

Cultural Value

Bloomsbury Festival in a Box: engaging socially isolated people with dementia

Dr Michael Eades & Dr Claudia Cooper



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

Bloomsbury Festival in a Box: engaging socially isolated people with dementia

Dr. Michael Eades & Dr Claudia Cooper

Executive Summary

Bloomsbury Festival in a Box: engaging socially isolated people with dementia has researched, implemented and analysed a pilot scheme for engaging people with dementia in the arts. A collaboration between the School of Advanced Study, University College London, the Bloomsbury Festival, and Age UK Camden—the project took a ‘festival in a box’ experience into the homes of six people living alone and with dementia in Bloomsbury and Camden. The project sought to create a miniature and peripatetic version of the Bloomsbury Festival that would be tailored to the needs of people living with dementia, and which would allow them to share insights into their lives in the area. ‘Archives’ of the engagement process were collected for each participant, and their contents analysed via a multi-disciplinary narrative research framework. This multidisciplinary approach—with primarily qualitative, but also quantitative components—combined literary and textual analysis, cultural and social history, interpretative phenomenological analysis, narrative gerontology and old age psychiatry.

Findings from the project have been disseminated via a range of mediums, including an exhibition and workshop during the Bloomsbury Festival in October 2013, a project blog, and a public knowledge share day bringing together academics, professionals and practitioners in fields of arts and health, gerontology, cultural and community provision from across the UK. The project has generated considerable interest from these fields. It has also generated a further range of outputs, detailed below. Specifically, the Bloomsbury Festival in a Box project will now evolve into an open access digital archive, in the form of the Bloomsbury Festival in a Box ‘open archives’.

Throughout the study and dissemination, participant confidentiality was respected. Consent forms were completed for participation, recordings, and for photographs taken. The study only included participants deemed to have capacity to give consent, and was overseen by Age UK Camden.

Researchers

Principal Investigator:

Dr Michael Eades, Cultural Contexts Research Fellow, School of Advanced Study, University of London.

Co-Investigator:

Dr Claudia Cooper, Senior Lecturer and Honorary Consultant in Old Age Psychiatry, University College London.

Research Assistant:

Kathryn Lord, PhD Candidate in Old Age Psychiatry, University College London.

Project Partners:

Age UK Camden

Bloomsbury Festival

Key words

Dementia, Narrative, Gerontology, Festivals, Cultural Engagement, Surrealism

Introduction:

The Bloomsbury Festival was established in 2007. A community festival described variously as ‘an autumn festival of art, knowledge and imagination’ and ‘an avant-garde village fete’ (Mager, 2013), the annual event has grown up around a central mission to celebrate Bloomsbury: its cultures, communities and histories, as well as the lives of those who live and work in the area. In 2013, festival director Cathy Mager initiated a scheme to extend the festival’s demographic reach and year-round programme of community engagement. Writing in *Arts Professional*, Mager noted a disparity between the rhetoric of inclusivity fundamental to the arts, festival, and creative industries—and the reality. She argued that:

the “something for everyone” and “free for all” mantra of these events often overlooks the many people that are excluded due to disability, social or intellectual barriers. Many people never get a chance to celebrate their membership of cultural society, their sense of place or their opinion of art, save but through perhaps reading about it after the event or watching it on television (Mager, 2013).

In the midst of an area famous for containing one of the highest concentrations of cultural and educational institutions in the UK, and for its associations with particular strains of literary and artistic ‘high’ culture, the Bloomsbury Festival therefore aimed to address the problem of creating a genuinely inclusive cultural environment. ‘We know not everyone in our community can come to our festival’, Mager noted, ‘but we want to take the festival to everyone’ (Mager, 2013).

Also in 2013, the School of Advanced Study, University of London—a partner organisation of the Bloomsbury Festival—received a grant as part of the Arts and Humanities Research Council’s *Cultural Engagement Pilot Scheme*. This project focussed on developing and extending the School’s existing relationship with the Bloomsbury Festival, and developing a programme of events, activities, and original artworks that drew upon academic expertise in the institution, and its research collections, and sought to open these resources to new publics.

Bloomsbury Festival in a Box: engaging socially isolated people with dementia developed out of these contexts, and out of an impetus on the part of both the Bloomsbury Festival and the School of Advanced Study to develop research into their shared cultural milieu of Bloomsbury. This impetus initiated contact with Age UK Camden, another organisation based in the heart of Bloomsbury, with the aim of developing an outreach programme working with clients of this organisation’s ‘Dementia Befriending Service’. This service offers support to people living alone and with dementia in Bloomsbury and across the borough, and was therefore identified as a means of connecting with some of the isolated inhabitants of one of London’s most culturally evocative districts.

The following document reports on the progress and findings of the *Bloomsbury Festival in a Box* project, which has attempted not only to initiate an innovative cultural outreach

programme, but to involve people living with dementia in Bloomsbury in the co-production of knowledge about their local civic and cultural contexts, and to create a new 'archive' to set alongside Bloomsbury's internationally recognised libraries and archives. The report is divided into five sections, accompanied by appendices. Section one provides an overview of the project's conception and intellectual grounding, including a note on methodology. Section two follows the project through its key stages of development, whilst section three comprises images documenting the project. Section four offers an analysis of the data collected, and points to the future directions of our research. Section five presents an overview of the project's present and future outcomes.

Objectives

The project had the following core objectives:

- To develop a cultural outreach programme designed to bring cultural participation to socially isolated older people with dementia.
- To pilot implementing the programme with clients of Age UK Camden dementia befriending scheme, and evaluate feasibility, acceptability and enjoyment by qualitatively analysing the responses of the people with dementia and the befrienders to the programme.
- To make a significant contribution to research methodologies deployed in evaluation of arts and health activities via the trial of a multi-disciplinary narrative framework.
- To develop the collaborative relationships initiated between institutions and communities during the AHRC-funded *Bloomsbury Festival Cultural Engagement Project* (Feb-May 2013).
- To disseminate the results of the project via two high-profile public engagement events: (1) an exhibition as part of the Bloomsbury Festival 2013 and (2) a one day knowledge-share event hosted by the School in 2014.

Research Questions

- The Festival in a Box project set out to address the following questions:
- What is the core value of cultural engagement among isolated people with dementia?
- Can participation in community-led cultural events lead to increased social inclusion, cognitive performance, and social wellbeing among this hard-to-reach population, using the cultural and intellectual resources of Bloomsbury?
- What is the value of engaging people with dementia in the planning and provision of culture, and how might we better recognise people with dementia as valuable cultural resources in their own right?

Part One: Context and Conceptual Grounding



Bloomsbury: cultural contexts

The *Bloomsbury Festival in a Box* project was born out of collaborative research into the 'cultural contexts' of a very specific area of London. Geographically, Bloomsbury is a small district with the British Museum at its centre—bounded by Euston Road to the North, Tottenham Court Road to the West, Gray's Inn Road to the East and, to the South, Theobald's Road. On a more conceptual level however Bloomsbury can be thought of as a locale with a very particular narrative, centred on its status as an intellectual and cultural hub for London and for the UK. Something of this is captured in Rosemary Ashton's (2013) *Victorian Bloomsbury*. Here she quotes Willkie Collins, writing in 1883 and describing Bloomsbury in the following terms:

The broad district, stretching northward and eastward from the British Museum, is like the quiet quarter of a country town set in the midst of the roaring activities of the largest city in the world. Here, when you are idle, you can saunter and look about, safe from collision with merciless straight-walkers whose time is money, and whose destiny in business (9).

In this as in many other texts Bloomsbury is represented as a tranquil area of cultural wealth 'boxed' in on all sides by the whirl of London life. To quote another extract from Ashton's work: 'it is at present neither a district neither very fashionable, nor very much the reverse, but quiet, respectable, salubrious and pleasant [...] and having for its centre

and its symbol the great national storehouse of the learning of all ages and the arts of all mankind' (12).

Ashton's book, and the University College's *Bloomsbury Project* from which it developed, has been instrumental in opening up the narrative of Bloomsbury, and demonstrating the area's history as a locus of intellectual and social reform in the nineteenth century.¹ Nonetheless, as Nicolas Murray (2010) has noted, the continuing cultural resonance of 'Bloomsbury' is, 'the Bloomsbury Group, that early twentieth century constellation of literary talent with which the British have a lively love-hate relationship' (12-13). The reason for the 'hate' side of this, Murray suggests, is the lingering association of cultural elitism and unapologetic snobbery that continues to tar the reputation of the Bloomsbury set and, by extension, Bloomsbury itself.

The Bloomsbury Festival has since its inception attempted to intervene in such narratives. In 2013 it drew inspiration from Ashton's work in initiating a programme celebrating Bloomsbury's history as a place of 'refuge, revitalisation, and reform'. The *Bloomsbury Festival Cultural Engagement Project* added academic support to this by researching and developing a programme of activities designed to promote public questioning of the meaning of 'Bloomsbury' itself, and of the roles that cultural, educational, and community organisations can play in their local civic contexts.

Importantly, this research also initiated a process of questioning about festival experience itself: asking not only 'what is Bloomsbury?', but also what is a festival? A working answer to this question, fundamental to the later *Bloomsbury Festival in a Box* project, was located in the work of Bernadette Quinn (2005), who offers the following definition:

In creating opportunities for drawing on shared histories, shared cultural practices and ideals, as well as creating settings for social interactions, festivals engender local continuity. They constitute areas where local knowledge is produced and reproduced, where the history, cultural inheritance and social structures, which distinguish one place from another, are revised, rejected or recreated. To borrow Geertz's terminology, they can be said to represent an example of a "cultural text" [...] one of the many ensembles of texts that comprise a people's culture. Historically, interrogating festival settings has yielded insights into how a people's sense of their own identity is closely bound up with their attachment to place (928).

Importantly, Quinn follows from this with a reminder that: 'the construction of festival practices is [also] intimately bound up with the cultural and social divisions that structure human population groups' (929).

This argument suggests that festivals can be perceived as palimpsest cultural 'texts' indicative of cultures, communities and places. As such they can be read as a means of interrogating the limits, social formations, and inequalities of those cultures. This

¹ The *Bloomsbury Project* has gathered a significant digital resource of data on the history of the area, which can be accessed at <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/bloomsbury-project/>.

argument, which betrays the influence of Raymond Williams' (1971) notion of cultural 'structures of feeling', was highly influential on the conception of the *Festival in a Box* project. Our research started from a focus on cultural narrative, and from a belief that, if festivals provide a means through which to examine cultural *contexts*, they can also be regarded as cultural *texts* in their own right. Such texts can be read critically as indicators of the diffuse histories, stories and social relationships that form a community and a 'place'. They also highlight those excluded from such narratives.

Dementia, Befriending Services, and the Arts

The 2012 *Prime Minister's Challenge on Dementia*, issued by the Department of Health, estimates that upwards of 670, 000 people are living with dementia in England, with the figure closer to 822, 000 across the UK (3). As this and other reports on the condition note, dementia is a societal as well as a medical condition, affecting the person with the illness, their family, and society through loss of memory and independence, challenging behaviour and often decreased quality of life.² In this light, the 2013 progress report on the *Prime Minister's Challenge* notes that: '62% of people living with dementia living alone are lonely and [...] people with dementia find it hard to access services which may help them overcome this isolation' (22). 'Put simply', it suggests, 'our society is not geared up to ensure people with dementia can live well in the community' (13).

As this data indicates, people living with dementia in the UK often report feeling lonely, and this is in turn exacerbated by the isolating potential of a diagnosis of dementia, and the loss of confidence that people with dementia often experience. As a possible remedy to this experience, both the *Prime Minister's Challenge* and the Alzheimer's Disease International 2012 *World Alzheimer's Report* have advocated policy moves toward creating 'Dementia Friendly Communities' (2012, 57).

'Dementia Friendly Communities'—conceptualised as a way of changing society to reduce the social stigma around dementia and enable those living with the condition to lead active and socially integrated lives—provide a possible locus for social action in responding to the challenges of dementia. The concept embodies a challenge that is of relevance to any community organisation, and which has a clear relevance to community *festivals*. We return to this argument below.

The Dementia Befriending Service coordinated by Age UK Camden—an organisation itself based in the heart of Bloomsbury—represents one response to the challenge of making a community 'dementia friendly'. The service offers support specifically for 'socially isolated' people experiencing dementia or other memory impairment. Established in 2009 and currently working with 56 'befriendees' across the borough of Camden (supported by 30 volunteer 'befrienders'), the service offers regular visits from volunteers who carry out one-to-one visits providing both companionship and practical assistance. As Age UK Camden's website puts it: 'the Dementia befriending service is for

² See, for example, the Department of Health's 2009 report on *Living Well with Dementia: a national dementia strategy*.

individuals with dementia who have little or no contact with other services or support from other sources. These are often the individuals in our community who can become isolated and forgotten' (web).

Early collaborative research around the Festival in a Box project indicated however that there are still certain absences in the forms of provision and support that can be offered by volunteers to Age UK Camden's service. A volunteer coordinator at Age UK Camden articulated this in the following terms:

although we have befrienders who go round and chat, and a lot of people really like that, there are definitely, within the group of service users we have, interests that are not being met still. So a love of classical music, or opera, people who used to paint, or love painting. Interests that, although they can talk about them, that's as far as it goes (B4).

There is a growing body of research exploring the use of the arts in the treatment and broader palliative care for people with dementia.³ Recent collections such as Peter Backhouse's (2011), *Communication in Elderly Care* and Lee and Adams' *Creative Approaches in Dementia Care* (2011), along with works such as John Kilick's *Dementia Positive* (2012) have explored this trend. These works follow a body of work on creative responses to dementia care that can perhaps be located at root in the work of Tom Kitwood (1997). Kitwood's work on 'personhood' and on defining a 'person centred' approach to dementia care, has been extremely influential, and has facilitated the embedding of arts and health based approaches to dementia care in mainstream health policy discussions. As Ryan and Martin (2013) suggest, 'It is increasingly apparent that arts-based therapies such as visual art, music, drama, poetry, horticulture, dance and storytelling can be important vehicles for patients to express their thoughts, emotions, and ideas in symbolic fashion' (196).

Storying Dementia: a narrative approach:

Narrative inquiry, broadly defined, offers a means of exploring the various ways in which the 'self' is created in and through narrative. As Stickley and Hui (2012) put it, 'it is argued within the field of narrative research that story-telling is the means of human sense making. This perspective draws on the Aristotelian account of human morality as developed and transmitted through the meaning-making activity of story-telling' (576). Angela Woods (2001) offers another useful summary here, noting that: 'advocates for the use of narrative have a commitment to understanding the centrality of illness experience in the medical treatment of disease, taking seriously stories of illness, and valuing the individual as the empowered author-narrator of her own story' (4).

³ The literature here is extensive, and it is beyond the scope of the current study to provide a comprehensive overview. Staricoff 's (2004), *Arts in health: a review of the medical literature*, however, provides a survey that remains useful in relation to dementia (27-35). The Department of Health and Arts Council England's, *Prospectus for Arts and Health* is also a useful resource. Evaluations of outreach programmes such as *Arts 4 Dementia* (2013) and the Museum of Liverpool's *House of Memories* (2012) also include useful bibliographies of research literature.

