



THE HACKNEY SOCIETY

SPACES 2024

News and views about Hackney's built environment

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Kings Hall to be refurbished **By Louise Goodison**

Hackney Council plans to refurbish and expand the Hackney Baths swimming pool and sports centre in Lower Clapton subject to local consultation and funding.



Kings Hall exterior in Lower Clapton Road
Photo Louise Goodison

Since the building, officially Kings Hall Leisure Centre, was completed in 1895, thousands of local residents have learnt to swim, splashed around, done their lengths and kept fit there.

Like the Tardis, it's bigger on the inside than it appears on the outside, a time traveller from an age of anxiety over hygiene and cleanliness. It was designed by Edward Harnor and Frederick Pinches and was Grade II listed only in 2003. Built in Portland stone, they are buildings of the street, transcending and enriching their gritty urban surroundings.

When the baths were built, the neighbourhood was in the process of transformation from a wealthy village retreat to a developed suburb of the throbbing heart of the British Empire. Wealth and poverty went hand in hand as industry developed

alongside housing. The national programme of municipal baths was a response to the fear of illness, epidemics and poor hygiene as the population of London grew. Cholera mid-century, and later typhus, scarlet and enteric fevers, created a moral panic and led to public health legislation and the corresponding infrastructure.

The original baths housed three pools, a laundry and washing facilities including slipper baths and hot tubs. Later refurbishments have reduced swimming to the main pool, converting the training pool into a gym, and the ladies' pool into a sports hall.

The swimming culture of Hackney has changed radically since the 1980s, when there was a threat to convert the pools into a dry sports centre, or even worse to sell the site for redevelopment. Wild swimming on the River Lea, open air swimming at the reservoirs and London Fields lido, the rebuilding of Clissold and Britannia pools, and the continuing debate about the glorious Haggerston Baths, reflect a changing ethos, and the proposals for Kings Hall will be celebrated by the community of swimmers and gym users.

FaulknerBrowns Architects, the appointed consultants for this design stage, have a stable of successful leisure sport and swimming pool projects to their name, most notably the award-winning Britannia complex in Haggerston.

The architects' key proposal is to move the main entrance to the side of the building on Clapton Square, away from the central frontage facing Lower Clapton Road. This will effectively close the front door of the building. The level access this proposal achieves is welcomed, but it is at the expense of the public face. The 19th century celebration of

street frontage and entrances must not be left to become a faded back side, a dusty collection of discarded sweet wrappings and boarded windows. Have the architects considered a café or secondary community access at the front of the building? It would be good to know.

The extension to the rear will house a new sports hall, occupying what is at present the car park. Though it's a great idea to get rid of the parking, there is an opportunity to create a small courtyard garden, centred around the rather lovely walnut tree that will otherwise have to be removed when the hall is built.

Reintroducing a new training pool in the hall that used to accommodate the ladies' pool is a welcome move. The roof trusses, shallow arches and high-level roof light make this the most elegant space in the building, and opening its use and visibility will encourage new swimmers young and old. Spaces like this dignify their users and raise a sense of community engagement.

More information on how the upper floors are to be used would also be welcome. The panelled committee room expressed as a bay on the front façade has housed many local meetings and council events; it would be sad to think these rooms may no longer be accessible for public use and access.

So broadly the proposals are welcome, but the need to reflect an understanding of the design and former orientation of the buildings should not be underestimated. The language of the building should inform current proposals, engaging us with its own narrative and, Tardis like, direct us to its future heritage.

* See the plans and consultation forms here: <https://consultation.hackney.gov.uk/communications-engagement/kings-hall-leisure-centre/>

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contents

- 01 King's Hall
- 02 St Chad, Haggerston
- 03 The Swan pub
- 04 Noticeboard / Publications / Events

Church of St Chad, Haggerston By Hedy Parry-Davies



Left, St Chad, Haggerston © Hedy Parry-Davies. Middle, St Chad in a lithograph from *The Building News*, 25 February 1876. Right, St Chad interior © Hedy Parry-Davies

St Chad's presence is impressive in its grand scale even today, surrounded by maisonettes and tower blocks, but it must have emanated an even greater sense of mission and importance when it was built amongst the small-scale Victorian terraces of the 1860s.

