

Church Walk



© Tim Crocker

Annalie Riches and David Mikhail are landlord, developer and architect for this housing development at 151 Church Walk in Stoke Newington. The accommodation consists of two three-bedroom houses, a triplex and a one-bedroom flat. The former brownfield site is in close proximity to a neighbouring residential block. The design of the scheme has evolved to minimise overlooking and loss of daylight to neighbours, whilst maximising the developable volume.

Residents benefit from a variety of outdoor spaces. In addition to courtyard gardens at the rear, the three terrace roofs step up in a ziggurat form and face south to provide an elevated place to enjoy the wider views and the light, as well as an unexpectedly animated and verdant streetscape.

At the heart of each dwelling is a double-height family room. It gets good natural light, with windows looking north, and large triangular rooflights. Living rooms address the street, providing surveillance and security. The rear 'concertina' elevation acts both to provide oblique views that prevent overlooking, and also to avoid a potentially overbearing and acoustically reverberant wall between neighbours.

Materials are intentionally taken from a limited palette, with white oiled Siberian larch arranged board over board giving a 'corduroy' effect, a light buff-coloured brick set in a flush white lime mortar giving a homogenous 'cast' feel to the street facade, recalling the ubiquitous London stock brickwork of Georgian London, and a large gauge expanded aluminium mesh, finished like the windows in anodised

bronze; individually robust materials, but which together with the wildflower roofs, seek to achieve a new delicacy and lightness.

The project was a winner of the Hackney Design Awards 2014. The judges were 'impressed by the clever use of the site and space while solving the problems of responding positively to its neighbours and the street', and added that 'the planning successfully negotiates potential overlooking issues achieving abundant daylight and outdoor spaces to all the units'. In addition the scheme won the London Building of the Year Award in 2013 and a Housing Design Award.

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Building Watch

Haggerston Baths

Murky Waters

By David Altheer*

As the editor of a news website for Hackney and surrounding areas, I try to keep my personal views out of the reportage. When it came to uncovering more about what had befallen Haggerston Baths, I let a little emotion seep into my stories.

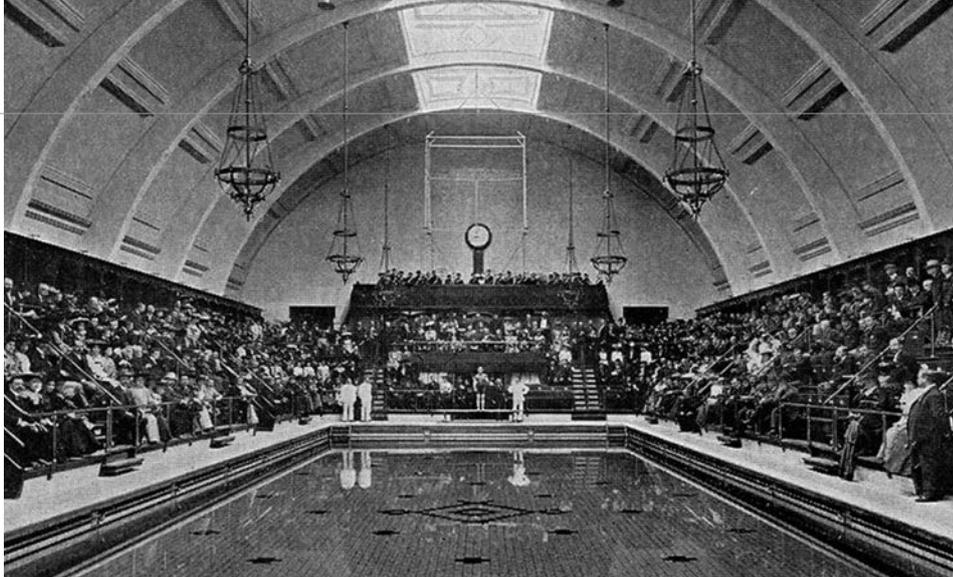
The place had memories for me. On summer evenings the little weathervane ship used to gleam golden like a beacon marking a halfway point on my cycle home from work. Some nights I would turn into Whiston Road E2 in time to meet my wife and daughter there before we went on to our home a few kilometres north.

