

Frontis

It was during a previous lull in work, in 1987, that David Quigley remembered a site in Camberwell, South London, which he had been shown by a Kensington-based developer. Situated in Hopewell Street and occupied by a Victorian omnibus terminus dating back to the 1870s, the site sits in a network of local-authority housing estates. These range in style from brick neo-Georgian of the thirties and forties to concrete sixties high-rise and aluminium-clad, medium-rise, deck-access of the seventies. It may once have seemed that this was a brave new world, but now the concrete is stained, the aluminium oxidised and dented, and the surroundings strewn with litter and rubble.

The West End developer got cold feet but Quigley, realising the potential of the site, drew



Above, panoramic view of the courtyard opening off Hopewell Street.

Left, the elevations are designed as a number of formal set pieces around the landscaped courtyard

up a number of alternative schemes and managed to persuade Crescent Estates (South East) to attempt a Docklands type, mixed-use development far from the river. Thirty-four flats, maisonettes and houses and 13 B1 studio/office units are grouped around a courtyard which is entered off Hopewell Street. One old building, the three-gabled stable block at the rear of the site, was retained and converted into B1 units on two floors. One of the existing trusses was removed to create an open atrium which admits daylight to all the units. The ground beneath this building was excavated to form an underground car park comparatively cheaply. To avoid introducing new loads to the existing structure, an independent steel frame has been inserted to support the new floors.

Architects: David Quigley Architects; Jane McElroy, Uma Manadeva, Kut Nadiadi, Charlie Hussey, John Chapman, Vahid Massah
Quantity Surveyors: John Hall Associates
Structural Engineers: Packman Lucas
Contractor: M. O'Donovan Ltd
Joinery: KHF Contracts, I.D. Products Ltd
Pre-cast Concrete Coping: Stepney Cast Stone Co. Ltd
Metal Balustrading: Glencot Development and Design Co. Ltd
Metal Staircases: Peter Marshall Fire Escapes Ltd



Above, access to the flats is via open, metalwork staircases.
 Above right, the main entrance on Hopewell Street



The remainder of the site had strict design limitations: windows could only look out on to Hopewell Street; no rights of light could be obtained over a children's playground on one side and a side street on the other. So many of the residential units are single-aspect with light gained solely from the courtyard.

The elevations around the courtyard are highly articulated. Flats off open vertical stairs and the two four-storey houses are clearly expressed as individual, formal set pieces. A wide range of materials has been used: banded brickwork, render finished with coloured, crushed sea shells – which Quigley also used at Blackpool Winter Gardens (*RIBA Journal* April) – brightly painted metalwork for stairs, balustrades and balconies, all capped with an Egyptian-style, pre-cast concrete cornice. Even the colour of the roof tiles varies: two colours of Redland Stonewold concrete roofing tiles were specified. To increase the sense of space the concrete cobbles in the courtyard – Rialto from Marshalls Mono – are laid in a diagonal pattern. With its formal buildings, unfussy hard paving and trees, the

courtyard has more the air of a quiet square in a sophisticated Continental city than a development in brutalised South London.

At a difficult time for the property market, the scheme has proved to be commercially successful with office and residential units now nearly all sold. Construction costs were kept low – Quigley did a lot of shopping around in the North for competitively-priced subcontractors – and the scheme worked out at £55 per sq.ft overall. One aim of the mixed-use development is to bring back life into the city and several people have purchased a flat plus a studio unit. Although Quigley has created an attractive and lively addition to the depressed area, it is unfortunate that the scheme has, like many Docklands developments, a defensive air – the offices on the ground floor have only high-level glazing on to Hopewell Street, the passer-by has to guess what is happening inside, and there are the ubiquitous security gates under the entrance archway. Despite the token gesture of employing a nightwatchman who lives in the area, the local community is excluded.

Richard Wilcock