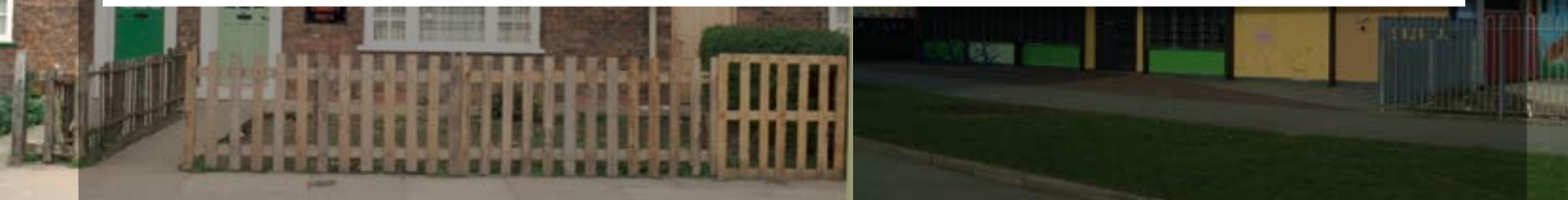




THE HISTORY OF COMMUNITY CENTRES IN HULL

WHAT WE DID, WHY WE DID IT AND
WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT.



REPORT COMMISSIONED BY
CARNEGIE HERITAGE CENTRE
RESEARCHED AND WRITTEN BY ANN HINDLEY



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Fund**

The History of Community Centres in Hull

What we did, why we did it and what we will
do next.

Report commissioned and published by

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Reason for this report

Liz Shepherd came up with the idea to document the growth and development of community centres in Hull and discussed it with Roslyn Abbott, the community development worker who had been employed by the Hull Federation of Community Organisations (HFCO) from 1985 to 1994

It was agreed that Hull had been part of a unique period in the way communities had come together at this particular time in history. Liz and Roslyn felt that lessons could be learnt from the rise and demise of community centres i.e. why had some centres continued and some not.

This proposal was potentially a massive piece of work so, under the umbrella of Carnegie Heritage Centre, a successful bid was made to the Heritage Lottery Fund, to document for posterity the history and development of Hull's community centres.

Consultant Ann Hindley was appointed in April 2023 and set to work looking through all the archived paperwork which had been filed at the Lonsdale Community Centre. The findings from Ann's research are documented in this printed report and there will be more information available on the Carnegie Heritage Centre web site which can be added to as more information comes to light.

Ann Hindley is an independent community development consultant living on the south bank of the Humber. She has worked in the community and voluntary and faith sectors for 46 years as a community development worker, advice worker, consultant, volunteer and trustee. Much of her work is concerned with supporting community buildings in some way. She worked as Regional Co-ordinator for Community Matters for Yorkshire and the Humber from 2007-2010 and as an associate for them until they closed in 2016. Her PhD involved researching women's role in rural community development.



Ann Hindley

Foreword by Charles Woodd

I was delighted, and indeed honoured to be invited to write a Foreword to this important report, for a number of personal and societal reasons. But principally, I believe this telling of the story of Hull's community centres and of the Hull Federation of Community Organisations comes as a very timely reminder of four key themes which I feel we are in serious danger of losing sight of in contemporary Britain.

- The first is a recognition of the key role played by energetic, persistent and passionate local residents, determined to bring their communities together and make life better for themselves, their families and their neighbours.
- The second is the parallel importance of sustained community development support to ensure that those active local residents have access to the tools they need to pursue their objectives – technical information, training, links into the prevailing political structures and so on.
- The third is the primary role that community buildings can and do play, providing a base for local groups and activities, and in doing so bringing communities together for mutual neighbourly support.
- And the fourth is a valuing of collaboration, whether within neighbourhoods, across a city or borough, or at a national level.

The story of Hull's community centres, set out so clearly in these pages, is testament to the role played by many remarkable individuals. It would be invidious for me to single out particular people, except on a personal note, to say that, when I was National Director of Community Matters (formerly the National Federation of Community Organisations) in the 1980s and 1990s, we were privileged to have Liz Shepherd as the Chair of our National Executive Committee for a number of years.

Liz has of course played a seminal role in the development of the community centre movement in Hull, both as a local volunteer activist, but also as a trained community development worker. And I have to say that Hull's story gives eloquent testimony to the vital role played by experienced community development workers, starting with the employment of Andrew Gillespie and his community development team by Hull City Council in 1983. I have to ask where in present day Britain is there a continuing recognition that community development support can be the vital catalyst that ignites a community into action and helps to ensure that collective action is effective in improving the lives of local communities, and so merits sustained investment?

After leaving Community Matters in 2000, I worked on Community Development policy in central Government. One of our campaigns was entitled '*Together We Can: government and people working together to make life better.*' Sadly, like so many good initiatives, the Together We Can campaign died a death as a result of political fluctuations. But the development of

HFCO, the history of collaboration between the Federation and Hull City Council, and the active role that Hull's representatives played in the activities of the Community Matters, all bear witness to the value of collaboration. In the increasingly atomised society of today, it is surely salutary to highlight the ongoing vital importance of collaboration and working together across institutional and geographical boundaries.

In many ways, this excellent report tells a unique story, one of which the people of Hull should be proud. But there is one tension coming through that is common to community buildings across the country, and which Doug Revell is quoted as highlighting in a speech to Hull Federation's AGM in 1992. *'We must ensure that the task of managing a building does not blind us to the responsibilities we have outside the centre... we must be aware of the many problems that exist in the community and be prepared to play our part in finding solutions.'* I remember this being expressed by a stalwart of the Community Association movement in the pithy phrase *'A Community Centre has windows as well as walls.'* This report describes the many ways in which Hull's community organisations have tried to respond to this challenge, particularly as patterns of employment, child care, social relationships, and leisure activity have changed significantly over the decades. The lessons to be drawn from the report are well highlighted at the end.

As society continues to change, political fashions wax and wane, and community centres come and go, I hope people will continue to look to the story of Hull's community centres as a beacon of good practice to light up directions for the future.

Charles Woodd, OBE

Former National Director of Community Matters (1986 – 2000) and Community Development Team Leader, Department for Communities and Local Government (2000 – 2011)

The History of Hull's Community Centres

Introduction – The Context

Halls and parish rooms have developed across England since the 1880s as leisure time of working people increased and people wanted an option to the pub. At the same time, the Settlement movement was developing with Toynbee Hall opening in 1884 in London, as the first Settlement offering accommodation to university students who would then organise educational and recreational activities for “*the local poor*” in meeting rooms and classrooms. Village halls were developing in rural settlements, many as a response to Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 – witnessed by the numbers called the Jubilee Hall, followed by many named after coronations and war memorials. Growth of village halls was often inspired by the Women's Institute. Model villages developed around particular industries, such as Saltaire, New Earswick and Port Sunlight, which had a hall as their central focus and continued in the development of new towns and garden cities. As these halls developed, the National Council for Social Services campaigned for community halls in urban areas, with a model built in the early 40s in Quarry Hill in Leeds. The Ministry of Education published guidelines on building more halls in 1944 and launched a national grant aid scheme lasting until 1955. *A Brief History of Community Centres in England. Historic England, December 2022*

Alongside these developments, were also the Mechanics Institutes emerging in the 1820s and continuing until just before World War I, providing education for the “*working man*” through lending libraries, classrooms, etc, some of which still exist.

The National Federation of Community Associations (later Organisations) was established in the late 1940s to provide support to this wide range of buildings and associations, particularly with the legalities and complexities of running a building safely. In 1997, they commissioned Paul Marriott to carry out a survey of community buildings across England and Wales. His findings were published in *Forgotten Resources* by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. At that time, he found 18,800 community buildings used by about 44 million people each week, and 200,000 volunteers sitting on management committees. There were three key messages coming from his project:

- For many people, community buildings are an invisible and forgotten resource with the scale and range of activity within them being much greater than most people realise.
- Community buildings help to make communities stronger and healthier because they're run by community volunteers, they are largely sustained by their own communities, and they bring people in communities together.
- With appropriate recognition and support, they could do even more to respond flexibly and imaginatively to changing community needs. He advocated the importance of both central government and local authorities better recognising the value of investing in them and the need for greater targeted financial support and appropriate advice and training to enable them to fulfil their potential.

This report documents not only the contribution of community buildings to stronger, healthier communities, but also the various programmes of support put in place by both national government and local authorities, to produce the support they needed and some of the issues being faced by community buildings and their managers today. *(P Marriott. The Role of Community Buildings. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Housing Research 218, July 1997)*

Methodology – Or How We Did It

The idea for this project came from Liz Shepherd. Her name appears throughout this document in the many roles she has taken, both locally and nationally. They could see that community centre provision across Hull was changing and wanted to capture the value played by those institutions before more centres closed and the people who started and ran them died.

The efficient admin staff of Hull Federation of Community Organisations, Wendy Green and Sue Mellors, had carefully kept an archive of photographs, press clippings, minutes of meetings, newsletters, reports, etc, which had been carefully stored in a cupboard at Lonsdale Community Centre. This information has helped to inform some of the accounts of community centres in this publication and to enable the story of the Federation to be told. Much of this archive is now in the process of being digitalised for posterity and future researchers to use. Technology enabled a number of people involved in community centre development and support in the 1980s and beyond to be interviewed by video, some of whom are still in Hull and others have moved away. Face to face interviews were carried out with people involved in the 17 community centres across Hull. Some closed centres have also been involved where extensive material could be found among the archives, or people found who were willing to talk to me. Three community centres have been missed because we could not find anyone with the history and nine centres that have closed were not included. There is scope for following this up at some time in the future.

As this process of looking back was taking place, so Hull Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) was also carrying out some work looking at the future of community centres. They kindly allowed me to attend two of their meetings with community centres which gave me an opportunity to meet people currently involved in community centres and to hear about their plans for the future.

As the research went on, several issues were identified which we wanted to raise with people currently involved. Gill Hughes, Lecturer in Education Studies at the University of Hull, along with Juan Pablo Winter Sepulveda, Policy Fellow with Yorkshire and Humber Policy Engagement and Research Network, kindly offered to carry out two focus groups, one in North Hull Community Centre and one at Balfour Street Community Centre, to which a range of people involved both advising community centres and managing community centres, now and in the past, were invited. This allowed for some of the issues coming out of the research to be raised and discussed with people who have been or still are involved in the management of community centres. The results can be found at the end of this report.



Development of Community Centres in Hull

The development of community centres in Hull must be set within the context of a city that had probably suffered as much damage from war time air raids as any part of the country outside London although fortunately casualties were lower. Damage to property was widespread; out of 91,000 houses, 5,300 were totally destroyed or so damaged that they had to be demolished and more than 3,000 more were seriously damaged. Approximately 2 million square feet of factory space (one eighth of the total) was also lost along with five department stores, twenty-one churches, six cinemas and two theatres. The docks suffered widespread damage including the loss of Riverside Quay.

Reconstruction began in 1950, delayed by Government restrictions on capital investment. The plan was to build housing on ten of the city's twenty-two square miles by 1971. Over 10,000 council houses and nearly 2,000 private houses were built mostly in three neighbourhoods – Longhill, Bilton Grange and Greatfield, each sufficiently large to support local social life and the intention was that they would become real communities with their own facilities. New neighbourhoods were built in clearance areas between Anlaby Road and Hessle Road and east of Bean Street replacing bomb damaged buildings, factories and old housing. This was accompanied by comprehensive redevelopment in the south west of the city between Boothferry Road, Pickering Road and Hessle Road. Population growth had been slowing prior to World War 2, further reduced by evacuation and call up. Although it started to increase post war, people were also moving away for new jobs and into nearby residential areas. (*Planning in Action – Kingston upon Hull, 1960*)



North Hull Community Centre, 37th Avenue, HU6 8AU

The first community centre to open in the city was North Hull in 1947, funded by resources found by the US Air Force who had been based in the area. It was followed at a much later date (around 1974) by Spring Bank Community Action group and Mitchell Community Centre, with Newington Community Care Association and Preston Road Community Action Group soon after. Community Centre development was happening alongside burgeoning voluntary and community action, both in Hull and elsewhere. Hull Council for Voluntary Service was established in October 1980 and was initially based in City Council Offices on Ferensway for a year when they moved to share space at Lonsdale Community Centre (run by Newington

Community Care Association) while their premises on Anlaby Road were being prepared. The impetus for the Hull Federation of Community Organisations came from the then General Secretary of Hull CVS, Kevin Curley. He describes his approach to the work as:

“An impulse to make sure that, as CVS, we were relevant to community groups and disadvantaged neighbourhoods”.

Other organisations developing at the same time were the Citizens Advice Bureau, Hull Independent Housing Advice Centre, (who had their first office in Lonsdale C.C.) Humberside Law Centre, Age Concern and later, Hull Community Transport. This was at a time when central government was making available considerable amounts of money through the Urban Programme and the Inner-City Partnership Programme. A number of community groups were coming together and lobbying their councillors for a building of some sort, be it a council house (Bilton Grange & Gipsyville council estates), an empty old school (Edinburgh Street CA) and a derelict building (Drypool Green Community Association). Preston Road Community Action Group had taken on an old decontamination shelter. Around the mid 1980s, when Hull City Council recognised the need for and benefit of community buildings, the city architects came up with a model design for a community centre and they got funding for two from Urban Programme Funding and two from the Sports Development fund.

North Hull community centre had opened when the US Air Force made a financial donation to the people of North Hull to build a hall with the support of a range of local volunteers giving their time and professional skills. The building of the hall took place under the supervision of Doug Revell, a name that appears many times in the history of Hull's community centres.

“At that stage, there were so many groups in...like whist, dressmaking, adult education, keep fit... We had lunches for the elderly, children's playscheme, bowling...” (Janet Wild)

Meanwhile, most community activity took place in local schools, who were making efforts to let rooms and invite local communities in, until the newly established Humberside County Council took over management of schools in 1974 and substantially increased the costs for community groups to use their premises. Alternative accommodation was needed and, over the next few years, four new community centres were built, two using Urban Programme funding and two with sports development money. At the same time, two other developments were taking place – a number of community associations were being formed to address a range of local issues, such as housing, safe play, et cetera, and all decided they wanted community buildings. These were Drypool Green, Orchard Park, Preston Road, Edinburgh Street and Coltman Area Residents Association.



