

Wrong House



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Wrong House in Lauriston Road (E9) is the extension to a semi-detached Victorian townhouse within the Victoria Park Conservation Area. It was designed for the furniture designer/maker Sebastian Wrong and jewellery maker Franca Berr.

The proportions, materials and detailing of the project are developed to form an appropriate setting for Edward Charles Hakewill's Grade II* Gothic revival church, St John of Jerusalem (1848), which lies immediately to the West.

The project provides a workshop and ensuite bedroom within a wedge-shaped volume derived from the unusual geometry of the site. The new façade is set back from the street and follows the curve of Lauriston Road. This creates a subservient relationship with the original house, while at the same time establishing an independent identity within the wider context.

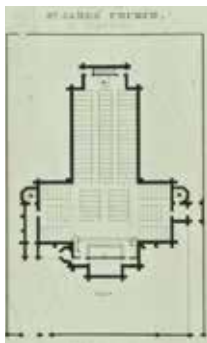
The architects, Matheson Whitely, adopted a monolithic approach to construction, emphasising volume and material continuity in relation to the house. A thin black mineral

wash unifies the new brickwork walls, while a radial pattern of stock bricks forms a new paved landscape linking together the existing outdoor spaces.

contents

- 01 Wrong House
- 02 Buildings at Risk: St James the Great
- 03 Holborn Studios – What went wrong?
- 03 Openness and its Collective Value
- 04 East London Line
- 04 Noticeboard

St James the Great, Clapton By Hedy Parry-Davies



Clockwise: South east view showing the originally proposed tower, c1841, Original floor plan, 1842 (London Metropolitan Archive), Current floor plan, Roger Mears Architects, South east view c1841, Day school, March 2020, The Church, 1908, Current view, Dividing wall in the Nave, 2020

The church of St James the Great which stands at the north end of Clapton Pond Conservation Area is intriguing. Its bell tower is slender and located externally in the south-east angle of the Transept. Further inspection reveals that its Chancel fronting Lower Clapton Road is of red brick, in contrast to the London stock forming the rest of the building. At the rear, a modern lift shaft and stairs have been added with little regard to the Grade II listed church.

Researching the history of St James has explained much of its appearance.

The building was designed by the church architect Edward Charles Hakewill (1816–1872), who also designed St John of Jerusalem, Hackney in 1845-48, listed Grade II*.

The site on Strawberry Gardens was part of Rev TB Powell's estate, given to the Church Commissioners to build a new church to serve the expanding population of Hackney. Hakewill designed it with a central tower to be built by public subscription, but this

fell short of the required amount, and the church was constructed on 25 July 1840 (St James's Day) with the slender bell tower seen there today. The use of London stock brick rather than stone as at St John of Jerusalem would also have been budget-led.

The Chancel was kept short to allow for a large congregation in the Nave, whilst keeping the building as far away as possible from the road which then accommodated heavy carts producing noise and vibrations. Nevertheless, according to local history records the church was a well thought-through building that managed to overcome these constraints: The church 'is in the form of a crucifix broken in parts, producing great variety and picturesque effect' (Robinson's *History of Hackney*, 1842).

In 1853-54 Hakewill built the adjacent day school using the same palette of materials.

Expanding population and the secular work of the church led to two new projects in 1869: the first was the erection of the Parish Hall; the second, extending the church

building itself. It was decided to demolish the entire, albeit truncated Chancel and, in effect, rebuild a larger front to the building. In 1901 the acclaimed architect William Douglas Caröe (1857–1938) was instructed to carry out the designs. It was built in nine months from July 1906.

When Archdeacon Sinclair first visited the church on 1 December 1907, he wrote: 'I must record my admiration and congratulations to the Vicar for all he has done. It is really beautiful and Mr Caröe has been most skilful.'

In 1978 following declining congregations, another drastic change was imposed on the church building. The Nave was rather brutally divided by a concrete block wall to provide accommodation for the Huddersfield Centre for disabled children in Hackney. The external lift shaft was added at the rear and the Centre remained there until early in 2020.

Roger Mears Architects have identified defects in the fabric and structure of the building and the church is currently fundraising for much-needed roof repairs.

Holborn Studios – What went wrong?

By Laurie Elks

Hackney Council recently suffered a second defeat at Judicial Review over plans for the Holborn Studios site in Hoxton. The scheme entails redevelopment of the site fronting on Regent's Canal to create 50 new housing units, none of them affordable, plus employment space. The employment space would be configured to be usable for photographic studios but not on a scale suitable for Holborn Studios, which is the largest studio space in Europe and provides an important resource for other creative businesses in the so-called 'City fringe'.

The first Judicial Review followed the grant of planning permission in July 2016 and is described in *Spaces* 59. That case concerned two errors by the Council. First, they failed to notify objectors or to consult on major changes to the scheme (including the removal of all affordable housing) after the consultation closed. Second, the Council failed to disclose the authors of two letters referred to in the planning committee report, which gave the misleading impression that the replacement studios offered by the redevelopment scheme would be suitable for a business comparable to Holborn Studios.

