



THE BOOK: LIVES LESS ORDINARY

'Lives Less Ordinary' documents the oral history of the Camden Society. A compilation of the memories and recollections of Society members past and present, personal stories are supported by new archival research. Together they build a fascinating history of the Society from its beginnings in the 1960s to the present day. Including over 60 interviews and absorbing black and white historical photography, this book provides a wealth of fascinating detail with stories of resistance, co-operation and progress. The book will be published in the Autumn of 2009.



THE PROJECT

This project has focused on recording personal histories of people with learning disabilities and the wider history of the Camden Society. It highlights an important heritage which is often hidden, and the less than ordinary lives that people have lived. The people that have contributed have lived through significant changes in attitude, legislation and opportunity.

We have provided training and the opportunity to learn new skills to many people with disabilities involved with this project. The training and workshops have focused on oral history, interviewing skills, performance skills and filming techniques.

We hope that everyone involved, and all those who come to see the exhibition, watch the film or read the book will come away with greater understanding.

PROJECT TEAM

Adrian Berry	Denise Largin
Lee Humber	Michele Egar
Robin Robertson	Hanna Tozer

ABOUT THE CAMDEN SOCIETY

The Camden Society started in 1966 as a campaigning organisation, advocating a more inclusive society for people with learning disabilities. It was instrumental in moving people out of long-stay institutions and back into the community. The Camden Society emphasises creativity, innovation and enterprise to generate new opportunities for people with disabilities to achieve greater equality & supports over 600 people every week.

LIVES LESS ORDINARY

Forty Years of the Camden Society



This project, a celebration of a unique organisation and the people who use its services, has been two years in the making. In documenting the history of the Camden Society, we are proud to present a compendium of creative delights including a new exhibition of photography, an original piece of theatre created by the performers, and a film showing the early history of the Camden Society.



Along the way, we have also created a range of training initiatives to support the involvement of people with learning disabilities in this project whilst in Autumn 2009, we will publish 'Lives Less Ordinary', a book that documents and celebrates 40 years of our history.



SPRING 2009



A collaboration between the Camden Society and Jacksons Lane Theatre, this project has been intriguing, exciting and fun for everyone that has contributed. We thank the Heritage Lottery Fund for their valued support and funding to make it happen.



THE PERFORMANCE: WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

'Where Are You Going' developed from the idea that as well as exploring our history, we also wanted to look at the things that people enjoy in their lives now as well as focusing on what people want for their futures. The performance was created from the personal stories, experiences and histories of the cast and was developed over time to explore the ideas of 'freedom' and 'moving forward'.

CAST LIST

Alice Etherington	Michaela Mamara	Dawn Fleming: Director
Alwyn Pierre	Nurul Hussein	Sara Nesbitt: Assistant Director
Carol Dove	Robert Arapapis	Nina Gebauer: Designer
Jackie Fields	Robert Smith	Sophie Goldthorpe: Designer
Jide Akinbye	Stephen Downes	Hanna Tozer: Project Coordinator
Keith Shortman	Tim Nixon	

Music by The Unknown



Gateway Club opens on 2 Feb. 9 members meet at St Mary the Virgin Church in Primrose Hill

Club moves to Montefiore Hall, at the Council of Liberal Jewish Synagogue, St Johns Wood

Toy Library opens: 85 Highgate Rd. The Charity Shop is set up: 27 Winchester Rd

Camden Society gets 1st group home in Gloucester Ave, housing 6 adults

THE EXHIBITION: PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBIN ROBERTSON

The term 'learning disabilities' whilst being very broad in definition is often portrayed in a narrow and one-dimensional way. This series of portraits hopes to reflect and celebrate the social and cultural diversity of the people photographed.

I have been fortunate to have been able to document the members and users of this Society for more than a decade. These portraits however only date back to August 2008 and form part of the Society's heritage project.



Café 311 opens

Dianne Hopkins & Jack Harris both retire

CJs Café opens

Jacksons Café opens

Greenwood Place transferred from council to full control by the Camden Society • KTs, a sheltered workplace run by the council, taken over by the Camden Society –renamed Flapjacks

THE FILM: JACK HARRIS, THE LEGACY

Reels of Super 8 Cinefilm, taken in the 1960s and 70s by Jack Harris, form an important part of our archive. Jack was one of the founding members of the Camden Society and was highly respected by the many people who benefited from his work. Jack's films record an important part of social care history: the early years of Britain's first Gateway Club for people with learning disabilities, as well as the very personal histories of its members and the early development of an organisation that began with a handful of parents and that now employs over 150 staff. Apparent throughout is the Camden Society's strong focus on equal rights.

Inspired by this footage and keen to explore their heritage, a group of Camden Society members produced this short film using Jack's archive. Everyone involved in this film knew Jack personally. Because he was so prevalent in their memories and instrumental to the history and growth of the Camden Society, this film reflects the man behind the camera.

A series of interviews form the basis to this film. Following initial training in preparing and conducting interviews, our film group members have enjoyed talking to people about their experiences of the original Gateway Club and memories of Jack. The interviews took place in people's homes, at the Camden Society and at various locations shown in the Super 8 footage, notably Brightlingsea (the seaside home of our Captain Jack's Holiday House) and St. Lawrence's Hospital in Caterham.

The interviews serve as the soundtrack to Jack's silent images and are complemented by music from The Unknown, a band formed at the Camden Society in the 1980s.

FILM GROUP MEMBERS

Ursula Allsopp	Alice Etherington
Angela Davies	Robin Robertson
Carol Dove	



The Queen visits Café 311

Jack Harris passes away

The Society provides services in 9 London boroughs & wins 'Preferred Provider' for Southwark

Head Office moves from 245 Royal College St to 60 Holmes Rd

1984 Applejacks, the Society's ground-breaking training facility, is bought
 1983 For the first time over 100 volunteers are involved in the Society's many activities
 1981 245 Royal College St opens as offices and a training and resource centre
 1980 Grants from Camden Council & central government drop from £30,000 in 1979 to just £400
 1978 Chetwynd Rd group home opens 106 Sydney St, Brightlingsea bought as an activity centre
 1977 Camden Society moves to Belize Rd • Toy Library moves to Fleet Rd • First paid workers joins the Society • Viv Davies • Name changes from Camden Society for the Mentally Handicapped Children to Camden Society for the Mentally Handicapped

1985 Artim Grove group home opens • The Linc (Living in Camden) pilot scheme to coordinate the return to community of long-stay residents of St Lawrence's - begins
 Society is responsible, in partnership with Camden Social Services, for 5 houses & 1 flat
 1986 Applejacks begins to operate
 1987 Name changes to Camden Society for People with Learning Difficulties
 The Society has full part time and seasonal staff • Modern day structure for clubs with Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday clubs
 1988 'The Unknown' band is formed
 1991 Mill Lane & Mail Out projects open
 Stand by Your Bees', a play performed by Camden People First & devised in partnership with Mind the Gap Community Team