Scholars working in narrative gerontology and related disciplines—notably James E. Birren (1996), Gary Kenyon and William L. Randal (2009), (2011), Ryan and Martin (2013)—have emphasised the role that ‘stories’ can play in care and support offered to people with dementia. This literature has provided an intellectual grounding for a substantial and growing popular literature—for example Stokes (2008)—that focuses on ‘telling the stories’ of people with dementia, or empowering people living with the condition to tell their stories.

The importance of stories and narratives can be understood as fundamental to the *Bloomsbury Festival in a Box* project in three core ways:

i) Personhood

Ellen Ryan and Lori Schindel Martin (2013) have argued that: ‘[t]he construction, telling or writing, and sharing of stories serve to promote connections between the person living with dementia and others, thereby fostering personhood’ (193). This echoes by Trisha Kotai-Ewers’ (2011) assertion that:

It is likely [...] that people with dementia have a far greater [than average] need to tell their stories and have them heard and accepted. Given the many losses they undergo with the onset of memory loss and the lack of what seems to be any real future ahead of them, their stories may provide a potent strategy to avert depression and anxiety (161).

Facilitating storytelling and the sharing of life narratives can therefore be perceived as therapeutic and directly beneficial to the individual or individuals engaged in the process, fostering personhood.

ii) Cultural Narratives of Dementia:

As suggested in the 2011 report completed by Bazalgette et al for Demos, *Coming of Age*, ‘storying’ dementia, and the lives of people living with the condition, might also have broader implications for cultural and policy narratives associated with the condition. Kenyon and Randal (2009) note that ‘a number of gerontology scholars are working to re-story our understanding of dementia, and viewing dementing individuals as, in their own way, still “biographically active”’ (255). The possibility of ‘re-storying’ dementia suggests a possible understanding of dementia *as* a story—one that is collaboratively written by ‘biographically active’ authors living with the condition. This notion is taken further by Philip G. Clark (2011), who argues that whilst:

Narrative approaches involving older adults are usually associated either with individuals or with research and intervention targeted on them [...] narrative understandings and methodology can also be applied to public policy as it responds to the issues associated with ageing on a societal level (84).

He therefore argues—drawing upon the Foucauldian approach to cultural policy studies associated with Tony Bennett (1995)—that ‘narrative approaches may also be developed to interrogate public policies and expose their underlying empirical and normative

foundations' (86). This argument has significant implications for the *Bloomsbury Festival in a Box* project. If public policy may be considered as a cultural narrative or discourse, then this narrative might be complicated, challenged, and interrogated by engaging with the narratives of those living with the condition.

iii) Understanding & Questioning 'Narrative'

Also influential to the development of the *Bloomsbury Festival in a Box* project was recent work by Hydén and Antelius (2011) exploring the phenomenology of storytelling in dementia work, and the strategies that might be deployed in enabling communication among and with this group. Importantly, this research recognises not only the communicative challenges involved in storytelling and facilitating narrative reminiscence among people with dementia, but the influence this process can exert on the personal narrative assumptions of the researcher. They note that:

Stories are generally considered discursive or textual units, characterized by topical or temporal coherence. Stories that don't live up to these norms are generally considered "failed" stories. As a consequence the storyteller may appear to be less competent and agentic than is actually the case (2).

In this light they suggest that: '[d]oing research with persons with communicative disabilities quite often tends to upset the often implicit and taken-for-granted narrative norms of the researcher' (6). The consequences of this are potentially profound, and suggest a wider impact to be gained from engaging with people with dementia. Engaging in dialogue with people with the condition might, this suggests, productively trouble implicit assumptions about the structure of 'narrative' itself, on the part of the researcher, and of the broader cultural structures within which she/he is immersed.

Narrative Possibility

To summarise the key points above: empowering people with dementia to tell stories of their lives before, during, and resulting from their condition can be seen as cathartic and empowering to the individual engaged. This process might also play a role in challenge negative, stigmatising, or catastrophic narratives of the illness communicated in culture and the media. In turn, working with people with dementia might itself challenge embedded assumptions about what can, and cannot, constitute a 'story'.

The *Bloomsbury Festival in a Box* project recognised an opportunity to work along the distinction that is made in Michael Bamberg's work (2004)—and in much other narrative inquiry—between, as Woods (2001), puts it, the "big stories" of biographical identity' [and] [...] the "small stories" of everyday life' (9). The tension between 'big' and 'small' stories—between narratives of personal identity and the everyday narratives that complement and complicate these; as well as between everyday small stories and 'big' cultural narratives of place, culture, and community—has been integral to the *Bloomsbury Festival in Box* project.

Archives of Engagement

The perspectives above informed our conceptualisation of the *Bloomsbury Festival in a Box* project as a whole, but also how we thought about our 'box' as an object. From the initial concept that the box would offer a 'cultural meals on wheels' (Mager, 2013), to people living with dementia in Bloomsbury, we began to reconceptualise the box not only as an outreach tool but as a vessel for collecting and storing research data. That is to say, in this instance, as a vessel for collecting and storing *narratives*.

Boxes, specifically in the form of 'memory boxes', have a long history in work with dementia, as seen for example in the work of the European Reminiscence Network founded by Pam Schweitzer (2011). Ryan and Martin (2013) note that: 'a memory box is much more than the opportunity to present familiar objects. Rather, it is a process whereby elements of self are introduced to reinforce personhood' (201). Our 'Festival in a Box' is indebted to this tradition, which led us to an early conclusion that our activities should include an element of reminiscence. However, what we were trying to achieve was not simply the construction of a memory box geared towards the 'personhood' of each individual participant, but an opportunity for linking the personal narratives of people with dementia back into the cultural and communal narratives of Bloomsbury/Camden.

Taking inspiration from Bloomsbury's status as home to some of the most prestigious archives in the world, we began to reconceptualise the Festival in a Box outreach devices as *archives of engagement*. Where the archives of the British Museum, the British Library and other Bloomsbury institutions curate the national story of the UK, our 'Festival in a Box' sought to establish archives that would provide a record of the meeting point between the festival, its associated artists, and the research participants.

Methodology:

The research contexts above formed the core pillars of our methodology. The research conducted was primarily qualitative, but a secondary quantitative element was also included (detailed below). The methodological framework of the project therefore reflected its collaborative nature, and the skills of the project team. Specialisms in cultural, literary and narrative analysis from the PI were combined with expertise in old age psychiatry offered by the CI, research assistant, and Age UK Camden.

1) Qualitative:

The primary qualitative methodologies deployed throughout the project were rooted in narrative inquiry and in textual and cultural analysis. The design of the various stages of engagement initiated by the project, as well as the analysis of the data gathered by it, was informed throughout by these critical approaches. As the project progressed, other perspectives were brought into play, including methodologies derived from 'interpretative phenomenological analysis' (IPA) and methods of textual interpretation

drawn from critical and cultural theory and from aesthetics. Most notably, an estranging critical perspective drawn from certain strands of 'ethnographic' or 'everyday surrealism' (detailed below) came to play an important role in analysing these texts.

2) Quantitative:

A single measure happiness indicator was taken at the start and end of each of our festival in a box visits. This consisted of a happiness question widely used in older people with and without dementia, and was selected for this study with a view to gauging what impact, if any, our Festival in a Box visits might have on our participants broader sense of happiness and wellbeing.⁴

Each participant was therefore asked the following question at the beginning and close of each session:

'Taking all things together, how would you say that you are these days:

'Very happy, fairly happy, or not too happy'?

⁴ See, for example Cooper C, Bebbington P, Livingston G. (2011) 'Cognitive impairment and happiness in old people in low and middle income countries: results from the 10/66 study'.

Part Two – Project Progression



Autumn leaves from the Bloomsbury Festival.

Project Timeline (Overview):

Phase One ---- Development/Recruitment (August-September 2013)

Phase Two --- Festival Exhibition/Launch (October 2013)

Phase Three -- Weekly Visits (November-December 2013)

Phase Four ----Analysis (January-March 2014)

Phase Five ----Dissemination (April 2014)

A blog was maintained throughout the project. Entries are available to view via:
<http://blogs.sas.ac.uk/category/bloomsbury-festival-in-a-box/>

Phase One: Development (August-September 2013)

i) Research/Recruitment

Ethical clearance for the project was approved by the School of Advanced Study's ethics committee in August 2013. A project steering committee was formed, including the PI and CI, a representative from the Bloomsbury Festival, and a representative from Age

UK Camden. In subsequent months this steering committee would be joined by a research assistant—Kathryn Lord, a doctoral candidate in Old Age Psychiatry at University College London—who joined the project in September 2013.

Consent forms for participation in the project were developed by the PI, CI and Age UK Camden, and befrienders with an established relationship with the participant were approached to invite those they believed to have capacity to give informed consent to take part. Befrienders were also approached for input on the type of arts activity their befriender might appreciate. We developed questionnaires to be sent to befrienders to gather background information on this point, specifically relating to participants' cultural histories and interests. Our developmental research therefore attempted to consult our participants by soliciting direct feedback on their backgrounds and interests, reflecting our person-centred approach.

Participants

Seven participants volunteered to take part in the study. Of these, one later had to withdraw due to ill health. The participants all lived in the borough of Camden, with three living in Bloomsbury itself, and four in the wider area. Four of the participants lived independently in their own homes and two in sheltered accommodation.

In total therefore six participants were visited as part of the project. Each of these participants was visited 3-4 times. After consultation with representatives from Age UK Camden, it was agreed that our initially projected figure of 5 visits per participant would be too disruptive to the befriending relationship and the established rhythm of their weekly visits.

Artists and designers

To accompany the box on the visits, a number of artists were recruited from the Bloomsbury Festival's collaborative community. The artists represented a number of disciplinary backgrounds and skill sets. They were:

- A ceramicist from Parasite Ceramics (an East-London based ceramics practice who participated in the Bloomsbury Festival 2013).
- Two members of the Keats House Poets, a collective of eight poets based in the Keats House Museum, Hampstead. Both poets performed at the Bloomsbury Festival in 2012 and 2013.
- A freelance filmmaker, photographer and musician—curator of the Bloomsbury Festival's '18 Rugby Street' exhibition.
- An actress, storyteller, and singer.
- A storyteller, felt-maker and ceramicist.
- A professional opera singer.

In total, seven artists undertook weekly visits as part of the project. Of these, four agreed to take part in narrative interviews reflecting on their involvement in the project (see analysis section below). The artists were coordinated from the Bloomsbury Festival

office by community arts organiser Laura Halliwell, who also joined our steering committee.

Befrienders

Three befrienders with established relationships to befriendees were recruited. In cases in which befrienders were absent, or in which participants had not yet been assigned a befriender, (3 of our participants) an Age UK Camden representative acted as befriender in order to supervise the visits. All befrienders involved in the project agreed to qualitative interviews following their involvement in the project.

ii) Box Design

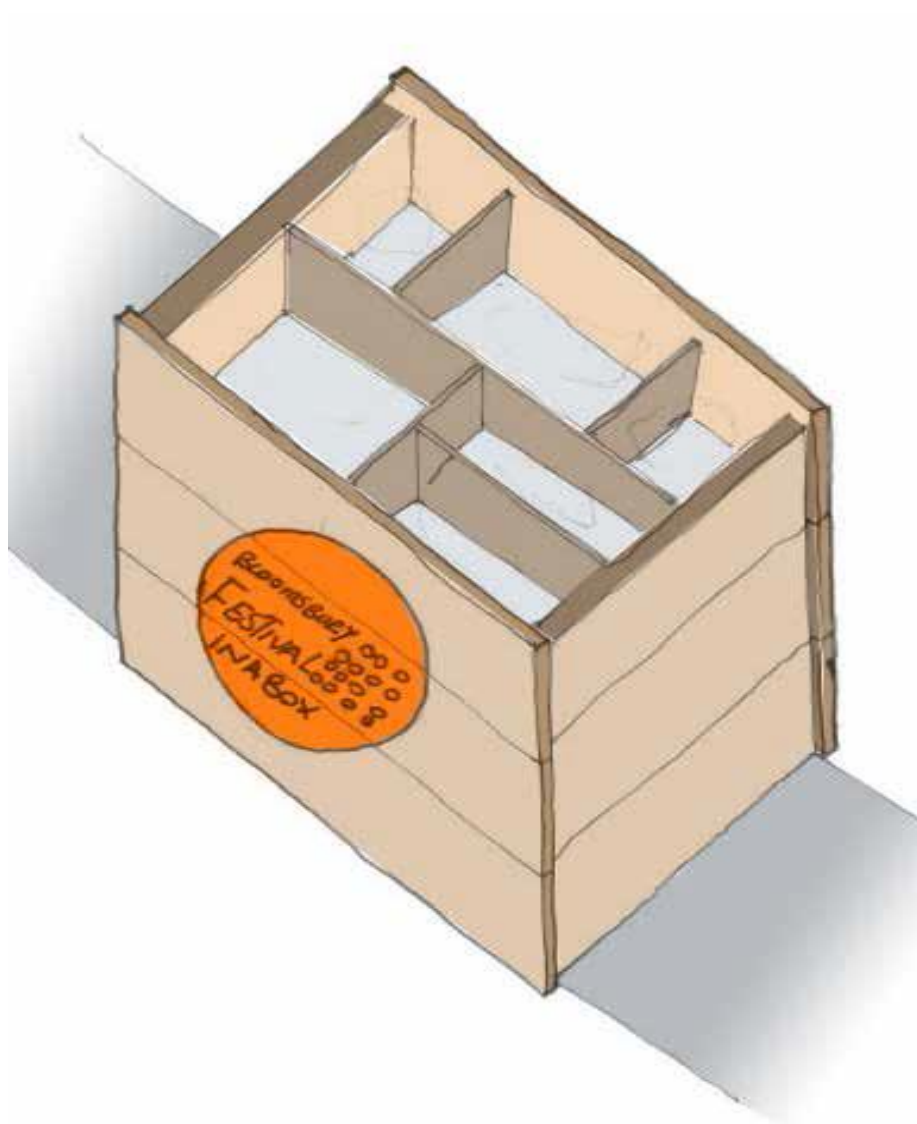
Via the Bloomsbury Festival, design of the *Festival in a Box* 'box' itself was undertaken by architecture and design practice Lyn Atelier, who have previously designed for the Southbank Centre and the British Library. Lyn Atelier also led in designing and staffing the exhibition and outreach workshop for the first stage of the project (see below), in close consultation with the project steering committee.

Various box designs were considered, responding to our concept that the Festival in a Box should represent both a resource for artists and (suitable for use as storage for arts and reminiscence materials), and as an evolving 'archive of engagement'.

A number of core principles were agreed:

- The box should be a high quality, engaging and aesthetically pleasing art object in its own right.
- The box should be designed to be portable, weather-proof, and as tactile as possible.
- The box should represent the Bloomsbury Festival in its design.
- The box should represent where possible a contribution to the increasingly recognised importance of 'designing for dementia'.

It was agreed that instead of the initially projected idea of having a separate box for each participant, the design would instead consist of a number of interlocking trays which come together to make up a single box. The final design presented a three-layered box with a top layer for housing art materials, a middle layer for the researcher's equipment, and a bottom layer to act as an 'archive' for any materials produced during the visit.



