



THE HACKNEY SOCIETY

SPACES 2022

News and views about Hackney's built environment

Issue 78 Autumn 2022 // ISSN 2047-7465

Yorkton Workshops



The Workshops, in Yorkton Street off Hackney Road, were completed in 2020 and have already won multiple awards, including categories in the RIBA London and New London Awards.

Design studio Pearson Lloyd decided to reuse the dilapidated buildings and turn them into a permanent home, rather than pursue a new build scheme. Former Victorian stables are now a studio, archive, and workshop. They also provide a gallery and event space housed in a repurposed factory building from the 1990s, available to hire. The two parts are linked by an outdoor garden area, with a fine view across the Hackney rooftops.

Original features have been retained, and where possible, the materials recycled and reused, retaining the history of the buildings whilst also keeping the project low carbon.

The area has long had an association with making and furniture, and the stables turned workshops were previously home to craftspeople including musical instrument makers. The history is emphasised by a display of census returns which give the names and occupations of those who lived and worked in the then York Street.



Pearson Lloyd were founded in 1997 by Luke Pearson and Tom Lloyd and work with manufacturers, companies and public bodies on projects including the



development of furniture for the transport sector and spatial design layouts for airline cabins. They 'occupy a space somewhere between architecture and interior design'.

The Workshops were built and designed in collaboration with Cassion Castle Architects.

contents

- 01 Yorkton Workshops
- 02 Clapton Portico
- 02 Turner Prize 2022
- 03 Alexander Baron book review
- 04 Noticeboard, Publications and Events

Help support our work by joining the **Hackney Society**. Call on **020 7175 1967** or email **membership@hackneysociety.org** or visit **www.hackneysociety.org**

A New Future for the Clapton Portico By Robin Mallalieu

Hopeful news, the Clapton Portico is embarking on a new relationship.

Having enjoyed a colourful past beginning in 1821 as a children's orphanage and then as the headquarters of the Salvation Army, the magnificent Greek Revival structure eventually fell into the arms of Hackney Council who in 1975 demolished it, apart that is, from the original entrance facade, retained as an 'object of townscape interest'. A solitary old age beckoned but in 2006 the Learning Trust swept it off its feet, converting the monument into an Information Technology Teaching Centre with high hopes for a permanent union, but alas things fell apart again and by 2017 the Portico was back on the shelf.

Now hope blossoms again - Hackney have swiped right on the NHS and the Portico will soon become the Lower Clapton Group Medical Practice. Is this finally the Hollywood ending? Maybe not. The Portico's chequered past was not caused by mere caprice - to be frank it has a difficult personality. Firstly, it is high maintenance, a Grade 2 listed historic structure weighed down with all the protections, costs and expectations associated with our most important buildings. Its location, at the end of a cul-de-sac off Lower Clapton Road, is by no means ideal, it is visible but not prominent. The building itself has a dominant, brooding presence partly created by the general air of neglect but also by the sheer scale - the cliff of entrance steps you face, the authoritarian strictness of formal, stone built, classical architecture. In any architectural relationship the Portico sets the agenda and calls the tune.

The current Lower Clapton Group Practice is a small building on a large site that could

otherwise support plenty of new homes. Find an alternative nearby location for the GP Practice and you unlock the site but is there a suitable location in the immediate area available? No is the answer except of course the Portico, empty and neglected as usual. Sorted then, put the surgery in the Portico and count the new houses. So now the Portico and the GP practice have got together, their union blessed with Listed Building Consent, but do the happy couple look suited? - well there is a big age gap, and they have little in common. Will the new building co-exist comfortably with the older structure? The heritage consultants have that one covered, they say the new additions will create "less than substantial harm". But what about accessibility, surely a doctors surgery must be convenient to get into, so how will patients manage those daunting steps? - well, there will be a rambling entrance ramp 50 metres in length arriving at a side door. Surely if the old building is characterised by anything it is symmetry so why is there a new wing only on one side? - they say they might build the other wing later. Also, the new wing crashes into the end of the south colonnade destroying the classical termination - this is being allowed because that bit was only built in the '70s which may be so, but it was well done and enhances what remains of the listed building.

Back in the day when the Portico was crumbling and neglected, YBA Martin Creed wrote in ironic neon letters right across its forehead "EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE ALRIGHT" - we must trust in his prescience.

Robin Mallalieu, member of the Hackney Society Planning Group (HSPG) and architect of the award-winning conversion of the Portico in 2017.



Note from the Editor – the Portico site was also the location of the 17th century girls school run by Mrs Elizabeth Salmon which was known as the 'University of the Female Arts'. Alumni include writer Katherine Phillips and musician Mary Dering. Both feature in the book 'Women from Hackney's History'.

Turner Prize 2022

Veronica Ryan has been awarded the 2022 Turner Prize for a body of work including her Windrush sculptures located on the Narrowway, Mare Street.