The parish church was built from 1868-1869 to designs by the Victorian architect James Brooks (1825-1901), reputedly 'the Sir Christopher Wren of the East End'. He designed four churches of great scale in the area: St Columba, Kingsland Road in the same year, St Michael, Mark Street, E2 (1863-65), as well as St Chad and St Saviour's, Hyde Road, Hoxton (1863-1870) though the latter was lost during WWII. All three surviving churches are Grade I listed.

Brooks also designed St Chad's Vicarage, a Grade II* listed building to the south of the church, built in 1873-4. He was born in Watford to a farming family but at grammar school was influenced by High Churchmen, including Dr Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800-1882), to abandon farming for architecture.

In the late 1850's he was commissioned to build St Michael's church through Dr Robert Brett, a surgeon from Stoke Newington and a friend of Dr Pusey. Both were members of a missionary movement promoting ritualism and targeting the poor communities of London's East End. Financial assistance was provided by the Church Building Commissioners and the Metropolitan Churches Fund.

On a Victorian Society visit in 1972, Roger Dixon, architectural historian and writer, summarised Brooks's East End works: "The three churches are remarkable for the honesty of their construction, their comparative lack of ornament and their grand proportions. Brooks chose as

his model the earliest period of Gothic. The churches are not however in the archaeological tradition of the Gothic Revival ... He wished to produce, with the limited means at his disposal, churches for the needs of his own day. Churches that would proclaim the Gospel to the poor." (The Victorian Society 'Visit to Churches by James Brooks in Shoreditch and Haggerston', January 1972).

St Chad's is constructed almost entirely in red brick and Bath limestone, which provide a striking contrast to the pared down, bold elevations. The unbuttressed apse is particularly dramatic in its pure architectural geometry. The building exudes strength and solidity.

This theme continues internally. The walls are of fair-faced red brick with some of the architectural features highlighted in cream-coloured stone. The stone piers add to the appearance of solidity and simplicity.

Colourful and decorative elements here have been kept to the most important liturgical area, the chancel. The ceiling above is vaulted in brick with stone ribs accentuating the beauty of the structural design, in contrast to the timber tunnel vault of the nave ceiling. The stained-glass windows were made by eminent English designers and manufacturers Clayton & Bell, who were also responsible for the three large-scale single figures in the apse depicting Christ in Majesty, flanked by windows with Mary as Blessed Virgin, and St Chad, the church's patron saint.

During Sunday morning service on a sunny day, rays of light pour down from the clerestory windows and a spiritual atmosphere descends on the interior.

James Brooks designed the reredos (altarpiece), which was carved by Thomas Earp, and the pulpit, and possibly also the rood screen.

In its listing citation, Historic England says of the church: "It is of outstanding interest as one of the finest inner-city churches of the mid-Victorian period and is by one of the greatest architects of the day. It is a magnificent response to the urgently-felt need among Anglicans to provide fine places of worship for the poor and which contrasted with the drabness and misery of the local surroundings. The external massing, materials, attention to detail are all of outstanding note. Internally, it retains important fixtures and fittings from the Victorian period, and it possesses a sense of volume and Gothic strength that are of great accomplishment."

St Chad's is an active Anglican church currently in an interregnum (between priests). They have a mission plan to keep the church and vicarage together under an incumbent priest. However, there is a risk that this may not be achieved, and the vicarage could be divided into several units and sold. The congregation is asking the public to consider donating time, expertise or funds to prevent this outcome. Contact m.cheeseman@stchadhaggerston.org.uk for more information.

* The Hackney Society's 2024 AGM will be held at St Chad's. See page 4.

Swan song By Julia Lafferty and Bob Mitchell



Left, The Swan in 2011. © Google Streetview. Right, The White Swan Inn in 1853 – James Pollard

In May this year, the residents of Clapton Common witnessed the demolition of the former Swan public house, which stood adjacent to Clapton Terrace, a Grade II listed row of Georgian houses. Described by Hackney Council as being among “London’s grandest Georgian houses”, Clapton Terrace contains some of the earliest terraced houses to survive in Hackney. The pub had associations going back 300 years but the building itself was thought to date from about 1900 and had been altered after suffering wartime damage.

