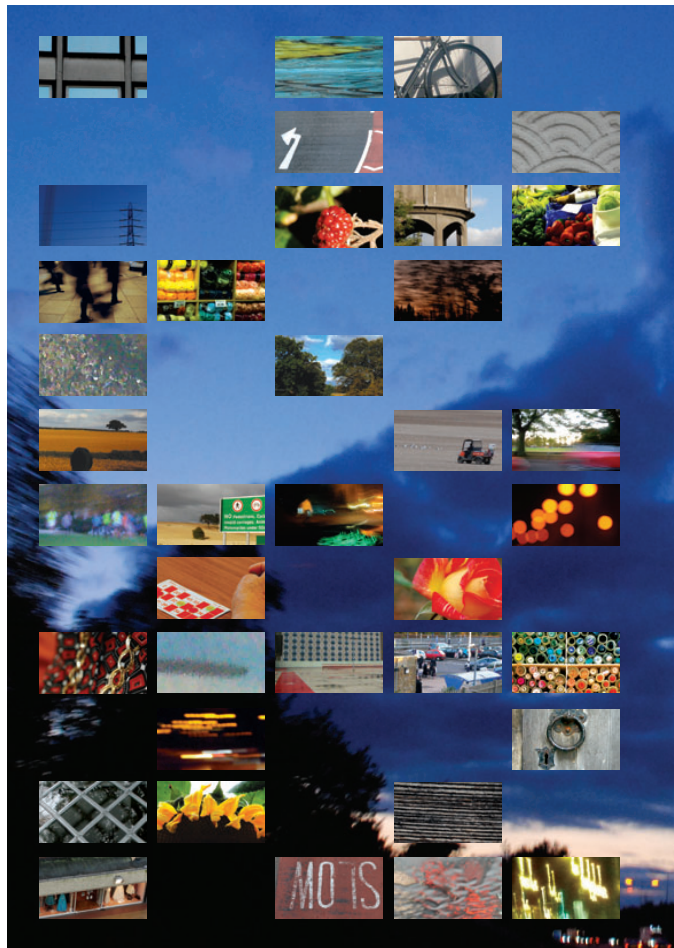


# With Our Ears to the Ground: Listening

Alice Angus and Orlagh Woods



In mid 2009 we (arts organisation Proboscis) travelled around Hertfordshire meeting over 280 people from Watford, Stevenage, North Hertfordshire and Broxbourne. We set out on an autumn day to drive up through Cheshunt, Broxbourne and Hoddesdon, over to Ware and Stevenage then Letchworth, up to Ashwell, down to Pilton, Hitchin across to Watford and back to London. It was a journey through old and new; market towns, new towns, agricultural land and urban centres. In the weeks that followed we put our ears to the ground and got to know Hertfordshire and its communities through the stories of its people. We researched urban centres, towns and villages and travelled through the county in cars, trains, by cycle and on foot, on narrow lanes and motorways.

We talked to people in groups, individually, inside, outside, in pubs, cafes, community centres, libraries, at home and at work. We gathered their opinions and experiences of their communities, what it's like living in their neighbourhoods and what gives them a sense of belonging. These experiences, whilst locally specific, are relevant to Hertfordshire as a whole. We met people between the ages of 5 and 94, from many cultures and backgrounds, from small organisations, schools, community groups, urban centres and rural villages. We captured their views through informal conversations on the street, hosting a stall at the local market and visiting community groups. We ran a creative workshop with a youth group and collected stories through other activities and events. From this research emerged the six themes of Transport, Movement, Listening, Community, Getting involved and publications.

## With Our Ears to the Ground

proboscis



Haring Woods Studio



With Our Ears to the Ground is a Perception Area project facilitated by Green Heart Partnership in collaboration with Hertfordshire County Council. With Our Ears to the Ground was supported by a partnership of representatives from Hertfordshire County Council, Watford Borough Council, North Hertfordshire District Council, Stevenage Borough Council and Broxbourne Council. Green Heart Partnership is an Arts Council England, East sponsored Arts Generation project funded by its partners, the eleven local authorities in Hertfordshire and Arts Council England. East. GHP is a strategic partnership project managed by Haring Woods Studio that aims to achieve growth and capacity across the arts and environment sectors to creatively and collaboratively address government priorities. [www.greenheartpartnership.org](http://www.greenheartpartnership.org)



