



THE HACKNEY SOCIETY

SPACES

2011

News and views about Hackney's built environment

Issue 33 Summer 2011

Bateman's Row By Kevin Moore



I first came across the architect couple Soraya Khan and Patrick Theis in 1999 when I asked them to renovate my own house. They were keen to create a kitchen in the basement, but less excited about the prospect of renovating an entire listed building. Wanting a single contractor, I took them out of the equation. Big Mistake! Bateman's Row is a remarkable building reminiscent of a Le Corbusier villa, recalling that period of heroic modernism. The interior with dark, deep corners, numerous turns and small cupboard spaces hints at a mixture of medieval and modern.

The building is a clever mix-use development with the architects' own home on the second, third and fourth floors, with an office on the first floor. Two studio flats and a one-bedroom flat also occupy this constrained site. The ceiling heights vary, to reflect the use of the rooms. There are a lot of ideas packed into a small building. The cantilevered staircase provides the wow factor, but flush, frameless windows, glazed corners, and contrasting deep recesses accentuate the rich texture

showing this to be a finely crafted and considered building.

The corner of Bateman's Row and French Place is outside the South Shoreditch Conservation Area. I only wish there were more new buildings of this quality within it.

Of the building the RIBA said: 'In its response to its surroundings, its scale and its mix of uses, this development defines a vision for the future of Shoreditch. It provides an environment for family-living within a tough urban context and an apartment with qualities that you couldn't easily find in a house ... It is a relevant piece of city-making that is ordinary in its programme yet is executed with extraordinary care and judgement, taking it into the realms of the special.'

No wonder Bateman's Row was shortlisted for the Stirling Prize. The building has been rightly much-lauded. It first came to my attention when I was a judge for the Civic Trust Awards; the panel was unanimous in awarding a commendation. Indeed, I think we should have been more forthright

with our praise. It also received a Hackney Design Award.

View this building at night from Shoreditch High Street, looking up towards Kingsland Road. It encapsulates exactly what is meant by a contextual building within the existing cityscape. The building is dark and solid at the bottom and lights up to a floating, glazed open top. It also has solar panels, a green roof and natural ventilation. The lucky owners also have a generous top floor roof terrace. Hackney deserves more buildings of this kind.

Photos: (bottom right) by Philip Vile, the others by Nick Kane

contents

- 01 Bateman's Row
- 02 Building Watch: Pond House
- 02 Building Watch: Haggerston Baths
- 03 Entertainment in Hackney
- 04 Hackney Society events
- 04 Noticeboard
- 04 Publications

Building Watch

Pond House By Bruce Eadie

Dellmount Estates, the owners of listed Grade II* Pond House at 162 Lower Clapton Road, have submitted new plans for its restoration and conversion into flats.

Pond House, which overlooks Clapton Pond, was built around 1800 when Clapton was a fashionable, semi-rural suburb of London. It was one of the finest late Georgian houses to be built in Hackney and, despite a century of neglect and having languished on English Heritage's 'Buildings at Risk' register for over a decade, it retains many stunning and original internal and external features.

In late 2008, Dellmount Estates submitted plans for the conversion of the house and stables into ten self-contained residential units, with the building of an additional 14 flats in the grounds of Pond House on the site of derelict garages that face on to Mildenhall Road. The plans were viewed with alarm by the Clapton Pond Neighbourhood Action Group, the Clapton Conservation Areas Advisory Committee and many local people who had long appreciated the qualities of the house. By squeezing so many residential units into

Pond House, irreparable damage would have been done to the historic fabric of the building. Fortunately, these ill-considered proposals were rejected by the Council.

In March this year, having enlisted the expertise of CMA Planning, new proposals were submitted for five residential units within Pond House and the building of six houses on the site of the garages. The halving of the proposed number of units allows them to be accommodated within the structure of the house, rather than the house having to be pulled apart to fit in as many units as possible.

To convert the house to flats and build on part of the garden may not be everyone's ideal solution to the problem of Pond House, but the new plans are a vast improvement on the plans submitted in 2008 and will secure and preserve the fabric of the house for the foreseeable future.



