

BODYSTORMING

**Bodystorming with
Marchmont Community Centre
Autumn 2003**

Stories about Life in Bloomsbury

**There was a liquorice factory in
Bidborough Street, you could smell it,
lovely, it disappeared in the late 40s ...
now long gone.**



www.proboscis.org.uk

Introduction

On several afternoons in between August and December 2003 Proboscis held Urban Tapestries bodystorming events with Marchmont Community Centre. These were to explore relationships between people, communities and knowledge and technology. At the events people created stories by adding their thoughts and memories to a large map creating a personal history of Bloomsbury and the surrounding area.

The events are part of the Urban Tapestries project. Urban Tapestries is a project run by Holborn-based group Proboscis a creative studio which researches, develops and facilitates innovation, it acts as a production company, commissioning agency, design studio, think tank and consultancy.

Urban Tapestries is creating an experimental software platform for knowledge mapping and sharing – public authoring. It combines mobile and internet technologies with geographic information systems to allow people to build relationships between places and to associate stories, information, pictures, sounds and videos with them.





I remember the controversy caused by the erecting of Centre Point in the 60s. Many of the flats remained empty for years and it was thought to be the great White Elephant of its time.



In the days before Marchmont Community Centre was here there was Liptons, the Post Office, Trumans the Greengrocers, a drapers shop and Bootles the Chemist. In the drapers there was was a tube you put the money in and it was whisked away, that's how they got the money around the store.



Rochelle

In the 80s I worked in a womens' centre in Cromer Street opposite Holy Cross Church. It was run by 2 lesbians who didn't like the church people, although they were very kind to everyone especially the first Yugoslavian refugees coming over. One lady made me cushions for my massage couch to make my clients comfy.

I started my aromatherapy and massage practice learning on the local women who couldn't afford expensive treatments. I loved the work. We had some nice parties with them. I once dressed as a "can can" girl; the costume was hired from Nathan Bermans at Cambridge Circuit. It's funny to be back working here in Marchmont Street Community Centre as an intergenerational project worker. No day is like another.

Mary

I like living around here (have lived here for) 40 years and worked in the university. All my children were born here, four sons, three now one was killed. I was a housekeeper working for Doctors, Professors and University people. They all liked me as a friend. It was very hard work, my husband died and I had to bring up four children on my own.

I love coming to our Community Centre in Marchmont St. I've been coming for eight or nine years. Its such a relaxing place to come and everyone is so friendly and helpful. I depend on Safeways in the Brunswick Centre, I remember when it was built. I wasn't very keen on it as a centre, not very interesting building, more like a prison.

My favourite buildings are Senate House and International Hall. Where I am living is two hundred years old in Brunswick Mansions. It was once all for students of the university but now it houses locals.

Marchmont Street is best and they put themselves out for us. I don't come for food but activities and Christmas and all they do for you. Christmas at the University was a nice time. All the heads used to come and have a sing song and knees up. I set the food up and they'd bring the drinks. I returned there when I was seventy in 1989, it was a very sad time having to hand back the keys. I was there for forty years working for them like a lifetime.

Marjorie

I was living and working in Fitzroy Square for 37 years, I knew George Bernard Shaw lived there, and Virginia Wolfe. The square was rather plain at that time before the Indian YMCA was built and a drama school. Nearby the Telecom Tower was built where a lift took you to the top for 4 shillings and there was a lovely view. I remember the Mecca dance hall in Tottenham Court Road, the Player Cinema. The Joe Lyon corner cafe is no more, where Judy Benson's girl band used to play. I remember a visit from the Queen Mum and also Princess Alexandra.

There was a gentleman's outfitter on Marchmont and the tip of the finger to the nose was the old way to measure a yard.

Lill's Sweet Memories

*Near British Museum, Boswell and Millman Street
There were sweet shops all around selling such delights as:*

*Pontefract Cakes
(give you the runs)
Liquorice Allsorts
Peardrops
Sherbert Lemons
Monkey Nuts
Tiger Nuts
Humbugs
Sherbert Dips and lollipops
Nougat
Jelly Babies
Dolly Mixtures
Choc Drops
Cough Drops
Lemon Dips
Lemonade Powder to make your own drink
Tizer*

Emily

In Marchmont there used to be shops for all you'd need – you didn't need to go into the West End before the Brunswick Centre was built.

St Clements and Danes Church was bombed in the war then rebuilt and it was a church for American Air Force children.

At one point during the year we used to do the handbells playing oranges and lemons. The Danes would come over and we would give them oranges and lemons.



I'm a Tottenham Girl – I've only been here 5 years. It was hard to move here but it was to help my son Edward. I live in the Brunswick Centre. My son is disabled. He is getting more confident moving here. I am still getting to know the area and it is nice to get out in the daytime.

Kit

I worked in Broadwick Section House, Treuchard House where I was supervisor of cleaners. I started at 25 years and retired at 60. I was awarded the BEM medal aged about 50. I've a son of 61, born on Christmas day.

My husband worked on the railways as a guard. Once the railway went privatised there were no more free passes. For holidays I went to Spain, Italy and Jersey. I haven't travelled for 30 years.

I've been married for 64 years next year. I received a photo and congratulations from the Queen on my 60th wedding anniversary. I was married in Old Lambeth in St Marys Church which is gone now. Born in Lambeth walk – its all spoilt now.

Emily

I was born in Wild Street and lived in a Peabody flat till it was bombed in 1941. We had nothing – not even a pair of knickers and we stayed at night in the shelter in the Masonic Hall. We went for food to our uncles, and for a wash. Eventually we got a room in Peabody flat, it was one room for Mum and the whole family, our father had died, and we had to share a bathroom with all the other families on the floor. I'm glad we lived this long, things are better now and we can enjoy them.