Kevin Curley

The second development was the establishing of Hull CVS in 1980. Their newly appointed Chief Officer worked to bring together a nucleus of six community groups to form the Community Centres Forum, to apply pressure for funding. Around this time, the city architect came up with a model design for community buildings.

In recognition of this demand and need for community space, a Community Centres Joint Working Party was formed comprising the Community Centres Forum and the City and County Councils. In 1982, the Community Centres Forum was officially inaugurated as Hull Federation of Community Organisations with a membership of six community associations, more of which later.

The first year of work saw the collaborative development of a City Council strategy for the development of community facilities, which had an aim of ultimately providing 30 community centres across the city. In 1983, Andrew Gillespie was appointed as Principal Community Facilities Officer with Hull City Council and he soon developed a team of experienced community workers whose role it was to support both existing and developing community centres. At the same time, Hull City councillors were feeling threatened by the emerging community associations who were often campaigning against the Council. Councillors were not being given a role on community association committees and felt that their power was being eroded. Andrew's post came with a blessing and agreement of all parties and led to a degree of working together between community associations, and many associations got their own building with a lot of support. The number developed from 3 to 16 and they had a target of 30.

A vehicle for moving this forward was the Community Association Liaison Committee (CALC) which brought the Federation and the Hull City Council together. The seriousness with which they viewed community centres was reflected in the fact that it was chaired by the Leader of the Council, before eventually handing over to the Chair of Leisure Services. The Chair and Deputy Chair of Hull City Council both came from a tradition of self-help (Patrick Doyle and Violet Mitchell) and they wanted to support, encourage and enable, and experimentation was encouraged. Andrew Gillespie described it as

“Demonstrating successful partnership working and getting buy-in for a considerable period of time... Hull was in the right place at the right time and was meeting community need for meeting space”.

Tenants' Associations were also starting to be formed about the mid-1980s and they also needed somewhere to meet.

Initially, the council attempted some quick wins with a portacabin on North Bransholme, then a brand new centre, followed by a more substantial portacabin on South Bransholme and the new purpose-built centres in Edinburgh Street, Maurice Rawling, Bilton Grange and Spring Bank. They worked with the African Caribbean Association to develop their own building in Park Street. This was always done in consultation with local people who had an input into design. Support was also given to the Chinese Cultural Centre.

All centres expected that they would have their own worker. Which led to Andrew's team of 5 being zoned so the community officers had responsibility for supporting and developing the associations in their area.

"At the same time, it was quite exciting and challenging, but also scary sometimes. Trust was involved at all levels". (Andrew Gillespie)

Some centres were critical of the lack of independence of the community officers and the local authority was sometimes seen as the gatekeeper of power. It was therefore useful to be able to recognise Hull Federation of Community Organisations in the Hull City Council strategy and to provide funding for a worker, who for many years was Roslyn Abbott.

These developments all happened alongside several housing initiatives, especially in North Hull. Some areas of Hull are, and were very impoverished, and community centres were able to provide answers to some of the issues. As these developments were taking place, so local government reorganisation was taking place. Humberside County Council was abolished in 1996 and Hull became a unitary authority.

Community centres have been both involved in and the subject of local strategic planning during the past 75 years and after the initial commitment to building them across the city. Centres often came about as part of the slum clearance process although there are differing views about whether there were any local strategic approaches involved and whether local people had a real involvement. Later, the Single Regeneration Budget process produced local neighbourhood strategies that included community centre support and development. Hull DOC, a Hull based community development organisation, had a positive aim of being based in and supporting centres. Most recently, Lonsdale Community Centre has seized the initiative, and instigated and produced the first Neighbourhood Plan in Hull challenging and changing some issues that affect local residents thus demonstrating the potential that community centres can have in affecting strategic development.

Hull Community Centre Timeline

- 1949** ONE Community Centre (**North Hull, 37th Avenue**)
- The original 37th Ave Building was built by Spooner Ltd. The Hall wooden floor was built in 1955, the expense being paid 50:50 between the Centre and the Council. The extension was built and paid for by volunteers and was permitted by the Council in 1951.
- 1970s** **Marfleet** Community Centre opened
- 1973** Formation of **Spring Bank Community Action Group**
- Urban Aid grant and conversion of Wellington Lane Building – conversion by Community Industry and Humberside Youth Association/Probation project
- 1974** The newly established Humberside County Council substantially increases costs for use of schools. Users seek alternative accommodation.
- 1978** **Spring Bank Community Action Group** community centre officially opened
- 1979** Three Community Centres in Hull (37th Avenue, Spring Bank, Mitchell). Newington Community Care Assoc set up **Lonsdale Community Centre**.
- 1980** Hull CVS is created and Kevin Curley brings together a nucleus of six community groups to form the Community Centres Forum. All wanted community buildings. (Drypool Green, Orchard Park, Newington, Preston Road C.A., **Edinburgh Street**, Coltman Area Residents).
- Preston Road** Community Action Group moved into an old decontamination building.
- Edinburgh Street C.A. had started life in Somerset Street School.
- 1981** The Community Centres Joint Working Party is formed, involving the Community Centres Forum and the City and County Councils.
- Mitchell C.C.** opened its doors.
- 1981/82** **Greatfield C.A.** moved in to School building
- Orchard Park C.A.** were given a portacabin to use as a Community Centre.
- Early 1980s** Andrew Gillespie and team were appointed in Hull City Council Community Development department.
- Hull City Council architects create a model design for community centres.
- Drypool Green** Community Centre opened.
- 1982** Official inauguration of **HFCO** with a membership of six Community Associations. Doug Revell, a Community Development Worker, based at 37th Avenue, was a founder member and chairperson. He kept in touch with the HFCO until his death in 2002.

- 1983** The City Council adopted its strategy for the development of Community Facilities in consultation with HFCO. (Looking at providing 30 community centres across the city.
- 1983** **Edinburgh Street** C.A. were given use of an old school building
- Coltman Street** CA was formed meeting in a member's house, later took on a community centre which became Maurice Rawling Centre
- South Bransholme** C.A. were given a portacabin to use as a community centre
- Forced closure of Wellington Lane Community Centre (Spring Bank Community Action Group), despite a fight to keep the building open, but **SCAG** continued with its activities.
- 1984** **Beverley Road** Community Association was formed
- Bilton Grange** were given a council house to work from
- North Bransholme** C.C. was handed over.
- 1985** The **Community Association Liaison Committee** (CALC) developed from the Community Centres Forum
- 1985** **HFCO** obtains funding for a part time organiser (Roslyn Abbott). By September staff numbers have increased to three (Keith and Kate).
- First monthly HFCO newsletter commences for community centres
Hull Chinese Cultural Centre officially formed.
- 1986** **HFCO** appoint a full-time community development worker (Terry Taylor) and a part-time clerk-receptionist (Wendy Green). Hull CVS provides three part time Community Programme Workers to work with HFCO for a one-year period (Ian Ward, Ian Wilkinson, Karen Brennan).
- 1986** **HFCO Equipment Pool** is formed and based at Mitchell Community Centre
Edinburgh Street purpose-built Community Centre opened.
Maurice Rawling purpose-built Community Centre opened
- 1987** Training commenced for people running community centres in conjunction with **Hull City Council, CVS** and the **Community Work Training Group**.
North Bransholme purpose-built Community Centre opened
- 1988** **St Andrews C.A.** start to use part of the local school to put on activities
- 1989** Funding received to open purpose built **Bilton Grange** Community Centre.
- St Andrews** (Sutton Park) community centre formed. Housed in rooms made redundant in 1988 when St Andrews C of E Junior School closed.
- Spring Bank** Community Centre opened on the south side of Spring Bank.
- 1990** **Bilton Grange** Community Centre was opened by John Prescott.
- Fundraising activities/events started with a view to help support a future community hall/

hub on **Victoria Dock Village** and a community organisation formed.

Greatfield Community Association was formed.

Drypool Green Community Centre opened.

Court Park C.A. started in the early 1990's

Craven Street Community Centre opened in a Portakabin.

1991 **HFCO Community Link Company** formed
Riverside Community Association moved

1992 Tenth anniversary of HFCO celebrated with Community Link-up Day.

1st Avenue CA took on a building.

Victoria Dock Family Fun Day commenced.

1992 **Afro Caribbean** Association community centre opened

1993 **Liz Shepherd** elected to National Federation of Community Associations, (Community Matters)

1994 Hull City Council cut funding resulting in loss of Community Development Worker and reduced admin support. HFCO once again almost a totally volunteer run organisation.

Hull Chinese Community Centre officially opened.

1995 SRB1 bid – the background/strategy of Hull DOC recognises the under-developed potential of the network of community centres.

Future King Charles III, John Prescott, and Mayor of Hull John Black formally opened **Victoria Dock** Community Centre.

HFCO/Hull City Council agreed a model community centre lease for 28 years.

St Andrews (Sutton Park) Community Centre sets up half term and summer holiday playschemes with help from local authority.

1996 Humberside County Council is abolished. Hull City Council becomes a unitary authority (This date needs checking)

1996 **Hull DOC** bases community workers in community centres, e.g. Orchard Park, Thornton, Greatfield, Bilton Grange and Spring Bank.

Victoria Dock Community Centre opened its doors

1997	15 community centres were regularly taking part in monthly HFCO organised quiz nights East Mount Community Centre opened Acorn Residents Association took on a council house
2000	HFCO is successful in its bid to become part of Community Matters Millennium Volunteer programme and appoints a project co-ordinator for 12 hours a week to work with young volunteers in several community centres. Dave Coates became chair of HFCO. He was then the manager of the Lonsdale Community Centre
2001	Gipsyville Community Centre closes.
2001	Dave Coates appointed as project co-ordinator for Community Matters Volunteer Project
2004	The Millennium Volunteer project continues for another two years with a new project co-ordinator involving additional community centres. Full time Community Centre Support Worker for HFCO appointed in January, funded by Big Lottery (Janine White)
2003	Balfour Street residents Assoc took on a building Hon Lok Senior Association (Chinese older people) formed.
2004	Hull City Council propose radical changes in the way community centres would be supported in the future
2005	HFCO Service Level Agreement with Hull City Council ceased
2006	Hull City Council took over the funding of the HFCO Community Centres Support Worker.
2008	HFCO loses paid staff A Community Association and centre support strategy was produced to cover 2010-2013 by Hull City Council Hull City Council Service Level Agreement given to Community Centres to cover three years.
2009	Orchard Park Community Centre closes/is demolished. Amalgamated with Orchard Park Centre offering very limited community access.
2010	Hull CVS takes over community centre support and Janine White was TUPE'D across from HFCO
2011	First Avenue Community Centre closes. Now used by "On the Edge" Theatre Company.
2013	HFCO ceases to exist although not officially wound up until January 2020. Beverley Road Community Centre closes.

- 2016** **HACA** Community Centre reopens after one year closure.
- Thorpes** Community Centre closed, now a day centre.
- 2018** **St Andrews** (Sutton Park) Community Centre has substantial building work to accommodate a nursery.
- 2020** Groups in the **Bilton Grange** Community Centre began to dip due to COVID – closed from March.
Lonsdale C.C. closed during COVID
 COVID seriously affected **Victoria Dock** Community Centre, some groups to close.
HACA Free Food Bags Project (FFBP) commenced and still continues.
St Andrews (Sutton Park) Community Centre closes but survives.
- 2021** **Bilton Grange** and other Community Centres re-open after COVID
- 2022** **HACA** starts Wednesday drop-ins.
 Thirty years of **Victoria Dock** Family Fun Day.
- 2023** **Mitchell** Community Centre closed
- 2024** **St Andrews** (Sutton Park) Community Centre have many groups using the centre and are very grateful for volunteers past and present.

Hull Federation of Community Organisations (HFCO)

An inaugural meeting was held in September 1982 and chaired by Doug Revell. The idea of the meeting was to replace the Community Centres Forum (CCF) which had been initiated by Hull Council for Voluntary Service (HCVS) with a local Federation to relate directly to city and county councils. There had previously been a joint working party on community centre development comprising representatives of both councils and HCVS. The working party largely concentrated on provision of community buildings and called for the establishment of a federation. The June 1980 meeting of the CCF authorised officers to prepare a draft constitution for a federation, which was actually prepared by Kevin Curley, general secretary of HCVS, which, although not considered *"completely suitable was proposed subject to further amendments"*. The Community Centres Forum was dissolved. At this point the City Council advertised for a Community Facilities Development Officer with the voluntary sector represented by Kevin Curley on the appointment panel.

There also existed at this time, a joint working party on community centre development, led by Councillor Violet Mitchell. The first officers of the Federation were: Doug Revell as Chair, Karen Spooner (Preston Road Action Group (PRAG)) as Vice Chair, Jan Brooker as Treasurer (Springbank), Kevin Curley as Secretary, and Lorraine Adams as Assistant Secretary (Bricknell Avenue Residents Association).



Councillor Violet Mitchell

There were concerns being expressed then about onerous clauses in leases from both councils, and community groups' liability for repair of old buildings.

Doug Revell gave an address at the HFCO AGM ten years on and described how they were *"all involved in a movement that was started by people interested in the environment and the quality of life in their neighbourhoods – people who had sufficient motivation to do something about changing and improving things for the better"*.

He describes the fight people in North Hull had to establish the very first centre in Hull. £5,000 had been given to the city by the US Airforce. Despite the existence of the Government Red Book on community centres, the City Education Authorities had to be persuaded of their value.

"How did they rise above the many frustrations to establish their eventual centres?"

Here counts changes on the City Council, developments in the Newington area inspired by Vernon Openshaw and Liz Shepherd, at Edinburgh Street by George



Rev. Vernon Openshaw

McGee, Janet Wilson and Tony Dearing. At the same time, the Community Council of Humberside was re-establishing the Hull Council for Social Services, now HCVS, with the first Organiser bringing ideas of a federation of community associations from Newcastle. This led to setting up of the Community Centres Forum. He describes the early days as not being easy, as a



Roslyn Abbott



Wendy Green

number of meetings were held which led to a community centre joint working party, later to become Community Association Liaison Committee, part of the Leisure Services committee structure. It was Doug's persistence that enabled the newly formed Hull Federation of Community Organisation (HFCO) to become an independent body and run by its members. HFCO received Urban Programme funding, which enabled the appointment of Roslyn Abbott as not only Hull's first paid Organiser, but probably one of the first paid Organisers of a federation within the National Federation.

