

## A visit to Hull

It was a privilege to be invited by Anna and Chris Hembury to come and stay with them in Hull for a few days at the beginning of February, just be alongside them for part of their normal week. They have a wonderful dog called Kobe who keeps them walking morning and evening whatever the weather!

I arrived on a Tuesday and so joined in with their normal weekly community meal. This was in their house on this occasion. It takes the form of “bring and share”, followed by a brief lectio style reflection.

Wednesday, I spent time with Anna from 10 - 3.00 at Orts. Orts is an archaic word meaning scraps. This is an initiative started some years ago for those who would benefit from a safe and creative space. It was probably the highlight of my visit. The Orts space is a small area of a vast building that has been given to an organisation called Hull YFC. It originally belonged to a C/E church which has now closed down. Most of the building is in a dilapidated state but is gradually being improved. It is used for all sorts of youth work and where Chris does his circuit training as it has two large halls, big enough for basketball etc. Anna took me on a tour of the whole building.



I was surprised by the necessary security. Padlocked wrought iron gates into a courtyard area. Then big metal doors to the outside with at least 3 locks which led to a stark lobby area. To the left a room further protected by a roller grill and this led into the room used by Orts and what a contrast! A beautiful space with wall hangings lovingly created and wonderfully displayed. Upstairs a kitchen and lounge area.

The members of Orts came in gradually, each time having to ring the bell and be admitted. Most had sewing projects that they were getting on with amidst a general buzz of conversation.

One of the women who I met is shortly going to be homeless but has bought herself a van which she is busy fitting out. She was making something to hang over the internal door to the toilet area with pockets on each side for storage. So creative! There is a big central table and about half a dozen sewing machines available for anyone to use. Pictures attached. I took one of Anna but not of the other women round the table. We all had lunch together in an





upstairs mezzanine space where a small kitchen and lounge area has been made. All the wall hangings and soft furnishings have been made by Orts members.



Later that afternoon Chris and Anna went out for youth club between 5 and 6.30. They use the same space and again serve food. I bowed out of going to that!

On Thursday they took me into Hull centre. I saw the Humber and the mouth of the Hull river but it was bitterly cold and windy so we didn't linger. We had a welcome coffee in the minster café and then to the fisherman's museum. We talked to an old trawler man who went to sea on a fishing trawler from the age of 15. It was a very dangerous job and so many trawler men lost their lives. As fishing was such an integral part of the livelihood of so many in Hull, the negative impact of the end of any significant fishing in the 1970's is still being felt today.

I was struck by the fact that wherever we went we were met by people who knew Chris and Anna and wanted to greet them and stop for a chat. They are so well known in Hull, a well-loved part of the community. On Friday morning I helped out with making toast and the washing up for a pre school breakfast club. When I told the volunteer I was working with that I was there because my church helps to sponsor Anna and Chris in a small way, he wanted to express his gratitude as he says they are invaluable to the people around.

Please continue to pray for them.

Dorrie Bilson