The photographs in this book are of Hertfordshire during 2009. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution, Noncommercial, No Derivative Works. Designer: Proboscis with Shaanahan Lai. Proboscis team: Alice Angus, Giles Lane, Oragh Woods. Proboscis are an arts organisation based in London [www.proboscis.org.uk](http://www.proboscis.org.uk)

### Credits

With Our Ears to the Ground was created and published by Proboscis 2009. For information on volunteering in Hertfordshire see [www.volunteeringherts.org](http://www.volunteeringherts.org). Tel: Hertfordshire County Council Strategic Partnerships Unit: 01992 556709 <http://withourears-to-the-ground.wordpress.com>

To find out more or share your thoughts about your community see:

Woods Studio for their support.  
Station and Tony Beckwith, Adriana Marques, Nicola Padick and Ali Winstanley of Haring Young Parents To Be Group. We'd also like to thank National Express at Broxbourne Watford Market; Watford Muslim Women's Organisation; Watford Skate Park; Bowes Lyon Stevenage Community Development Officers; Stevenage In-town Training; Kristy Thackur; Hitchin; Suzanne Rider; Sophie Ronsom; Michael Stewiak and the Polish Community; Ethnic Forum; people outside Stevenage Job Centre; Pilton Joycare; The Priory School North Herts Community Development Officers and Wendy Tooke; North Herts Minority Ricky Manning; Hendon Community Bar; North Herts College Supported Learners Group; Hoddesdon Rotary Club; Kimpton Bench Working Party; Leavesden Green Community Cafe; (A Hertfordshire County Council Gypsy site); Kevin Harris; Hertfordshire Music Service; Voluntary Service Broxbourne and East Herts; Chells Manor Youth Club; Douglas Drive Day Centre; Great Ashby Community Centre; residents of Halthide Lane Caravan Park Pappina Albanese, Age Concern Hertfordshire; Broxbourne Station commuters; Council for Hertfordshire between August and November 2009. We would like to thank all those who participated in With Our Ears to the Ground especially to the people of Hertfordshire who were so welcoming and gave their time so generously. Thank you to all on this list, to anyone not included here and to the people we spoke to informally along the way.

### Thanks

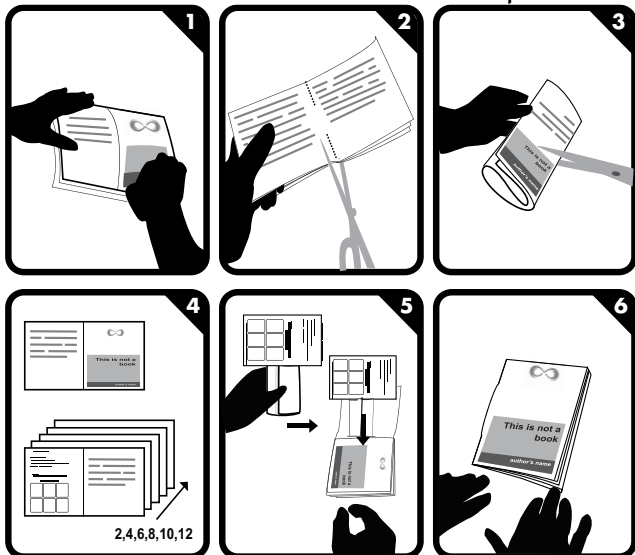
The text in this book is quoted or paraphrased from conversations with people in Hertfordshire between August and November 2009. We would like to thank all those who participated in With Our Ears to the Ground especially to the people of Hertfordshire who were so welcoming and gave their time so generously. Thank you to all on this list, to anyone not included here and to the people we spoke to informally along the way.