Doug relates the efforts put in by various associations to create a community building and the fights and debates that occurred, the hard graft and labour applied by local people, like Ken Rowley at Drypool Green, not to mention the roof issues at Preston Road...

As community centres opened, so the HFCO developed, with Liz Shepherd as Chair, becoming involved with the City Architect on designing the Model Community Centre. At the same time, discussions were taking place among centres about the problems they experienced, particularly with meeting their running costs, recognising the need to learn skills and acquire information. The HFCO provided a forum for pooling and sharing experience and raising issues with the local authority. At the same time, HFCO was gaining a seat on the Executive of the National Federation of Community Organisations, and so Hull community centres also developed a national profile.



Community Matters 2005 Conference

Doug's finishing words were:

"A local community association is and should be the lasting community group in its neighbourhood involved in any discussions of development in their area...".

But he sounded a note of caution:

"We must ensure that the task of managing a building does not blind us to the responsibilities we have outside the centre. The building is a very useful resource...but we must be aware of the many problems that exist in the community and be prepared to play our part in finding solutions".

Roslyn Abbott was appointed as the first part time Development Worker in May 1985 with funding from the City Council, based at Lonsdale Community Centre. Ros describes herself as being:

"Really struck by the passion and commitment of people because of their union background... there was more going on than appeared on the surface...".

That same year, two more workers were appointed, Keith and Kate, followed by Terry Taylor as Community Development Worker in 1986 and Wendy Green as part time clerk and receptionist. During the same time, Hull CVS used the Manpower Services Commission Community Programme to appoint three staff to work for a year – Ian Wood, Ian Wilkinson, and Karen Brennan.

In 1992, the 10th anniversary of the Federation was celebrated with a Community Link-up Day. It had previously taken place in September 1990 when 24 groups were involved in some way in activities ranging from full scale galas to a disco marathon, sports days and sponsored events. The purpose of the event was to promote and publicise HFCO and its then 28 member groups to the general public. It was also seen as a way of involving community association members in something citywide but at a local level. Both the planning and the event itself contributed to a strengthening of links between associations.



Mini Bus for Link Day

The Link Day was held in 1992 to mark the 10th anniversary of HFCO. All organisations put on entertainment in their own centre during the day and then got together at the North Hull Community Centre in the evening. A Link Day song was written and recorded by Keith Wardale and Danny Richardson. Members of the HFCO management committee visited all the centres in a mini bus. The aim was to bring publicity to all the centres to show how they all worked together and supported each other. Entertainment was provided in the evening by Keith and Danny's band. A presentation was also made to Councillor Violet Mitchell to thank her for her support to community centres while in office.

Protest at funding cuts

COMMUNITY centres across Hull are due to be closed on Monday as part of a protest over a council decision to cut funding to voluntary groups.

The closure has been agreed by the Hull Federation of Community Organisations (HFCO) which acts as an umbrella to 30 groups and centres in the city, giving advice, assistance and secretarial services and equipment hire.

As part of £29,000 worth of cuts proposed by the city council, the HFCO stands to lose £17,360.

Members say that will force them into bankruptcy and will have a devastating effect on the HFCO's member organisations.

They are also planning to lobby a meeting of the council's ruling Labour group on Monday night in a bid to persuade councillors to change their minds.

"The one-day strike will be in community centres across Hull," said HFCO vice chairman Mr Roy Marshall.

"It means the centres will be closed for all activities,

including mother and toddler groups, OAP groups, everything.

"We hope our members will ring councillors to lobby them to restore the funding."

As previously reported in the Mail, the cuts are being made from the council's £400,000 grants budget.

Councillors say the work of the HFCO can be absorbed by the local authority which has sufficient offices and experts.

HFCO members hope next Thursday's full council meeting will reverse the decision.

Hull Daily Mail report on protest against funding cuts, 28th January 1994

By 1994, local authority spending cuts started to be felt in the community sector which led to redundancy for the community development worker and reduced admin support. HFCO once again became almost totally a volunteer run association. This was the result of a decision taken by the Finance Committee of Hull City Council in January 1994, not to fund HFCO for the next financial year. As a result of members lobbying their councillors, protesting outside the Guildhall and presenting a petition to the Leader, the Leisure Services Committee picked up the funding for a period of six months, subject to a review by Hull City Council. This was supplemented by an independent review carried out by Carol Hudson, a consultant.

Funding continued to be committed for three months at a time, but ultimately both Roslyn Abbott and Wendy Green were made redundant in November 1994, although resources were later found for Wendy to be given 10 hours a week to staff the office for two mornings as information and admin co-ordinator.

A new phase in HFCO's life began in 2001 when HFCO was successful in its bid to become part of Community Matters' Millennium Volunteers programme and appointed Dave Coates as project co-ordinator, working with young volunteers across several community centres. This project ran for four years. Its aim was to encourage young people to sign up for a few hours' volunteering with their local community centre and in return, they would receive support from the project co-ordinator, a nationally recognised certificate at the end of 100 hours' work and a Millennium Volunteer award at the end of 200 hours. It was based on a report by Community Service Volunteers (The Road to Independence) which produced



Millenium volunteer, Ben Hooper

evidence of the impact of volunteering on young people's employability. The Federation was particularly concerned about lack of opportunities for cross generational activities and an increasing divide between children, young people and adults. The Federation Trustees were also concerned about the need to grow the next generation of volunteers to run community centres.

In 2004, the Federation was successful in an application to the Big Lottery and Janine White was appointed to the full-time community centre support worker post, supported by Sue Mellors.



Sue Mellors

Janine had a background in community centres through her involvement at Preston Road. Her role was to provide individual support to centres:

"It was great because you got to know the workings of a community centre and you got to know what was working and what wasn't working".

She was in post for six years and worked with a wide range of centres that existed at that time, as well as getting involved with promotional events in places like Princes Quay and the Lord Mayor's Parade, where she once dressed up as a mobile phone!



Janine White

After six years of Lottery funding, CVS took over the provision of community centre support and Janine was transferred to them. The Federation continued with Dave Coates, who by now was managing Lonsdale, chairing the Federation. Before she left, Janine secured the Federation some funding from the assets of a centre that was closing. The Federation eventually closed and ceased to exist as a charity in 2012 – as some community centres were closing and people running those that survived were dwindling.

Over the years of its existence, HFCO had over 30 centres in membership, as well as statutory bodies, other voluntary organisations and some individuals. It took part in many social events,



such as the Summer Spectacular at East Park that became the Hull Show, the Lord Mayor's Parade, the Red-Hot Fiesta. Monthly quiz nights, hosted by a different centre each month, were introduced by Danny Richardson, Keith Wardale and Tony Dearing in the mid-1980s and continued well into the new millennium. In 2000 the Federation won the trophy for best float in the Carnival, which, according to FedFax of July of that year, involved a dragon and a smoke machine and involved people from Orchard Park Community Association and Bilton Grange, and the Heart in the Community



Community Matters 2008 Conference

Project. The Red-Hot Fiesta followed a month later and involved a number of members with decorated hats and umbrellas, with photographs of Federation members featured in the Hull Daily Mail. In 1988 the theme of the Lord Mayor's Parade was, fittingly, sport and leisure.

Hull Federation of Community Organisations also played a big role in the National Federation of Community Organisations (or Community Matters as it was better known) with representatives regularly attending the annual conference and members of HFCO representing Hull on the National Executive, Liz Shepherd chairing it at one time. The Federation Newsletter reports five people from Hull's community centres attending the National Conference in 1987, which addressed the theme of reaching out into the community. People were directed to resources to help pay for the costs.

Throughout this time, the Federation brought centres together on a monthly basis at its regular quiz nights, hosted by a different centre each month. FedFax in October 1997 reported up to 15 teams at some venues. This has certainly been one of the most memorable aspects

Fed Fax

Issue 68 Sept 07

Inside this issue:

- Hull Community Investment Fund
- West Hull Community Centre re-opens
- Quality Standard accreditation launched

Working Together

**Building Better Relationships
Making a Difference**

We all have a preferred way of working with other people—Some of us are informal, some are formal, some are assertive, others prefer a laid back approach. This interactive workshop will help you to learn how to adjust the way you work with other people and achieve better results.

Most importantly participants will include BOTH community volunteers and council officers enabling you to get to know each other on a personal level whilst developing better negotiation and interaction skills.

**Hull Federation of
Community Organisations**

TUESDAY
OCTOBER 23RD
10.00AM—3.00PM

**Longhill Community
Centre**
Eastmount Recreation Ctre
Waveney Rd, Longhill

THURSDAY
OCTOBER 25TH
10.00AM—3.00PM



Training Certificates Orchard Park C.C.

of the Federation during interviews at community centres.

FedFax was a monthly newsletter produced by Federation staff from July 1985, providing information on events, training, Federation activities, notices of meetings, quizzes, AGMs, updates on developments locally and on Community Matters centrally, services available to centre committees and updates on legislation. It was originally known as

Federation Networks until November 1993 when it became FedFax and copies are available up until December 2004, becoming more and more professionally produced.

The Federation was also involved in delivering training to people involved in running centres, in recognition of the complex nature of the job. This was acknowledged a number of times during the interviews and was something remembered and valued by a number of people who contributed. It was often provided in partnership with Hull and North Humberside Community Work Training Group or with Hull CVS. As early as Winter 1987, courses were being provided in conjunction with Hull City Council community officers in subjects such as legal requirements, committee skills, fundraising, working with staff and volunteers, with creche facilities and lunch on offer and sometimes travel expenses paid. The training was provided from a range of community centres across the city. As time went on, the training became accredited by the Open College Network and participants were able to claim credits for portfolios submitted, which could ultimately lead to entry to more formal education.

Another early development was the Federation Equipment Pool including a range of soft play equipment. It became based at the Mitchell Community Centre. A range of training resources also became available – both in terms of equipment such as overhead projectors and flipchart stands, and books, videos and training packages.



Andrew Gillespie

Throughout its existence, HFCO had a strong voice within the City Council, championing the cause of community centres and community associations. In 1985, the Community Associations Liaison Committee was formed as a subcommittee of the Leisure Services Committee, which enabled representatives from HFCO and Leisure Services to meet regularly to promote the effective development, operation, and management of community facilities in Hull, and to recommend to Hull City Council means of assisting the development of community associations in Hull. Andrew Gillespie, as Community Facilities Officer, described this as a successful way of working as it came with the blessing of all parties, chaired by the Leader of the City Council, Councillor Patrick Doyle, and supported by the Vice Chair, Councillor Violet Mitchell. It enabled a strategic

approach to take place and demonstrated successful partnership working.

By 1993, questions were starting to be asked about community development and whether that was the role of community associations, or had they become community centre managers. It raised the question of the future role of HFCO – is it about community centres and their development, or is it concerned with all the issues that affect people in their neighbourhoods? The primary objectives of a community association is *“improving the conditions of the life of the said inhabitants”* but managing a community centre takes up money, time, and effort. A paper was produced in December 1993 by Roslyn Abbott, suggesting that HFCO needs to decide about its future direction and development and whether HFCO wishes to continue to play a wider community development role in Hull and how it could do this.

This willingness to keep reviewing its purpose and role continued during its lifetime. An input was made to Leisure Services in 1997 on the future role of community development and meetings were being held with the Director about the future role of Community Officers. A consultancy report was produced by Karen Wood in 2002, in her work with Hull DOC, which described HFCO as a *“quiet organisation”* and explored the possibility of closure, despite just having entered into a Service Level Agreement with Hull City Council, and that was obviously not chosen as HFCO continued for some years more.

In 2004, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Hull City Council published a report proposing some radical changes to the way in which community associations are supported in the future. The panel, set up by the committee, reported that, whilst some Associations and centres were thriving, others were struggling to survive as a result of fragmented support, lack of capacity and a lack of strategic direction from the Council. This led to a Community Centres Development Strategy and a proposal for a Community Centres Development post within the Council and to be responsible for assisting in their development at a strategic level, and one of the Council’s corporate directors becoming responsible for the development of this service area. This report offered a vision for the next ten years, which included Community Associations, each supporting the development of other community-based groups.

At the same time, Hull Federation of Community Organisations was reviewing its own position and future, knowing that their Service Level Agreement with the Council ended in March 2005. The monthly quizzes were more successful than ever, offering not just a cheap night out but also opportunities for forging links and networking. FedFax was still being produced and training delivered, and the Millennium Volunteer project continued on a small scale, but the managing committee was acknowledged as weak and unrepresentative. The result of a strategy planning day was a plan for partnership working with Hull City Council and Community Network and a proposal for a Partnership and Policy Officer. The vision later developed for community centres to become *“hubs”* or *“anchors”* for other community groups, allowing HFCO to work with a wider range of community sector groups without losing its focus. This will enable them to become involved with more strategic issues, such as Community Led Planning.

In November/December 2008, a Hull City Council document was published: Future

Arrangements for Providing Support to Community Associations, based on the Overview and Scrutiny enquiry mentioned above. This had found that

“a huge range of activities are being provided but we are not in a position to establish the true value of these activities, nor indeed that these activities truly meet the needs of the local community”.

It concluded with a recommendation that a more consistent approach be adopted to the way in which the Council worked with each Association, and recommended that all Associations should be required to enter into agreements with Hull City Council, which clearly set out the services to be performed and the payments to be made for those services.



Planning Day

A Community Association and Centre Strategy was produced to cover the period of 2010-13 which aimed to realise a headline vision of *“a well-managed, people-centred service, providing a wide range of high quality activities for local communities and sustainabilities”*. The strategy addressed four priority action strands of consistent management practice, review, rationalisation and reinvestment, asset transfer, and concessionary lettings and maximising lettings.

At that time, HFCO was funded via a Service Level Agreement from Hull City Council, providing an annual income of £44,000 in return for the delivery of a number of outputs which had not been updated for some time. They were aware of a tentative plan to put the service out to tender and had provided considerable input to the above Community Centre Strategy which they felt contained a strong desire to transfer assets to community organisations and some interest in incentivising the development of those organisations but, beyond that, there was no clarity about what it would mean for the Federation and its members, especially in financial terms.

In 2012, support for community centres was transferred to Hull CVS, having gone full circle and HFCO closed.

