

Four decades of urban farm are celebrated

Display is marking its anniversary

by Eleanor Busby
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Tucked away behind the North London railway line in the heart of Gospel Oak lies an exhibition displaying images and film footage of local residents from as far back as the 1970s.

Some 40 years ago, the country's first urban farm, Kentish Town City Farm in Cressfield Close, opened its doors to the public.

It is now celebrating its birthday with a one-off exhibition tracing its history and that of the surrounding area in a display put together by a group of volunteers.

They interviewed local residents, who shared their memories for a documentary, and collected photographs from the farm, residents and the London Metropolitan Archives.

The exhibition, funded by the

Heritage Lottery Fund, focuses on the 1970s, looking back on events that had an impact on people living in the area, such as squatters in Gospel Oak.

Cinema

A makeshift cinema has been set up in the farm where old footage from the period can be viewed, including a clip of Prince Charles on a skateboard in Kentish Town.

Indeed, if you have lived in the area over the last 40 years, you may well be featured in the exhibition, either in the modern documentary created by volunteers, the archival photographs or the collage on the 'Do you know these people?' board.

Stockman John Langan, 60, has been working on the farm for three decades and has lived in Kentish Town for nearly all of his life.

"There are people out there



■ John Langan with some of the pictures in the exhibition

Picture: Polly Hancock

whose memories might be jogged by it," he explained. "The importance of this exhibition is memories – people have good memories of that time.

"We often think of that period as being austere, but there was fun then and people really enjoyed doing the activities displayed in the exhibition."

The farm was opened in 1972 by youth charity Inter-Action, which converted the land into a farm, riding school and gardens.

The Inter-Action Centre in Talacre Road was the first home of the National Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens. It helped educate people in farm-

ing, giving them first-hand experience.

"The farm, and projects like it, gave people the chance to run their own affairs and do things that weren't normally available to them in an urban situation, like gardening and being around animals," said Mr Langan.

Kentish Town City Farm continues to offer cookery courses and horse riding. "We are also doing two things that are very popular at the moment – gardening and growing food," said Mr Langan.

■ The free exhibition is open from 9am to 5pm until Thursday next week.

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John Langan

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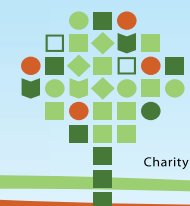
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