Our final box design



The completed box

Phase Two: Exhibition and Outreach Workshop at the Bloomsbury Festival (October 2013)



Participants engaging with our Bloomsbury Festival outreach workshop 19th-20th October 2013.

As a dissemination exercise for phase one of the project, and as a public launch, a public event for the *Bloomsbury Festival in a Box* project was held in Russell Square during the busiest weekend of the Bloomsbury Festival 2013 (19th-20th October). Staffed by members of the project team, this workshop aimed to:

- Raise awareness of the Festival in a Box project.
- Create a resource that would provide a 'narrative snapshot' (Hamilton, 2008) of Bloomsbury over the busiest days of the festival.
- Produce resources that could then be reused as part of our outreach activities.

Bloomsbury Festival goers were therefore given a bag to collect materials encountered during the festival, and invited to complete a simple form culminating in an invitation to: 'Tell Us An Interesting Story About Your Day'. The intention was to initiate an exercise that would gauge the narrative tone of the Bloomsbury Festival, of Bloomsbury itself, and of the people moving through it over the festival weekend, during which the festival experienced a footfall of some 30, 000 people. The data gathered by the outreach workshop was therefore designed to provide a narrative 'structure of feeling' of the area over two exceptional days in October.

In planning this workshop we were inspired by the example of the on-going example of the Mass-Observation project, first established in the 1930s and currently coordinated by the University of Sussex. Described as 'one of the longest-running longitudinal life-writing projects anywhere in the world' (Bazalgette, 2011, 10), Mass Observation was founded in 1936 as a movement that would apply principles drawn from poetic

description, anthropology, and psychoanalysis, to provide an 'anthropology of our own people' (Madge et al, 2002: 146).

James Clifford (1988), in his highly influential essay 'On Ethnographic Surrealism' has described Mass-Observation as a:

social documentary project [...] [that] envisaged a comprehensive ethnography of British popular culture conceived as a de-familiarised, exotic world. Its goal was to mobilise ethnographers of all classes in a democratic expansion of social consciousness and a constant interchange of observations (143).

Drawing on this argument, Ben Highmore (2000) has more recently dubbed Mass-Observation 'a social movement dedicated to uncovering the surreal in the heart of the everyday' (257). This notion of a 'surrealism' locatable at the heart of the everyday life, but revealed by an 'ethnographic' surveying of exceptional circumstances such as festivals or moments of social upheaval (as seen in Mass-Observation's own (as seen in Mass-Observation's interest in festivals, dancehalls, and seaside holidays), was a major influence on our festival workshop—and increasingly on the *Bloomsbury Festival in a Box* project as a whole. We were interested in uncovering the 'everyday surrealism' residing in the Bloomsbury Festival narrative, the unruly and disordering 'small stories' within the fragmentary festival text.

Over 30 forms were completed, and various materials donated over the course of the two day outreach. The forms and other materials were gathered together into a box—our first 'archive—and later digitised. This first *Festival in a Box* archive underlined the capacity of cultural engagement to prompt narrative expression, reminiscence, and storytelling. Two examples provide a sense of the 'interesting stories' told:

Example One:

We were just wondering whether this sort of event happens elsewhere in the world. Do people in Siberia have festivals where British musicians go? Do they think the sound strange like we think Siberian folk singing in Bloomsbury sounds strange?

This morning my partner confessed that he misses the mouse we had in our flat (it went away as soon as we put some mouse traps (humane ones) out). He told me he'd been dreaming of pets and that now he asks: 'Mr Mouse, does this outfit look good on me? But there is no mouse to answer (form 3).

Example Two:

Memories of the Area: I worked in an office in Bloomsbury in the 1950s where it was so cold in the winter that in my lunch hour I went to the Egyptian mummy room (in the British Museum) and stood over the hot air grilles. I saw the Queen and Prince Philip in Bedford Square when they toured parts of London after the coronation. Went to evening classes at the Mary Ward Centre.

In the 1940s I worked in Bury Place. There were many power cuts and in a very bad winter I went to work in my pyjamas [sic] under a pair of men's trousers (I am female 81 years old (form 13)

The 'narrative snapshot' of the Bloomsbury Festival produced by our first dissemination and outreach activity marked an important stage in the project's development. Cementing the focus on storytelling, and on the possibilities for both *engagement* and *estrangement* that might be found in such activity, the workshop also provided the contents of our first *Festival in a Box* 'archive'. The materials gathered in this archive were later used as inspiration for our outreach activities. Through an ordering and textual reading of the archived forms we were also able to establish a story of the festival over these two days: noting the inherent 'everyday surrealism' of this narrative, and the presence or absence of certain voices from it.

Phase Three: Weekly Visits (November 2013-February 2014)



A participant engaging in a wallpaper making workshop.

Weekly visits began in November 2013. Participants were visited once a week by members of the research team (alternating between the PI and research assistant as lead researcher), and a Bloomsbury Festival artist. Visits were supervised by a befriender or by a representative from Age UK Camden, and comprised an art activity followed by a narrative interview. Materials from the box were presented at each visit, and the client was engaged, where possible, in developing materials—drawings, writing, photographs or a verbal response to the existing material—to be added to the box. In this way, a weekly 'archive of engagement' for each participant was developed. For the

narrative interviews, questions were kept deliberately simple, and were repeated for each visit. Asking open-ended questions was intended to encourage storytelling on the part of the participants.

It became clear from our first visits that maintaining a division between the engagement and 'interview' sections of the engagement was problematic. Visits were therefore audio-recorded in full, and later transcribed.

Visits were structured as follows:

Visit Structure:

1) Introductions

- Consent Forms
- Happiness Measure

2) Art Session

- Art workshop/session begins.
- Photographs taken (at discretion of artist, researcher, participant).
- Materials put back into box at end of session.
- Artist leaves.

3) Narrative interview

Researcher asks following questions:

- How long have you lived in this area?
- What did you do today?
- How did it make you feel?
- Have you done anything like this before? Please tell us about it...
- Did it make you think about/remember anything about your life in Camden?

4) End of Session:

- Happiness measure repeated

Activities:

With one exception, the group comprised artists with no previous professional experience of working with people with dementia. Artists were therefore offered training in working with this client group by representatives from Age UK Camden and by the CI. Participating artists were also offered access to the first 'archive of engagement' built up over the course of the Bloomsbury Festival outreach day, and informed of participant's interests as recorded on befriender questionnaires.

The activities undertaken on the visits were as follows (described in detail in Appendix II)

	Activity	Total visits
Participant 1	Tile making (leaf print) Tile making (coins) wallpaper making (leaf)	3
Participant 2	Bloomsbury Reminiscence Carol singing Poetry reading	3
Participant 3	'18 Rugby Street' Exhibition Music 'jam' session Poetry Recital Poetry/Singing	4
Participant 4	Poetry reading/reminiscence Poetry workshop Poetry/ Reminiscence	3
Participant 5	Literary prompts and reminiscence Ceramics/Storytelling Singing/Storytelling	3
Participant 6	Literary/prompts reminiscence Tile making Tile making	3
Total Visits		19

Table showing spread of activities across visits.

Section Three: Documentation of Visits

The images below provide 'snapshots' of the activities undertaken on the Bloomsbury Festival in a Box visits.



Musical activity as part of a Bloomsbury Festival in a Box visit.



Ceramics activity as part of a Bloomsbury Festival in a box visit.



Tile

making activity as part of a Bloomsbury Festival in a box visit.

Archive documentation

The images below and in Appendix II provide examples of the contents of the 'archives of engagement' developed for each participant.



Equipment shelf for the Festival in a Box.

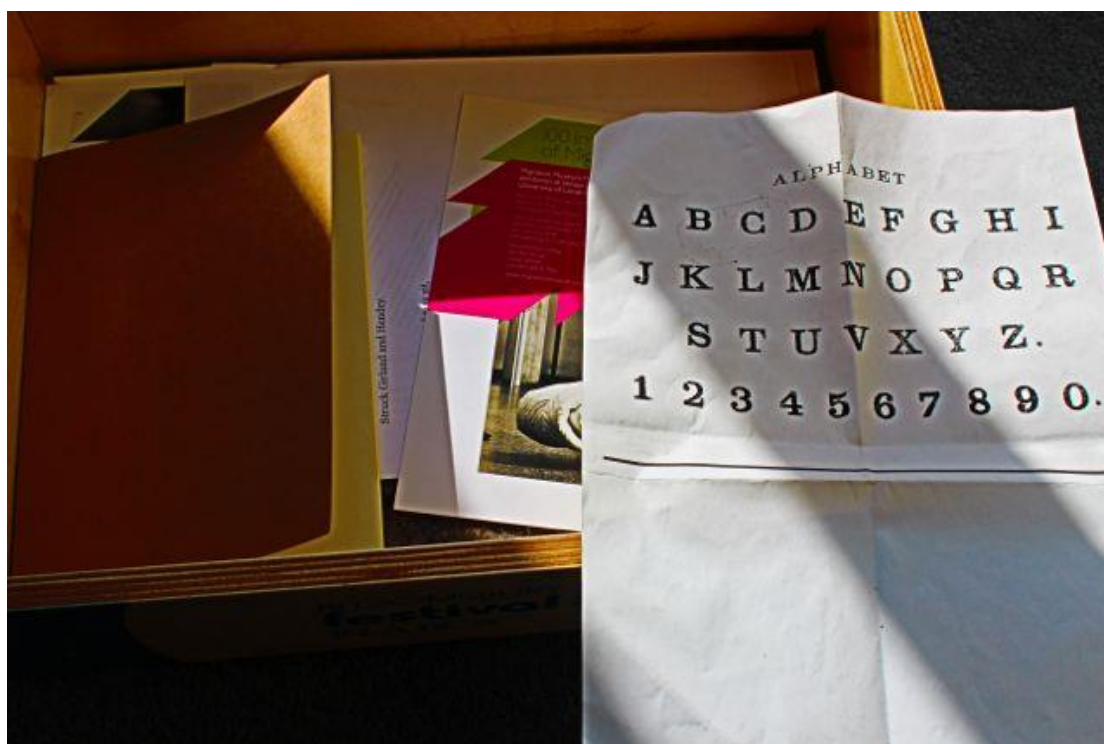




Contents of participant 1, 'Mary's' archive.



Contents of participant 2, 'Brenda's' archive.



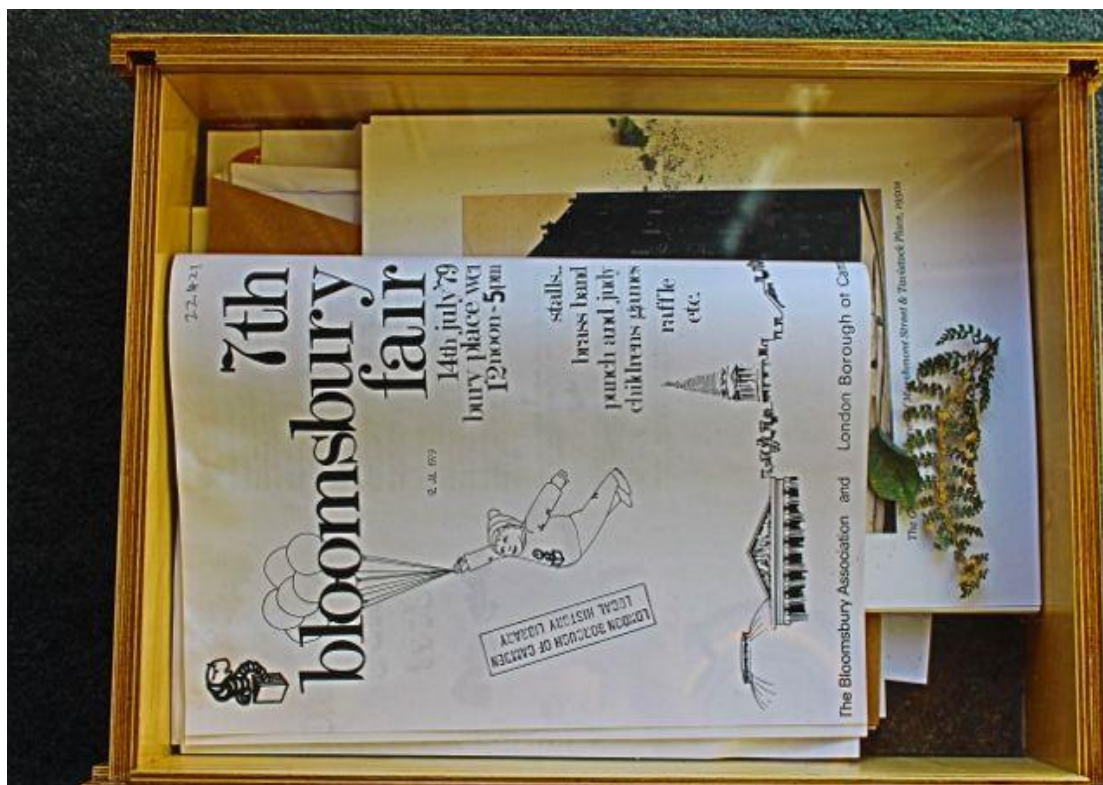
Contents of participant 3, 'Roland's' archive.



Contents of participant 4, 'Victor's' archive.



Contents of participant 5, 'Kieran's' archive.



Contents of participant 6, 'Ivy's' archive.

Part Four: Project Analysis

Our Strategy of Reading:

Recordings of each full *Festival in a Box* visit were transcribed, and all identifiable data removed. Transcripts were read by members of the project steering committee, and individual codings of core themes prepared. A group reading was also conducted by the steering committee, with a separate group reading for befriender and artist narratives.

Our approach to analysing the transcripts was informed by the principles of Phenomenological Interpretative Analysis, defined by Smith, Jarman and Osborn (1999) as follows:

[t]he approach is phenomenological in that it is concerned with an individual's personal perception or account of an object or event as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself. At the same time, IPA also recognises that the research exercise is a dynamic process. One is trying to get close to the participant's personal world, to take [...] an "insider's perspective" but one cannot do this directly or completely (218).

Clare et al (2008b) offer another useful definition here, noting that IPA:

explores lived experience and the way in which individuals make sense of their experience by focusing on the internal psychological meaning evident in their accounts [it is] descriptive in the sense that it seeks to identify individual perceptions and develop a credible account of subjective experience, but it is also expressly interpretative, acknowledging that any account will also contain elements of interpretation on the part of the researcher (713)

IPA has been well established as a narrative methodology for working with people with dementia. The methodology suggests the importance of developing an agreed strategy of reading to be adhered to by all researchers, which will respond to the challenges of interpreting a static text as a phenomenological record of the research process. Informed by these arguments, the *Bloomsbury Festival in a Box* project steering committee developed a strategy of reading that adhered to the following core principles:

- Analysis should be taken on a case-by-case basis, and transcripts read as a *narrative* of engagement for each participant.
- Engagement' will be considered as: (1) engagement of participant with cultural activity (2) social engagement between the artist/researchers/ participant.
- Transcripts would be read and coded by individual members of the project team.
- Perspectives should then be sought from across the 'research community' via group readings and discussion.
- A set of key narrative themes would be agreed for each participant.
- Overarching themes would then be identified across the sample.
- The trajectory of happiness measure questions would also be considered for each participant.