Reminiscences of the first HFCO development worker – Roslyn Abbott

Returning to Hull in 1985, after working away for many years, I thought that the whole of the population had come to interview when surrounded by the whole HFCO committee at my interview (about 12 people). This beginning just highlighted the commitment, enthusiasm, dedication, vision, and perseverance of volunteers and community activists who managed and ran community organisations at that time. Many groups and neighbourhoods did not have community centres, but they worked at building up their organisations, meeting the needs of their communities, campaigning for promises. Many of them did this on top of jobs or family and home commitments.

This was the pioneering spirit of Hull. It existed then as it does now. You couldn't relinquish that fighting spirit then and never will do, despite adverse conditions. For example, people in groups campaigned for community centres. Bilton Grange were told by the local authority to prove themselves over 5 years and then they would be considered for a centre. For 5 long years a small group of local volunteers ran community activities in a four bedroomed house. When they ran out of room, they hired other venues for activities. When they needed to raise funds, the friendship of other HFCO members came into play to help them. South Bransholme Community Centre used to lend their centre free of charge so the group could hold fundraising events. That's the level of support that constantly shone through between groups of HFCO.

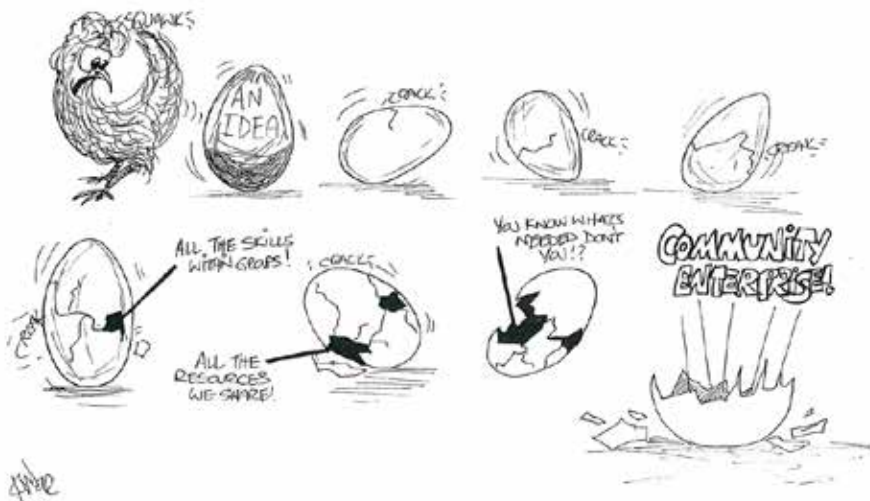
I have so many memories of the HFCO and I could reminisce forever, but I can't finish without remembering the many individuals who I had the honour and privilege of working with through the years. Many people who have been involved in community groups and the HFCO have moved on into other situations, even jobs, and others are no longer with us. But for each of the HFCO members past present, may they be remembered for giving their time, effort and skills because of their belief and trust in people, in wanting to help provide a good life for the citizens of Hull and improve their quality of life. The spirit that is Hull, that stubbornly persistent energy that believes in community, however it may be defined these days, is and was always in the HFCO and its wonderful volunteers and activists. I remember the hours of work many committee members used to work in their centre, for no financial reward, and yet were still expected to keep to 60+ pieces of legislation, just to keep the centres open. I remember volunteers being disheartened at times, because there were no thanks to be had by the centre users, often only complaints. But they didn't give up. Sometimes, it only needed a small thank you from someone who had been grateful for a lunch club when they had been lonely, or a parent and toddler group when their children were playing up, to make all the difficulties worthwhile.

(Taken from HFCO – 1982 to 2002 Commemorative 20th Edition Booklet)

The Community Link Company

A Community Resource Bank was established in 1984 as part of the Artisan Social Enterprise Experiment. This was a project set up and run by David Burnby for HCVS, which inspired HFCO to recruit a consultant, Katie Williams, to explore “a leisure and entertainment agency” on behalf of HFCO, building on work already done to provide a central equipment hire pool for use in fundraising events, carnivals, playschemes, social and educational events. Her work was funded by the National Federation of Community Organisations as part of a National Pilot Project. The Community Link Company (Hull) Limited was set up as a trading arm of HFCO in 1990 to help address the issues caused by reliance on grant aid and the time-consuming nature of fundraising. Its purpose was to develop a community enterprise in Hull. The first directors were: Maureen Macklin, Barbara Barchard, Roslyn Abbott, Robert Hall, David Green, Susan Stewart, Judith Macklin, and later to be joined by Peter Clarke and Karen Spooner.

A number of options were initially explored, including fancy dress hire, a catering service, a safe women’s transport scheme, a creche service and market gardening, with the fancy dress business proving the most feasible area for development. It was identified as a recycling project, making old and unwanted clothes into new fancy dress costumes. It was hoped that this venture would link with future projects, such as a catering service, a special wedding package and a mobile bar.



Community Enterprise 2005

A feasibility study was carried out also in 1990 which found a demand and potential customer base and led to the preparation of a business plan. The business would initially rely on volunteers until sufficient funds were generated to provide employment opportunities. Volunteers were to be provided with training and valuable work experience. A full-time assistant manager and a part time book-keeper and secretary were to be appointed. The work to establish this was based on visits to the Community Enterprise East Midlands Conference where the consultant and one of the directors had the opportunity to meet people with community enterprise experience, exploring, in particular, community childcare and community newspapers.



Community Enterprise Ideas

The documents produced were clear that this exercise was about improving local conditions for people in the community, ultimately pumping profits back into the community to help provide the necessary services required by local people. Although maximum effort was being put into the fancy dress idea, two other future ventures were being considered by the directors: a pre and post school and holiday childcare provision, and a music studio hiring enterprise. The first was pursued with the head of a primary school and got a favourable response. The music studio idea was based on the knowledge that there were many musicians in Hull with great potential but without access to the necessary facilities and equipment to practice.



Community Bar

However, the second feasibility study to take place in 1990 was for a mobile bar/community catering service. It was identified as a project that would create jobs for local people and an area in which people involved in HFCO and community centres had skills and talents. Potential

premises were identified at a snooker club on the Hedon Road. The feasibility study came to the conclusion that they had insufficient financial information to move forwards and then the existing owner withdrew his offer of a lease with a right to buy. It was also felt to be too big a project to take on in the early years of the Link Project. The conclusion was to start off an enterprise on a smaller scale and gradually work up to a larger scheme, building up capital slowly, demonstrating the company's ability to make money. Adopting a bottom-up approach and discovering what skills already existed in local communities in Hull and to consider developing a Leisure and Entertainment Agency in the field of discos, buffets, celebration cakes, bars, live music, photographers, flower arrangers, et cetera. Community Link would operate as an agency bringing all this together for a fee.

At one stage, an approach was made to the Mitchell Centre about installing a bar there and using the centre as a base for community link and storage of entertainment equipment. Approaches were also made to Concept Training about the possibility of them seconding a trainee to co-ordinate the agency.

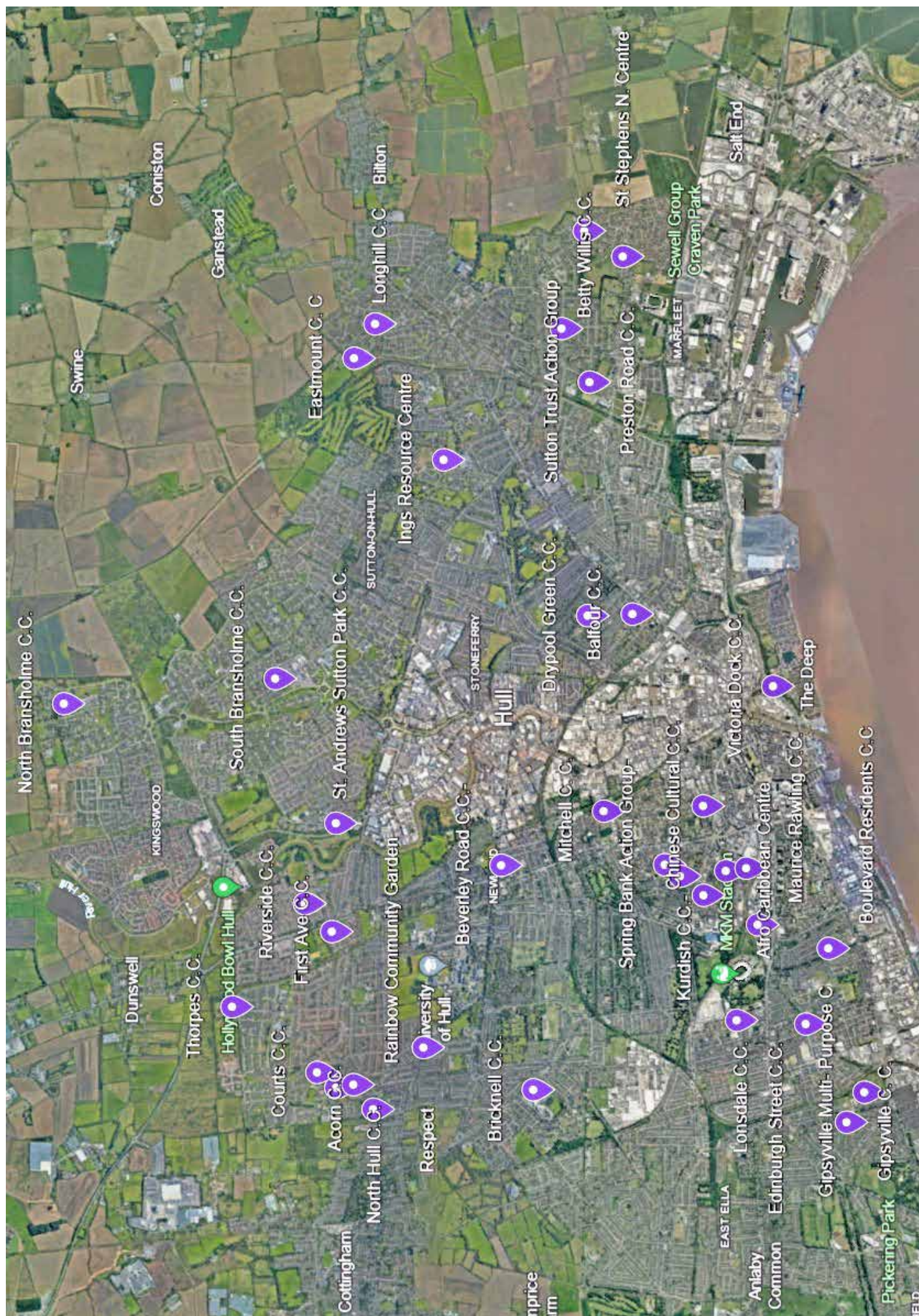
In 1991, Katie Williams was appointed to the post of Community Enterprise Development Worker to develop the work explored in her earlier feasibility studies. However, by May 1991, the company was made dormant and community enterprise work was refocused to explore business opportunities in individual centres with the help of a worker called Victor. The reasons for the closure were set out in a report written by Karen Spooner, Company Secretary, along with some recommendations for how it could have been improved. A choice of Company Limited by Shares was probably not the most appropriate structure, which unnecessarily distanced the project from HFCO and created a drain on energy. Maintaining commercial confidentiality was, perhaps, also unnecessary and created feelings of mistrust. Karen also felt that

“the long term benefits were intangible to people struggling on a day to day basis to finance their activities”.

More expertise on community enterprise would also have been useful, which was lacking within the City Council at that time. A fundamental mistake had been made in assuming that one year was sufficient to develop a viable community enterprise and that at least three years funding would have been preferable. Another major drawback was not having access to capital to give new businesses a start-up in a difficult economic climate as it was then.



Community Transport Lorry



A sample of Hull's community centres: past and present.

What follows is an account of a number of Hull's community centres – most still in existence but some now closed or re-purposed. There are, and were, many more and there is scope for including them in further work. They are included either because there were people willing to be interviewed or because there was considerable archive material available. The centres are all different which reflects the diversity of communities across Hull i.e. some are supported by Hull City Council; some are not. They represent a snapshot of community centre activity across the city, past and present and not a comprehensive coverage.

Bilton Grange	39
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Victoria Dock Village Hall	92

Bilton Grange Community Centre



Bilton Grange Community House, Taylor Avenue

Like many others across Hull, Bilton Grange came about as the result of a group of local residents calling a meeting, in 1984, to discuss what was needed for their area, and forming a steering group with the advice and help of Hull Federation of Community Organisations and other established groups.

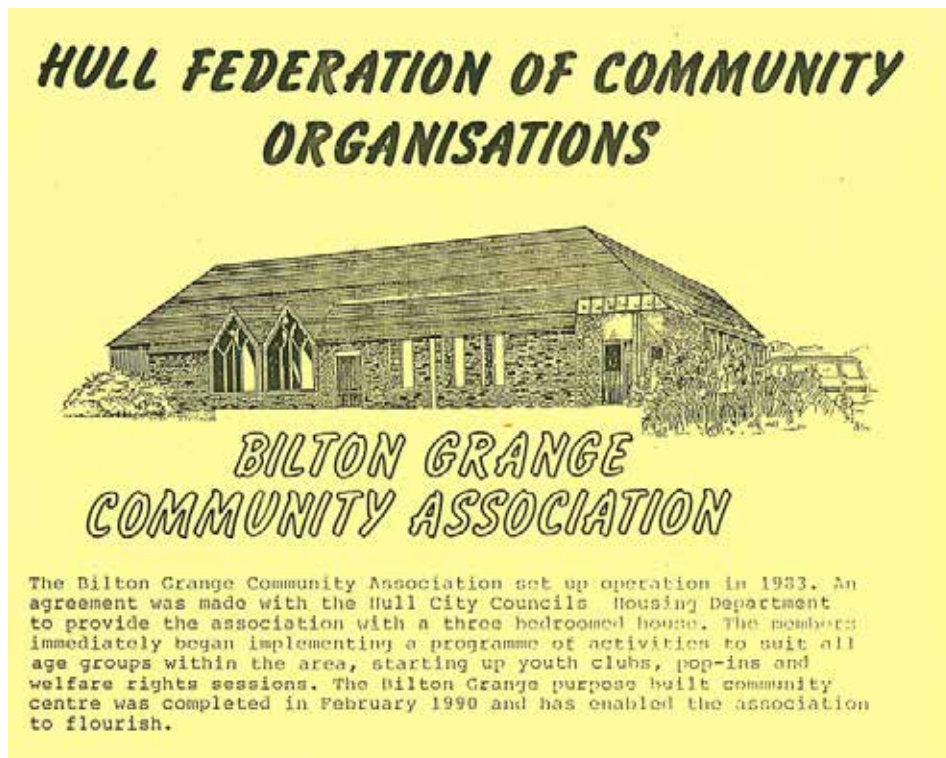
Before they received the keys to a building of any sort, Bilton Grange Community Association was organising trips to the seaside, adult social evenings and pensioners' pop ins at other premises, adult education classes, junior clubs and disco dancing, and in July 1987, organised their first summer carnival at Bilton Grange School attracting high numbers of people despite continual rain.

