

Community

February 1994 - UPDATE

“There were moments when walking down Claremont Road in a pair of dungarees with a scaff pole on my shoulder or whatever, and there’s kids and dogs and people playing music, I remember for the first time in my life feeling really at home, and like I really belong here”
 - Anonymous

For many, participating in the No M11 Campaign offered an alternative possibility for the way that a community could operate. Furniture was brought out onto the streets, doors were left open, lofts were knocked through, and tunnels were built to connect houses. These concessions to shared space over private space made Claremont Road, and other M11 outposts, stand out as radical possibilities within the urban environment.

“I think they just got genuinely terrified of the local people joining together; people like Laurie, me, Ros, people you would call staid people, and then the activists... Dolly would take ‘em out a cup of tea. Mum would take ‘em out a cup of tea... it was a community that had suddenly been brought together... We were one big family, linked by blood, it’s as simple as that.”
 - Richard Leighton



Drawing of Claremont Road, from the one-off publication “Claremont Road - Festival of Resistance” c. 1993

Opposition – to the road, to mainstream culture, car culture and capitalism – was central to the campaign. The diversity of the community, the shared adversary, and the concrete work of resisting the eviction of houses proved an empowering and inclusive experience for many.

“I thought ‘this is amazing! It’s beautiful!’ ... It just seemed to tap into a sense of values and power that was missing or forgotten or suppressed within modern, adult, rational existence.”
 - Richard Paton



Gathering on Claremont Road c. 1993

“There was always the sound of woodwork being done somewhere...there were some people whenever they had nothing to do would get on with building something”
 - Paul White



93 Year old Claremont Road resident, Dolly Watson drinking tea with a protester, from the one-off publication “Claremont Road - Festival of Resistance” c. 1993



Veterans from the M11 Link Road campaign on Claremont Road

“I was cooking on Cambridge Park Road, I was going into the kitchen nearly every day ... I took over the communal cooking on the M11 and people liked it so they called me ‘John the Cook’”
 - John Frost

They weren’t like the grownups I knew...when I expressed my opinions about stuff they didn’t argue with me or roll their eyes and they had values and they lived by values
 - Paul White

Map showing key sites of protest along the route of the road



An Eastside Community Heritage exhibition. Visit our website www.hidden-histories.org.uk