The scheme came back to the Planning Sub-Committee in January 2019. It was substantially the same scheme save that the developers agreed to contribute £757,000 to the Council for offsite affordable housing to compensate for the absence of affordable housing in the scheme. The payment was well below expectations of policy but was said to be justified by a viability assessment discussed between the developers and the Council.

The viability assessment had not been discussed with Holborn and the figures provided to the Committee and to objectors were so redacted as to be (in the words of the 'judge') 'opaque and unexplained' and 'incoherent'.

The Court said that recent planning policy including the National Planning Policy Framework and accompanying guidance made it perfectly clear that such assessments plus underlying background documents should have been disclosed. Put bluntly, Council officers have form in agreeing such assessments with developers under a cloak of secrecy to recommend schemes with little or no affordable housing. Such assessments will have to be open for review in the future.

A second ground of review related to Hackney's practice of planning purdah, which has prevented planning committee members from looking at representations from objectors (apart from the paltry five minutes generally allowed at committee), largely shielding councillors from any other views than recommendations of officers. The Council claimed that its Code of Conduct *did* allow committee members to consider objections. The trouble was that no one seemed to know this and members were firmly advised to pass any representations, unread, to officers. The Council luckily escaped defeat on this ground because Holborn's QC, Richard Harwood, had been forceful enough to insist on having extra time to put his client's views across to committee, after twice being threatened with eviction by the chairman! But the Court was clear that the present practice of planning purdah is illegal and must go.

Richard Harwood commented that this was a case, like *Paddington 2*, where the sequel was better than the original!

Holborn 2 will hopefully usher in a new era in which officers' assessments will be exposed to more openness and more effective challenge. Planning committee business will have to be done differently and monthly committee meetings may provide insufficient capacity for proper democratic scrutiny in the future. Perhaps the greater scrutiny will also enable councillors to consider alternative visions for the site which recognise Holborn Studios' unique contribution to the cluster of creative businesses on the City fringe.

A longer analysis of this case has been posted on our website and can be found at <http://www.hackneysociety.org/page/holbornstudiosjr>

Openness and its Collective Value

By Tom Feary

The current coronavirus crisis has exposed longstanding differences within our society. One of the more obvious and visible ones was the disparity in those able to access outdoor space.

Two camps emerged: those with gardens or balconies and those without. In an age where high-density new developments are the norm rather than the exception, the shortcomings on amenity space were all too clear. The practice of holding conversations across front gardens quickly became adopted practice, further accentuating the advantages of being able to do so. The task going forward, when space in Central London comes at a premium, is how we prioritise the public-private division of open space.

Much has been written in the past months about the need to increase the provision of private amenity space in the design of future developments. While this is understandable in the circumstances and nobody would ever sensibly argue against the provision of open space, be it public or private, a balance has to be struck in order to determine how private our lives should be. In a world which seems to be increasingly defined by intolerance in favour of tolerance, introversion over extroversion and the digital rather than the physical, we should be advocating for more (and better quality) shared open space.

Of course this is not a controversial argument; who would resist calls for more open space? But we need to be extremely careful about the path we choose to pursue in terms of the use of the scarce amount of land available in cities. Understandably people will feel in times of a global pandemic that a retreat is necessary, avoiding human contact if at all possible. However it is easy to slip into the mode of underestimating the subtle impacts of the social interactions we have in public spaces.

Whether it is the mixing of different languages, ages or races, the mere existence of a mix of people in a common space generates a clear yet immeasurable impact on us. We know that tolerance is built not through our digital spheres but our physical, more tactile reality.

Another argument in favour of more public rather than private space is that of health and activity. As much as we now like to shape our homes into workplaces or gyms, the majority of us gravitate towards comfort, towards being in control of our own targets and priorities. Arguably however there is more chance of being active if sharing common goals and ambitions with competitive relationships.

The crisis has provided an opportunity to champion the lesser-known open spaces in the borough such as Well Street Common, Millfields and Hackney Marshes. This supports the notion that fundamentally open spaces were created as a matter of public health more than anything. In a similar way to the cholera epidemic leading to London building a fit-for-purpose sewage system in the mid-19th century, this health crisis may lead to a long-term replanning of public spaces. Not only making them more accessible but perhaps more adaptable to accommodate change such as social distancing measures.

In short, the answer is not to fill our shiny new towers with oversized balconies, more to tip the scales in favour of dedicated, publicly-owned open spaces.

The opening of the East London Line Northern Extension – the sequel, 10 years on

By Roger Blake

In the book *Hackney: portrait of a community 1967-2017*, there was a hint in the chapter '2010: Going Round in Circles' of what might follow, playing to this newsletter's title *Spaces*.

There is first a factual update required for the record. Shoreditch High Street station is said in the book to be the 59th-highest in the national league of rail station footfall; it's now 46th! For completeness and to confirm the above-trend pattern of growth, Dalston Junction which was then 93rd is now 86th, Haggerston was 172nd and is now 157th, and Hoxton which was 190th is now ranked the 169th-busiest mainline rail station, out of over 2560 across Britain.