The initial result of meetings between the steering group and Hull City Centre Leisure Services Committee, was a four bedroomed house to enable them to prove the need and demand for community space. The success in providing activities, coupled with the identified need for more accessible premises, led to the council agreeing to a purpose-built centre and "*the first sod was turned*" in 1989, with development meetings being held in a classroom at the Archbishop Thurston School. On Wednesday, 16 October 1989, the first meeting of the 55+ club was held, with 7 members and 16 committee members present. The group moved into the new building when it opened in March 1990 and membership steadily grew.

"We received the keys in February 1990 to a beautiful purpose-built building that at the time fulfilled all our needs. The next few months were so very busy for everyone with working out a new programme and activities....the last three years have been spent working with all our groups giving them strong roots helping and encouraging them to develop and watching them flourish and grow; we have also taken time out to train our volunteers to run these clubs on our behalf...." (Annual report 1990/91)

This was the first recreation facility on Bilton Grange Estate.

"Until the Association began operating, there wasn't anywhere for children to play safely on the estate. Before the Association opened its doors...many people felt alone and isolated, particularly elderly people and one parent families. A new trust between neighbours, the young and old, is developing as those families' become members of the Association."



Bilton Grange HFCO Write Up

By the time this was written, the Bilton Grange Association had a membership of 300 families and was growing.

At this stage, the 55+ group grew and developed to provide a regular lunch and a minibus was bought to provide transport to the centre. Alongside the 55+ group, was developing a group for people with mental health problems and another for young people with learning disabilities, and a parent and toddler group and youth clubs. Reports produced at that time demonstrate the effort people made to ensure that volunteers were properly trained.

As the NHS and Community Care Act began to have some impact by encouraging a range of provision for older people so, the centre started to develop an outreach function, visiting people in their own homes. Student placements were also provided to local young people studying at Hull College of FE. Aspirations developed for employing a co-ordinator to *"plan, help and empower people, help them to identify the wonderful skills they already possess, then help them pass that learning on to others"*, in the hope of alleviating some of the stress, loneliness and deprivation identified. The trustees were identifying a local demographic trend which would see an increase the number of older people living locally.

The community association was also concerned about the needs of unemployed people in the area, with the figure being 30 per cent and up to 50 per cent in some parts of the area. A very detailed paper was put together to support the setting up of a local advice centre for claimants, working together with the Hull Poverty Alliance and Hull Unemployed Advice Centre.

This was all happening at the same time as extensive housing redevelopment was taking place and proposals were being made for neighbourhood management committees on Old

Bilton Grange.

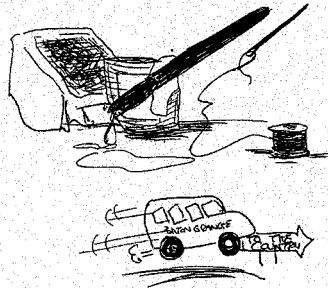
Once the doors of the new centre were opened, a fundraising group started to meet to initiate fundraising ideas, a women's arts and crafts group started, an English Heritage and Countryside club was planning visits to gardens, the country and places of interest, and a discussion group was forming to share experiences of old Hessle Road fishing industry days. A regular newsletter was being circulated.

Monday 2pm - 4 pm Fundraising Group. This group meets to put forward and initiate fundraising ideas.

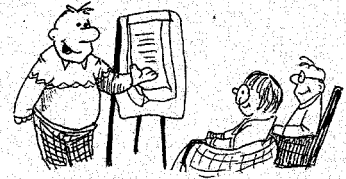
Tuesday 2pm - 4 pm Women's Group. Sessions include arts, crafts, trips etc. and costs 50p per week.

**NEW* Craft Group, due to begin very soon. Bring your own crafts to a friendly group (knitting, crochet, cross stitch, cross stitch etc.)*

English Heritage and Countryside Club. Visits to gardens, the country and places of interest.



We are looking for old pictures/memorabilia of Hessle Road and old Hull for a display planned for the Autumn. If anyone has any information that they are willing to loan us, please contact Brenda Wardale tel: 781863



A discussion group will be starting on Friday 13th September. The first meeting will be sharing experiences and quotations from the old Hessle Road Fishing Industry days. Please join us if you wish to participate or just come and listen.

Bilton Grange Heart of the Community Project

"People who were afraid to come out of their homes are now having the confidence to mix with others....we have seen them develop and grow; the payoff is when you see these people sharing their newly possessed skills with others in their group, helping others to come to terms with their traumas whatever they might be."

A funding application was made to National Lottery Charities Board in 1995 to set up a self-help project for older and disabled people, but there is no indication of success or otherwise. Brenda and John Wood were key people at Bilton Grange in the early years of the 21st century with John running children's and young people's activities. John managed the Mountain Base Project which was a government initiative designed to engage young people aged 13-19 years not in full time education or employment offering them volunteer work in the community and introducing them to new skills and opportunities. It was based around the Mountain Base residential centre in the Lake District which every young person having joined the project had the opportunity to attend free of charge. Project volunteers ran a summer playscheme for between 20 and 30 young people and went on to help as volunteers with the centre's own youth club, among other activities. The work was initially funded by the Neighbourhood Support Fund and then the Community Investment Fund.

Brenda was involved in the Heart of the Community which worked with people who were socially isolated for some reason and was funded by the Community Fund. It provided opportunities for vulnerable and marginalised people to work together on an equal footing. A report produced by Dave Coates on the two projects in 2003 proposed bringing the two projects together in to the Respect project to operate city wide. The report endorsed the work for enabling different generations to mix and work together and promoting integration not only of different age groups but also of people of different abilities and backgrounds. Projects that emerged from this work included a Print Shop with a fully functioning small scale printing press, a Pottery Shop which provided training in using a potter's wheel and

kiln, a Community Garden and Allotment providing produce for the kitchen and community meals and Residentials for all ages and abilities. The weaknesses of the projects, however, lay in the absence of an exit strategy and the absence of any financial contribution from organisations that referred into the project. The report concluded with a recommendation to secure funding for a Community Development Worker to develop support measures for the Community Association's management committee and volunteers.

The centre is now largely used by Creative Day Care, the members of which also attend the considerable garden attached to the building. It is also home to a band called Route 66 which has been in place since 2001, formerly run by John who used to write music for them and includes several Disabled people. They often play in public in places like Bridlington Spa.

Members of Creative Day Care are starting to join the management committee bringing younger people in with ideas for development. A small-scale café is being opened to try and attract local people in. Barbara, a former cleaner and management committee member remembers "*...when I worked here, it was alive, it was buzzing...*" She has a clear recollection of having played a motorbiking fairy on Cinderella and of "*...the floor bouncing up and down with everyone dancing*".

Drypool Green Community Centre



Drypool Green Original Building

Drypool Green Community Centre opened in 1983 in a building that had originally been a sweet warehouse and a stable block belonging to Hull City Council, which was transformed by the efforts of local people who, after the City Council had given it to them, developed it at their own expense. The Chair, at the time of writing, got involved through using his engineering skills to mend a fence on the centre property and was then invited to call the Bingo. Tony took over as Chair of the Management Committee, at Ken's request, when Ken, the previous Chair, died and has been there ever since. At the time of opening, it hosted a youth club, disco dancing, keep fit, mother and toddler group and four dances a week which attracted people from as far as Withernsea, Cottingham and Hornsea.

The original committee was comprised of 17 people. Over time, they have received Lottery funding to replace the roof, but internal repairs have been funded by their own efforts and their particular pride is their sprung dance floor. Their original kitchen was a caravan kitchen, until they persuaded B&Q to sell them one half price, which was fitted by volunteers. In the past people often made donations of up to £100 to the centre and made bequests, and they survived on their own funds.

At one time the Association had a minibus and ran trips to markets across Yorkshire and garden centres, up until COVID measures were put in place.

A high point was reached by Drypool Green when they were presented in January 1989 with a certificate for "Good Mark of the Month" by Mr Campbell of Hull Civic Society. The award was given in recognition of *"continued hard work put in by the team and will no doubt provide a considerable boost to morale"*.

What Drypool Green was particularly noted for was its concerts. Their first concert produced



Drypool Green Concert Party, 2004

by Heather Bell, was described in the Spring 1986 Fed Fax.

“The first half was given by the 14 children of the group in songs, dancing, mime, sketches and puppets, while the second half was by the adult members of the Association. This included a choir singing old time music hall songs, humorous sketches, tap dancing, duets, et cetera... including the audience singing Christmas Carols”.

Until COVID lockdown was introduced, Drypool Green was developing itself very much as a centre for pensioners, although younger people were still very welcome. They had a vibrant art class and many of their pictures adorn the walls of the centre. There was also a keep fit class, a social afternoon and a tea dance, together with a monthly charity dance. *“We were so busy pre COVID that the car park was always full”.*

No-one seemed to want to come back to dancing though, once restrictions were lifted, despite a half page advert in the Hull Daily Mail.

“Pensioners were reluctant to dance after that and probably went to closer venues”.

Current activities include martial arts, bowls, keep fit, a jigsaw group and a number of other enquiries have been received. Funding has just been received from the Police and Crime Commissioner to fence the carpark.

Although the number of trustees is dropping because of old age and poor health, they still keep in touch with former trustees, taking one, aged 94, shopping each week who previously held her own regular tea parties in the centre.

The current trustees recognise that they are being affected by changing times and a changing neighbourhood as people have reacted to COVID and the neighbourhood becomes more multi-cultural and subject to heavy traffic congestion.

Eastmount Community Centre



Longhill Eastmount CC reception area

Longhill Ward Community Centre/Eastmount Community Centre, run by Longhill Ward Community Association, is located in East Hull on the central edge of a housing estate that is predominantly council housing, backing onto parkland. The centre, originally a secondary school, has had a chequered history, with frequent changes of management, vandalism and arson attacks. It was refurbished, after extensive fire damage, in the early twentieth century and the management committee, made up of local residents, remained active during the closure period, undertaking an intensive training programme, largely with Hull Federation of Community Organisations. During this time, they were also supported by a paid worker funded by European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and received input from the area community participation officer.

The association “had originally taken over the building in 1997. Funding was received from Age Concern, Leisure Services, charitable trusts, among others, which allowed the purchase of furniture, equipment and refurb of the kitchen”.

Initial activities included Bingo, the Black Knights teenage evening, charity dances, netball, bowls, archery, ballroom dancing. Thirteen nominations were received for committee membership at the second AGM in 1998.

The centre was closed for two years for refurbishment, which attracted over £1.5 million worth of funding from the ERDF and Football Foundation, to create a new community centre and sports facilities. A Longhill Sports Forum was put in place around various sporting issues and met to discuss issues such as funding for clubs, training and development, and good practice in sport. The redevelopment had strong support from the local ward councillors, John Black, Betty Hewitt and John Hewitt.

There is a strong management committee comprising representatives of groups and local residents who are leading discussions about future developments. They are proud of a centre

which is generating volunteer time which has been calculated as being worth £100,000 per annum and having regular boxing and wrestling events that produce full car parks. Negotiations are ongoing about moving the library into the building. The building is open and staffed 7 days a week from 8am to 12pm with staffing provided on a voluntary basis. There are an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 people through the door weekly.

Margot, now an enthusiastic line dancer, was one of the first Chairs of Trustees and remembers the first steering committee meeting in 1995 at Longhill School, to discuss the opportunity to take on the building, that was once a school and then a leisure centre run by Humberside County Council. The first committee was 16 strong of people who all volunteered to be involved. The range of activities then included sequence dancing, line dancing, kids' clubs, discos, family nights, children's Christmas parties.

"For a few years, we did a Christmas show". She describes "hundreds coming, from local people to dancers from the south bank. A local quartet of men practiced at the centre and regularly put on a free concert. NGW Wrestling both practiced there and put on public shows. Community Sports leadership awards evenings were held there".

The reconstructed building was due to be opened by the Duchess of Kent in 2005, with a fireworks display and activities planned in conjunction with the local church. *"People were there all day"*. Margot tells a story of a young woman stood outside listening to musicians rehearsing and who got invited in and became a volunteer. Today, her husband runs the wrestling events.

Eastmount was an active member of the Federation and took part in training courses, willing to travel to do so. *"...if there was ever a course, we did it..."*. They took an active part in the monthly quizzes. *"We were like just one big family"*.

Whoever was the chair would go regularly to Community Matters conferences and the centre took an active interest in national community centre issues. The Federation helped them to get funding for events and festivals.

She also recalls money coming from the football foundation to improve drainage on the pitch and John Prescott MP coming to *"dig the first sod"*.

Another long-term volunteer is Neil, who initially became involved in a dad's group and got involved in running the karaoke at children's discos. He recalls working with the Community Cop Shop on a project to teach children to ride bikes safely, and then ended up on the committee *"without even trying"* and has since been both Vice Chair and Treasurer. He recalls the ups and downs of the committee, which he no longer belongs to, but acknowledges the strength of the current committee. Everyone wants the community centre to continue because *"this is the only facility left on Longhill"*.

Eastmount Community Centre, as it currently operates, is under threat of enforced change because of expensive repairs needed to the gym. The community centre comprises a large hall, dining room and kitchen, and a gym. They provide space for line dancers, sequence

dancing, karate, parties, meetings, training courses, councillor surgeries, Little Stars Musical Theatre, a weekly over 60s club, Christmas and summer discos, regular boxing and wrestling events, summer holiday activities and advice sessions provided by Hull City Council staff. There is a total of 11 football and rugby teams using the adjacent fields, mostly at weekends, making use of their changing facilities and, more importantly, buying bacon butties and mugs of tea and supplementing the income of the centre. The facilities they can currently offer are curtailed, at the time of writing, by the need for urgent repairs in the gym, which are under negotiation with Hull City Council. The only other facility locally is a previously church run building which is much smaller and closed through lack of funds, with little parking space.