Before the war firms didn't employ married women, there was no union for women so if you were sick you didn't get any pay. The unions changed that. The women's union in the Carreras Cigarette factory on Hampstead Road began in 1942.

We used to have tea in Limes Corner House by the river and I remember Amy Johnstone had her plane parked on some wasteland behind Bush House for a time.

Ash

I live in Fredrick Street, I like it a lot, its a nice quiet area at times, everyone gets along and talks to each other I have lived in Handel Street for the past 16 years. It is such a nice street to live in.



Covent Garden

There were powder puff factories in Covent Garden – Slave Work.

Shaftesbury Avenue

Strolling players used to wander along the theatre queues entertaining the people.

Rupert Street

I was cleaner at Section House a small hotel for Policemen. They looked after me, I was only 26.

Wardour Street

Ration books; once a week you'd take a coupon into a shop and could get offal, tripe. You had to line up and queue but you weren't pushed around they way you are now.

Alfred Place

The huge computer shop here used to be a furniture shop.



Medicine has changed so much, for instance when Penicillin was introduced in hospitals the TB wards emptied overnight and the hospitals changed.

Juliet

There have been several visits by the Queen to the London Goodenough College, Mecklenburgh Square. Also a visit by Princess Diana. You can find out more at London House.

There have been several television and filming occasions in Mecklenburgh Square including some of its old houses. There was once a comedy involving striped beach huts in the street nearby

Field Lane: Tony Blair visited to Homeless Centre and the Mens Kids Club in Sidmouth Mews Estate, its in the Oct 2003 edition of the Camden Citizen.

Lambs Conduit Street: The Welsh Dairy off Lambs Conduit Street was run by a pleasant elderly couple and (I believe) their daughter. The sign above the door is still there I think. It is a vintage furniture shop now.

Leigh Street: Oct 28th 2003 saw the filming for comedy "Black Books" on Channel 4 television. It took place at an old fashioned bookshop painted black with that name specially for the occasion.

Lambs Conduit Street: The Holborn Bakery, butchers, cobblers in Lambs Conduit Street have all gone.

St Barts: During the war I was lining up for clothes. If they found out a lady's husband was not in the forces she didn't get help. People whose husbands weren't in the Army or Forces were sometimes ousted and had to pay for things like giving birth.



Una

I remember Lyons Cafe in Holborn, the Aviation House in Holborn – now its Boots and Sainsburys.



Eileen

My son Rory Blaney was born in 1953 in 18 Regent Square

My children were born in Swinton Street.

Andrew Blaney in 1942 at no 31

Michael Blainey in 1945 at no 7

Eileen Blainey in 1948 at no 7

Agnes

I came to London 1951 and was Manageress of a Small Hotel in Berners Street.

Worked in my son's school St Joseph's School in Macklin Street for twenty five years as a classroom helper – educational helper – I helped the slow learners.

Worked for the nuns. St Joseph's School is still there.

Juli

The British Museum is the closest museum to my house. It has things from all over the world. I like Corams Fields because I go there and play with my friends (it has lots of playing equipment).

I like the Thames River because its beautiful.

My sister married in Camden Town Hall.

Marjorie

I worked in Gt. Portland Street for 20 years. I lived in a pre fab that's now pulled down and on Kingsway I worked later as a tea lady for 10 years. I've been in London for 50 years. Born in Bury, Lancashire I've travelled to many place in Europe. Favourite bits of London are ones I can get to with my free pass like Greenwich, I go with my friends. Where I am living now was a coach station in Judd Street, you could go to Southend, Brighton etc on holidays.

Maria

I came to this area in 1946, married an Englishman, I'm Italian from Napoli. I had five children and I've been a housewife, cleaner, jack of all trades, worked in an Indian hostel in Guildford Street for 12 years. I worked for shop stewards in the unions serving dinners and cleaning in Malet Street.

My kids were all grown up and none of them left, they like it here too much – near their parents. We are very close.

I worked in Aylesbury Cafe for a few years and I was very happy. I learned to speak English at the cafe. Mixed Italian and English food, seven of us worked there, Frank, Julia, Oliver....

Maggie

My father was born here in 1918. My parents got married in St Peter's Italian Church in 1950. My mother was born in Sidmouth Street in 1928 and moved back in 1985 to Regent Square after my father dies. She now lives opposite where she was born – a full circle.



Seaforth Street

There was a famous button factory that used to be here, they exported buttons all over the world and if you were to dig around there now you might find buttons. Its now a telephone exchange.

Kings Cross

The steam trains used to come in and out of Euston, going north to Manchester and other places. There were still steam trains til fairly recently.

Bidborough Street

There was a Liquorice Factory in Bidborough Street, you could smell it, lovely, it disappeared in the late 40s and there was a telephone exchange in Judd Street.

Southampton Row

Kingsway Hall

Kingsway Hall was rented or owned by the Quakers. The top floor was a nursery school – the first of its kind in London at around 1920.

I frequented the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden in the 50s and 60s and I'm glad to say the old has been kept along with the modern – new. I was a regular visitor to shows at the old Sadlers Wells Theatre 1940, 50, 60 etc. All modern this century and so different.

Popi

Tonbridge Street has everything you need like food stores and clothes stores and that's why I like it.

Lima

I like going to Coram's Fields because it has lots of playing areas in one park.

Liza

I like Cromer Street because it has a good girls youth group which is Chadwell.

I like the British Library because its really big and full of interesting books.

Ifteker

The British Library is also know as the "World of Knowledge".

Tavistock Square is known for the flower garden at the entrance of the back gate.

Gordon Square is a nice place to enjoy the view around you.

When we were young you got married a virgin and stayed with the same man. Now its gone in the opposite direction.

From one extreme to another.