Spaces, or public realm. In the vicinity of each of Hackney's four new London Overground stations are new and permanent public places. Not one was anticipated at the outset; every one emerged during the construction phase, as a by-product of construction requirements.

Dalston Junction – Ashwin Street

The reconstruction of the 'Dalston Covered Way' – which supports Kingsland High Street and the then mainly single-storey buildings astride it – necessitated the prolonged closure of Ashwin Street. This eliminated what for years had been a notorious rat-run between Dalston Lane and Kingsland High Street. As the closure continued and everyone grew accustomed to the route being 'modally-filtered' for active travel only, the subversive thought developed: why re-open it as a through route for motor vehicles? The answer is visible for all to see – and enjoy. The Design for London-sponsored 'Making Space in Dalston' initiative between 2007-10 gave context, and the unconventional planters in front of Café Oto survive and thrive to bear witness to the tenacity of landscape architect Jo Gibbons.

Haggerston – Dunston Road

The bridges over the Regent's Canal (the original three-track span plus the single-track span added to the west side later) – unused since June 1986 and probably unmaintained for even longer – needed replacement for the new two-track railway. Their demolition, removal of the supporting columns, and installation of the bow-string bridge required extended closure of Dunston Road, with a local traffic diversion via Dunston Street. As with Ashwin Street, the same question – why re-open for motor traffic, when there's so little, it's local, and has had minimal inconvenience with an easy diversion nearby. Result: another new space, which one councillor went so far as to describe as a promenade, given its canal-side location.



Haggerston station boasts 'The Elliptical Switchback', a mural by Tod Hanson to celebrate son of Hackney Edmond Halley, Britain's second Astronomer Royal born in Haggerston in 1656.

Hoxton – Geffrye Street

Original plans for the station anticipated direct access with Cremer Street, under the bridge. That quickly proved impossible owing to the viaduct curvature pushing the required straight platforms further north. Insertion of a new 21st-century station into a 19th-century viaduct necessitated another prolonged street closure, and traffic diversion – and the same question as at Ashwin Street and Dunston Road. The Geffrye Museum's original opposition to a station access on Geffrye Street has swung 180 degrees, with a new museum entrance now to be created there!

Shoreditch High Street – Braithwaite (formerly Wheler) Street

Demolition and construction requirements necessitated another prolonged closure of what was then Wheler Street, in Tower Hamlets. Result: another space freed from through motor traffic, renamed after the engineer who built the viaduct which continues to bear his name. What, however, of its architect, one Sancton Wood? He is also associated with the rail stations at Cambridge, Bury St Edmunds, Great Chesterford, and a number in Ireland.

A closing question: is it not long-overdue that Sancton Wood be honoured with a plaque in Hackney, the place of his birth? 2021 will be the 135th anniversary of his death, on 18 April. Queen Anne Road, by Cassland Road, appears to be the nearest successor to his birthplace on 27 April 1814: 'Nursery Place at the eastern end of Hackney Terrace'. Hackney Terrace is the Grade II-listed nos. 20-54 Cassland Road.

Noticeboard

Horrid Hackney Horrid Hackney is a new blog by local history guide Lucy Madison, with a post added each day recounting an element of Hackney's 'horrible' history (horridhackney.com). Think crime and punishment, madhouses and workhouses, things that go bump in the night, and the

past destruction of significant buildings. Here you can also find details of a new virtual tour, 'Stoke Newington to Dalston', which uses historical detail, anecdotes and superimposed photographs to guide you down this fascinating part of Hackney.

Happy Man Tree The developer Berkeley Homes wants to fell a 150-year-old London plane tree in Woodberry Down, arguing that its loss is unavoidable. However, local residents are protesting against the destruction of the Happy Man Tree. Over 22,000 people have signed a petition to save it.

The Gun The Gun on Well Street has launched a fundraiser (gofundme.com/f/thewgunaid) amid fears that it will not survive the coronavirus pandemic. The independently owned pub needs the money to cover rent, bills, supplies and other running costs while social distancing measures remain in place.

Woodberry Wetlands Woodberry Wetlands has been severely hit by the coronavirus pandemic. The nature reserve had to close when the UK went into lockdown. Not only could it not open safely within social distancing guidelines, the losses suffered as a result of the pandemic mean the London Wildlife Trust cannot afford to keep it open to the public. Hackney Council and Berkeley Homes have announced that they would match-fund donations from the public up to a total of £55,000. Donate at <https://www.wildlondon.org.uk/save-woodberry>.

Review of Landmarks Hackney Council is reviewing the role of statues and street names to ensure they reflect the borough's diversity and anti-racist history. This follows the anti-racism protests after the death of George Floyd. The Museum of the Home, formerly the Geffrye Museum, is consulting with the public on whether to remove the statue of Sir Robert Geffrye that is above its entrance. Geffrye (1613-1703) was involved with the East India Company and the Royal African Company. Cassland Road is named after the slave trader Sir John Cass (1661-1718).

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