both buildings have been locally listed by Hackney Council.

The Rumbal family were well known in Victorian times as dairy farmers and cattle breeders and were amongst the first breeders to introduce Dutch Holstein cattle into England. The striking black and white cattle were later to become highly popular



in the dairy industry because of their milk yield.

Also built in the early part of the 19th century was Bellevue Terrace on the north side of the church site. A number of the original buildings still remain and include locally listed 95 and 97 Upper Clapton Road. Unhappily an original building adjacent to the Church was recently demolished by its owner without reference to the Council and the site is currently awaiting redevelopment. Unlike the developments at the rear of the original Congregational Chapel, Bellevue Terrace accommodated skilled craftsmen and professional people. Documentation obtained from the Sun Fire Office archives reveals that in 1834 a surgeon and cabinet maker were amongst the residents. Bellevue Terrace was indicated in Charles Booth's *Survey into Life and Labour in London (1886-1903)* as 'middle class, well to do' whereas the labourers' cottages in Conduit Street and Caroline Street (now Rosendale Street and Charmwood Street), which lay to the west, were described as being inhabited by the 'poor' and 'very poor' and were demolished in the 1930s by the London County Council to make way for social housing.

The present United Reformed Church replaced the Upper Clapton Congregational Chapel designed by T Emmett and built in 1852. Accommodating up to 1,000 people and faced with Caen stone in



Transitional style, it was described at the time as 'bold and abbey-like'. The chapel was demolished and replaced in 1956 with a new chapel designed by W B Attenbrow. When the Congregational and Presbyterian churches merged in 1972, it became known as Upper Clapton United Reformed Church.

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Hackney Society Events*

Highlights of Haggerston

Saturday 8 October, 11am

Walk with John Finn

Take a tour of Haggerston and see the changes in the area from the past to the present and looking into the future. Find out about local characters, buildings and the changes to Haggerston after the Second World War. After the walk, there will be an opportunity to find out more about the history of Hackney City Farm and watch a 12-minute DVD on the history of Haggerston Park at the Farm. This event is in partnership with Hackney Museum and Hackney City Farm.

Meet at Hackney City Farm, 1a Goldsmith's Row, E2. *Booking essential.* To book your place email linda.sydow@hackney.gov.uk or call 020 8356 2509. FREE to all.

Parkholme Road

Saturday 15 October, 2pm

Tour with James Wright

This Victorian terraced house has been restored and remodelled by Macdonald Wright Architects 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 has been redesigned to incorporate a terrace, kitchen and dining space connecting the west-facing garden to the existing house. Meet at 39 Parkholme Road, E8. FREE to members, £5.00 non-members.

AGM

Monday 7 November, 7pm

Dalston C.L.R. James Library and Hackney Archives, Dalston Square, E8.

Booking essential. To book email archives@hackney.gov.uk or call 020 7241 2886 by 4 November.

Lee Valley

Sunday 13 November, 10.30am

Walk with Laurie Elks

The aim of this walk will be to explore some less well-known areas of the Lee Valley, including the Walthamstow Reservoirs, Low Hall, the Black Path and finishing at the Middlesex Filter beds and Millfields. Expect a total route of about 4-5 miles with a finish at about 1.30pm, followed by a visit (optional) to Chatsworth Road Market.

Meet at the Riverside cafe at Spring Hill (Come earlier if you want to eat an excellent breakfast beforehand.). FREE to members, £5.00 non-members.

Noticeboard



Kynaston Gardens Groundwork UK and the Big Lottery Fund's Community Spaces programme have awarded £48,225 for improvements to Kynaston Gardens. The grant is the result of campaigning by Friends of Kynaston Gardens.

The Residence A topping out ceremony has been held for The Residence, a 27-storey tower block in Woodberry Park. Located by the New River, the tower overlooks the Stoke Newington Reservoirs. At 90 metres, it becomes Hackney's tallest building. It was designed by the architectural practice Rolfe Judd.

Hoxton Revisited A new website (www.hoxtonrevisited.com) shows photos of Hoxton in the past alongside present-day images of the area.

Church Street Theatre A new theatre has opened in Hackney. Located in the basement of Ryan's Bar on Stoke Newington Church Street, Church Street Theatre's first production was *La Chunga* by Mario Vargas Llosa. The resident company, Second Skin, will run a scheme to involve local young people in theatre.

Colville Estate Regeneration plans for the Colville Estate include the demolition of over 400 existing homes and the building of 880 new ones. The new homes, which will be energy-efficient, will be for social renting, shared ownership and private sale. The plans are supported by the Colville Estate Tenants and Residents Association (CETRA).

Robin Hood Community Garden A new community garden has been created at the bottom of Big Hill in Clapton. The site includes wildlife meadows, an orchard and raised vegetable beds.

The Brownswood The Brownswood in Green Lanes has reopened after a revamp. Formerly the pub's name was the Brownswood Park Tavern.

Principal Place The developer Hammerson has plans for a 51-storey building in Shoreditch. An original design in 2008 would have involved the destruction of The Light Bar (see *Spaces* 22 and 23). Local residents are not happy with the current design, but find it considerably better than earlier ones.

Lauriston Primary School Lauriston Primary School received three honours in the British Council for School Environments Awards. It won the Best of British Primary School Award for excellence in design for teaching and learning, was highly commended for the Healthy Schools Award, and commended for the Green School Award. For more about this school, designed by Meadowcroft Griffin Architects, see *Spaces* 28.

Publications

Beyond the Tower: A History of East London by John Marriott explores the relationship between the East End and the rest of London, and challenges many of the myths surrounding the area. Yale, £25.00.

Regeneration and Innovation: Invention and Reinvention in the Lea Valley by Jim Lewis is the last in a series of seven books about the Lea Valley. The author reflects on the history of the region and its ability to rise up, phoenix like, and reinvent itself time and again. He presents stories of invention and innovation in the Lea Valley, leading up to its current boom with the forthcoming London Olympics and the regeneration of some of the surrounding areas. Libri, £9.99.

The Making of the English Gardener: Plants, Books and Inspiration, 1560-1660 by Hackney Society trustee Margaret Willes charts the horticultural revolution that took place between the accession of Elizabeth I and the restoration of Charles II. One of the gardens featured belonged to Lord Zouche in Homerton, looked after by the distinguished Flemish botanist, Matthias L'Obel, after whom the lobelia is named. Yale, £25.00.

The White Van Papers: Tales of London Today: Bugs, Murder and Privilege by Roland Muldoon is a crime novel set around Hackney. Muldoon was formerly artistic director of the Hackney Empire. AuthorHouse, £10.99.

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 or phone 07771 225183.