Haggerston Pool Restoration Victim of Spending Cuts By Liz Hughes

The Council's plans to re-open Haggerston Pool at the heart of a Health and Wellbeing Centre have stopped due to lack of funding.

Despite a £5 million grant from the Government's Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Council has been unable to raise the full amount needed for this plan, which would have seen a doctor's surgery, hydrotherapy pool, youth and sports facilities developed alongside the restored swimming pool.

In a letter to Haggerston Pool Community Trust, the Council said: 'While we were working hard to develop ambitious and robust plans for the redevelopment of the Baths, the funding gap needed to ensure the future of this project was, of course, a source of concern for the Council.'

This led to a review of the Baths project within the context of wider corporate capital projects. This process was recently concluded and, unfortunately, the redevelopment of the Baths project as we had originally intended has had to be stopped.'

The current plan is to mothball the building to preserve its fabric. The Council say they remain committed in the long term to re-opening the pool: 'Despite the decision not to progress the project at present, the political will and determination of the Council eventually to restore this facility to public use has not diminished.'



Haggerston Pool Community Trust commented: 'We have been campaigning for Haggerston Pool for 11 years since its closure – it remains derelict, guarded 24 hours by security, as Haggerston is redeveloped and a new community is moving in. We are glad to hear that the Council remains committed to its



re-opening. We would also like to see the building put to temporary community use, rather than mothballed, where it runs the danger of being forgotten.'

Entertainment in Hackney Part 2

The History of the Hackney Empire

By Jascha Philipp Braun

The Hackney Empire is hard to miss. Not only is it centrally located in Hackney, but it is designed in an eye-catching way with the façade of the building dominating Mare Street.

Frank Matcham (1854-1920), the well-known architect who created and modernised about 150 theatres all over Britain, planned this Grade II* listed complex. Completed in 1901, it was originally used as a music hall. Matcham's buildings showed high standards in functionality and technology. The Empire was equipped with electric lights, central heating and an in-built projection box – very progressive in those days.

The appeal of the red-bricked theatre lies in its opulently designed interior. An atmospheric play of red, green and golden colours illuminate the exquisite stucco work. The *Architectural Review* writes: 'Matcham understood the mystery and magic of the theatre and turned it into architecture. His imaginative genius is perhaps most powerfully demonstrated by the extraordinary Hackney Empire.' (*Architectural Review*, 203 (1214), April 1998, p98.)

The extraordinary place attracted extraordinary artists. Stanley Holloway, Charlie Chaplin, Stan Laurel and Marie Lloyd appeared at the Empire – to name just a few. In the 1920s burlesque, variety, plays and concerts took place here. Even Louis Armstrong came to perform on the stage.

But the high period of the theatre ended with the coming of television. In 1956 the building was converted into Britain's first commercial television studio by ATV. Popular programmes such as 'Take Your

Pick' and 'Oh, Boy!' were broadcast live. Marty Wilde, Cliff Richard and Maria Callas appeared, and 'Emergency Ward 10' was filmed at the Empire.

Since the greatness of Matcham's work was not fully recognised until 60 years after his death, the Empire lived in the shadows in the following years. The evident decline began in 1963 when the Mecca Organisation opened a bingo hall. The new owner invested little in maintenance, and the extravagance of a bygone age became increasingly faded.

In 1984 the Mecca Organisation decided to close the bingo hall because of the high upkeep costs and offered the Empire to Ronald Muldoon, the manager of the satirical theatre group CAST (Cartoon Archetypical Slogan Theatre). The renaissance of the building is due to Muldoon, who returned the historic theatre to a dignified use. While others planned demolition, he had the vision to re-establish a permanent stage – and he was successful. CAST began to restore and to modernise the building. On its 85th birthday, 9 December 1986, the theatre with its 1500 seats re-opened and developed into the leading centre of alternative comedy in London.

Major renovation and reorganisation, long overdue, started in 2001 when the comedian Griff Rhys Jones, who led the restoration appeal, announced that enough money had been collected – not least because of a significant donation from Sir Alan Sugar, who grew up in Hackney.