Two of the other three nominees for the prize have strong Hackney links – Heather Phillipson has a studio in Hackney and Ingrid Pollard was part of the Lenthall Road Workshop in the 1980s.



Alexander Baron's memoirs

Hackney Archives hosted an event in September for the launch of Alexander Baron's memoirs.

Review by Ken Worpole

Alexander Baron (1917 – 1999) is regarded as the finest novelist of the Second World War.

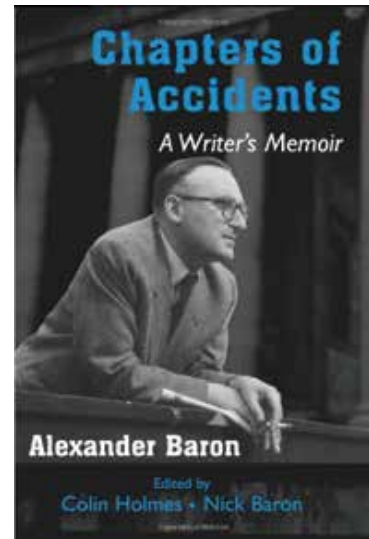
Baron started life in a single room in Abersham Road, Dalston, before his Jewish parents moved to a room and scullery at 11 Sandringham Road, where his younger sister was born. In time his father was able to buy a house in Foulden Road, Stoke Newington, then sub-divided into separate flats, the setting for his most famous novel, *The Lowlife*, published in 1963, still in print. Now we have his long-awaited, posthumously published memoir, *Chapters of Accidents*, essential reading for all those interested in Hackney's tumultuous social history in the 20th century.

Wherever there was something happening, Baron (otherwise a small, quiet, self-effacing man) was there: in Paris at the age of 17, and while still a Hackney Downs pupil, the young would-be Communist intellectual met Louis Aragon and Andre Malraux. He then

volunteered to fight in Spain in 1937 (offer refused), but later saw action at the D Day landings and the battle of Monte Cassino as an infantryman, and after the war witnessed and wrote about the fight against fascism again (this time in street punch-ups in Ridley Road market). It was his terrifying experiences of war on the ground, together with episodes of love and loss, that produced the great war trilogy - *From the City*, *From the Plough*, *There's No Home*, and *The Human Kind* – before returning to writing about London, the city he loved and knew so well.

Baron wrote fifteen novels, many based in and around Dalston. This memoir provides an invaluable insight into the writer and his formative if anguished milieu: the streets of Hackney in more fraught and dangerous times. We can finally understand the novels more fully and the real-life experiences that inspired them.

Chapters of Accidents: A Writer's Memoir, is published by Vallentine Mitchell, September 2022, £16.95.



Hackney Revealed
Images of Hackney Town Hall from the arts festival that lit up landmarks with projections.



Noticeboard

Abney Park – memorial for Margaret Graham



Spaces 77 highlighted a crowdfunding appeal for a memorial for the aeronaut Mrs Graham who was buried in a common grave without a marker at Abney Park Cemetery.

The appeal was successful, and the memorial stone was unveiled on the 30th October in the presence of an invited group, including some of her family.

Britannia Leisure Centre

The Britannia Leisure Centre development has been announced as a New London Architecture Awards overall winner.

King's Hall Leisure Centre



The 125-year-old building on Lower Clapton Road is potentially getting a face lift.

Hackney Council have approved a contract for the development plans to refurbish the building which was described as a “valuable community asset”.

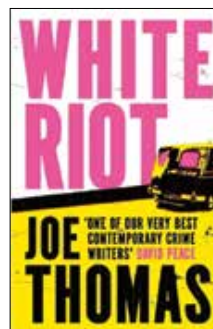
New plaque in Hackney Central

A memorial plaque for the artistes connected with the Mellow Mix and Blend Studios and Social Club has been placed on the Picturehouse Cinema building in Mare Street.

Mellow Mix were promoters and supporters of local music and were based at 2 Foulden Road, Stoke Newington.

Publications

White Riot by Joe Thomas



Billed as a mix of ‘fiction, fact and personal experience’ the book centres on a policeman in 1980s Hackney who is responsible for investigating local racist attacks.

Publication date January 2023 (available for pre-order at Pages and other local bookshops.)

Hackney Society Events

The events programme for 2023 is being planned. Check the Hackney Society website and join the email list for dates and details.

Photo by Marc Ely



Freight train – from the roof of St Augustine's Tower

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

Edited by: Susan Doe

Layout by: design@gloryhall.com

Contributors: Susan Doe; Robin Mallalieu; Ken Worpole

Photos: Sue Doe, Marc Ely

The Hackney Society

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

T: 020 7175 1967

E: info@hackneysociety.org

W: www.hackneysociety.org

Twitter: @HackneySociety

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