They were at the Haggy because my then-little girl's swimming teacher had switched after-school lessons from Clissold Baths while a 'leisure centre' was being built to replace the Stoke Newington pool.

That slipped behind schedule and over budget, eventually costing between £35 million and £40 million... it is difficult to be precise because in the argumentative aftermath costly lawyers were consulted.

Usually it is local people who lose out after such follies, and the council decided in 2000 that it could no longer afford what I call the 'people's pool'. So during the last 15 years of indecision neither my daughter, nor anyone else, has been able to slip into its tile-lined 25m x 10m depths.

This spring Hackney Council quietly announced it was seeking 'expressions of interest' from... well, anyone who could take on a lease with a stated £25 million maintenance bill. Flats and shops were mentioned as development options, but a hotel was ruled out.



BNP Paribas, the City property agent the council hired, was expecting approaches from big money and it was not disappointed, although one or two social enterprises also looked over the complex of Edwardian and 1960s buildings.

I was determined to run as many updates as possible in the short time allocated for these expressions, and I did, occasionally hanging about in the street to catch the iron anti-squatter doors at the Laburnum Road side of the building being opened for interested parties.

On 19 June 2015 the deadline to register an interest expired. The 250-year lease on the Grade 2 listed building had attracted more than 400 enquiries and about 100 people were shown over the buildings.

The Haggerston Pool Community Trust wants the council to prioritise any bid that 'includes a swimming pool and other community facilities', and the pool hall should be left intact. This accords with a

detailed 2005 conservation report, on BNP's baths website, describing the main hall as of 'national significance', even though the pool has been altered. Some viewers say they were told the pool had less significance in the national listing, which was awarded in 1998, than the building. They were also told that a lease much shorter than 250 years might be considered.

Nervousness about discussing such matters, however, persists. The truth is still proving difficult to uncover.

*Editor of the independent Hackney-and-around news site LovingDalston.co.uk

Why Haggerston Baths Matter

Lisa Shell, who chairs the Hackney Society Planning Group, considers the importance of Haggerston Baths

The striking edifice of the Edwardian Haggerston Baths possesses undeniable historical and architectural value. Built in the 'Wren Revival' style, with classical pediments, Portland stone dressings and grand colonnaded balcony, in 1903 the baths were squeezed between tiny terraced dwellings so that only the front and rear elevations were originally visible. The more utilitarian laundry building, with a surviving chimney, water tanks and internal basement boilers, sits to its west. Despite radical alterations during the 1960s, the surprisingly modern pool hall remains relatively unaltered, and the ladies' second class bathing booths are intact.

But equally as important as its architectural heritage is the Baths' communal value for those that it served: long-standing residents

Background – Haggerston Baths

Deadline ends for enquiries <http://lovingdalston.co.uk/2015/06/deadline-ends-for-haggerston-baths-enquirers/>

Hackney chronicler wades in to save baths <http://lovingdalston.co.uk/2015/06/save-haggy-baths-says-hackneys-top-chronicler/>

Investors flood in for pool <http://lovingdalston.co.uk/2015/06/investors-flood-hackney>

From baths to brewery? <http://lovingdalston.co.uk/2015/06/haggerston-baths-could-become-a-brewery-pub/>

Hackney washes its hands of heritage <http://lovingdalston.co.uk/2015/05/sell-this-haggerston-heritage-site-says-hackney/>

BNP Paribas Haggerston Baths <http://www.haggerstonbaths.co.uk/background/>

Haggerston Pool Community Trust <https://www.facebook.com/savehaggerstonpool>

who used the facilities for their weekly laundry, who washed in the slipper baths, and taught their children to swim in the magnificent barrel-vaulted hall. The baths were closed, as recently as 2000, since when the Haggerston Pool Community Trust has continuously campaigned for its re-opening, only to be thwarted by the Council's lack of financial power, if not lack of commitment (*Spaces* 33). The reinstatement of a working swimming baths, the need for which is not contested, will remain the ideal conservation outcome both for the community and national heritage.