In 2008, Hackney Council commissioned an appraisal of the Conservation Area from heritage consultant Dr Ann Robey, who recommended that the Conservation Area be extended to include the Swan “for reasons of historic association and social history”. After a five-year delay, the appraisal document ratified by the Council omitted any reference to the Swan. In the meantime, the Swan’s owners, Punch Taverns, had sold the building to a Hasidic sect that had applied for planning permission for a change of use to a synagogue, which was granted. Despite regulars and heritage campaigners fighting a lengthy “Save the Swan” campaign, the landlady, Ellen McLean, had no option but to close the pub. It became a synagogue about 2011 and permission to demolish and redevelop was granted in 2018.

A public house had existed on the site since the first half of the 18th century, when it was known as the White Swan Inn. It functioned as a staging point on the route in and out of London, being strategically placed close to a turnpike road. In 1825, Pigot’s Directory listed “Coaches to London from the White Swan and Crooked Billet, Clapton every quarter of an hour to the Flowerpot, Bishopsgate and the Boar and Castle, Oxford Street”.

In 1833, Charles Dickens’s first published short story related the frustrations experienced by a visitor to Stamford Hill from the unreliable nature of the service

to and from the White Swan. The Inn was painted in 1853 by the artist James Pollard, who was celebrated for his depiction of stagecoaches and coaching inns. As well as providing refreshment, accommodation and stabling for travellers, the White Swan was the scene of voting at local and national elections as well as a meeting place for the parish vestry and a variety of clubs and societies.

Dickens’s Dictionary of London, by Charles Dickens Jr. in 1879, listed London sporting clubs, among them Clapton Boxing Club, established in the 1870s by River Lee rowing clubs to keep members fit during winter months. The Swan Hotel was recorded as the club’s headquarters and its adopted colour of scarlet was declared “delicately suggestive of the claret which is occasionally ‘tapped’ at its meetings.” In the 1880s, the Swan was also the headquarters of Clapton Football Club and Stoke Newington Cycling Club.

During the 1920s, the Swan’s landlord ran a branch of the Ancient Order of Froth Blowers (motto “Lubrication in Moderation”), whose members raised funds for charities benefiting needy children and their families under the title of “Wee Waifs and Tired Mothers”. AOFB’s membership peaked at about 700,000 before it ceased operation in 1931.

Despite alterations to the Swan in the 1950s and 1960s involving removal of

the top storey of the building and refacing of the facade, the Council’s Design and Sustainability team considered the “attractive ground floor frontage, first floor windows of elegant, Georgian proportions and a metal balcony feature across its frontage” merited its retention and inclusion in the Conservation Area.

Clapton Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CCAAC) found the initial 2016 planning application “deeply challenging” as it would “significantly harm the setting of the adjacent Conservation Area and designated Clapton Terrace.” Despite the submission of a revised application, the view of the CCAAC remained that the highly visible elevations would dominate the view across the Common and “the lack of any tangible relationship between them or to the immediate built context is troubling and results in an incoherent design that would be an extremely obtrusive form of development”.

The controversial decision by Hackney Planning Sub-Committee to grant planning permission in this case has raised important issues around the setting of the borough’s heritage assets and key local views when encroachment from adjacent development is perceived as threatening the distinctive character and significance of a conservation area.

AGM date: The Hackney Society AGM will be held at St Chad's Church, Haggerston, on Wednesday 18 September. Come along and support YOUR society. Doors 6.15pm; tour with Malcolm Bass, churchwarden 6.30; AGM 7.15.

Noticeboard

Become a trustee!

The Hackney Society added eight new members during the recent successful Hackney History Festival. We work to promote the highest standards in design and protecting Hackney's unique heritage, focusing on the natural and built environments.

But we are in desperate need of new trustees to run the organisation, including a treasurer.