The contents of the archive box for each participant were also presented at our group readings and were used as a prompt for discussion in each case. Artefacts from the box and photographs from the visits were used to facilitate debate and as a means of escaping from a purely 'literary' reading. This was one of the ways in which our study attempted to include a phenomenological and 'embodied' aspect not only to our outreach, but to our process of analysis.

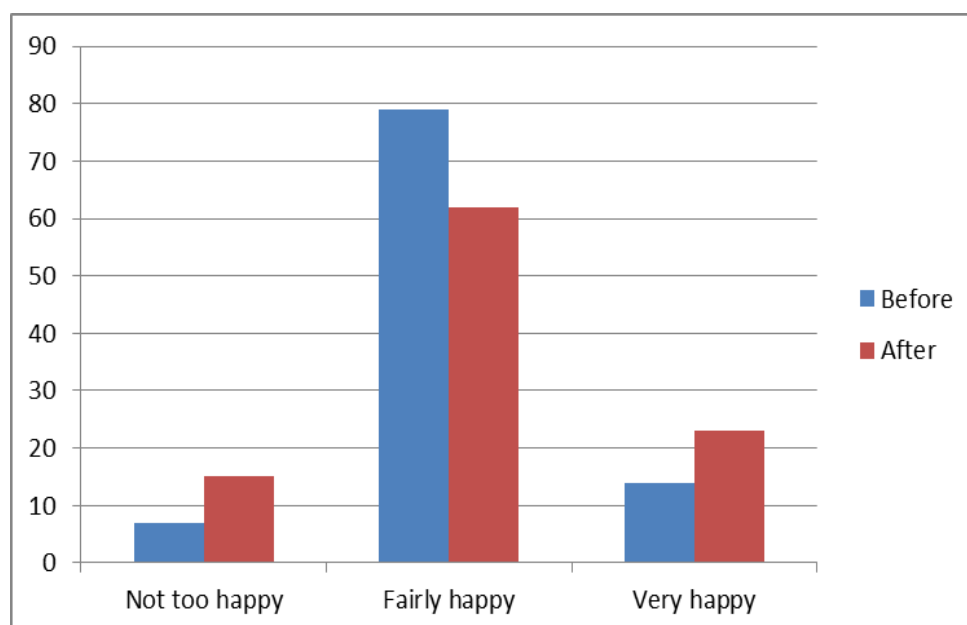
As a final stage of analysis, participant transcripts were read and discussed in the light of Kenyon and Randall's (1997) notion of 'signature stories'. This idea is outlined in by Randall and McKin (2004) in the following terms:

Signature stories are those narrative units, those noteworthy episodes, that we have told on a variety of occasions, what some would call "set pieces" often concerning "nuclear episodes" [...] in our developmental journey (248)

We were alert therefore to the 'signature stories' that made up our participants' life narratives, their 'signature stories' of their lives in Bloomsbury and Camden, and also the 'signature stories' that might emerge of the engagement process itself. Drawing on these signature stories, the core themes identified across our stages of reading, and upon the documentary materials collected in participant archives, we developed narrative vignettes for each participant presenting an overview of their engagement with the project. These are included as Appendix II to this report.

Quantitative Analysis: Happiness Measures

We did not use formal statistical tests to evaluate the happiness measure due to the small number of participants. In most cases the measure did not change over the course of the session, and there was no overall trend. This indicated that the sessions had not impacted upon our participant's *overall* sense of happiness.



Graph detailing happiness measures. Y axis shows % of all sessions rated at each level.

Qualitative outputs helped to contextualise this finding. The limited data gathered via the quantitative happiness measure also illustrated the need for a further layer of qualitative work—leading to the additional set of narrative interviews with befrienders and artists outlined below.

Narrative Themes:

1) Participants' Perspectives

Whilst our sample was small, this allowed us to engage at some depth with each participant, allowing for long visits and for the accumulation of significant materials in each narrative archive. Transcripts from the visits comprised over 200,000 words of printed text, accompanied by photographs and other materials. Via the process described above, themes were identified across the transcripts and collated, as summarised in the 'narrative snapshots' offered below.

Cultural Narratives: personal values of culture

Participants frequently drew upon cultural references, and the language of cultural activity, in articulating their life narratives and personal histories. In some cases this was related to reminiscence on the role played by cultural activity in their lives before the onset of dementia, in others it pointed to an on-going and integral role for cultural activity in their life narratives.

Several participants used the visits to reflect upon the role cultural activity had played in their past lives and shaping their identity:

- 'I was never frightened of standing up and projecting when most people were embarrassed' (P4).
- 'I didn't perform as showman. I didn't perform but I played guitar. I played the guitar. I played' (P3).
- 'I've done art. I've done lots of things. I'll try anything once' (P2).
- 'I was [shy] at first but from being in a drama group you get to open out. That's a good thing. If you know a good drama group, you join' (P2).

In other cases, the visits provided an opportunity to reflect upon the *loss* of cultural activity as a central component of life narratives due to illness or old age:

- 'I think I've always scribbled one way or the other (P5), 'I think this is the only time I haven't, now' (P5).
- 'It's been a long time since I did anything like that [...]. But I used to love it' (P2).
- 'I want to read my poems. I can't read them. I start to read them. I'm trying to read them' (P3).

Descriptive Language: dementia, memory and isolation

Whilst not directly asked to talk about their condition, participants often drew upon richly descriptive and at times unusual language to articulate their personal relationships with memory problems, physical frailty, and their social situation.

- 'I grow up to be a shadow' (P3).
- 'my mind is going fuzzy, my mind' (P3).
- 'I would tell you a lot more, but I can't tell you anymore because I don't remember' (P3).
- 'Nearly eighty, you know... I'm in good condition but you know there are times that I feel that I'm in prison for a crime that I haven't committed. I still feel that' (P4).
- 'It's bad news this memory business, you know' (P5).
- 'I feel very cold, often and...can't join in' (P3).

Voice, Agency & Participation

Participants were often insistent upon both their right to be heard and their capacity to participate fully in the activities. The importance of *voice* and of *being heard* emerged as a dominant theme across the sample. In some instances this was contrasted to previous life experiences of being silenced, particularly in childhood:

- 'I had a very strict school. We didn't talk much' (P2).

In others, we were ourselves challenged as a team to use the correct language and questions to facilitate speech:

- 'Mind if I sit and talk to you? Some would say that to me, and I'd say, 'Only if you talk sense. I don't want any nonsense' (P2).
- 'You're asking the question, let me finish it' (P4).
- 'Well, you've got to ask a straight question, I answer or I can't' (P6).
- 'You see I'm not like most of your patients who are incapable; I'm capable of doing absolutely everything *[laughter]*. (P6).

Themes of voice and voicelessness were encountered most strongly in participant 3, who suffered difficulties with speech as a result of a stroke. Loss of speech and loss of memory, and resulting frustrations, were very apparent in this narrative, which was nonetheless marked by a strong desire to talk:

- 'I would tell you a lot more, but I can't tell you anymore because I don't remember' (P3).
- *listen to me...I am trying to tell you*' 'The poem, I remember it and...I...' (P3).

Responses to Visits & Activities

Participants responded to activities as they were happening. Our readings detected both positive and negative responses here, ranging from enthusiastic engagements with the art activity to more ambivalent responses, to some moments of confusion and disorientation caused by the visits:

- 'I'm now completely confused, one, two, three people, who...' (P6).
- 'Gosh I'm an artist [...] I didn't realise I could do anything like that' (P1).
- 'When she sings I remember the words. I remember the words and I know the song' (P3).
- 'Gosh I didn't realise I could do anything like that'; 'I'm a genius!' (P1).
- 'Having talked to you, I kept on remembering things' (P4).
- 'Yes, yes, yes, because you've got imagination and apart from this chap here, *[befriender]* I never meet anyone with imagination' (P4).

Reflective Impacts: How did it make you feel?

Perhaps the richest data gathered during the narrative interview sections of our visits came from answers to the question 'how did it [the visit] make you feel?' These answers complemented and at times contradicted the data gathered from the happiness measure:

- 'by the end I was enjoying it but I started off really thinking, I can't do that' (P1)
- 'I've had a nice morning, I've been very happy this morning' (P1).
- 'calm, enjoyable' (P2).
- 'I feel good, good, good, good, good.... I feel so calm. I feel so calm. I feel so calm, I feel just so calm.... Because if you don't come, come and you see me, I am just here. I am just here.... I am just here...' (P3).

- 'It made me feel good, I suppose, but I can't think of any other word at the moment. It made me feel good' (P5).

In one instance, we were challenged on our methodology here, with the participant suggesting a possible alternative:

- 'Well if I use psychoanalysis [...] Then it would make me feel very good and superior to be able to talk about Bloomsbury' (P6).

Memories of Bloomsbury, Camden & London

Participants were able to communicate a number of rich and varied memories relating to Bloomsbury, Camden, and lives lived in central London. These memories were at times fragmentary, but also richly detailed and evocative. They often revealed a heavily invested and nuanced relationship with place, not only in relation to Bloomsbury/Camden but also other areas of central London including Soho, Fitzrovia, the West End, and Kentish Town.

- 'I know all about London'; 'I know this area well' (P3).
- 'We used to go into Russell Square at the weekend. It's a nice square, that. Have you been there? I'd sit there and I'd talk to anybody' (P2).

One participant articulated revisiting her memories of a past life in Soho as a form of personal 'therapy' to combat loneliness:

- 'Do you know, sometimes when I'm feeling really lonely, I catch the bus and I wander around Soho. But it's very different now. When I was there, and I was 18 I think, or 19, and all the prostitutes, they used to say to me darling, don't walk around the streets at this time of night. They were so caring' (P1).
- 'I used to have dates with actors, because the street was so narrow, it was Winnett Street, a tiny, tiny street, and I still, when I feel sad, go and walk around' (P1).

Another described raising a family near the British Museum, and making an unusual use of this cultural organisation:

- 'All my children learnt to walk in the British Museum on that lovely floor... There's a room with highly polished floor and they loved it because they slithered, that's how my children learnt to walk, in the King's Library' (P6).

In two cases particularly, memories of lives in the area were articulated in relation to correspondence across generations:

- 'You know, sometimes I just go up there and just look at my flat, and the window is open, and I think, that's my room!' (P1).

- 'Well I used to practically live in Russell Square, take my child there so that it could, "Oh look at the fountain" and I still see lots of mothers with their prams sitting around there' (P6).

Social Isolation & Changes in the Community

Memories of lives lived in central London were often set against the participants' perception of their current community, neighbourhood, and social environment. Themes of anxiety and precariousness were detected here, but also reflections upon the importance of community support networks that participants continued to draw on. In some cases, participants volunteered opinions on how their integration into their local communities could be better.

- 'Well will I still be brave enough to go out there?' (P1).
- 'This road is, everybody used to know each other but people are moving all the time now' (P1).
- 'I've been here a long time, but I don't know a lot of people' (P2).
- 'They've grown up and they've got married or moved away' (P2.)
- 'Well, I'm the only one now [...] I've got a nephew, but I don't know where he is now or whether he's still alive' (P1).
- '[London is] an international transit camp with pieces all over the place. It's not the real England' (P4).
- 'I can walk if I'm not in danger of being knocked down and walk just with a stick, but if anybody sort of ...in London they'd just go in a straight line and knock anybody that gets in the way' (P4).
- 'Everybody in Sainsbury's. I go in and I say... I've got my milk and my bread and they say you were here half an hour ago and bought that! And they let me take it. They were really nice, the people in Sainsbury's' (P1).

2) Befrienders' Perspectives

Following their engagement with the Bloomsbury Festival in a Box project, narrative interviews were also conducted with Dementia Befriending Service volunteers. Interviews took the form of a semi-structured narrative discourse, with the same questions asked for each participant. Interviews were conducted in the presence of the Festival in a Box 'archive' for each participant, which was used as a prompt throughout the interview process. The following themes were identified.

Unique Aspects of the Project:

Befrienders reflected upon the unique aspects of the Festival in a Box project, and the cultural components of this, as opposed to their own regular routine of visits.

- 'But it wasn't just a... what I do, because you guys brought your poetry, your knowledge of how to deal with people, you had some interesting games and that challenges him, that brings other things out. So you offered something more than I do when I go there' (B1).
- 'I think giving poetry, writing poetry, all that stuff. I mean I think that's good for him. Getting his attention, really challenging him to do a lot of things. I think I will try and do that more' (B2).

Impact of Visits:

Befrienders also took the opportunity to reflect on their own personal perceptions of what participants had gained from the visits:

- 'When I saw him being involved with the poem story [sic], I somehow felt that he was in his element a bit. So whether that means he's a more creative person or not than before I don't know, but I think that's an interesting... he could associate very well with the project' (B1).
- 'I didn't think he could do that [play notes on the piano] with his dexterity and everything. So that was really nice. Even with the poetry I didn't think he had such strong passion for it. Such determination to get it done. Like I think that's the most determined I've ever seen him do something' (B2).
- 'That was very interesting, a really good selection and it actually did get him talking quite a lot about, not necessarily imaginatively about the pieces, but about his life again' (B3).

Value of Culture and Isolation from it:

In numerous interviews, befrienders articulated *their* understandings of their befriender's relationship with culture and how this relates both to their past life narratives and their current state of health:

- 'When do go on YouTube sometimes, downstairs they have the internet, that kind of computer, and we put on some like [...] some Laurence Olivier, Henry V, and he watches that thing, he starts crying. I mean it kind of, it really touches him watching I think. I don't know if he would like to go to the theatre or go to the cinema because moving around is difficult for him. But to have access to this at home via the internet or via the festival, I think he would really like it. It would really enrich, kind of lift him up, wake him up, make him feel more alive' (B1).
- '[Music is] one of the few means of communication that he *fully* gets it. He fully understands. The music is coming to him fully and he properly understands what's happening about it. [...] So when we did the whole listening and did the whole... what we played, I think he loved that. He loved that. I [...] it's a means of communication that works for him' (B2).
- 'I do remember once, maybe afterwards, we went to the British Museum which is really close by most standards, and he was absolutely knackered by the time we got there and we had to get back' (B3).

New knowledge:

Befrienders noted that they had gained new knowledge about their befriender's over the course of the *Festival in a Box* process:

- 'What else did I learn about him? I think I didn't understand much that he's a bit of a performer' (B2).
- 'I guess it broke down a few of the stereotypes I had about him' (B2).
- 'I hadn't realised how [...] how resistant he was to being involved in stuff. I thought he would've been more involved, been more participatory. Yes, that's what I learned from him, that's he's slow to participate in those circumstances' (B3).
- 'I think she definitely went into more depth than I'd known her to when I've been on my own with her. Definitely more' (B4).

Importantly, these new insights, and the value of the Festival in a Box engagement generally, were often articulated in narrative terms, as 'stories'.