2010-02-04

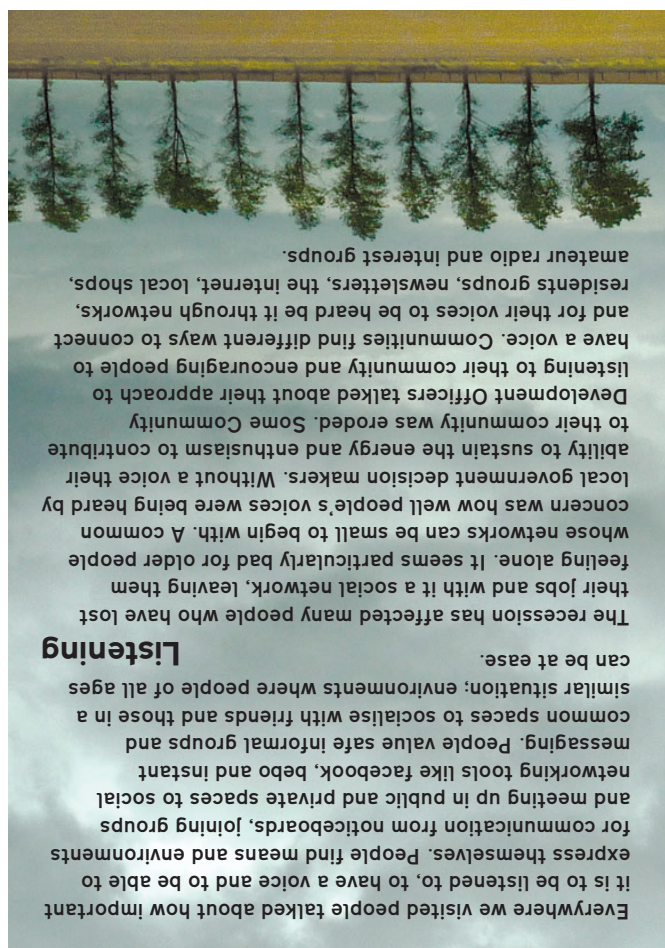
A Proboscis project commissioned by Green Heart Partnership with Hertfordshire County Council to explore peoples ideas about community. Part 1 of 6 eBooks based on the limited edition publication. <http://withourears-to-the-ground.wordpress.com/>

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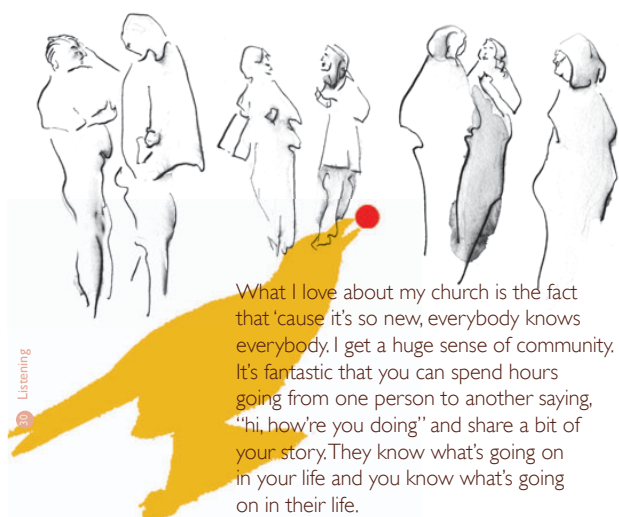
In all this we've taken Proboscis' anarchaeology approach, to informally and creatively excavate layers of meaning and understanding to get beneath the surface of some of Hertfordshire's communities.

Our enduring experience of this journey has been of the generosity of the people, the ambition of their ideas and the determination and commitment they devote to building their communities.

This book is one of 6 that are based on the limited edition publication printed to accompany the project. It draws together the multiple layers of ideas and experiences we found across different communities and it is designed to reflect those ideas and voices.

Alice Angus and Orlagh Woods, Proboscis 2009

With Our Ears to the Ground is a project by arts organisation Proboscis. It was commissioned by Green Heart Partnership with Hertfordshire County Council. It builds upon previous consultations, by Hertfordshire County Council, that used traditional surveys to find out how well people from different backgrounds get on with each other. This publication and the project research will be presented to the community, Council Members and Project Team to inform the Hertfordshire Forward Community Cohesion Strategy, equalities planning across the county, and to support the partners to build stronger communities where people feel valued, get along well together and feel they belong.





There are some people in the village (Pirton) who are very isolated... older people who have been in the village many years don't feel on the same plane as new people, they speak a different language, well it's not a different language but a different outlook. We make people welcome in Kimpton by knocking on their door talking to them. People are accepted for who they are and not what they do.




If communities can have a belief in themselves, it will happen, and our job as development officers is to come alongside and encourage them. You have to make sure that everyone gets heard. Listening is absolutely critical, showing a willingness to move, asking people for solutions.



I didn't get a chance to enrol at the time and they said, "We can't take you again until next September." So really, what can I do until I go to college and get my grades? Be a bum? 'Cause there's no work out there, I've tried every shop in Stevenage.



I mix with non-travellers at work



35 years. We laughed. We were good friends. I was working with Irish and Scottish people in Hitchin for

You lose all trust because as a child the council men would come and they'd be very nice to you. Then the next morning they'd come to throw you off the gypsy site.

You become more aware of what people need here in Leavesden so you become sort of the voice of the residents.