We are dealing with the departure of two trustees on top of earlier departures. The pandemic meant a lot of people changed what they do with their free time. If you have a little to spare to devote to the community you live in, please get in touch on info@hackneysociety.org.

There is immense satisfaction to be gained from involvement in one of Hackney's leading civic society groups. No previous experience necessary!

Help shape next year's Hackney History Festival

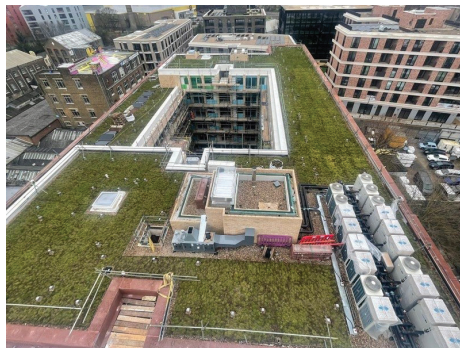
For our first festival in May 2024 we had

- 1679 participants
- 49 events
- 24 talks
- 10 walks
- 12 guided tours
- 2 film screenings
- And a quiz

We heard from Hackney Society regulars Sue Doe on individual suffrage stories; Laurie Elks on the modern heroes who successfully campaigned to save some of our most treasured spaces but also new faces such as Richard Yeboah on the effects of regeneration on council estate residents. Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive with comments such as "FABULOUS FESTIVAL! – I have always loved Hackney, and now I love it even more!" Talks are gradually being put on our YouTube channel and we are already planning next year's festival which will be on May 9 – 11 with satellite events throughout May, as well as a schools event in February. So please tell us what you'd like to see next year! Janet Chapman

hackneyhistoryfestival@gmail.com;
www.hackneyhistoryfestival.org

Roof winner



Winning roof at 1 Stour Lane, Hackney Wick
©NFRC.jpg

The UK Roofing Awards (yes, it's a thing) has given one of its 2024 prizes to a development in Hackney. The National Federation of Roofing Contractors gave the Green Roofing award to Roofworx (UK) Ltd for 1 Stour Road, Hackney.

The building on Fish Island, Hackney Wick, is Wick Park – Novel Student Accommodation, offering homes for 330 students, incubator workspace for graduates, and artists' studios, exhibition and performance space. It's designed by Hackney-based Henley Halebrown and was completed in 2023.

Hackney names heritage champion

Hackney Council has reappointed Cllr Sheila Suso-Runge as its "heritage champion", one of six champions. A statement said she "will help to ensure the stories of Hackney's rich heritage reflect people as well as historic buildings and assets".

Historic England encourages local authorities to appoint "heritage champions" to advance the cause of heritage in the built environment.

Previous Hackney holders include Cllrs Clare Potter, Geoff Taylor and Peter Snell.

Pub plan refused

A planning application to allow the locally-listed, derelict Albion pub in Lauriston Road to be turned over to residential use has been refused by Hackney Council. It had been resisted by campaigners including the local branch of the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) and Victoria Ward councillor Penny Wrout.

Solar go-ahead

Hackney Council's planning committee approved the installation of solar panels

on a Grade II listed house in Northchurch Road against the advice of planning officers. The application returned to the committee in May after the applicant was told in December to examine retrofit options to reduce the house's energy use. The ten panels on the southern and eastern roof slopes would meet the electricity needs of the north-facing house.

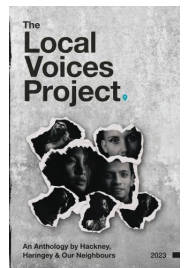
At issue was the plan for five panels on the eastern slope which, to a limited extent, could be visible from the street. Officers said the proposal would be harmful to the listed building and the gain could be achieved in other ways. De Beauvoir councillor Joe Walker spoke to support his constituent's application, saying the council should consider its climate action plan. Chair of planning Cllr Jessica Webb said she had been to look at the site and the panels would be "very clearly not obtrusive".

Publication

The Local Voices Project: An Anthology by Hackney, Haringey & Our Neighbours

Published by Indie Novella;
£9.99 from Pages of Hackney

An anthology by a collection of 34 Hackney and Haringey based writers about how London has been instrumental in championing their identity, and what home means to them.



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