- 'The fact that you showed him these cards where you gave him a word and he answered back a word, and then it was based on that that [poet] wrote the poem for the next time. [...] So it makes him think of his past probably and bring things out. I think the point which was very nice also puts a bit of... it's a part, I don't know, his life if you like, or his story. He kind of, yeah, his story a bit. So I

think it's nice for him if he has it, still he could read it from time to time to make him smile and to reflect on' (B1).

- 'She was also trying to get him... doing things which would get him to would story-tell and he told a bit about his own life and it's a form of story' (B3).
- 'And... You can get them out of him and you can learn more about him and he's got lots of amazing things, tastes and experiences and stories and we've seen that' (B2).

Community/Geography/Local Context

Befrienders also reflected on the new perspective on the local area (and their befriender's place within it) that they had gained from the project:

- 'even though it's familiar with him historically, he might not be.... if he found himself by himself he would be lost and he knows this and there would be a certain level of anxiety, I think' (B3).
- 'they had the same issues about their being a change in the community. It seemed to be a theme, you know, that this loss of community, loss of neighbours. So I think that they gave us important information back about, how, what the changes are and also how that affects them. So they were giving us opinions on what they felt had changed, but also how that had impacted on their lives' (B4).

Connections: Unexpected affinities

Befrienders noted the unexpected synergies that had been created by the Festival in a Box project; the connections and affinities that had been created during the project:

- 'Make them feel like it's a nice afternoon with some people that are creative, young, they have the energy, they have the talent. And I can offer them as an older person probably my experience, my stories and we can meet together and form a very nice group' (B1).
- That's one of the things I get from the Bloomsbury thing. Like when you think about these artists, you know, you, me, [participant's name], really unlikely people to come together and share something amazing. So, yeah, that gives me a lot of hope and, yeah, I think I would take that away from it' (B2).

3) Artists' Perspectives

In an additional round of qualitative research, the perspectives of artists engaged with the Festival in a Box project were also elicited. Four artists agreed to take part in follow-on interviews.

Perspectives on Dementia

Several artists noted that the experience of working on the *Bloomsbury Festival in a Box* project had helped to de-mystify dementia for them, countering negative stereotypes and challenging their own preconceptions of the condition.

- 'I had the fear it was going to be really depressing and I would come out crying my eyes out [laughing]! But of course it wasn't. It was absolute joy' (A2).
- 'I think I feel more just...I suppose I feel more humane towards it [dementia], because before it was kind of like a clinical...it's person with dementia...that I don't really know anything much about dementia...I don't know people with dementia...In my general life I don't integrate with people with dementia and I don't...So it's kind of like...But now it's more like...It's just more about the person, I suppose' (A1).
- 'Yeah, she had lots of stories and more than I expected, I guess. Yeah that was one thing maybe, I didn't know that...I wasn't sure how...Yeah, I guess I didn't know what level people were at or how much of their memories they might have access to' (A4).

New Knowledge and Perspectives on Bloomsbury/Camden

- 'I do remember feeling like I was seeing it through his eyes a little bit. So there was that sense. So yeah, in a way but not... I don't think we got a history lesson from him but I think we got a little bit of a personal perspective, a little personal journey. That's what I remember of it' (A3).
- 'meeting people, hearing stories. People that have lived in Camden...I've lived in Camden my whole life, so meeting people that have lived in Camden for 30 years, 40 years and hearing their experience of it. [...] I think that such a built up...in the centre and the city...that community aspect you don't get very strongly, so you don't hear the stories of people that have lived there for 40 years. You know what I mean? You don't really get that' (A3).

Personal and Professional Development

Several artists noted that the project had changed their perspectives on their own practice. In some cases this resulted in new work being created. In others the influence was articulated in relation to perceptions of personal creative practice.

- 'I think that new art is probably a bit ambitious, but in terms of trying to engage... Because we do a lot of projects...as I said, where we basically put the marquee out and try to get people involved. I think we'd really kind of like to aim to get a different kind of demographics. Even if it's through, possibly, home visits...knowing that actually works. If a person feels comfortable in that, we can do something like that' (A2).
- 'definitely I felt like it's easily something I could do again and, you know, I might even try out befriending...because I think, you know, elderly people are very much...I feel like our society just kind of pushes them behind a door or behind a curtain and we don't...there's a wealth of knowledge and learning and experience and wisdom there that people often just turn their noses up at' (A4).
- 'I think it strengthens your practice, it is good experience and it pushes you to really think about what you're doing in a different way' (A4).

Importantly, two artists who engaged with the project noted that this engagement had influenced not only their personal creative practice, but also their understanding of *narrative* communication and stories:

- 'It's very important as a writer to challenge yourself and try and write lots of different things in different structures and different voices, do what you can, but it does have your own stamp on it inherently. That's how it works I think, but I tried to put [P]'s voice in there as much as I could' (A1)
- 'It's rewarding kind of... it's kind of looking at what you do from a completely different perspective I suppose [...] a lot of the work I do is all about story telling – and it made me get right down to the nitty-gritty and break it down to what is this actually about [...] it made me ask myself questions about what my story was that I wouldn't have done necessarily otherwise' (A3).

•

Discussion: Opening the Archive

The narrative snapshots taken above from our transcripts illustrate the diverse perspectives drawn into the *Festival in a Box* project. A narrative community was formed by the project, comprising not only people with dementia, but those who care for them, and those who have sought to engage with them creatively. The artists, befrienders, and participants with dementia were able to engage on many levels, through active participation in arts and music, through humour and through sharing memories about places and events. As noted above, people with dementia are often defined, and isolated, by their condition. The narratives gathered by the *Bloomsbury Festival in a Box* archives have demonstrated that where they are able to share their thoughts, feelings, past memories and experiences, this one dimensional perspective, which is likely to be associated with stigma and disengagement, may start to break down.

Our narrative reading of the archive detailed above suggests the following key impacts resulting from the study:

- The project allowed people with dementia a space of narrative freedom in which to tell their stories, prompted by engagement with cultural activity.
- It allowed participants, artists, and befrienders to discover unexpected affinities and points in common.
- Artists engaging with people with dementia for the first time gained new perspectives on the condition, which challenged preconceived perceptions and apprehensions.
- Befrienders with established relationships with participants gained a deeper level of insight into their 'befriendees', their life histories, and their narratives of self.
- Artists and befrienders were encouraged to question their creative practice, and strategies of communication.
- Through the engagement, new knowledge was uncovered about the social history and cultural contexts of Bloomsbury, Camden, and London.
- Via the creation of a new archive, the project offered a framework for the storing, sifting, and analysis of the narrative records of these engagements.

The analysis above has revealed surprising correspondences across these narratives, as well as productively strange or estranging juxtapositions. A significant impact of our research has therefore been to offer a frame in which such perspectives can come together: in the form of the archive created by the 'Festival in a Box' itself. The arrangement and rearrangement of the narratives of engagement gathered in the archive invites them to be read critically, in relation to one another, and in formations that can be unexpected and constructively defamiliarising.

Estranging Perspectives: The Cultural Value of People with Dementia

We began this report by referencing recent policy drives towards creating 'Dementia Friendly Communities'. This phrase comes from what is often referred to as 'grey literature'—policy documents, guidelines, and white papers—and forms an important part of the current discursive narrative around dementia in the UK. We noted above that this is a concept that has obvious implications for those involved in the planning and provision of community-focussed cultural activity, including community arts festivals. In concluding this report into the *Bloomsbury Festival in a Box* initiative, it is therefore worth returning to this context, and to current policy debates, as a means of reflecting on the achievements, legacy, and possible broader impacts of the project.

Recent research in the field of arts and health by Hester Parr (2006), (2008), has explored the possibility of locating and reintegrating the voices of socially marginalised populations—in Parr's case primarily people with mental health problems—into broader geographies and narratives of place. As she puts it, 'the arts bring with them the possibility for centring marginalised voices, experiences and locations' (15). This argument echoes a concern that has been explored recently in critical cultural and social geography around what David Harvey (2008) has termed 'the right to the city'. Harvey has argued that:

The question of what kind of city we want cannot be divorced from the question of what kind of people we want to be, what kinds of social relations we seek, what relations to nature we cherish, what style of daily life we desire, what kinds of technologies we deem appropriate, what aesthetic values we hold. The right to the city is, therefore, far more than the right of individual access to the resources that the city embodies: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city more after our heart's desire. [...] The freedom to make and remake ourselves and our cities is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet neglected of our human rights (23-24).

The notion of the 'right to the city' has resonance in relation to any discussion of the presence (or absence) of people with dementia and their lives within communities and urban contexts. People with dementia have a 'right to the city', and a right to community, too, and a right to actively articulate their own understandings of such concepts. As Pam Schweitzer (2011) has noted recently, there is a 'growing emphasis on the concept of dementia as a disability which, like other disabilities, society can work with and come to terms with. People with a disability increasingly expect society to listen to them, to plan for, and with, them and to adapt to their needs' (176).

Taken together, these arguments indicate a more radical edge that might be located around current imperatives to creating 'dementia friendly communities', or 'dementia friendly cities'. The need to 'make and remake' cities, communities, and cultures, this suggests, is a task for serious political and theoretical work, and one which requires direct and ethical engagement with those currently excluded from such narratives. As the research presented above has indicated, this is a task that might also require a

radical reframing of the perceptions of value attributed to dissenting and non-normative voices within the broader framework of a community, and a re-thinking of the modes of engagement used to locate and document such voices.

We contend that the *Bloomsbury Festival in a Box* project has made a contribution to these debates. It has offered a means for the collection, storage, and accessing of the narratives of people with dementia living in Bloomsbury and Camden. Moreover it has created, and will continue to create via its on-going dissemination and legacy, a resource in which the stories of people with dementia can be stored, protected, and valued—but also ethically integrated into the public domain. The *Festival in a Box* project has therefore explored the possibility of re-examining Bloomsbury, and beyond it Camden and London itself, through the perspectives and voices of those who are usually silent. In doing so, it has provided a medium through which to access new narratives of the cultures, histories, and communities of the area via the necessarily ‘estranging’ perspective afforded by some of its longest established, but also most vulnerable residents.

In this light it is relevant to revisit the notions of ‘ethnographic’ or ‘everyday surrealism’ touched upon in Section Two of this report in relation to our *Festival in a Box* outreach workshop and the work of the Mass-Observation movement. We noted above that our narrative mapping of Bloomsbury over two exceptional days in October 2013—as conceived and interpreted through a ‘surrealist’ perspective—offered an opportunity to locate unruly and disordering ‘small stories’ within the fragmentary cultural text of the Bloomsbury Festival. To use James Clifford’s terminology, this was an exercise that allowed us to explore the Bloomsbury Festival, and Bloomsbury itself, as ‘a defamiliarised cultural reality’ (121) made up of the diffuse personal narratives of festival goers. In our interpretation of this prototype archive, therefore, we might therefore locate a critical perspective—rooted in certain strands of ethnographic or ‘everyday’ surrealism—that will be of use in the current and subsequent analysis of the completed *Bloomsbury Festival in a Box* itself. This is a perspective, we suggest, that might not only be of relevance to the legacies of our own project, but to the broader critical reception of narratives produced by people with dementia.

We are not entirely original in making this connection. Susan M. Shultz (2008), in her experimental text *Dementia Blog* (compiled from her online documentation of her mother’s Alzheimer’s disease) has argued that:

To say that dementia is a surreal condition is probably not to say anything anyone doubts who has confronted a relative or friend with Alzheimer’s disease. More interesting, on a literary level, is the way in which writing about dementia creates a hybrid form, documentary surrealism. If documentary poetry combines the strengths of historical writing, journalism, collage, and the lyric, then documentary surrealism opens up the field to the ways in which the imagination is actualized by mental illness or other extreme states (Shultz, 2009).

Such an argument brings a new and potentially radical perspective to the arguments around 'storying' dementia explored above. A critical perspective informed by surrealist aesthetics might not only, as Shultz suggests, be productive in writing about and 'documenting' dementia. It might also provide a critical perspective that is of assistance in *re-integrating* the narratives of people with dementia into a broader cultural text.

André Breton, in the 1929 *First Manifesto of Surrealism* famously described: 'the future resolution of [...] two states, dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a *surreality*, if one may so speak' (14). Through the *Festival in a Box* project, and the creation of the *Festival in a Box* archive, we have attempted to explore the *everyday* lived reality of dementia within the 'extraordinary', if not necessarily dream-like context of our outreach activities, and of a community arts festival. In drawing these two contexts together—the everyday 'illness' and the extraordinary festival 'moment'—via the creation of a new archive conceived directly in relation to the voices of those with dementia, we have explored the possibility of creating both a juxtaposition and a new harmony between the two. If the disordered, carnivalesque context of the arts festival represents a means of reconfiguring our understanding of everyday life, it might also offer a means of familiarising the presence of people with dementia in our cultural and communal imagination. As such, it might provide a means of exploring what Hilary Lee and Trevor Adams (2011) term 'the very core experience of the person living with dementia: looking at the ordinary, but seeing the extraordinary' (xi).

The potential benefits of this to the Bloomsbury Festival, and to other community arts organisations, are underscored by the current status of the festival itself. In February 2013 the Bloomsbury Festival board issued an email to its community partners asking them for assistance in reshaping and reimagining the nature of the festival. The email noted that:

During the course of this year [2014-15] we'll be undertaking a full strategic review of the Charity, with a view to implementing a new operating model and funding model later this year, in good time to deliver the 2015 Festival.

Our first task is to rearticulate the unique strengths of the Bloomsbury Festival in a way that not only captures the things you value but also, crucially, puts us in a strong position to build a sustainable funding base.

The Bloomsbury Festival is therefore actively seeking new means through which to 'rearticulate', and re-narrate, its purpose and social value. The *Festival in a Box* archive is well placed to assist in this process. Materials gathered from the *Bloomsbury Festival in a Box* project archive will be offered to those undertaking the Bloomsbury Festival analysis. Local residents living with dementia will in this sense be given an opportunity directly involved in shaping the future of the festival. They will therefore be empowered to offer a genuinely unfamiliar, and in the best possible sense 'strange', perspective on the future of this event. By extension, they will play a role in reshaping the fabric of Bloomsbury itself.

Festivals change places just as they change people. They can change perceptions of what it means to live and work in an area, to inhabit a community, and to offer an intervention into the meaning of a place. One of the functions of the Bloomsbury Festival, as noted above, has always been to pose the question: 'what is Bloomsbury'? We suggest that the answer to this question, must, in the light of the data gathered by the *Bloomsbury Festival in a Box* project, include the perspective of local people living with dementia. The value and validity of these 'estranging' perspectives has been underlined through the *Bloomsbury Festival in a Box* project. We have gathered a resource which allows us to construct a defamiliarised Bloomsbury and Camden—and a defamiliarised Bloomsbury Festival—formed in dialogue with the voices of people with dementia. What this might provide in a broader register is a vision of a world in which people with dementia are themselves *familiar*, and in which the currently uncomfortable, fear inducing 'strangeness' of the condition is challenged and reconfigured.