Eastmount (Longhill) dance

Edinburgh Street Community Centre



Edinburgh Street Community Centre

Another centre that came about as a result of resident pressure was Edinburgh Street. A report in the Hull Daily Mail in October 1983 recorded the residents of Edinburgh Street giving their seal of approval to setting up an official community association. The centre was opened in 1986 as one of three built at the same time on the same design. It was built on the site of an old school. When it first opened, money was given to the centre by local fish merchants – *“one of the factories would give big boxes of burgers...but the fishing went....”*

The annual report of 1997-8 lists Edna Bolton as Chair, Danny Mahoney as Vice Chair, Tracey Overend as Secretary and John Shipley as Treasurer. The report records dramatic improvements in the centre and a high level of support from members and volunteers. In addition to the standard activities provided by community centres, such as Bingo, line dancing and carpet bowls, the centre was also the home of Cod End Drama Group, putting on pantos with names like, “Jack and his Stalk from Bean Street” – a fairy story with a Hessle Road flavour. A walking group met monthly at weekends. Job Link, a project of the Hull Taskforce, was open daily in the centre, supporting unemployed residents back into employment or further training. The 1997 report recorded 161 people having gained jobs after visiting the centre at Edinburgh Street.

Another active group was the Hessle Road Historical Society *“aiming to keep alive the spirit and memory of this once proud community by collecting and displaying memorabilia connected with the road”*.

They record contacts with Hessle Roaders from all over the world and visitors, such as the daughter of Big Lil Billocca who became a folk hero by campaigning to improve safety on trawlers, probably saving the lives of untold numbers of British fishermen. Big Lil’s story, along with those of many others who started life in Hessle Road and later achieved fame and notoriety, are recorded on the Spirit of Hessle Road Mural in the main hall of the centre, produced by local artists with local funding, and project managed by George Magee. The centre is worth visiting if just for the mural.



Edinburgh St. Mural

A newsletter of April/May 2009 records a total kitchen refit and installation of a new IT suite and still providing a range of activities under the banner of “**bringing our community together**”, including wrestling training, a Dart School of Excellence “*come and learn to score 180 or more*”, youth clubs for all ages, and training in ESOL, basic skills, IT, digital photography and family history. The cafeteria provided weekly cheap lunches.

In 2002, the management of Edinburgh Street was passed to the Goodwin Resource Centre Association, who were being supported by a user group. The aim was to work with users and volunteers to enable them to develop a new management committee. This was as the result of a decision made in December 2001 to dissolve the community association. It could no longer attract sufficient members to its management committee from the association's area of benefit, following approaches to the Hessle Road network and well attended public meetings. By this time, the centre was being used for a number of Sure Start activities which may have been in jeopardy had the centre closed, which led to the arrangement with Goodwin. Attempts to set up a new committee were obviously successful because Anita Allen is now the Chair of the Trustees, at the time of writing, and has been there for 10 years, having started, like many others, running the bingo. The centre has successfully survived COVID and now hosts a nursery one morning a week, a disabled children's group, karate, Arabic classes, and private party bookings, as well as an afternoon tea provided by Back to Ours, a local theatre group. They have also been asked to take part in the commemoration of the 50-year anniversary of the sinking of the Gaul, in February 2024.

Gipsyville Community Centre



Gipsyville C.C.

PANDA – Pickering and Newington Development Association

Gipsyville was a very industrial area and is named after Gipsy Black Soap that was produced in a local factory, whose owner built the houses for his workers. The soap was used for cleaning steps and ovens. The original Gipsyville was on the east side of Hessle Road, comprising of Edwardian and Victorian houses and the name now also covers the adjacent council estate. The Gipsyville Community Association started out in a council house and provided activities for young people and was run by Bob Howell along with the committee. The association was given a portacabin on 'The Greenway' which was central to the council estate which they served. No one was available to interview from those times so the following comes from the organisation which evolved from those times.

PANDA differs from the other community centres in having paid staff and managing some of the City Council services for them.

"We went from being a small organisation managed by a group of volunteers and supported by Hull City Council, to a voluntary organisation that, at one time, employed 50 staff and managed 5 children's centres and job shops".

They currently manage the local authority library service for the area and offer serviced offices to other charities and voluntary organisations. Colin Turner describes them as, *"having been, over the years, more outreach and offering more community based activities"*.

Community based activities do still happen around the library, which also offers a valuable resource in terms of access to IT and broadband. They also run a community café at the Wheeler Street Rainbow Children's Centre, which is run under their banner. A community hall in the PANDA building is used for a youth club.

Colin Turner describes the centre as more of an action centre than a community centre. There had previously been a community centre in a prefab on Gipsyville, which has been a preschool now for about 15 years, after West Hull Rugby League was rehoused into the former preschool premises on the demolition of the old rugby ground. For a number of years, the centre and preschool worked side by side.

“As community centre volunteers got older and stopped being involved, and friction developed between the two groups...it moved on and became a preschool with opportunities to book a birthday party or do a bingo afternoon or something...but it never really happened, but they are a good organisation...”.

Colin talked about a local community activist called Ken, who had previously been a charge nurse at Hull Royal Infirmary *“he would give up his time for anything...he was a local rabble rouser for the estate... he could organise things. If we had bingo in the main hall and it wasn’t well attended, we would ring Ken up and next week there would be 30 more”*. Another local activist was Gordon Brown who was a great spokesman for the area and a volunteer in lots of different areas – *“he was proud of where he lived...”*.



Ken Elert

Hull Afro Caribbean Association



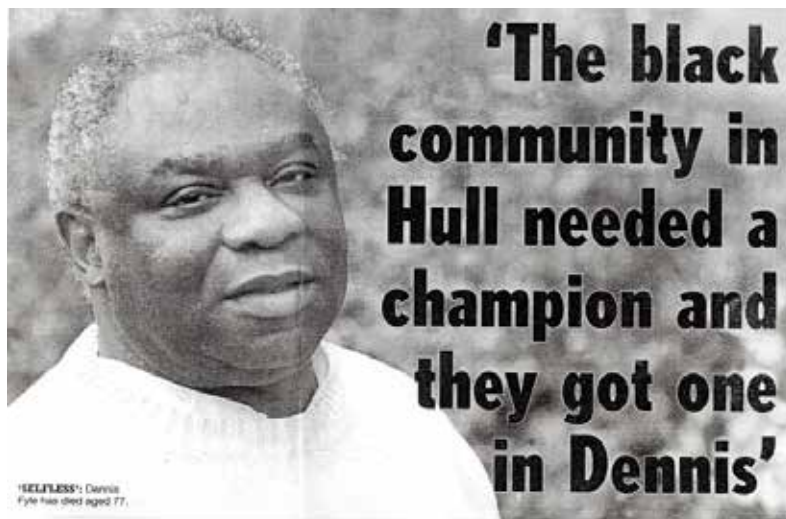
Afro Caribbean Centre, Park Street

When the Hull Afro Caribbean Association (HACA) first started in the early 80s, activities such as dances were held in various premises and fund-raising activities were held in local church halls. They were not just holding activities and raising funds for the association but for premises. The vision was for their own premises within which to hold their own activities for the Afro Caribbean and the wider community. At the same time, HACA became a member of HFCO which had in membership several community associations who had or were seeking premises to become community centres in their neighbourhoods. Hull City Council had a subcommittee of their Leisure Services Committee called the Community Associations Liaison Committee (CALC) to which HFCO elected representatives to promote the views and issues of community associations. Together with City Council officers, a strategy for community centre provision and running costs were also discussed in the CALC.

HACA were active members of HFCO in the 1980s and were also supported by HFCO in obtaining their premises and challenging the neighbourhood-based model adopted by the City Council. Around 1989, Hull Council for Racial Equality was established and HACA, along with the Chinese Cultural Centre and the Bangladeshi group, joined, which increased pressure on the City Council to provide support. This all led to discussions in the Urban Regeneration Sub Committee in early 90s, about the possibility of three cultural centres for the above three groups.

Two key people who were involved at this time were Raz Gouldbourne and Dennis Fyle, who have been described as balancing humour with steadfastness in vocalising community needs

"Dennis was a legend." They were described as having 'worked relentlessly to achieve their goal of premises and activities for HACA, the Afro Caribbeans and the wider community. Dennis has humour in abundance but could also be steadfast and sure in vocalising the community's needs. He supported HACA through many hard years and was a great communicator with people of all backgrounds and levels.



Dennis Fyle, Afro-Caribbean Association

In 1992, the Hull Daily Mail was reporting that HACA had still not got its premises, despite many years of lobbying. However, soon after, the City Council started to discuss in its Urban Regeneration Sub Committee, three cultural centres for the Afro Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Chinese groups. The centre run by Hull African Caribbean Association (HACA) in Park Street, along with the Chinese Cultural Centre, marked a change in practice for Hull City Council. All community centres had, until this opened, been neighbourhood based. Ethnic minorities then made up 2 per cent of Hull's population and Councillor Mima Bell, Chair of the above committee, is quoted as saying.

"Because the community is so small, it is isolated and that's why it's absolutely essential to have a cultural centre". At this time, the African-Caribbean Association was meeting in the Maurice Rawlings Centre in Coltman Street.

Although the name of the centre is Hull Afro-Caribbean Centre, the ethos is that all cultures are welcome: *"If you come here on Fridays to the Food Programme Day, you will see Nigerians, Ghanaians, Syrians... We just have a cross section... Gambians, loads of Cameroonians... There's a Kenyan community here, Nigerians have their community and their Yoruba community, so there are different communities as well".*

Activities have included Latin dancing, keep fit, and an older people's befriending project, yoga and a gym. Current activities include a Wednesday drop-in when hot food is available, a Friday Food Programme, a students' programme, film nights and fire pit nights, coach outings, walking trips and barbecues, celebrations of national events such as International Women's Day and Refugee Week. They also have a special programme for refugees. Health promotion events are held around issues such as Hepatitis B. The centre has extensive grounds at the back, part of which was made into a Peace Garden, opened officially by Alan Johnson MP. HACA plays a full role in Black History Month, giving lectures at Hull University on Black history, sometimes taking part in 5 events in a week.

The organisation is involved in food provision. As well as the Friday Food Programme, Angela Murden was active during COVID collecting food from Fair Shares in a local park and then delivered it to local collection points for people to come and help themselves. They have also worked on a project with local schools called Standing in the Gap, buying large quantities of food from a local supermarket, boxing it up and then delivering to schools. This continues through term time and during the summer holidays to ensure children have sufficient to eat. These are supplemented by toiletries.

Photographs were available of their involvement in Black Lives Matter in 2020, when George Floyd was killed by police in the USA – holding events in the garden and outside Hull Minster.

Hull Chinese Community Centre



Chinese Cultural Society Lion Dance

Hull Chinese Community Centre (the building) provides the base for a range of activities delivered by the Hull Chinese Cultural Centre (HCCC-the organisation), which started in 1985 prompted by the scattered nature of catering businesses run by Chinese people who had migrated to Hull. As a result, social interaction was rare between a group of people who were far from home and friends and who knew and spoke little English, all of which produced high levels of loneliness and isolation. Chinese people had difficulty accessing services and, in addition, experienced considerable levels of racial harassment.

The original organisation met in the Mitchell Centre in Hull on Tuesday evenings to play mahjong. Discussions about having their own dedicated centre had started long before and led to three organisations – Hull Afro-Caribbean Association (HACA), the Hull Chinese Cultural Centre (HCCC) and a Bangladeshi group getting together to apply to Leisure Services for Hull City Council and European funding, which was initially unproductive. Eventually after further work and persuasion led to an offer of a building in Park Street, to be shared by HACA and HCCC. Although working relations between the two organisations were good, the Chinese Cultural Centre really wanted their own building and eventually identified their current premises in Percy Street. This was secured by a combination of Hull City Council funding and member donations, with furniture bought at auction and support given by local business people. Although the third floor had been damaged by fire, they managed with two floors until they could raise funds for restoration. The centre was officially opened in Spring 1994.

The Chinese Community Centre became the home of the Phoenix Chinese Operatic Society which was founded in 1990 above a Chinese supermarket, moving to the centre in 1994, practising twice a week. The society has performed locally, nationally and across Europe, showcasing Chinese operatic traditions and often raising funds for charitable causes. They

were proud to host the 4th European Chinese Operatic Event in August 1997. The Society no longer functions at the centre but the space is now used for Lion dancing, a fascinating activity to watch if not take part in.

Meanwhile, activities were taking place outside the centre. Discussions with the Housemartin Housing Association Ltd to conduct a housing needs survey among Chinese people in Hull informed a funding application for a new development in the city. A site was identified in 1995 and building began in 1996 of 10 3-bedroomed houses and 10 bungalows, plus a communal hub for community meetings and services. The aim was that 80 per cent of the residents should be of Chinese ethnicity, providing a unique living space for Chinese residents in Hull. The project also marked the first ethnic Neighbourhood Watch programme in the UK.

A Chinese school started just before the Hull Chinese Cultural Centre was formed, although the class consisted of only a few children, taught by Hull University Chinese students in a small space in the Students Union. The Chinese were keen for their children to maintain their language and to connect to their cultural roots. When HCCC was fully established the school became part of the organisation. This allowed a space for children. As more children attended, the school then moved to a local primary school with bigger premises and attracted 60 or more children, allowing for a diverse range of classes. By the mid-90s, it



Chinese Cultural Society

was offering combined classes for students preparing for Chinese GCSE and A Level exam. In 1999 a range of extra-curricular activities was added, including Chinese calligraphy, painting, Chinese chess, dancing, Kung Fu and table tennis. During the height of activities, some of the children would compete in calligraphy and dancing with other Chinese Schools up and down the country, winning numerous trophies and medals.

The Hull Chinese Cultural Centre is very much a focus for all these activities, being the base for executive committee meetings and subcommittees, general meetings, training and celebrating various festivals and social events, such as barbecues, et cetera, and as a base for the Lion dancing classes. Its focus is not just internal but also external. Right from the start it was and is involved and works with the public sector and other agencies, including Hull & East Riding Race Equality Council (REC), Hull City Council Ethnic Forum, Community & Voluntary Services (CVS), Communities Network, Developing Our Communities (DOC), etc. Members of the Association gave an input to Ethnic Forum meetings which helped to inform housing policy and practice and ensured that appropriate cultural material was placed in local libraries, among other things. Members are vocal about articulating the needs of Chinese people but are also welcoming to other community groups. When the Vietnamese refugees arrived, they welcomed them with open arms and helped them to integrate into local life.

