

A Cultural Arts Forum Erewash (CAFE) project, funded by Arts Council England and Erewash Borough Council.

- Bringing local artists into the heart of Long Eaton and Ilkeston to revitalise town centres.
- Filling empty shops with creative workshops, performances, and exhibitions.
- Engaging local residents and visitors in creative activities.

The Challenge

- Identifying suitable premises
- Liaising with agents, landlords, the local authority
- Securing leases and getting the legal stuff right
- Bringing together artists, volunteers and the community

The former Burton's shop on Bath Street Ilkeston was reopened in Summer 2012 as an Arts venue. The project launched with cakes, balloons and drums — **Congratulations to CAFE steering group and rEvive project managers**

QUOTES

" An ingenious way of bringing art to the people
Alan Yentob
(BBC programme 'Imagine')

" Helping local individuals and groups to work with councils in converting less glamorous spaces to good use
The Times



Life Story Writing

your story begins here

Life Story Writing Facilitator, Chrissie Hall, hosted Life Story Writing sessions inside the shop and promotional 'Saturday Street Encounters' outside the shop.

Participants related and created some wonderful stories, we displayed them in shop windows where they've entertained and inspired shoppers over the summer.

- The fearless couple who camped and cycled four thousand miles over Australia.
- The incredible story of the illegitimate child brought up by nuns in a silent order Convent.
- The talented local man who told his life story in 16 intricate, stylised pictures.
- The young lovers from London who 'ran away' together 25 years ago, got as far as Ilkeston, and stopped.
- The woman who escaped from an abusive husband
- Tales about work in pits, pubs, factories and foundries.
- Stories about poverty, bereavement and neglect.
- Lost loves and poignant letters from Second World War soldiers.
- Stories about 'caring' with self sacrifice humour and generosity.
- Heartwarming tales about happy reunions, good fortune, good friends, and the kindness of local people.



Benefits to participants

We enjoyed being able to think, talk then write about our lives. We discovered similarities in experiences, aspirations and values. We also found huge differences, and were surprised. As we came to know and trust each other we read our work out loud. We enjoyed sorting through, reinterpreting and sharing family photographs, press cuttings, letters, trinkets and treasures. We enjoyed conversations and confidences with new people. We talked about events we remembered, which led to us remembering others we'd forgotten. We came to new understandings about past hurts and became more forgiving. We reminisced about what it was like living in Erewash. We shared lunches and treats. We listened to each other. Sometimes we cried, but mostly we laughed, sharing funny stories, making new friends and enjoying ourselves.

Benefits to town

Shoppers, business owners and local people told us they hated neglected buildings and boarded up shops – it made them feel depressed. They said it was exciting seeing the changing window displays. When our shutters went up in the morning people stopped to see what was happening. Shoppers stopped and read the stories in the shop windows, came in and got involved. Local artists, amateur and professional, and those with craft based interests who had not previously been aware of Cultural Arts Forum Erewash, asked about joining the network. The project was good for artists, participants and for Ilkeston. Artists were able to raise their profile and the profile of the arts in Erewash. They enjoyed free marketing opportunities in the town centre. We bought stationery, equipment and materials locally. We visited shops, services, cafes, printers, bakeries, newsagents, the library and the market. As news got around and people read about the project in the local paper interest grew. The rumour spread that the shop was to become a permanent Arts Centre for Erewash. Now wouldn't that be a great idea!



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