

LONDON PLAY

Play Streets Past & Present

Canning Road, Islington

Canning Road is a friendly and diverse community of terraced houses. Many neighbours have known each other for years, and some have lived in the road since the 1930s. Others settled in London from the West Indies more than half a century ago and now their children and grandchildren live in the road.

Residents take pride in keeping the street green and for many years, people in Canning Road have organised well-attended 'Pop Outs' – a chance for neighbours to 'pop out' with a cup of tea to meet their neighbours whilst watching the children play.

In the past Canning Road was the playground for many local children and who would call for each other after school to play in the street.

Nowadays local children yearn for the kind of freedoms that previous generations had in their day.



Canning Road reminiscence session

The Canning Road group who took part in the project met for a lively reminiscence session. Four older people from the street were joined by around 10 other participants to share memories and stories relating to play and childhood.

The group heard many happy recollections centred around a close-knit community on the street, and listened to descriptions of playing on the bomb sites known as 'stone hills' after the war.

One of the strongest themes which flowed through the session was about local rivers.

Bob recalled that when he was a child, the local Arsenal Tavern was still called The Sluice House - because of a sluice house in existence near the site. People spoke about the rivers, many of which have now been diverted underground - one to Clissold Park. They recalled the fun of fishing for brown trout and catching tiddlers in jam jars.

Dave made us all smile when he remembered going to the New River at Douglas Road, where he filled a small attaché case with frogs from the river. However travelling back on the bus home, all the frogs spilled out and everyone had to get off the bus.

Reg, another long standing resident in the street recalled an eventful day when the street was shaken by an almighty bang!



Water, water everywhere.....

During the art and play session in Canning Road, these stories about the flood translated in to the creation of a giant play ship in order to bring alive the story of the day when the road flooded and they bought out their toy boats.

As usual, the combination of mixing children and water is great fun. In this session one thing lead to another and it ended up in a giant water fight which was enjoyed by all.