In 2004, it was realised that older Chinese people were feeling isolated and lonely. They

spent years assisting their children in their catering businesses and helped to bring up the grandchildren. When the grandchildren had flown the nests, they seemed to have lost their purpose in life and needed to be with others in a similar situation. Hon Lok Senior Association was formed to bring the older Chinese people together, offering them activities, English classes, Tai Chi classes and traditional Chinese dancing classes. They enjoy the Tai Chi and traditional dancing classes so much and are doing so well that they have been invited to perform for Age Concern, DOC, HANA and various other organisations.

The centre continues to evolve and thrive with new activities and new members. The future looks positive especially with newer generations taking over from the original ones, bringing fresh energy and ideas to an organisation established almost 40 years ago.

Lonsdale Community Centre



Lonsdale C.C. before extension

Lonsdale Community Centre is one of the earliest of Hull's community centres, having been opened officially in January 1985 by Councillor Violet Mitchell, Chair of Hull City Council's Inner City Programme Committee, and Councillor Vick Chapman, Chair of Humberside County Council. Part of the centre had been open and in use from 1980 but this ceremony marked the completion of the central hall after 5 years of renovation work. Lonsdale is different from other community centres supported by Hull City Council, in that the Trustees own the building. It was formerly a Sunday School room attached to a church that had faced on to Anlaby Road. It was sold by the URC Church to Newington Community Care Association for £22,000, under the guidance of Reverend Vernon Openshaw. Declining church attendances at the URC church had meant that it was threatened with closure and an initial one-year lease was granted to the community association to see how things worked out. A grant was received to buy the building, which included £8,000 to begin basic conversion work. A number of activities were already taking place, on handover in 1983, including Cubs, Scouts and Brownie units and an over 60s club, and these were supplemented by a New to You sale and advice and support from Hull Unemployed Advice Centre. Interestingly, 40 years on, Lonsdale runs a charity shop and weekly jumble sales. Liz Shepherd was the first centre organiser on a voluntary basis and led the work to restore what had been described as "*a run-down church, believed to be infested by dry rot, and seen as virtually useless*".



Liz Shepherd with Prince Charles

Grants totalling nearly £100,000 over a five year period enabled the Newington Community Care Association to transform the building, much of the money coming from Hull City Council's Inner City Programme Committee. By the time of the official opening, activities included keep fit, craft classes, a slimming club, an afternoon tea dance, a toddler group, and councillors' surgeries. At this time about 300 people were using the centre on a regular basis.

Lonsdale Community Centre hosted a Royal visit in March 1986 by the then Prince of Wales, who was visiting the School of Architecture, students from there designed and had oversight of the centre's renovations. This visit made the pages of the Hull Daily Mail and is documented in a display in the stairwell of the community centre.

Lonsdale CC sits in the Newington ward, which was described in the 1978-9 National Dwelling and Housing Survey as being among the four wards with the worst facilities in Hull. It had a high density of population and above average levels of employment in unskilled manual occupations, families with no car, and pensioner households. At this time, it was not included in the inner-city area, which qualified for central government funding, but became included after lobbying the council. It was described by a ward councillor as becoming a "*boiling pot*" unless something was done to help it.

Support with re-developing the disused church was also provided by pupils from Riley High School in 1983, who gained valuable work experience from it. A group of 5th formers helped to dig up the church floor and then returned to offer help during the school holidays. Pete Dawson, a long-standing volunteer and local resident, and previous Chair of the management committee, talked about his long involvement with the centre, starting in 1985 when his former sister-in-law was running the youth club and asked him to help... "*...and within six months I was running it*" and did so for nearly 30 years. He is still a committee member despite long-term health problems and goes in one day a week to help in the office. He joined the committee 40 years ago as a representative of the youth club, when he had to defend the club from those on the committee who would see it closed. He soon became Vice Chair, and later Chair of the centre. When the café developed to provide training places for catering students, Pete became employed to teach them and to enable them to acquire NVQs. He was also involved in setting up the computer room and helping people from a range of backgrounds to learn IT skills. Pete lost a number of years from school through illness and attributes his literacy, numeracy and IT skills to his involvement with Lonsdale.



Pete Dawson

The youth club that first drew Peter into the centre no longer exists as the members grew up and moved on and the local population changed. The early summer play schemes have also come to an end. Pete described the activities they did: roller skating, swimming, arts and

crafts in the park – “*at once stage, we had three coaches full of kids.... Now I see the kids, they’re in their 30s*”. Parents would become involved as volunteers.

Further renovation took place in 2000, funded by the National Lottery Charities Board, to the tune of £200,000. This work included installation of an 8 person lift to improve accessibility, extending the community café area, and refurbishing the kitchen, among other things. Another official opening took place, this time by Alan Johnson MP, who was holding monthly surgeries in the building. At this time, Lonsdale was completely managed by volunteers and offered a multitude of activities including the community café, line dancing, lunch clubs, junior and senior youth groups, art classes, computer workshops, yoga, Arabic dancing, and a course on women’s history run by the University of Hull, called *Her Stories: Women’s ever-increasing achievements*”, which maybe should have highlighted the efforts of the women who set up these centres! And most importantly, the Chameleon Players, more of which later... By this time, Liz Shepherd was Chair of the Trustees.

Over time, Lonsdale has taken part in a number of initiatives, including spray paint art at an event called Aero Solution in 1992, when a faded mural was updated by graffiti artists, and a “writers’ convention” was held bringing together graffiti artists from across the country, to display their talents and DJs performing during the day.

Lonsdale has been the first base of many of Hull’s voluntary organisations, including CVS, CAB, Hull Independent Housing Advice Centre, Age Concern. It was the scene for the handing over of the keys to the first community owned minibus, originally owned by CVS before Community Transport was started by Barry Andrews. Others groups to use the centre include Drug Users Advice, BTCV, Lesbian Line, Credit Union, Hull DOC, PANDA. At one time an Ofsted registered playgroup operated from the centre. It had one of Hull’s first proper computer hubs. A charity shop runs from the premises on the main road, started in the 1990s, now making approximately £100 a day gross.

Another long-standing trustee at Lonsdale is Paul Taylor, the Finance Officer, who started in 1995 when he was found a placement at Lonsdale to help them with their finances while he was a student and then moved into paid work.

The current Centre Manager, Dave Coates, also has a long history with the centre, describing himself as coming to the centre as a punter to “*use the computer and things*” and being a volunteer in the youth club when he was also a local authority youth worker, before moving into a paid role in 2005. Prior to that, he had worked for the Hull



Paul Taylor



Dave Coates

Federation of Community Organisations, running their Millennium Volunteers project funded by the National Federation, encouraging young people to volunteer, during which time he was based in an office at Lonsdale. Dave is familiar with the battles Pete had to keep the youth clubs.

“He used to open the café, get the pool table out, and they had board games and stuff But there was no funding and no money or anything It was popular, we used to get a lot of young people in ”.

He recalled attendances of 70 and later getting funding to pay youth workers and having the run of the centre two nights a week. As that cohort of young people grew up, youth clubs seemed to go out of fashion.

Efforts became focussed on supporting unemployed people and they got Lottery funding to pay a worker to do just that. *“And we very carefully made sure all the people paying rent were contributing to our charitable aims”.*

The future of the centre appears to rely on applying for funding to pay for a Centre Manager for a three-year period. Income raised from room hire and lettings covers 20 hours of the Centre Manager’s time but external funding will be needed to cover the rest. The key to Lonsdale’s success is having been able to generate enough money to keep itself going and owning the freehold of the building. It has two long-standing groups – the art group and Chameleon Players, as well as a range of other activities, including a community fabric group, a stay and play, the Warm Welcome lunch club on a Tuesday, winter jumble sales and dance groups. Offices are let to other organisations. A sewing course runs twice a week and a card making group once a week. Other activities include Latin line dancing, Kung Fu, knit and natter, children’s dance classes, smoking cessation, ESOL, and a Romanian support group. A culture and language project for Lithuanian children happens on a Saturday, as does an Indian cooking club. The kitchen is let out to a professional caterer who also contributes to centre activities.

A group that has been meeting at Lonsdale longer than most and has two representatives on the management committee, is the Chameleon Players. Photographs of their productions and bills advertising them line the walls of the centre. According to Betty, management committee member, someone said: *“Oh, we’ve got this lovely room which will be brilliant for rehearsing – so we came and we’ve been here ever since”.*



Chameleon Players

Over 30 years, they have produced over 100 performances. They use the centre for rehearsals twice, sometimes three times a week, and each performance is attended by a party of Lonsdale staff, volunteers and trustees. Betty describes their time at Lonsdale, right from the beginning when they had to rehearse in a butcher's shop whilst construction work was being carried out.

More recently, Lonsdale has been the lead organisation in the development of the Newington Neighbourhood Plan – the first and, so far, only neighbourhood plan in Hull, which is setting the pace for the rest of the city in terms of co-ordinating community development. The referendum was held in November 2023 when 93.6% of those who voted were in support of Hull City Council using the Neighbourhood Plan to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area. The Plan was written by a Forum of over 50 local people and supported by key local organisations, Planning Consultants and Hull City Council Officers. The Forum consulted widely with the local community and held consultation events at numerous venues over several years.

Despite the challenges posed by COVID, the Forum successfully managed to challenge Boundary Commission proposals to dispense with the Newington Ward and more positively were able to persuade them to include West Park in the plan. Some key findings of the report highlighted the significance of sport, leisure and a culture of artisan small industries to the Newington area, thus defining its unique identity. Culture and public art were identified as an important and powerful means to develop and promote a sense of belonging and community pride, connecting people with the neighbourhood heritage and historic narrative. This work sets a precedent for what other community associations in Hull could achieve.

Julia Jones

Julia arrived in Hull around 1980 when her husband was in the armed forces and she had one child at that time. She got involved in Lonsdale Community Centre where it was apparent that it was a community in itself from toddlers to pensioners, and she found it warm and welcoming with a café and she got involved in the toddler group. She helped to set up and clear away and then got involved in the pre-school playgroup.... and it all developed from there. Eventually she took over as the lead of the playgroup. That brought all sorts of other training opportunities within Lonsdale with it. She met up with older people there who made friends with the families who didn't have parents locally, and they developed a tolerance between the two groups. The community centre had everything. The playgroup provided things for her to develop personally. She found out about management of voluntary groups which then led onto childcare courses and then onto management courses. In her 60s she undertook a degree in Family and Childhood Studies at York University. This kept up her interest in family life.



Julia Jones

She feels that community centres can offer that same sort of support to others. She eventually needed a wage and found out more about a special educational needs provision and that led to teaching with adult education. It opened a number of doors for her and led to her own personal development and opportunities arose through the community centre, for her to develop her own self-esteem and abilities. Before that, she felt she was *"just a mum"*. She now found she could help others in their own self-belief.

She is now retired and a grandmother but has done other voluntary work locally with the City of Culture and is an advocate for volunteering.

She taught Childcare Studies at level 3 for Adult Education for some years and in the 1970s and 1980s taught at the university and then also worked for the Pre-School Learning Alliance which allowed the university to reach other parents. She has worked in Hull and the East Riding, particularly in Driffield and Withernsea, and has met a range of parents and has been able to encourage them to develop them in the same way she has. She was also a development worker for the Pre School-Playgroup Alliance and for the charity Kids, supporting parents.

She did, at one stage, take on being Treasurer for Lonsdale and went on a course to learn book-keeping. *"It certainly did empower me to do other things, which I might not have done without the community centre and without Liz."*

She did, however, find that she preferred people to numbers in the end. It is now 20 years since she has been to Lonsdale, although she used to come to the regular Christmas events before that. She also talked about doing a fun run and playing netball because of the work that she did at Lonsdale, and she got to see people from different walks of life and came across people who saw some really tough times and then came good through being involved in community activity.

Marfleet Community Centre



Marfleet C.C.

Marfleet Community Centre was built in the 1970s – *“it used to be a green hut right at the bottom, before all these bungalows were built. It was built by the Sutton Trust to provide for the needs of residents on their estate”*.

The residents group added on an office and another room. It was run by the residents’ group until about 2017. Pauline became involved, like many, when her children started school and *“I had time on my hands”*. She describes how she got to know a few people and eventually joined the committee and has been both Secretary and Treasurer. During that time, the centre was generally run by a resident couple, until 2017 when Mike and Sue who were running it then, both died soon after each other. They had been in place for about 13 years and were involved in decision-making within the Sutton Trust as well, and later Clarion Housing Association. The Sutton Trust modernised the building in terms of physical access and security measures but most of the improvements to the building have been achieved through local fundraising, local people often doing the building work too.

Activities included Bingo, a pensioners’ club, youth clubs, parent and toddler – *“Most were pretty full nearly every day but slowly everything dropped off bit by bit...as residents got older, they didn’t want to come out...”*.

Since the residents group gave up the tenancy of the centre, it has been occupied by other groups, currently Time Bank which employs Pauline as a caretaker and with whom she volunteers. Time Bank is based in the building and offers a range of activities, including Foodcycle, councillor and police surgeries, private lettings, creative writing workshops, film nights, craft club, yoga, and entertainment. The organisation itself is a mechanism for enabling



Community centre activities

the sharing of skills, knowledge and support across Hull and East Riding and uses a system of reciprocal exchange.

Marfleet Community Centre was involved in the Federation and took part in training on managing a community centre. This gave them a passport to funding which helped pay for the new kitchen. They also attended training on funding which enabled them to apply for money for improvements, all of which they were required to do themselves. Support was also provided to them by Janine White.

COVID has had some impact on the lettings and activities, although Time Bank did a check-in with everyone on Saturday mornings, to ensure all was well. Pauline herself kept in touch with the housing co-ordinator who gave her names of people who needed shopping during that time.

Maurice Rawlings Community Centre



Coltman Street Community Association's first meeting place

The Maurice Rawlings Community Centre was named after a previous ward councillor and is run by the Coltman Area Community Association which was formed in 1983 and was officially constituted in 1986. They describe themselves in their local newsletters of the time as

"a group of residents in the area which want something more often than just a place to live or even a street in which to occupy a house, and we have come together under roof...to infuse this area with life of the kind that Hull was known for during the fishing era. That means meeting socially with friends and neighbours in fun and enjoyment".

