Perambulator

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Final report for Deveron Arts, June 2014

Throughout May 2014 I was in residence in Huntly carrying out the 'Perambulator' project. The work of the project, as was laid out in the project proposal, revolved around my life in the town with my two small children, Ernest and Ruby. By attending Mother and Toddler groups with them, and using playgrounds and other child-oriented facilities, I was able to quickly make connections and build links with other parents (predominantly mothers). In this respect the work carried out by DA's Cultural Health Visitor was also vital. By establishing a baby group before I arrived in Huntly the CHV was able to engage a group of Mums in the project, introducing its themes and scope to them.

All of the work that I undertook during the residency is recorded on the project blog at: http://huntlyperambulator.wordpress.com. Every walk that I did in Huntly is recorded via GPS trace on the custom google map at: http://goo.gl/maps/elmll

Throughout the 4 weeks I carried out a number of one to one walks with Mums and their babies (and older children) predominantly using prams and pushchairs, but also using slings and carriers. Additionally I walked with one grandmother and her granddaughter, and with one community health worker. Each of these walks is recorded in note form, with photos and a gps map of our route on the project blog. I asked Mums to share their good pram walking routes - as well as their 'black spots', and these were mapped on a large scale map of the town. This map was also used at a Mother and Toddler group to facilitate discussion around walking with prams.

On Saturday 10th May I organised an event - the Baby Slow Marathon, to tie in with DA's Slow Marathon. I identified the point on the Slow Marathon route as it arrived into Huntly that was still accessible to prams on the Clashmach, and invited parents to join me for a walk to this point, with a picnic tea, timed to coincide with the arrival of the first 'full' marathon walkers as they arrived. We calculated that the adult walkers, plus babies and toddlers in prams, together accumulated the equivalent distance of a full marathon.

I also conducted a series of walks on my own with one of my children in the pram (usually Ruby). I thought of these as 'testing the edges' - each one took a different route out of the town to find the limits of passability for a pram. The first of these was the walk up the Clashmach (testing the route for the baby slow marathon). I went on to walk up Battlehill, up Bahill, and along the river Deveron. A set of photographs was generated from these walks which form a key visual outcome of the project (and are included on the project blog).

The final event of the project was entitled 'Perambulator Parade' and took place on Wednesday 28th May. Although several compromises had to be made in order to deliver the event, it was a success. Originally scheduled for Saturday 31st, it became apparent during the project that a weekend was not good for many of the participants in the project. It was decided to tie in the parade with a sponsored walk organised by one of the local toddler groups, which was great in terms of attracting additional participants, although it required compromises - for example on the route that was walked. Around 30 prams were involved in the final parade, prams were decorated with large flags made during a baby painting workshop session, small flags made
with a group of 16 local toddlers at their messy play club, and pram brooches made with Mums at the BYOB baby group. I also made a banner that was carried during the parade.

The parade ended at the Linden Community Centre (site of much of the baby/toddler activity in the town) with a picnic provided by the Rhynie Woman art collective.

Although a month felt like a very short amount of time to work on this project, I feel that with the support of the DA team a huge amount was achieved. The project blog provided an excellent space to record and reflect on the work on a day-to-day basis, and now provides an extensive account of my time in Huntly. I look forward to working on a publication outcome for the project which it is proposed will consist of a map of Huntly showing good pram walking routes, plus awkward points and things to avoid.

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