The Empire closed for two years and was refurbished for £17 million by Tim Ronalds Architects. Besides the restoration of the historical parts a modern annexe on the south side was added to accommodate a new theatre studio. The major improvements included a 60-seat orchestra pit to make possible opera performances and a new backstage area.

The Hackney Empire is one of the few surviving buildings designed by Matcham. No one in Hackney can remember a time without this time-honoured theatre. Today the programme is as varied as the people who live in the East End and ranges from variety, comedy and drama, dance to opera, pantomime and concerts.

Is local history your thing?

The Friends of Hackney Archives were established in 1985 to support the work of the borough's Archives Department. They have done this by raising funds to buy material for the collection – books, manuscripts, prints, photographs, and two important collections of theatre posters – and by publishing research into local history, in the form of booklets, DVDs and the journal *Hackney History* (see www.hackney.gov.uk/archives for more details). The Friends also keep the Archives Department in touch with their users by funding the regular newsletter *The Hackney Terrier*.

You can help the Archives by joining the Friends (the annual subscription for a UK resident is £10 for the calendar year, and you can download the form from the website). Better still, you can get directly involved. The Friends are a registered charity run by members, and in their 25th anniversary year they would welcome new faces. If you would like to join the committee (which meets three or four times a year) or take part in the management of the Friends as an officer, we would love to hear from you. You can get in touch with the Chair, Isobel Watson, either by email (isobelwatson@hotmail.com) or on 07544 262034.

Thanks to Kopykat for sponsoring this issue

Kopykat Printing Limited

76 Rivington Street, London EC2A 3AY
Tel: 020 7739 2451 Fax: 020 7729 5925
www.kopykat.co.uk

Kopykat based in Shoreditch specialises in company stationery and high quality marketing material, we cover onsite litho printing, digital printing, copying and direct mail, environmentally we have recently been awarded Green Mark accreditation and we print using vegetable based inks, without the use of alcohol and deliver in an LPG vehicle.



kopykat
Design and Print

Hackney Society Events*

From Rags-to-Riches

Saturday 16 July 2011, 11am

Walk with John Finn

A walk from the City of London to Hackney Marshes. Bring a picnic lunch.

Meet outside Liverpool Street Station, Bishopsgate.

FREE to all

Under the Cranes

Tuesday 19 July 2011, 6.15pm

(refreshments from 5.45pm)

Film showing with Emma-Louise Williams and Michael Rosen

Using the script of poet Michael Rosen's documentary play, *Hackney Streets*, 'Under the Cranes' is shot on location in Hackney and intercut with rare archive footage. It offers a lyrical, painterly defence of the everyday, even as it raises questions about the process of 'regeneration'. Director Emma-Louise Williams, Q&A with Emma-Louise Williams and Michael Rosen

Booking essential. Hackney Museum Technology + Learning Centre, 1 Reading Lane, E8. FREE to all

Highlights of Haggerston

Thursday 28 July, 6-7.30pm

Talk by John Finn

Find out about the history of Haggerston as well as local characters, buildings and the changes to the area.

Booking essential. To book your place email: linda.sydney@hackney.gov.uk or call 020 8356 2509. Hackney Museum Technology + Learning Centre, 1 Reading Lane, E8. FREE to all

Parkholme Road

Saturday 15 October, 2pm

Tour

This Victorian terraced house, by Macdonald Wright Architects, 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. Meet at 39 Parkholme Road, E8. FREE to members, £5.00 non-members

Noticeboard

RIBA Awards 2011 The following buildings in Hackney are among the winners of RIBA Awards for architectural excellence: Hackney Service Centre (Hopkins Architects), Hoxton House (David Mikhail Architects) and Stoke Newington School and Sixth Form: Media Arts and Science College (Jestico + Whiles).

Skinner's Academy was opened on 12 April 2011. Designed by Studio E Architects, it replaces the former Skinner's Company's School for Girls in Stamford Hill. Environmental features include the recycling of rainwater, a seeded roof and highly insulated walls.

Hoxton Square is temporarily closed for restoration. Hackney Council will improve the drinking foundation, put in new plants, relay the path and add more seats.