Part Five – Project Outputs

It is in the *Bloomsbury Festival in a Box* archive, finally—and its continuing interrogation and dissemination—that the broader value and future legacy of the *Festival in a Box* project is to be located. This fact has informed our plans for the project's legacy and dissemination (outlined below). However, it has also informed two important additional outputs that will be crucial to the project's legacy. These are:

1. **Festival in a Box 'Open Archives':** a website, *Festival in a Box: Open Archives*, is being developed to offer open access digitised resources from the Festival in a Box project. This site will open up the 'archives of engagement' gathered over the course of the project to a broader public via an online platform that will also allow for the submission of new material. A prototype site can be viewed at: <http://festivalinabox.blogs.sas.ac.uk/>
2. **A festival in a box training 'toolkit':** A toolkit will be developed collaboratively between the research team and Age UK Camden. This toolkit will form part of the training for volunteers to the dementia befriending service, encouraging them to use artistic techniques for engagement with their befriendees. This toolkit will also be made available as a resource to other dementia services.

Other Outputs:

1. **Bloomsbury Festival exhibition:** a two-day exhibition and outreach workshop at the Bloomsbury Festival.
2. **Blog:** a project blog was maintained by the PI throughout the project within the School of Advanced Study's research blogs. The blog attracted 185 hits over the course of the project. <http://blogs.sas.ac.uk/category/bloomsbury-festival-in-a-box/>
3. **Knowledge Share Day:** A public knowledge share day was held at the University of London on May 1st 2014 to mark the project conclusion. The day brought together leading figures in the field of dementia and the arts, including: Veronica Franklin Gould, Founder and Chief Executive of the charity Arts 4 Dementia; Professor Justine Schneider, Professor of Mental Health & Social Care, University of Nottingham, Dr Helen Chatterjee (University College London), principal investigator on the AHRC-Funded Heritage in Hospitals project, and representatives from Dulwich Picture Gallery's 'Good Times: art for older people' programme. The day was attended by 50 delegates, and key presentations from the event were recorded and will be disseminated as podcasts. The event was also live-tweeted via the hashtag #FIAB2014.
4. **Peer reviewed Journal article:** At the time of this report, a journal article has been drafted for submission to *Medical Humanities*.

Additional Outputs

In addition to those proposed in our initial application for funding, the Festival in a Box project has generated a number of additional outputs. These are:

1. **Material for Bloomsbury Festival analysis:** the Bloomsbury Festival is currently undertaking 'a full strategic review of the Charity, with a view to implementing a new operating model and funding model'. Material from the Festival in a Box project will be included as part of this review.
2. **Artist interviews:** In addition to the interviews conducted with participants, nine additional narrative interviews were also conducted with befrienders and artists participating in the FIAB project. These have been analysed and will be used to develop the toolkit above, and will also be made public via the Festival in a Box 'Open Archives' website.
3. **Second Festival in a Box exhibition:** A number of short films have been developed during the project and over the course of reading the FIAB archives. These films, along with the boxes themselves and additional visual materials generated over the project, will be displayed in an exhibition held for the 2014 Being Human festival of the Humanities (November 15th-23rd).

Appendix I – Research Methodology and Advances

Overview

For this study, we adopted a multidisciplinary ‘narrative framework’ approach, combining narrative and textual analysis of the data gathered by the peripatetic Bloomsbury Festival boxes with quantitative indicators of happiness and wellbeing. Taken together, this allowed us to develop a critical methodology informed by interpretive phenomenological analysis, narrative inquiry, social and narrative gerontology, and old age psychiatry, as well as methods of reading more typically associated with literary and cultural analysis. The quantitative element was introduced to this pilot study to explore whether this might be a meaningful method of evaluating our cultural intervention in a definitive trial.

Creating a new archive over the course of the project allowed us to reconceptualise our research data (including narrative transcripts but also photographs, objects, film clips and literary excerpts) as cultural texts to be read critically. Doing so has in turn allowed us to develop a critical perspective informed by certain currents of everyday, ‘documentary’, or ‘ethnographic’ surrealism. The significance and future possibilities of adopting such a perspective, particularly when conducting research working with people with dementia and others whose communicative strategies may follow non-normative patterns, will be expanded upon in peer-reviewed publications resulting from the project.

Advances

Festival in a Box: engaging socially isolated people with dementia has made a contribution to advancing research methodologies in a number of ways. These advances have come not through the initiation of a new methodology, but rather in the original combination and juxtaposition of a number of existing methods in a framework approach, as suited to the inherently collaborative and practice-based nature of the project.

As noted in our report, the qualitative elements of the study were the more successful components—pointing to the appropriateness of such methodologies in working with the particular client base and particularly with small samples such as ours. Our preliminary findings suggested that use of the single item happiness measure was not a particularly valid way of determining impact of the intervention—as the outcomes of this measure were frequently at odds with qualitative data. We concluded that a measure focussed more on immediate enjoyment would have been more appropriate, and will take this into account when designing future studies. Specifically, the measure developed by Ander, Noble, Lanceley, Menon and Chatterjee (2011) in their work with the *Heritage in Hospitals* programme at University College Hospital has been identified as a possible model for future research. Dr Helen Chatterjee was invited to attend the Festival in a Box knowledge share day on May 1st, 2013 to speak about this measure.

The possibilities explored over this project in drawing upon a methodology drawn from the overlap between cultural studies and art theory, in the form of the ethnographic 'everyday surrealist' perspective, is an original contribution to discussions around cultural value and arts and health. This perspective, which arose over the course of the research and which draws upon aesthetic and creative approaches to 'storying' dementia seen primarily in literature and filmmaking, has potentially significant implications for adaptation within a research context—as a means of recognising and reintegrating the culturally 'estranged' narratives of people with dementia.

Perhaps the principal methodological advance of the project however has been the creation of the Festival in a Box archive itself. This has created not just a resource, but a new method of engaging with people with dementia in an arts and health context, and for critically and ethically responding to their narratives. Working with people whose memories are fragile, this archive has offered a space in which such memories can be preserved and valued, and a framework across which various methods of interpretation can come together in their analysis. The archive thus presents an ethical space of interpretation through which to engage with the personal narratives of people with dementia, and through which to begin re-integrating those narratives into the fabric of a broader cultural text.

The primary methodological advance here has therefore been in the conduct, representation, storage and 'framing' of the research, and the initiation of a legacy for it. Via its continuing outputs, specifically in the creation of an online digital 'Open Archives' resource, the Festival in a Box project will continue to grow and evolve, and to develop as a methodology for engagement.

Appendix II - Narrative Vignettes

The short texts below are narrative vignettes offering an overview of our participants' *Festival in a Box* visits, and our collective analysis of their transcripts. Pseudonyms have been used for all participants, and the narratives are accompanied by representative images drawn from each participant's 'archive of engagement'.

Participant 1 – 'Mary'

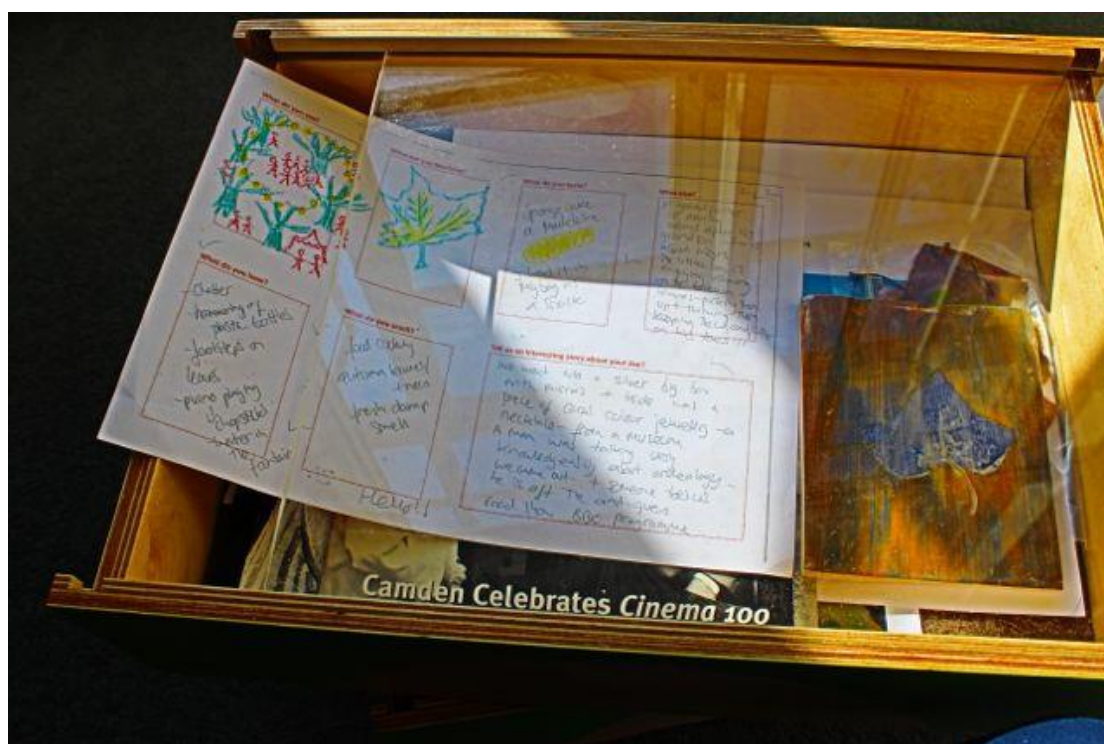


Image shows the contents of Mary's archive

'Mary', a woman in her seventies, has lived in Camden for some 40 years. Her visits benefited from an immediate rapport with the visiting artist, who engaged her in a number of 'hands on' activities including ceramic tile making and wallpaper design. Her enthusiasm for these activities is apparent across the transcripts, as is her reflection upon her earlier life experiences in London, specifically in Soho. Over her three visits a nuanced articulation of present fears and anxieties emerges, most notably in regard to family, money and dependence. This is set alongside evocative depictions of past life of early independence and experience of 'bohemian' community in Soho, narrating a deeply felt relationship with place. Each of the visits has a dominant colour, offering a conceptual language for articulating emotions.

'Yellow' emerges as the dominant colour for visit one, which revolved around tile making. This visit also saw the emergence of several key themes and 'signature stories'—the central one of which related to a perceived missed opportunity for a more artistic life working for 'the richest man in Dubai' (672-673). Throughout this and

subsequent visits there were frequent expressions of surprise and delight about the activity and about her own creative ability: 'Gosh I'm an artist (215); 'I'm a genius' (393).

Green emerged as the dominant colour from the second visit: 'I'm a very green person' (182), 'My favourite is green. I love green' (499). This visit revolved around tile making once again, but also featured reminiscence work using photographs of Soho. This prompted a number memories about Mary's earlier life, often expressed in spatial terms, emphasising the physical closeness of the previous community: 'there were two theatres opposite and I was 19 and so the street was that narrow, in the interval they'd say do you want to come for a drink after? (908-910). Female figures were emphasised here, perhaps reflecting the all-female team undertaking these Festival in a Box visits. The therapeutic value of the art activity itself was also underlined during this visit, where the 'bashing' of the clay was articulated as stress relief in relation to family tensions: 'I'll pretend it's my son. Being a pain at the moment' (302-303); 'I'll pretend it's my daughter' (1281).

Black emerged as the dominant colour for visit three, perhaps reflecting the approaching stress and anxiety of Christmas: 'I dread Christmas' (25). The visit focussed on making wrapping paper, and this provided an opportunity for Mary to reflect on her dislike of Christmas and on other anxieties relating to her family and current situation. This final narrative concluded with a tour of the participant's house, with the domestic environment opening up to the Festival in a Box team.

Participant 2 – 'Brenda'

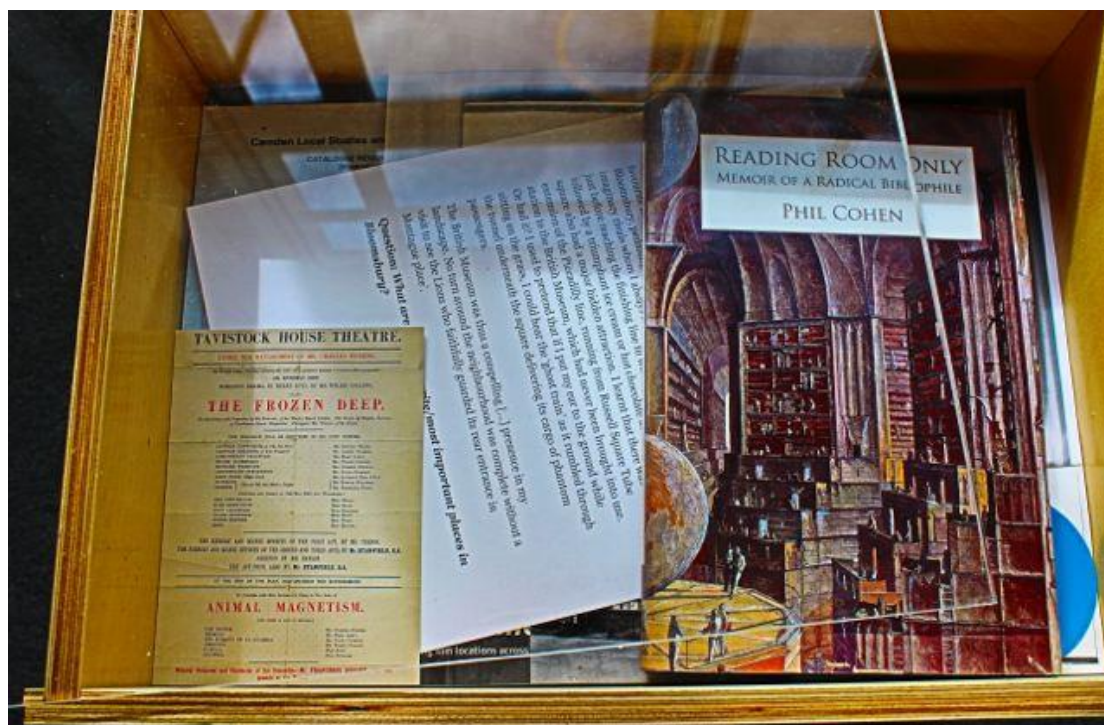


Image shows the contents of Brenda's archive.

'Brenda', a woman in her early nineties, has lived in central Bloomsbury for over forty years. Her narrative begins with reflection on her journey to London from the North-East, and is marked by frequent references to amateur dramatics undertaken in later life. The narrative is marked by Brenda's frequently avowed identity as an active participator who will 'try anything' – particularly in relation to cultural activity.

The first visit (due to illness) took place without an accompanying artist. Nonetheless, it was rich in narrative reminiscence about Bloomsbury and other areas of London. The visit was marked by Brenda's narration of two significant journeys in her life, the first being her relocation to London with her son following the death of her husband, and the second a much later trip to Berlin as part of an amateur production of the Beggar's Opera. Around these journeys, many memories of Bloomsbury were revealed. A sense was given that Brenda had witnessed a community grow up around her, but that she has outlived many of the close connections formed: 'They've grown up and they've got married or moved away' (833-834). This is inked to a signature story of communal life in the area: outliving her son and witnessing the funeral conducted for him by the local army cadets (667-703).

