



THE HACKNEY SOCIETY

# SPACES 2018

News and views about Hackney's built environment

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## Hackney Wick Station



**A newly redeveloped Hackney Wick station opened in May 2018. Designed by Landolt + Brown Architects with artist Wendy Hardie, the station has a new subway, lifts and overall improved layout.**

The principal funder for the £25 million project was the London Legacy Development Corporation. Hackney and Tower Hamlets Councils each provided £1 million.

The designers sought to create something uniquely relevant to the area. They drew

references from Hackney Wick's historical industries, particularly its innovative industrial chemistry, and the experience of walking and cycling the neighbouring Hackney Cut canal and Lee Navigation.

A new subway running north to south beneath the existing railway line has replaced the pre-existing footbridge and will eventually open up new pedestrian and cycle links between Wallis Road and White Post Lane.

The subway features coloured concrete walls imprinted with chemical symbols to

signify the area's industrial heritage and an illuminated glass wall to reflect the local waterways.

A new ticket hall has also been built with new stairwells and lifts providing access to the station platforms. The stairwell architecture was inspired by the weeping willows that are found along the Lee Navigation.

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## 'Step into history. Step into the old Smokehouse' (says the estate agents blurb).

The building being described is not actually a former smokehouse, or even old – the name, we are told, 'tips its hat to Forman's', a long-established Fish Island presence for all of six years. Time in the Wick, after decades of stasis, is suddenly moving very fast. More historically pedantic buyers purchase a flat in the Old Bagel Factory, which until recently was a bagel factory, though I don't recall it then having a swimming pool on the roof. What was once for centuries the beating heart of industrial East London [the blurb continues] is now an artistic hub where old blends with the new and a generation of curators have turned this canal side village into the most exciting place to be in the city. This is where it happens. Where beer is served straight from the tank, where coffee shops are workplaces and where restaurants are housed in barges nestled on the water. Old Smokehouse is the place to enliven your living.

One of many places in the Wick to enliven your living, actually, whatever that means. Most of the former business property in the old industrial Wick and Fish Island now has consent for redevelopment, generally as housing with a hint of business and studio space. Developers clearly believe that there is a big market for this mixture of former industrial vibe, tasteful modern architecture, faux bohemianism with an artistic edge, and lust for craft ales, yet all in walking distance from the comforting mundanity of Stratford City. The planning forecast is that some 5,500 new residents will arrive in the course of this 'regeneration'.

A few developments have been completed and already give a very accurate sense of the place to be: polite well proportioned

blocks of five or six storeys, flat roofed, brick faced often in grey, discreet entrances, modest balconies, all with an unnerving correspondence to their earlier CGIs (computer generated images). Development is being tightly controlled to limit block heights and ensure a land use mix, and the opportunities such widespread redevelopment offers to remodel the public realm are being taken – a new open space and shops around Hackney Wick station (known inevitably as Hackney Hub); new more legible routes to the canal, new open spaces along the Hackney Cut. Several of London's most respected and fashionable architecture practices feature: Egret West, Karakusevic Carson, Hawkins\Brown, Haworth Tompkins, and more. Awards are being won (perhaps in hindsight not the good thing they first appear to be – didn't the GLC Trowbridge Estate win something?) but Wick Riverside, by Ash Sakula and BUJ (commissioned by McGraths to replace their giant landmark recycling complex by the A12), unquestionably deserves its New London Architecture Overall Winner award for 2017/18. Several of the existing studio complexes – Oslo and Lion Works, in the Wick, and Old Ford Works and the Peanut Factory, on Fish Island – seem to be surviving, lending both their artistic and architectural idiosyncrasies to the emerging mix, though tragically, Vittoria Wharf has been part demolished by, of all people, the London Legacy Development Corporation. Essential bars – Stour Space, White Post Cafe – seem secure at least for the time being. The totemic shell of the Lord Napier is only threatened by its renovation and reopening, which is in train.

The trigger for all this is, of course, the Olympics. While no Olympic investment found its way to the Wick (or indeed any of the

other so-called fringe areas), its repositioning of the Wick post-2012 to the front row of the brave new legacy world has had an unstoppable effect. Meanwhile, major new investment and change is also underway on the Park side of the Cut, as the giant Here East digital business centre continues improbably to grow, and the Legacy Corporation commence development of its new 'neighbourhoods' – Sweetwater, and East Wick – which are intended to become integrated over time with the existing Wick and Fish Island settlement.

Will all this work? The housing market is a fickle thing, and is already starting to stutter. So much housing supply over such a relatively short timescale carries uncomfortable risks for developers, and several landowners of some of the most interesting sites in the Wick are cautiously holding back on development schemes. Can its limited infrastructure really cope with the arrival of such an expanded population? New schools have already been built, and new retail and more is planned for the Hackney Hub but this is still some way off. Where will people work? How much business will really be attracted to the wealth of funky new space which is being created? London Overground through Hackney Wick Station is already heaving. Can it take more? In practice flux will continue, and is perhaps a good thing, while these issues are worked through. Probably for some time to come it will remain this weird hybrid of industry and housing; new and old, public and private, which is oddly reflective of the Wick over time. Somehow one senses that the Wick will remain unusual, attractive and interesting, and will always be different, but the idiosyncrasy and surprise we know and love today will become a thing of the past.