Hackney Gunners Researcher Andy Thompson has approached the Hackney Society for information about the Hackney Garrison 152nd RGA Heavy Artillery Battery (see www.hackneygunners.co.uk). He is working with a neighbour whose grandfather joined the battery at Hackney swimming baths in October 1915. If you can help, contact rich@eyewitnesstours.com.

Geffrye Museum The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has awarded a grant of £518,500 to the Geffrye Museum for development work. The museum, to be known as Museum of the Home, plans to: create new entrances from Hoxton Station and Kingsland Road; improve refreshment, education and conference facilities; and offer public access to the library and archives.

The Clapton Improvement Society has been formed to improve the environment, well-being and education of Clapton and the surrounding area. It has adopted the model rules of a community benefit cooperative and will in due course seek charitable status. Currently the group is negotiating with Hackney Council to reopen the public toilets in Brooksby's Walk. More information at www.claptonimprovementsociety.org.

Endangered Buildings The Victorian Society is calling on people to nominate Victorian or Edwardian buildings that are at risk in their local area. The Endangered Buildings campaign is an effective way of highlighting the plight of neglected buildings. The buildings don't have to be listed to be eligible, but they must have been built or substantially restored between 1837 and 1914. To nominate a building, send information and digital photographs to Katie Gunning (Katie@victoriansociety.org.uk) or to the society's website (www.victoriansociety.org.uk/topten). The deadline for nominations is 17 July 2011.

St Michael and All Angels Church will be open to visitors 10am and 4pm (3pm on Wednesdays) in 2011 on: 16, 20, 23, 30 July; 6, 13, 20, 27 August; 3, 7, 10, 14, 17, 24 Sept; and 26 Nov. Church access is free.

Publications

A Cupboard Full of Coats by Yvette Edwards is a novel set in Hackney, where the author grew up. Oneworld Publications, £12.99.

Ghost Milk by Hackney writer Iain Sinclair is a story of incident and accident, of the curious meeting the bizarre. It includes an account of the banning of a book launch in Stoke Newington Library. Hamish Hamilton, £20.00.

Fragmented by Jeremy Worman brings together short stories and sketches charting a personal journey. Many sketches are set in Hackney. Cinnamon Press, £8.99.

We Are Only Humans: Photographs of Hackney 2001-2009 by the photographer Tara Darby with text by Heidi James. The photographs document the ordinary and everyday life of Hackney and its inhabitants. Miniature Love, £10.00 + postage (www.miniaturelovebooks.com).

Gillespie and I by Hackney Society member Jane Harris is a novel set in Glasgow in the late 19th century. Faber and Faber, £14.99.

Mr Briggs' Hat – A Sensational Account of Britain's First Railway Murder by Kate Colquhoun tells the story of the murder of Thomas Briggs, who lived at 5 Clapton Square, E5. The murder took place on 9 July 1864. Mr Briggs was the first person to die after an attack on a train. Little Brown, £16.99.

Mr Chartwell by Homerton-based Rebecca Hunt is a novel set around Winston Churchill's retirement from parliament in 1964. Fig Tree, £12.99 (hardback), £7.99 (paperback).

Tracing Your East End Ancestors: A Guide for Family Historians by Jane Cox describes resources for researching the lives of people who lived in the East End or passed through the area. Pen & Sword Books, £14.99.

The Canal by Lee Rourke is a novel set by the Hackney/Islington part of the Regent's Canal. Melville House, £9.99.

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

Edited by: Monica Blake

Layout by: design@gloryhall.com

Contributors: Monica Blake, Jascha Philipp Braun, Bruce Eadie, Liz Hughes, Kevin Moore and Isobel Watson

Photos: Jascha Philipp Braun, Nick Kane, Brian Longman, Malcolm Smith and Philip Vile

The Hackney Society

The Round Chapel,
1d Glenarm Road, London E5 0LY

T: 07771 225183

E: info@hackneysociety.org

W: www.hackneysociety.org

The Hackney Society is a registered Charity (No 107459) and Company limited by guarantee (No 04574188)



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.