

### **“Play Streets” in Paddington 1953 – (on Right Hand Wall)**

While parents today are increasingly fearful about children playing in the street, it is interesting to view two successful ventures in the 1950's.

Designated children's "Play Streets" were provided in deprived city areas lacking parks and open spaces. Groups of streets not used as thoroughfares were periodically closed to traffic so that neighbourhood children could use them as safe spaces to play. Children used their own and borrowed toys, dustbin lids and lampposts for adventure and, while unsupervised, were overlooked by dozens of windows so parents could monitor the area, yet there was remarkably little trouble.

The photographs show activity in streets west of London's Paddington Station in 1953 and were taken using a Pentax Spotmatic camera with Kodak TriX 35mm film.

### **Adventure Playgrounds 1960s – (on Left Hand Wall)**

In the 1950s Lady Allen of Hurtwood was impressed by the observations of fellow Danish landscape architect C.T.Sorensen who noticed that children enjoyed playing on bomb sites where they used metal, wood, bricks and junk for creative play, constructing all manner of interesting items. She fought city planners who looked upon "Steptoe" playgrounds as extremely distasteful and even potentially dangerous. "In the ten years of experiment," she said, "there has not been one serious accident and not one insurance claim". By contrast the supervisor of an "architects dream" playground in Camden claimed a weekly average of one fracture and several cuts and bruises.

Lady Allen encouraged contractors to dump scrap timber, crashed cars, ropes, cables, sand, tyres and all manner of junk on her sites where often a single play leader supervised the site which had at peak times as many as 100 children at play. A toolbox of saws, hammers, nails, paint and all the paraphernalia of construction was available. "The cost of one play leader supervising a hundred children is less than the cost of keeping one child in Borstal" said Lady Allen. Many children almost lived on the sites, and there was a resultant drop in local juvenile crime.

The photographs show activity in Camden and Lambeth Adventure playground sites and were taken in the 1960s using a Rolleiflex 6x6 cm camera with Ilford HP5 film.

### **Chelsea Handicap Adventure 1970 – (on Far Wall - Right)**

For five hundred of London's handicapped children, the sun rose in Chelsea where Lady Allen developed the world's first Adventure playground specifically for them to play freely without over protection. Thirty at a time would arrive by bus to have the free run of a one acre vicarage garden to laugh, cry, get wet, jump, light fires, drop through hatches, slide down on steel wire fitted with pulleys, and get dirty. Allen and her team set out to prove to the municipal authorities that there was a need for more than aimless swinging above a stretch of asphalt.

The photographs were taken in 1970 using an Olympus OM1 camera and Kodak TriX 35mm film.