

Efford - Project report from Cleo Broda, January 2007

How I've spent my time:

Walking the back lanes and paths with Maria
Walking to the water with Michael
Visiting Efford Fort with Sue
Walking with the youth workers on their detach eve - Foxfield / Torridge Way etc
Walking around on my own in the rain charting routes (a lot!)
Getting to know the health and social care students at Lipson (3 visits)
Getting to know the food science students at Lipson (4 visits)
Doing cooking session with food science students
Attending mothers and toddlers session at Play Tots
Hanging about to see which routes students take to/from school
Talking to dog walkers and others using the lanes and back routes
Attending the senior lunch held at Highfield Primary Community Rooms
Hanging about on the allotments talking to people about food and growing
Attending the Post Office demo
Attending Hurrell Court Friday coffee (twice)
Travelling to Highfield School with Sue and the walking bus
Organising the feast
Preparing the food to take to Hurrell Court with the students
Sending photographs / proof pages / letters / cards to participants for approval
Phoning around a lot for approvals for the book
Doing the book layout
Editing, printing and getting the book bound
Eating good food and talking at Michael's house

Collected recipes from:

Rose, Lesley and Marlene in the Post Office
Michael and Maria from Heart of Efford
Barbara, Dorothy and other Hurrell Court residents
Bob, John and Derek from the allotments
Karen the cook at Highfield School
Play Tots nursery (play dough)
Jackie the Food Science teacher at Lipson Community College
Harry the chef
Various others along the way

Video footage collected:

Health and Social Care girls giving tour of Efford back routes and explaining games - tracker, kerby.
Some of Hurrell Court residents talking about food (noisy!)
Lipson students cooking
People on the allotments talking - sound only
Rose explaining recipes
Barbara explaining recipes

Still images taken:

Allotment produce
Food I've come across in Efford
Recipes
Hurrell Court residents
Lipson students cooking
Back routes

Information collected on forms / maps

Route maps filled in by Health and Social Care and other Lipson students
Recipe forms left in the pod - only one filled in!

Observations and other information collected

There are a lot of areas for young people to hang out in in Efford - they use the woodland and paths etc but seem to like to hang out where they are visible and can find each other.

Foxfield appears to work well as an area for young people but has the disadvantage of being in the middle of a residential square. It provides a focus with the ball court but causes problems because of its location. A youth zone with an activity focus does seem to be a good idea.

Less visible are the young people who don't want to hang out on the street and engage in other activities instead - activities which are based mainly at home. These young people are less visible but also seem to be a sizable though not formed group. I spoke to girls who visit friends in the evening or just do their coursework and communicate on msn or by text in the week and see friends at each other's homes on the weekend. I also spoke to a group of boys at Lipson who are deeply involved a sci fi card and role-playing game which they play in a part of the school after lessons and visit each other's homes to play too.

The youth workers and service seems well used by some young people but it seems that the youth workers and therefore the club, are severely restricted by under funding. They have too few paid hours to expand their work to cover more days. The youth workers are well liked amongst the kids hanging out on the street who call them over when they are on detach.

The times I went to the youth club, it seemed very well used - the early session for younger kids was very busy and there were young people waiting outside for the later session for older teenagers to start.

The girls I spoke to in a 6th form class at Lipson College who live in Efford said they don't go to the youth club. They are probably a bit old for it and also say that the activities available there don't suit them. They want expensive stuff! - action sports, driving lessons etc which seems a bit unrealistic.

Another thing that came up in discussion is somewhere to go out of the rain and wouldn't be disturbed by police - for eg a shelter but think there should be more than one of these to give choice and opportunity for different groups to use shelters

There also seems to be quite a bit of 'making your own fun' going on with younger teenagers ie hanging out and playing games and using rope swings etc even in the pouring rain.

The young people of Deer Park mainly go to a different school and are quite separate from the Torridge Way end.

What people say:

Health and Social Care girls (on video tour)

They think Efford has got a bad name from just a few people causing trouble.

They think it looks badly kept and could do with some upkeep esp the older houses on the estate.

They really liked the newer estate off Blandford road - the 80s one - because it was quiet and the houses have their own parking and cul de sacs.

They feel safe to hang out in cul de sacs because of cars not racing through.

They don't feel safe using the back paths on their own especially after dusk as the lighting is so bad.
One of them knew all the back routes through the trees and behind houses and fences from playing games outside.

Discussion with 6th form class:

A few of the students mentioned the youth club described above that they liked that does exciting (expensive) stuff with the kids - this seemed not to be local and was possibly either a summer thing or a club that travels round neighbourhoods or a franchise club. It does activities such as abseiling, driving lessons etc.

Hurrell Court residents

When they were young they used to go out and play all day in the park in groups and just come home in time for tea. They commented that when they were kids there weren't the same sort of health issues and problems for kids as they played out more and ate less and healthier home cooked food 'without preservatives'.

The sheltered housing there isn't really that sheltered - its open for people to wander through and they say that there is a bit of trouble with that. The housing being a bit more enclosed would make them feel more secure.

Allotment gardeners

Patience for growing and cooking are good things
Food you have grown yourself tastes better
Allotment tending is good exercise
They're glad that the primary schools now have allotments but they need to be able to let the kids do some of the work - they say that health and safety means the kids can't dig.
'Our society suffers from affluence and this means a low boredom threshold'.
'The people are lovely round here'.

Others

We didn't have any toys when we were kids so we had to be more creative - making up our own games - playing with making up stories around the names in the graveyard for eg.

Some improvements that were suggested to me

Lighting improved on pedestrian walkways
More dog dirt bins
Increased funding for the youth workers
House facelifts - painting etc

Efford Recipes book

I am very pleased with the Efford Recipes book as the project outcome. Residents who have seen it have given me positive feedback which has been rewarding. I enjoyed working with the participants and making the piece. I would like the opportunity to work in Efford again and develop the contacts that I have made working on the project further.

I have aimed to create

- A document that records something about Efford creating a snapshot portrait of the community
- A book which records a special aspect of Efford
- Something which brings up discussion around food, passing things on and cooking and eating as social activities.
- An opportunity for older and younger residents to meet and talk
- A celebration
- An opportunity for social cooking
- An opportunity for social eating

Some thoughts on the project set-up

Timescale

- I found the short timescale quite difficult to work to; a lot of the time was spent trying to identify people who might be interested in working on the project.
- It would have been useful with a project of such a short timescale to have had a group or groups already identified to work with,
- In the end I'm happy with the groups who I worked with and it all turned out well, but I did get in a bit of a panic about managing to form a group who would be interested in working with me within the time.
- Working to a short timescale meant quite a lot of trips in a short period of time as I needed to juggle trips around existing commitments for other projects.

Organisation

- The information pack with the research document and contacts list was very useful.
- It would have been useful to know about needing to spend budget on travel/accommodation for the debriefing meeting (which I couldn't attend) and the exhibition opening earlier in the project so that we could allocate budget for these trips.
- Having all the artists working together at once created a good support for our work especially as all of us were working individually and three of us at a distance.
- My experience of working with the other artists was very positive.
- The idea of having someone helping to document our projects seemed a good one but for me was difficult to find the appropriate opportunity for it.
- Being able to come in for a crit at Shillam and Smith was very useful.
- I felt that Shillam and Smith were supportive and kept in touch at the right level when managing the art commissions.