Haggerston Baths was designed and built by the renowned architect of public baths, A.W.S. Cross, in response to the needs of an area 'crowded with factories and the residences of the artisan class' (Edward Walford, 1865, social commentator, taken from The Architectural History Practice's Conservation Report of September 2005). The early 19th century had seen a gas works and chemical factory built in Haggerston, alongside the traditional industries of furniture and shoe-making, weaving, and brick and tile manufacture, all served by the Regent's Canal, a block north of the Baths. Overcrowding and poverty were the inevitable outcome of the exploitation that came with industrialisation, which led Charles Booth to describe neighbouring Hoxton as 'the leading criminal quarter of London and indeed all England' (quoted by David Mander, 1996, *More Light, More Power: An Illustrated History of Shoreditch*. Stroud: Sutton Publishing, p. 73).

By the time the baths were built, under the long-established Public Baths and Wash Houses Act of 1846, there was a pressing need for facilities in a borough where private bathrooms were scarce and disease rife. The huge complex served to 'promote the health and cleanliness of the working classes, and as a necessary consequence, improve their social condition and raise their moral tone' (quote from the 'Committee appointed to promote the establishment of Baths and Washhouses for the Labouring Classes', 1852), but it also offered entertainment through the winter, when the pool was covered to create a boxing arena.

The powerful presence of the now dilapidated building reinforces Haggerston's identity, and informs newcomers of the social and cultural history of the area. Haggerston Baths is vital to the character of a part of London at great risk of losing any connection with its past, and facilities for its residents.

One more chance on Amhurst Road: The Gibbons Department Store's fight for survival

Lisa Shell, whose practice *Lisa Shell Architects* is involved for the second time in the reconstruction of Nos 3 and 5 Amhurst Road, reflects on the buildings' repeated misfortune and their value to Hackney

On 11 June 2003 the London Fire Brigade battled against a raging fire that destroyed Nos 7-17 Amhurst Road. The Earl of Amhurst at No. 19 was subsequently lost, unable to survive without the structural prop of the neighbour that had supported it for over a century.

But Nos 1-5 did retain their structural integrity, saved by the one party wall which had not been breached during the ambitious 1898 conversion of the terrace to house the magnificent Gibbons Department Store.

Prior to its demise the year before the fire, the store had been run by one of Hackney's longest standing businesses, founded in 1831 by Thomas Gibbons. It is pure coincidence that Thomas Gibbon is today managing director of the family-run property company, GMS Estates, who are the long-standing and, it transpires, committed, owners of the surviving three buildings. Despite significant fire damage they invested in a high-quality part-reconstruction and refurbishment of the surviving buildings, completed only in 2012. The decade-long blight on Amhurst Road was then to be fully eradicated by the construction of a new hotel and student accommodation on the adjacent site, designed by Stephen Davy Peter Smith Architects.



1-19 Amhurst Road pre-2003 (source unknown)

But within months of the commencement of the excavation work in 2013, the basement fridges of Raw Duck, the new restaurant in No. 5, began to topple and window-glass to crack. The remaining stump of the Victorian terrace on Amhurst Road was yet again evacuated and a controlled demolition, with the entire loss of No. 5, followed, since it was found that the foundations could not be stabilised.

Such repeated misfortune is surprising enough, but it is not the whole story. The terrace was built on land reclaimed from the 1861 culverting of the Hackney Brook. The brook, whose course followed the line of Amhurst Road, features in paintings, engravings and old maps and played an important role in the life of Hackney, often flooding the medieval settlement. Once subdued, the immediate area flourished,

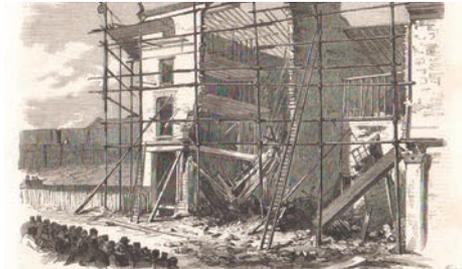
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1-19 Amhurst Road artist's impression (Hackney planning explorer)



Hackney Station postcard from the collection of Melvyn H. Brooks



Illustrated London News 1862 clipping from the collection of Melvyn H. Brooks

with smaller scale speculative development adding to the distinguished residential villas that had been constructed earlier.