The second visit featured carol singing with a professional opera singer. Whilst the participant joined in with the activity, an element of tension is evident in the transcript. Nonetheless, it emerged that cultural activity had been an important part of post-retirement life for Brenda, in contrast to perceived inability and failure in this area in childhood. An early life in which Brenda had no voice: 'I had a very strict school. We didn't talk much' (918), was therefore compared to importance of a voice in later life (965-967), 'If I'm put out I let them know, I speak my mind' (1016-1018). She also articulated the confidence gained from previous art activity—'I was [shy] at first but from being in a drama group you get to open out' (1202-1203)—and our visit provided an opportunity for reflecting on the value of this.

The third visit focussed on poetry reading. Poems including Maya Angelou's *And Still I Rise*, Louis MacNeice's *The British Museum Reading Room*, and Christopher Reid's *The Song of Lunch* were performed. The visit was marked by Brenda's immediate desire to participate, and to be given a voice in the proceedings: 'I'd like to read one' (64). The importance of coherent speech, narrative, and voice emerged again during this visit, in relation to memories of Bloomsbury's Russell Square: 'Mind if I sit and talk to you? Some would say that to me, and I'd say, 'Only if you talk sense. I don't want any nonsense' (491-493).

Overall, Brenda's narrative suggested that the Festival in a Box visits allowed a context in which to reconnect with previous cultural experiences, demonstrate her skills, and reflect on the value of these activities in her broader life narrative. When reading poetry, she noted that: 'it's been a long time since I did anything like that [...] But I used to love it' (950-952). At the end of this visit, and of the Festival in a Box visits, adjectives such as 'Calm, enjoyable' (909), were used to describe the impact of the engagement.

Participant 3 - 'Roland'

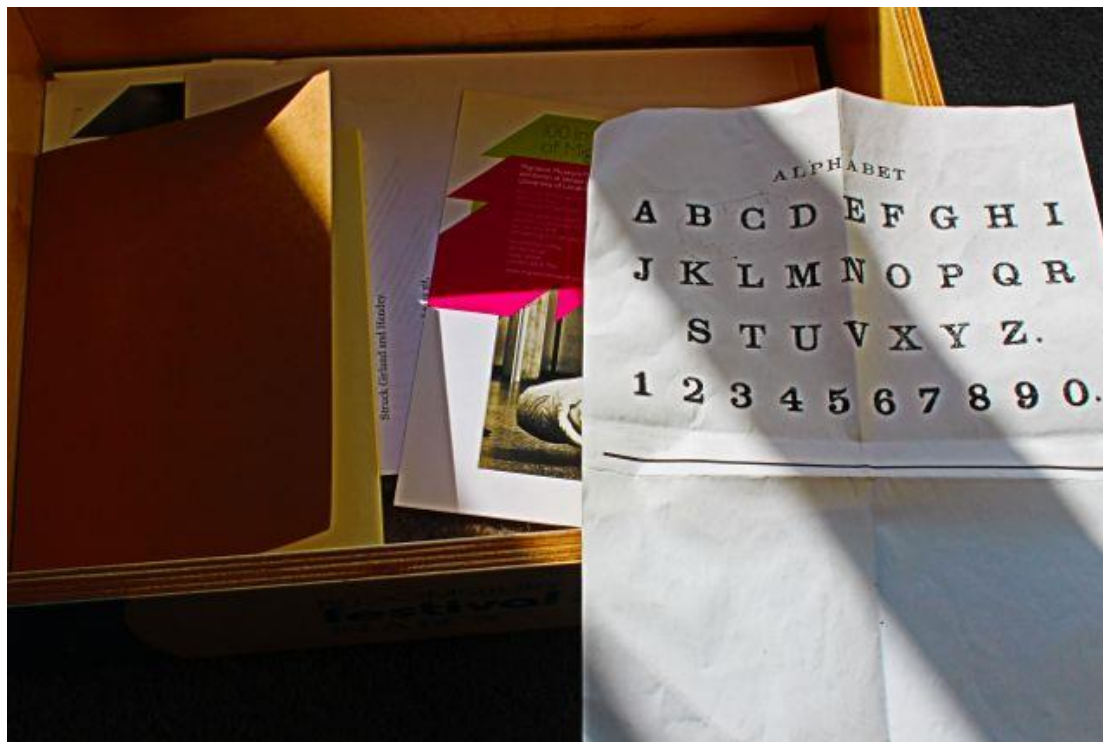


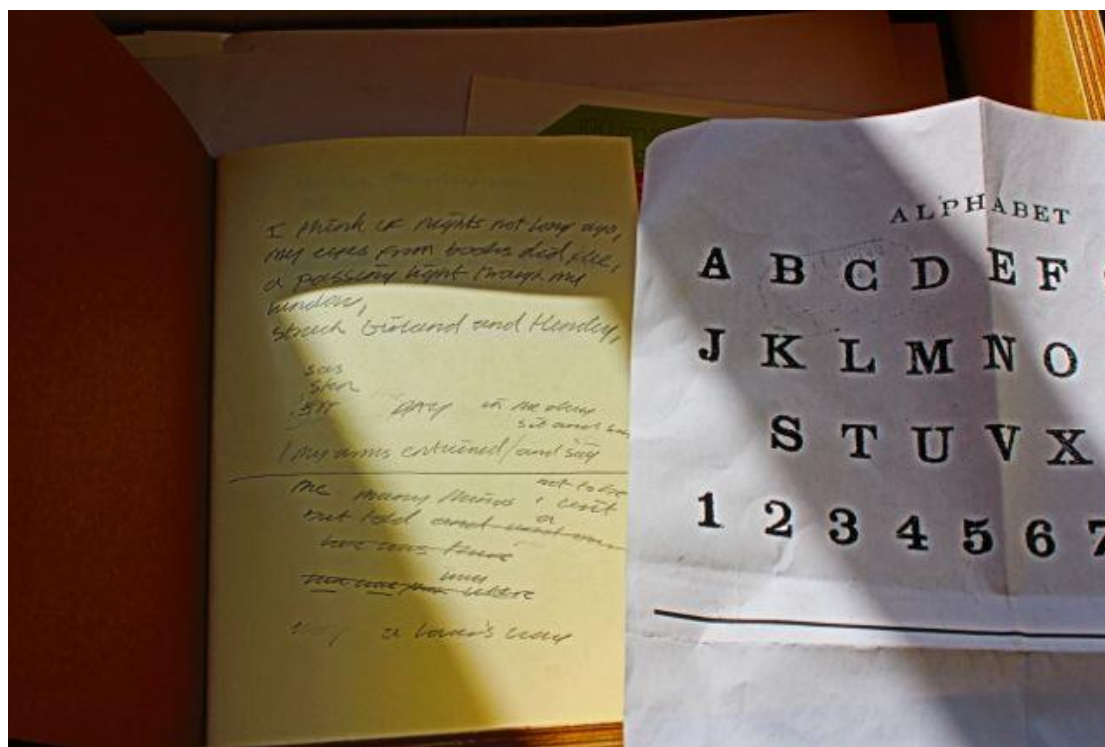
Image shows the contents of Roland's archive.

'Roland' is a male in his seventies. Originally from Barbados but a long-term resident in London, he suffered a stroke nine months before the start of our project, causing severe mobility and speech problems. Due to these he was relocated into sheltered accommodation. Roland frequently expressed frustration during the visits about the communication difficulties caused by his speech dysphasia and dementia. He also articulated the trauma of his stroke and relocation from a familiar domestic context. Throughout the narrative there is a tension between avowals of capacity around speech, cultural activity, and memory, and resignation and defeat regarding his current condition. The visits underlined the potential difficulties faced by attempting narrative interventions with people who may have difficulties speaking.

The first visit responded to the participant's previously stated interest in photography. A freelance photographer and filmmaker brought a photography exhibition, which had featured at the Bloomsbury Festival into Roland's home. The artist talked through these photographs and the stories behind them, using them to prompt reminiscence. Over the course of this visit, Roland's distance from his home and family in Barbados emerged as one source of his isolation, compounded by his physical ill health (574-576). Having lived in London for thirty years or more—'I was here a long time. I came from Barbados to London' (628)—Roland insisted that 'I know all about London' (631). His transcript was however marked by struggles to articulate this knowledge. It emerged that Roland maintains a strong interest in music, and played several instruments before his stroke rendered him unable to do so.

The second visit followed up on this interest. The artist brought a guitar, ipad, and other musical equipment, and attempted to initiate a jam session with the participant. Roland was able to play a few scales on the keyboard but was happiest just to listen to the music. Unfortunately, whilst there are photographs from this session and notes by the researcher, the audio was lost due to a technical fault.

The third visit featured a new artist, and revolved around a poetry recital. The poems had been selected to reflect black experience in London (reflecting the ethnic backgrounds of both poet and participant). However Roland was at pains to underline that these poems did not reflect his experience of life in London, stressing his education and professional life (746). It emerged that Roland had previously written poetry himself, and the visit increasingly revolved around his attempts to recite this, and frustrations resulting from his difficulties with both speech and memory: 'The poem, I remember it, and ... I (1134); I can't remember... This is a long poem... I can't remember... (1486-1487).



Detail from Roland's archive.

Visit four brought together elements of previous visits, featuring photography, poetry and musical performance. In this session the artist sang as well as performing poetry—singing songs including John Lennon's Imagine and Bob Marley's Soul Rebel. Roland strongly indicated from the start that he would like to continue reciting his own poetry, and the mixture of poetry and song worked well in facilitating this. Roland was able to relax and reflect during the musical interludes, and come back to reciting his own poem in the periods following this. By the end of the session, two stanzas of the poem had been transcribed and added to the box.

Participant Four – ‘Victor’



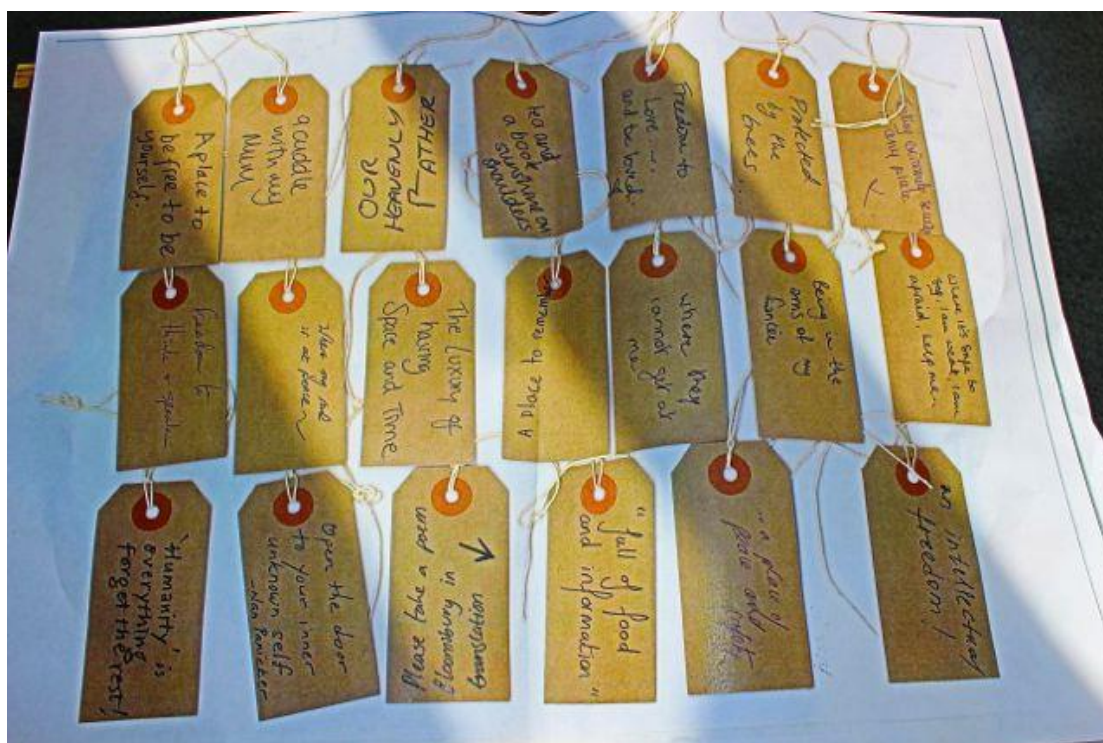
The contents of Victor's archive.

Victor is a man in his late 70s. Over three Festival in a Box visits he was happy to talk at length about his life and memories, including numerous stories of Camden, the West End, and the outer fringes Bloomsbury. Engaging Victor in artistic activities however was more difficult, although the artist (who remained the same for all visits) was able to find some success in using poetry activities to draw out stories from Victor's rich and varied life. Themes of performance were common throughout this participant's narrative, with Victor making frequent references to the importance of 'projecting', and to acting, the theatre, and role-play.

The first visit comprised a reminiscence session using theatrical images found in the Camden Local Studies archive. These images prompted numerous stories about Victor's life and former profession as a theatrical costumier in the West End, as well as the community that he found through this profession. He noted that, 'once you're in the theatrical field you all sort of help each other' (37-138). His sense of early self-confidence was underlined—'I was never frightened of standing up and projecting [at school] when most people were embarrassed' (602-604)—as was an apparent identification with character actors: 'it's the character actors that get the best applause' (609-611). In contrast, however, Victor also articulated feelings of isolation in relation to his current context: 'I don't feel my present situation is worth thinking about, but I live very much in the past' (1945-1946).

The second visit involved a word association exercise using luggage tags marked with significant words noted during the first visit. Victor was asked for his first responses to

these words and these were recorded. The exercise was successful in eliciting unexpected responses to key words, including 'Bloomsbury'—'an upmarket place in London (1307). Victor occasionally became upset over the course of this visit, particularly when touching on memories relating to a previously firmly held identity as a 'fixer' and someone able to provide support to others in times of crisis. These memories were recounted with pride, but also caused some distress.



Luggage tags: detail from Victor's archive.

The third visit took place in the Victor's own flat, unlike previous visits conducted in a common area. This marked an important change of context, and Victor narrated very frankly his relationship with this space. He told us that, 'when I'm in here, I don't know... I'm just in a little world of my own, I've got all my own things and whatever's outside is sort of foreign territory (137-139). The transcript evokes a feeling of Victor having created a protective space—like a theatre set or a memory box—in which he can mount a production that provides a narrative of his past life. The visit revolved around the performance of an original poem written by the artist, based on previous visits. Victor also narrated a number of detailed stories articulated in relation to the remarkable collection of photographs arranged around his room. Reproductions of these were taken (with Victor's permission), and added to the box, as was a copy of the poem created during the visits.

Participant 5 – ‘Kieran’



Contents of Kieran's archive.

'Kieran' is a man in his eighties. He has lived on the eastern edge of Bloomsbury for over ten years, and in London for much of his adult life. Originally from Ireland, his narrative returned often to longer-term memories of life as a young man in Dublin. Kieran has a long history of creative and cultural activity, specifically creative writing, and learnt that he had written plays and novels (unpublished) throughout his life. Kieran preferred primarily to observe and to listen during the Festival in a Box visits. Nonetheless, rich and vivid memories did emerge, and Kieran's personal and idiosyncratic sense of humour was apparent. Activities included poetry, ceramics, storytelling and singing.

