

Our Place - a community arts and history project

Tel: 07972 708 542; web: www.ourplace-arts.org.uk; Email: ourplace@riseup.net

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PRESS RELEASE

Cardboard houses, songs and residents history make for successful arts project opposing a third runway at Heathrow on 11/12 August 2007

The Our Place arts project at St Mary's Church Hall, Harmondsworth was visited by an estimated 100 local residents from Harmondsworth, Sipson and beyond on the weekend of 11/12 August. They took part in producing a cardboard 'house' sculpture, painted 'Not for sale to BAA' signs for front gardens, and listened to accompanying music and song. Interviews of local residents using their photographs were also an important part of painting a portrait of the local area and people's history. The community arts project unites climate activists and local residents in their opposition to the building of a third runway at Heathrow.

The cardboard house sculpture, about 1.5 by 2.5 meters, included rubbings from the wall of the Five Bells pub in Harmondsworth, reproductions of photographs of Sipson and Harmondsworth – of Sipson post office and the Tithe Barn at Harmondsworth for example, and visual references to the immigration detention centre at Harmondsworth. The sculpture has been taken to the Camp for Climate action for display, along with a 'gallery tent' donated by a local resident. The sculpture was constructed in the yard between the railings of the church and the Five Bells as its customers looked-on. Other cardboard sculptures were constructed including a church.

Songs of resistance to the building of runway 3, including 'Orchard vs Runway' inspired by the nearby grave of Mr Cox in the church yard, originator of the Cox's Orange Pippin apple variety, were sung through the weekend. On Saturday 'Mandy' an erstwhile flight attendant handed out biscuits, including to the police forward intelligence unit that photographed and repeatedly visited the community arts project. Local women told-off the police officers, saying they were violating peoples' human rights.

Local historian and author Philip Sherwood gave a talk on the history of Heathrow; he said he had first attended a meeting to oppose Third Runway proposals affecting villages North of the Bath Road (the A4) in 1946. He also showed how the proposed runway, said to be a 'short' runway, is actually logically to be extended in time to also destroy part of Harlington and create a five runway airport.

A spokesperson for the Our Place project said:

"The Our Place project has united local residents and art activists in opposition to a third runway. Local people concerned about the loss of their homes to a third runway have common concern with environmentalists. Climate change will also make people homeless as they flee areas made uninhabitable by climate change. So called 'climate refugees' could be as many as one billion people by 2050 according to a Christian Aid report."

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CONTACT: 07972 708 542

EDITORS NOTES

Camp for Climate Action (14-21 August) is a response by climate change activists to the proposal to build a third runway at Heathrow. Peaceful non-violent demonstrations and direct action, as well as workshops and educational events are planned at the site.

PICTURE EDITOR NOTES

Digital photographs of the cardboard house sculpture and other activities being created at the Our Place weekend are available on request.