But not before a first tragedy had struck: before completion of the construction of the original terrace on Amhurst Road, *The Illustrated London News* of 22 February 1862 reports that 'three of the houses fell in . . . Three [of the workmen] were found to be dead and the survivors . . . conveyed to the German Hospital'. Those three houses were Nos 1-5 Amhurst Road.

This false start explains why the 1870 OS map shows a completed terrace, but other sources claim that it was constructed during the 1870s. The terrace subsequently provided shops and entertainments to Hackney's prosperous residents, and facilities for railway commuters for about 130 years. This area of Hackney prospered well into the 20th century, only to suffer decline with the rest of the borough after the Second World War.

We understand from the developer of 7-19 Amhurst Road, that the ground beneath Nos 1-5 is now firm and the terrace will rise again for the fourth time, to recover the quality and character of that which once housed the Gibbons Department Store, and to restore a fine architectural and aesthetic backdrop to the street.

But even if the power of the Hackney Brook is finally defeated, this may not be the final chapter for the Amhurst Road terrace: in 20 years Crossrail 2 may still sweep through Hackney Central taking the 'safeguarded' Travelodge and TK Max development with it, again testing the resilience of the fabric of Nos 1-5 Amhurst Road.

Noticeboard

WWI plaque

Cllr Guy Nicholson, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, unveiled a plaque at 16 Alkham Road, N16 to commemorate the first bombing raid on London during WWI. A bomb was dropped from a German Zeppelin on 31 May 1915.

The Prince Edward

Hackney Council has granted The Prince Edward planning protection as an Asset of Community Value. The pub in Wick Road was built in 1886.

Geffrye Museum

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has awarded the Geffrye Museum £11m to support its plans to develop the museum for the future. New features will include gallery and library spaces to display more items from the collections and archives, inspiring new facilities for the learning and events programme, enhanced visitor services and an additional entrance opposite Hoxton station.

The Chesham Arms

The Chesham Arms reopened on 1 July following a campaign by the Save The Chesham group who objected to the owner's unauthorised plan to turn the pub into a residential property. The pub was the first building in Hackney to be listed as an Asset of Community Value.

Cremer Street Studios

Artists at Cremer Street Studios have been told to support demolition of their building or leave the premises within two months. If they agree to sign a letter supporting development plans, they will be allowed to stay until November.

Hoxton Hall

Hoxton Hall has been restored by Foster Wilson Architects. The five-year project has doubled the Grade II* listed hall's audience capacity by opening up its upper and lower side balconies for public use. Improvements have also been made to the building's foyer and youth arts centre facilities.

TREExOFFICE

TREExOFFICE is a pop-up office built around a tree in Hoxton Square. It was designed by Natalie Jeremijenko with artists Shuster + Moseley, architects Tate Harmer and briefing architects Gensler. The initiative is part of the Park Hack project, led by Groundwork London and Hackney Council, and set up to test



new models to sustain and enhance public spaces. Money from renting the office to business or community groups will be put back into maintaining local parks. The tree office will be in place until December.

Publications

Hackney writer Iain Sinclair has two new books out.

Black Apples of Gower

rediscovers the paths of Sinclair's childhood in South Wales. Little Toller Books, £15.

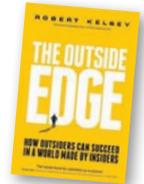
London Overground. A Day's Walk Around the Ginger Line

provides an account of a walk along London's Overground network. Hamish Hamilton, £16.99.



The Outside Edge: How Outsiders Can Succeed in a World Made by Insiders

Robert Kelsey distinguishes between advantaged and disadvantaged outsiders. In contrast to Malcolm Gladwell, Kelsey believes that most outsiders are disadvantaged. He sets out to establish how such people can develop the edge required to succeed. Capstone, £9.99.



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