The first visit revolved principally around poetry. A member of the Keats House Poets read two poems by W.B Yeats (a former Bloomsbury resident) in an attempt to prompt memories about participant's early life in Ireland and later life in Bloomsbury. Photographs of Yeats's former residence on Woburn Walk were also included in the box, and a short poetry writing exercise was attempted. Alongside a number of evocative memories relating to his early life, Kieran talked about his previous practice of creative writing, noting that the current time was the only period of his life without this: 'Well I haven't thought about writing for a long time' (766 -778) I think this is the only time I haven't, now (1157). Memory problems were articulated evocatively throughout the visit, most notably in relation to a 'signature story' involving the ending of Kieran's professional life as a counsellor. When asked about the end of his career, Kieran noted that he felt he had to stop work because: 'I remember not being able to remember what the client had said to me when I was trying to write my report (1288-1290).

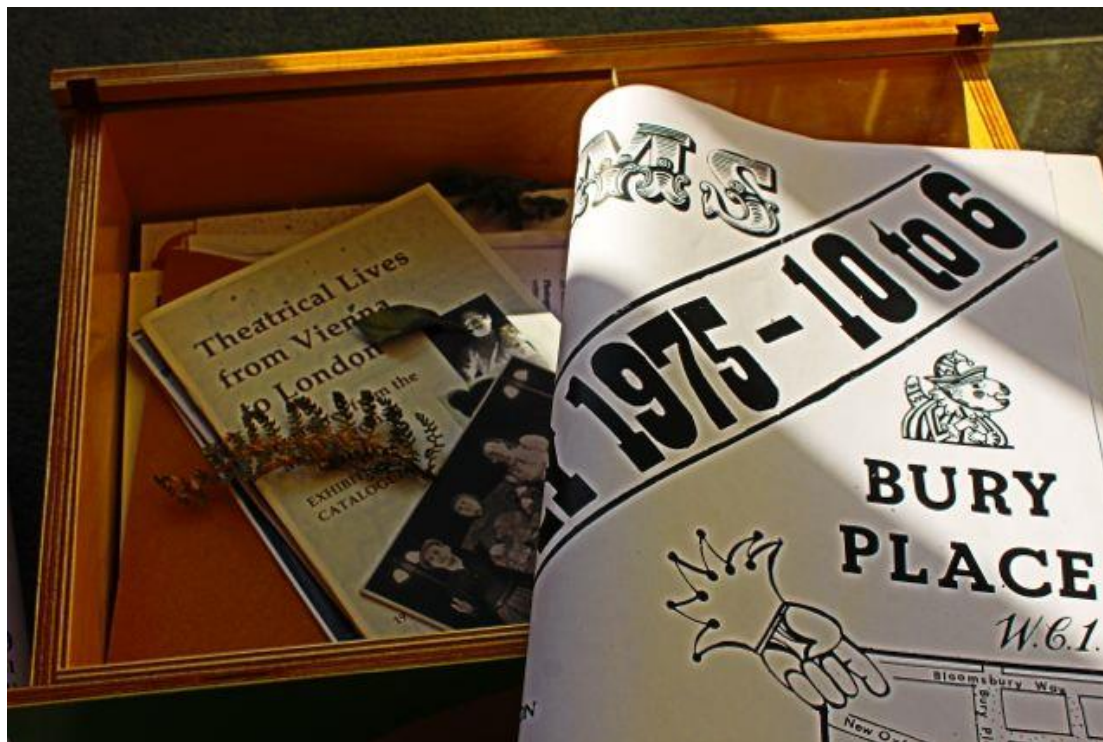
The second visit was led by a ceramicist and storyteller, who used a selection of materials based on the narrative of the first. Kieran was reticent to participate fully in this visit, preferring to watch. Nonetheless he shared many more memories of his earlier life and articulated his enjoyment: 'I did enjoy it. It's quite interesting, you know, so I mean I think it's a good idea. (2078-2079). Patience emerged as a motif during this visit, with Kieran noting of his previous experience training horses: 'it's a question of sort of time and effort. You just do it gradually (941-942).



A detail from Kieran's archive.

For the third visit, the focus was once again on storytelling. Objects were used to prompt reminiscence, and there was also a musical component. The artist sang several songs based on the narrative information from previous visits. Kieran complemented the singer by saying, 'that was beautiful' (1121), and also sang along to two traditional Irish songs: Molly Malone and Danny Boy. At the close of the visit Kieran remarked that 'It made me feel good, I suppose, but I can't think of any other word at the moment. It made me feel good' (2764-2765).

Participant 6 – ‘Ivy’



Contents of Ivy's archive.

'Ivy', is a woman in her late nineties. She has lived in central Bloomsbury for over sixty years and raised a family in the area. Originally from Germany, she came to the area with her husband as a refugee during the Second World War. Both she and her husband had been active figures in the local community, and instrumental in establishing the 'Bloomsbury Fair'—a much earlier, though very different—iteration of the Bloomsbury Festival. Discovering this connection, coupled with the uncovering of two posters from the earlier Bloomsbury Fair in the Camden Local Studies and Archive Centre, was a remarkable and informative coincidence for our project, and produced a number of materials for our archive.

Ivy's first visit consisted of a reminiscence workshop structured around literary quotes about Bloomsbury. Extracts of writing by Virginia Woolf, Louis MacNeice, and Phil Cohen were read. The workshop was largely unsuccessful, however, in part due to problems with the participant's hearing, but also because the literary quotes caused confusion. In a theme that recurred throughout her visits, the participant challenged our indirect method for prompting reminiscence, telling us that: 'you've got to ask a straight question, I answer or I can't' (77-78). This insistence on the correct use of language was linked to an instance that we were wrong about the name of the community event that we were representing. Ivy insisted that '[it's] the Bloomsbury Fair, it's never called Festival, it's always called Fair (36-37).

Many memories of life in Bloomsbury emerged over the course of this visit, and Ivy offered a new perspective on the cultural institutions of the area, and their personal value to her. The British Museum was narrated as a space for raising a family:

all my children learned to walk in the British Museum on that lovely floor. They learned to walk there, yes. We were very much, not involved, but... what do you call it? [...] Rooted in the area (577-581).

Whilst a personal perspective was also offered on Bloomsbury's libraries:

I set up little libraries where people go and we had a wonderful library in the town hall here, accessible and of course we've got St Pancras. We are very lucky in this area really, very lucky (V1, 807).

The second visit featured a ceramic workshop. This activity again caused some misgivings, with Ivy feeling condescended to at times: 'I'm not like most of your patients who are incapable; I'm capable of doing absolutely everything (696-698). Nonetheless, the transcript demonstrated a greater openness and willingness to talk about her 'secret' war work, and Ivy also spoke much more candidly of her escape from Nazi Germany during the Second World War. A greater vulnerability was displayed, too, with Ivy noting at the close of the visit, that: 'I hope you're not going to desert me now that you've got my information? (2199-2200).



Detail from Ivy's archive.

To maintain continuity, the third visit used the same artist and activity as the second, whilst also attempting a more targeted reminiscence activity using two Bloomsbury Fair posters from the 1970s found in the Camden archives. This prompted detailed and

evocative memories of the earlier Bloomsbury Fair, and the civic consciousness underlying this event:

Bloomsbury Fair, people got together, got little stalls and got to know one another. I didn't know people opposite. There were two very nice, really very nice young men, gay, yes, and I used to see them in the street and we had the fair, then we had a get together in Bloomsbury Street down there, you know, during the summer fair and so you got to know all your neighbours, yes (1025-1032)

Ivy's narrative demonstrates the possibilities of the Festival in a Box approach to both prompt and archive stories and memories of an area. The narrative of an earlier Bloomsbury Fair that emerged over the course of Ivy's visits, intertwined with her own personal narrative and responses to our interventions, provided an unusual and revealing narrative of community, cultural activity, and the social history of Bloomsbury. These themes are directly relevant to those engaged in the planning and provision of contemporary cultural activity, and the potential lessons for the contemporary Bloomsbury Festival that might reside in this narrative were explored in a project blog entry entitled The Bloomsbury Festival, or the Bloomsbury Fair?:

<http://blogs.sas.ac.uk/2014/03/27/the-bloomsbury-festival-or-the-bloomsbury-fair/>

References

- Ander, Eric, Linda Thomson, Guy Noble, Anne Lanceley, Usha Menon & Helen Chatterjee. 'Generic well-being outcomes: towards a conceptual framework for well-being outcomes in museums'. *Museum Management and Curatorship*. 2011. 26(3): 237-259.
- Arts Council England . *Arts, health and well-being*. London: Arts Council England, 2007.
- Arts4Dementia. *Reawakening the Mind: Evaluation of Arts 4 Dementia's London Arts Challenge in 2012*. London: Arts4Dementia, 2013.
- Ashton, Rosemary. *Victorian Bloomsbury*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012.
- Backhaus, Peter (Ed.). *Communication in Elderly Care: cross-cultural perspectives*. London: Bloomsbury, 2011.
- Bennett, Tony. *The Birth of the Museum: history, theory, politics*. Oxon: Routledge, 1995.
- Belifore, Eleonora and Oliver Bennett. 2nd ed. *The Social Impact of the Arts: an intellectual history*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Birren, James, Gary Kenyon, Jan-Erik Ruth, Johannes J.F and Torbjorn Schroots, Svensson (Eds.). *Aging and Biography: explorations in adult development*. New York: Springer, 1996.
- Clare, Linda, Julia M. Rowlands and Rebecca Quinn. 'Collective Strength: The Impact of Developing a Shared Identity in Early Stage Dementia'. *Dementia*. 7(9). 2008: 9-30.
- Clare, Linda & Julia Rowlands, Errollyn Bruce, Clare Surr and Mura Downs. 'The Experience of Living with Dementia in Residential Care: an interpretative phenomenological analysis'. *The Gerontologist*. 48(6). 2008: 711-720.
- Clifford, James (1988). *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. London: Harvard University Press, 1996.
- Cooper Claudia, Bebbington P, Livingston G. 'Cognitive impairment and happiness in old people in low and middle income countries: results from the 10/66 study'. *Journal of Affective Disorders*. 130(1-2). 2011: 198-204.
- Department of Health. *Living Well with Dementia: a national dementia strategy*. London: Department of Health, 2009.
- Department of Health and Arts Council England. *A prospectus for arts and health*. London: Department of Health and Arts Council England, 2007.

- Graham, I.W. 'Reflective Narrative and Dementia Care'. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*. 1999. 8: 675-683.
- Hamilton, Heidi E. 'Narrative as Snapshot: glimpses into the past in Alzheimer's discourse'. *Narrative Inquiry*. 2008. 18(1): 53-82.
- Highmore, Ben. 4th ed., *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory: An Introduction*. Oxon: Routledge. 2012.
- Hubble, Nick. *Mass-Observation and Everyday Life: Culture, History, Theory*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006.
- Hydén, Lars-Christer and Eleanor Antelius, Communicative disability and stories: Towards an embodied conception of narratives. *Health*. 2011. 15(6): 588-603.
- Kenyon, Gary, and William L. Randall. *Restorying our lives: personal growth through autobiographical reflection*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997.
- Kenyon, Gary, Ernst Bohlmeijer and William L. Randall (Eds.) *Storying Later Life: issues, investigations, and interventions in narrative gerontology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Kenyon, Gary, and William L. Randall. 'Narrative Gerontology: an overview' In, *Narrative Gerontology: Theory, Research & Practice*. Michigan: Springer Publishing Company, 2009.
- Killick, John. *Dementia Positive: a handbook based on lived experiences for anyone wishing to improve the lives of those with dementia*. Edinburgh: Lutha Press Limited, 2013.
- Kitwood, Tom. *Dementia Reconsidered: the person comes first*. Maidenhead: Open University Press, 1997.
- Lee, Hilary and Trevor Adams. *Creative Approaches in Dementia Care*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Lefebvre, Henri (1947). *The Critique of Everyday Life: volume 1*. London: Verso, 2008.
- Leibing, Annett and Lawrence Cohen (Eds.). *Thinking About Dementia: Culture, Loss, and the Anthropology of Senility*. New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2006.
- National Museums Liverpool. *House of Memories: An evaluation of National Museums Liverpool dementia training programme*. Liverpool: Museum of Liverpool, 2012.
- Mager, Cathy (2013). 'The Arts in a Box'. *Arts Professional*. Sept 2013. Accessed 18th October 2013: <http://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/magazine/267/article/arts-box>.
- Murray, Nicholas. *Real Bloomsbury*. Bridgend: Seren, 2010.
- Parr, Hester. *Mental Health and Social Space: towards inclusionary geographies*. Malden MA: Blackwells Publishing, 2008.

- Quinn, Bernadette (2005). 'Arts Festivals and the City'. *Urban Studies*. 5(6): 927-943.
- Randall, William L. & A. Elizabeth McKim. 'Towards a Poetics of Aging: the links between literature and life'. *Narrative Inquiry*, 2004. 14(2): 235-260.
- Ryan, Ellen. B, and Lori Schindel Martin. Using Narrative Arts to Foster Personhood in Dementia. In, Peter Backhouse (ed). *Communication in Elderly Care: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Schultz, Susan M. *Dementia Blog*. San Diego: Singing Horse Press, 2008.
- Schultz, Susan M. 'Documentary Surrealism: review of Matt Jasper's *Moth Moon*. 2009. Accessed 9th Sept 2013:
<http://tinfisheditor.blogspot.co.uk/2009/10/documentary-surrealism-matt-jespers.html>.
- Schweitzer, Pam. Innovative approaches to reminiscence: remembering yesterday, caring today. In, Lee, Hilary and Trevor Adams (Eds.). *Creative Approaches in Dementia Care*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Sherratt, Chris. 'Lighting Up: lessons learned in establishing an arts project'. *Journal of Dementia Care*. 2012. 18(6): 22-24
- Smith, Jonathan A. Maria Jarman, and Mike Osborn. Doing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. In, Michael Murray and Kerry Chamberlain (Eds.). *Qualitative Health Psychology: theories and method*. London: SAGE, 1999.
- Staricoff RL. *Arts in health: a review of the medical literature*. London: Arts Council England, 2004.
- Stickley, Theodore (Ed.). *Qualitative Research in Arts and Mental Health: contexts, meaning and evidence*. Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books, 2012.
- Stokes, Graham. *And Still the Music Plays: stories of people with dementia*. London: Hawker Publications LTD, 2008.
- Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

External links

Project Links

Bloomsbury Festival in a Box project blog

<http://blogs.sas.ac.uk/category/bloomsbury-festival-in-a-box/>

Bloomsbury Festival in a Box Open Archives (prototype site)

<http://festivalinabox.blogs.sas.ac.uk/>

External Organisations

Age UK Camden – Dementia befriending service

<http://www.ageuk.org.uk/camden/our-services/dementia-befriending-service-/>

Bloomsbury Festival

<http://bloomsburyfestival.org.uk/>

The Keats House Poets

<http://khpoets.wordpress.com/>

Lyn Atelier

<http://www.lynatelier.com/>

Parasite Ceramics

<http://www.parasiteceramics.co.uk/>