# Picture from a *Portrait*: Demonstrators calling for an Independent Inquiry into the Death of Colin Roach

By Laurie Elks



© David Hoffman

Our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary publication, *Hackney: Portrait of a Community 1967-2017*, was published in October 2017. This is one of the photos from the book.

Few events cast a greater shadow over Hackney in 1984 than the death of Colin Roach. The 21-year-old died the previous year in very puzzling circumstances in the foyer of Stoke Newington police station. An inquest later concluded that he had committed suicide, but the angry local reaction that his death provoked was a symptom of the deep distrust between the local police and the black community.

Duncan Campbell covered the demonstrations and the conflict that followed from this distrust over many years for *Time Out* and *City Limits* and later for *The Guardian*. His chapter in the book (1984: *The Inquiry into the Death of Colin Roach*) and David Hoffman's vivid image bring those troubled times back to life.

## Publications



### **The Corners**

by Hackney photographer Chris Dorley-Brown contains photographs of

street corners in East London. Each image is the result of multiple shots taken on the same corner. Hoxton Mini Press, £30.



### **The Chameleon**

by Samuel Fisher is a love story about books. The author is co-founder of Burley Fisher Books in Kingsland Road. Salt, £9.99.



### **The Lido**

by Hackney author Libby Page is a debut novel focusing on the threatened closure of a lido. Orion, £12.99.

## Noticeboard

### RIBA London Awards

A number of new buildings in Hackney are among the winners of the 2018 Royal Institute of British Architects London Awards. They include: Kings Crescent Estate Phases 1 and 2 by Henley Halebrown and Karakusevic Carson Architects; De Beauvoir Block by Henley Halebrown for the Benyon Estate; Ivydale Primary School by Hawkins\Brown, Karakusevic Carson Architects and Henley Halebrown; The Makers House by Liddicoat & Goldhill (see *Spaces* 56); and Vex by Chance de Silva & Scanner (see *Spaces* 59). Another winner was the restoration of Hackney Town Hall by Hawkins\Brown. The Kings Crescent Estate also won the Mayor of London's Prize at the New London Awards on 4 July.

### Clowns Gallery



A collection of eggs painted with clown faces has been moved to the Clowns Gallery and Museum in Holy Trinity Church in Dalston. Formerly the eggs were housed at Wookey Hole in Somerset. The museum is open on the first Friday of the month from noon until 5pm.

### Tower Theatre



The Tower Theatre Company has acquired Sunstone House on Northwold Road as its new home. Dating from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the building was originally a Methodist church. The chapel, which was badly war damaged and derelict, was extensively repaired and renovated by the

Jewish congregation Beth Hamedrash Ohel Yisroel in 1953, and on 18 December 1955 it was consecrated as the Northwold Road Synagogue. The synagogue closed in 1989. In 1992 Sunstone Health and Leisure Club refitted the building as a women-only gym, which closed in 2014. The first production in the building, which is to be renamed Tower Theatre, will be in Autumn 2018.

### Mary Wollstonecraft

The Mary on the Green Campaign, which has been pressing for a memorial to Mary Wollstonecraft, has selected Maggi Hambling to create a statue on Newington Green. In 2020, an exhibition will be held of art inspired by the life and work of the great feminist.

### Church Crescent



Historic England has designated four 1980s properties in Homerton as Grade II listed. Designed by Colquhoun and Miller, the houses – at 23, 23a, 24 and 25 Church Crescent – are among 17 new postmodern listings.

### Shoreditch Audio Walk

Home-City Stories is an app-based audio walk that starts at the Geffrye Museum and weaves its way on and around Kingsland Road before finishing at Hackney Archives. The walk draws on research at Queen Mary University of London, in collaboration with the Geffrye Museum of the Home, Hackney Archives and current and former residents.

### Swifts

Hackney Council has announced a set of proposals designed to help halt and reverse the decline of swifts in the borough due to habitat loss. The birds are now officially classified as endangered in the UK. Swifts are unique among birds in that they rely almost 100% on the built environment for nesting space. As older buildings are renovated and newer buildings are totally sealed, available nesting sites for swifts to raise their young have fallen dramatically. The Council will now take action in three key areas – through the planning process; through ensuring that permanent swift nests are built into all suitable new council housing developments; and through

identifying and creating a register of existing council-owned buildings where 'swift boxes' could be fitted retrospectively.

### Former Swan



The Bobof community has been given permission to demolish the building at 73 Clapton Common and to build a three-storey synagogue. The existing building was formerly a pub, The Swan.

## Hackney Society Events

### Hackney Society AGM

Tuesday 11 September 2018, 7.00pm  
Booking essential.  
Book via [hackneysociety.org](http://hackneysociety.org)

### Stokey: A Jewish Village

Sunday 7 October 2018, 3pm

### Walk with Rachel Kolsky

Booking essential. Book via [hackneysociety.org](http://hackneysociety.org) FREE for Hackney Society members, £5 for non-members.

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