This was written at a time when they met in a local members' homes and were given the opportunity of the lease of a house in Coltman Street for use as an office and for meetings and were in negotiation with Hull City Council for a new centre. At that time the association was organising jumble sales at their own premises, concerts at the library theatre, discos at the cricket club, and seaside trips to Cleethorpes. Other premises used for activities included the local primary school and church hall.

In 1986, a purpose-built community centre was completed which allowed the association to expand its activities. *"We are now seeing the Hessle Road area come to life again..."*.

A full programme of activities included: indoor bowls, groups for disabled people, keep fit, Bingo, weight circuit training, youth/drama group, councillor surgeries, football team training, marching band practice, tea dances, Tai Chi, children's discos and talent nights, table tennis, children's dance classes, dressmaking and knitting machine classes planned, as well as regular quizzes, party lettings and car boot sales. An official opening ceremony was held on Saturday 17th January, with Councillor Louis Perlman, Lord Mayor of Hull, with performances from the local Girls' Brigade band, St Matthew's Church choir, children from Chiltern Street School and the keep fit class. A regular newsletter was produced and circulated in the neighbourhood.

They were particularly proud of the Maurice Rawlings Troopers marching band which performed at the Hornsea Carnival and the Lord Mayor's Parade and other carnivals and centres around the city. There was also a successful table tennis team which finished up as runners up in division 8 in 1993 which allowed them to move up a division. Their carpet bowls team were also league players.

They got involved in the Link Day which brought all community centres across the city together, providing an opportunity to visit other community centres. This brought back recollections of being open for three out of the six-week summer holidays for mothers who were working all day... *"And then for the last week, we would have a bus and take them all away for the day"*. Tenth year celebrations were held in 1993 with a Summer Gala and an evening cabaret. A commemorative booklet was produced by then chair, Ray Marshall, promoting the activities of the centre.

The association was involved in the Hull Federation of Community Organisations, attending and hosting monthly quiz nights, and getting support from Janine White. Since the Federation has closed, support was provided by a local neighbourhood co-ordinator, Mark Hogben. The current Chair of Trustees, Hazel Knaggs, took over from Ray and Brenda Marshall. She describes how she got involved through her neighbour, Margaret, who did some volunteer typing for the centre – *"then they asked me to come and join the Bingo, then to help out on Bingo night, then I used to come every Thursday and Monday to help out with the Bingo...then from then on, it just carried on"*.

She recollected that this was one of three centres that got developed on the same design – along with Edinburgh Street and Spring Bank, at the same time as considerable demolition and housing development was taking place.

When Ray, the original Chair, stepped down because of ill health, Hazel became Vice Chair and then Chair two years later, after the death of the following Chair. She described the activities that took place until COVID hit, such as Friday night discos, children's nights on a Tuesday, a refugee group two days a week, which have not returned. A family contact group has started again, as has a weekly stroke group, band practice, a rugby team and Filipino parties. She described the way in which the neighbourhood has changed. It is very close to Hull Royal Infirmary and is largely populated by nursing staff who work shifts. The people using the centre now tend to travel from other parts of the city, although Hazel would argue that's not a new phenomenon, citing the Bonsai group – *"they'd come from all over"*, and the karate group *"but they didn't come from round here"*, and that this was common across community centres: *"they were set up to provide for the local community but in actual fact people were coming from all over..."*.



Ray Marshall

Hazel stressed the support they got from local ward councillors and the value they placed on the centre. They hold surgeries there, as do local police officers.

They are starting to see the building become better used, post COVID, and have an artist interested in running a community project at the centre. A new committee is developing but mostly people from outside the neighbourhood. They have a secretary who came to them for work experience and who stayed and joined the committee and travels from Bransholme to do so. Their aspiration is to raise enough money to pay for a part-time member of staff. A re-launch of the centre is planned for Spring/Summer,2024, including a rebranding of the centre and a volunteer recruitment drive.

Mitchell Community Centre



Mitchell Community Centre, Goodrich Close, Fountain Road

The Mitchell Community Centre was opened in 1952 and closed in 2023. After a temporary closure in 1997, it was re-opened with a new committee. Like many others, it grew from activities of a community association, this time the Kingston Community Association. It is situated on a post war housing estate close to the city centre and built by the local authority. It became known as the Mitchell Centre in honour of local ward councillor, Violet Mitchell, who died in the middle of her Mayoral year in 1989.

The building comprises a main hall, a dedicated martial arts room, four offices, meeting rooms and general offices. Activities included the whole range of martial arts, line dancing, Tai Chi, Bingo, breakfast club for all ages, computer club, art class, activities for children, older people and disabled people. The WEA had an office in the building and provided classes there. A food bank also operated from the premises.



Violet Mitchell

The person responsible for running the Mitchell Centre for many years was Pat Jackson, who also represented them on the Federation, attending regular monthly meetings. She also sat on the committee of Hull DOC which based one of its workers at Mitchell for about two years. Pat recounts how she learnt to use IT through Federation support, with Janine teaching her how to use spreadsheets for the accounts.

The centre closed in 2023 following a change in personnel on the trustee board. Despite Pat providing support to new trustees, they gradually left and Pat had made a decision to retire. Hull City Council officers closed the building and users have relocated. Its future is currently uncertain.

Pat and another trustee worked throughout COVID, keeping in touch with all the centre users to ensure they all returned once lockdown lifted. *"I kept ringing them up; letting them all know what was going on. And as soon as I said we were re-opening again...they were all back; same day they usually came in every week...they were straight there"*.

An interesting observation made by Pat was that, at one time, the centre was largely used by local people... *"and then they suddenly stopped coming. The biggest majority of people that were in the centre now; in the last few years all are coming in cars. The only local people that used to come in here was when I did the Bingo club"*.

North Bransholme Community Association



North Bransholme CC

At the time of opening, the Bransholme estate was the largest complex of local authority housing in Europe, with an approximate population of 31,000, greater than many towns in the Humberside area, but with much more limited facilities. Building started in 1966 and continued until 1983 when the 10,656th local authority house was built. It is on the northernmost boundary of the city and was viewed by other Hull residents in a negative way and as a no-go area

North Bransholme Community Association was opened in 1987 and was hailed as a great success by Councillor Woodford in the first annual report, who welcomed the opportunity to use it as a private place to hold a surgery to meet local people. *"I enjoy the warm welcome that is always afforded me..."*

North Bransholme was another centre campaigned for and then managed by a local community association. The original centre was dismantled to form an extension to the centre at South Bransholme and the interim period was used to hold fundraising events in preparation for a new building. Plans for a new centre were presented to the management committee in May 1986, followed by a process of consultation between committee representatives and members of Hull City Council's Leisure Services Committee. The committee took possession of the new centre on 3rd August 1987, which was followed by a mass survey of 2,400 local households in North Bransholme, asking for ideas for activities and events within the new centre. The official opening took place in November 1988. During its first year of operation, the centre was used for dance classes, keep fit, parent and toddler, rugby training, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, karate, an after-school club, Bingo, majorettes, youth club, and a lunch club. It was being used by Humberside Health Teams for a relaxation and depression group, by the CAB, for a children's health clinic, and by Gingerbread. Sundays saw several faith organisations using it for religious worship and Sunday School. The centre was also used by Bransholme's Voluntary Action Centre's community worker, Liz Shepherd, to open a women's group.

It was described in the annual report of that year by the Parish Priest, Father W. Ryan, as

Bransholme's own satellite in an area that was described as Hull's *"new satellite town"*. *"Recently, this area has received a new 'heart' in the form of a beautiful new modern centre in Lothian Way"*.

It seems much of the credit needs to go to Pete Fenwick, the Chair at that time who, in turn, credited the teamwork of *"a dedicated band of management committee members"*, each one deserving a pat on the back. The 1989 annual report gives details of both Easter and summer playschemes, a range of Christmas events and a trip to Skegness.

Ten years later, the Chair was M Holmes, and then replaced by Danny Richardson on her leaving the area. The annual report celebrated the centre's 10th anniversary with a Grand Night of Entertainment. A scarcity of volunteers is being highlighted in the late 90s. The summer playscheme, funded by Children in Need, was recorded as a highlight. A new activity was the Friendly Friday Club, run by the Community Health NHS Trust, Bransholme's 65+, the Community Mental Health Team and Age Concern, who worked together to develop a lunch club for people over 55 living in North Bransholme. It was opened in recognition of the isolated nature of North Bransholme and proved to be popular.



Danny Richardson

Another new development that year was the renting of the office space to United Residents of Bransholme North, who worked closely with the community association to improve living conditions for people on the estate.

Twelve years on, in 2001, the annual report recorded a new list of committee members so new volunteers must have been found. Danny Richardson had moved from being Secretary to Chair and had been presented with Personality of the Year. A UK online IT suite was about to open to provide all residents with access to the internet. The centre had also become the focal point for a major community consultation carried out by the Bransholme Area Co-ordination Team, gathering ideas from local people about ways in which in the regeneration of North Bransholme could be achieved. This was happening at the same time as a report was being compiled on community centres by several different council departments and HFCO.

The team had also put in place a successful summer programme including a residential summer programme for young people, and a residential weekend, a trip to Alton Towers and arts and music workshops, culminating in a concert sponsored by Cop Shop. 168 young people were recorded as taking part in activities in the centre. Staff and volunteers were provided with accredited training. This was followed up by a reward scheme to encourage young people to become more responsible for their surroundings, with points awarded, which could be translated into priority placing for future events and trips.

URBan', whose strapline was, "Investing in our community's future" worked together with the centre to run events throughout the year, developing a calendar promoting Bransholme Village and supporting plans for the new computer suite. Regular activities taking place at this

time included Bingo, a new group for young girls called Bransholme Breams, parents and tots, karate, and the Wolds Support Group where NHS staff supported people with mental health issues. A nearly new shop had opened to raise funds for the centre. Bransholme's Women's Centre Outreach Project was also using the centre for a range of classes.

North Bransholme Centre is now a boxing club. It would be interesting to know when the centre closed and the boxing club opened.

North Hull Community Centre



North Hull 'Community Centre, 37th Avenue, North Hull Estate

The first centre to be built in North Hull using the rubble from bomb sites came together as a result of a donation of \$25,000 from the American Congress of Industrial Organisations and the American Federation of Labour as thanks for the great welcome that Hull gave to the GIs stationed there during World War Two. The knowledge of the gift gave the active people on the North Hull estate the incentive to press the local authority to use the gift to provide a community centre for the use of local residents. They initially faced opposition from the City Council (in particular from the education officers who felt that difficulties might arise in the management of such a centre) but the objections were overcome and the Council agreed to proceed. It was erected at a cost of £6,200 in under three months on the site of former allotments and was opened on the 10th of June 1949 by the Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States of America.

Volunteers brought their construction, plumbing and other skills together, under the supervision of Doug Revell who later became the Warden of the centre (and eventually the first chair of the Federation of Community Organisations), paid by the local authority. Prior to the centre opening, a tenant's group had existed on the estate. A public meeting was called at 5th Avenue School to form a Steering Committee, chaired by Alderman Schultz, which was described in the Souvenir booklet produced for the 40th anniversary as *'packed with representatives from all existing local organisations and interested local people'*.

Representatives attended from North Hull Tenants' Association, the Co-op Women's Guild, Greenwood Allotments Association, WRVS, Holy Name Church and the St. Vincent de Paul Society all competing for places on the committee. The community association became a registered

charity in 1984.

Current members can list a range of activities that have taken place there over the past 70 plus years. These include: whist drives, dressmaking classes, organised holidays, youth clubs, lunch clubs for older people, keep fit classes, bowling club, groups for people with dementia and with MS, line dancing, singing group, African groups, Asian wedding parties, martial arts, birthday parties, coffee mornings, Slimming World, church groups, carer support... Many of these, of course, are replicated across the city. At one stage, the community centre owned its own minibus which allowed them to organise trips and holidays.

Current committee members describe the way in which the centre has changed from being very much community based, with local people both running and using it, to a building let to people and groups from across Hull. They describe activities held in the past, such as a theatre group involving lots of children, which practiced in the hall but toured *"all the different greens in the area and...all kiddies used to go up there and perform for their neighbours, for anyone who used to come out and see it. And when I was a kiddie, I used to go and watch all the others performing and that actually got me into joining the community..."*

Like many other centres, they ran summer play schemes in the 1980s and 1990s, attracting about 200 children a day, taking two to three busloads to a theme park. They also ran well supported discos on a Saturday night for young people.

They got support from community development workers, Carol Osgerby and Brendon McGowan, who helped with *"knowing where to go and who to go to for different things. You don't appreciate when you come into it how much you're going to get involved"*.

The centre is still thriving, with work recently done to revamp the stage to enable events like pantos to take place, replacing windows to prevent heat loss, and discussing replacement of the very old boiler. The main concern is. *"...We're not bringing the younger ones in...to help and to take over when the older ones go..."*.

The current committee are working to make the centre as easy to run as they possibly can and would be looking for funding to pay someone to run it on a full-time basis, to allow the current trustees to "back off a bit". This happened previously until COVID "messed things up". The current trustees admit that they are all getting older and, *"Need people who are going to be as passionate about it as we are, to join the committee and produce new ideas"*.

The committee has retained a significant number of documents from the early days of the centre, including photographs. One member described how. *"...My mother used to come here to help... well, how to do dressmaking and things like that, so that she could clothe us all...so that we could keep happy and not be underneath her feet whilst she's doing it"*.

Other photographs depict the flower and produce shows – *"the best flowers and the best onions and god knows what...but when that was on, it was a throng, loads and loads of people were in there"*.

A recent post COVID event was a showcase event to give all current users an opportunity to promote what they do, suggested by the leader of the Irish dancing group and attended by martial arts groups, MS group, the Freedom Church, a homemade produce stall, belly dancing, Alzheimer's singing group – some with stalls and some entertaining...It was so well attended that.*Next day we could hardly walk*".

Doug Revell mentioned in his 1992 address to HFCO, the way in which he linked the North Hull Centre to the National Federation of Community Organisations and getting elected onto the National Committee. He saw what was happening in North Hull as an inspiration to others in the city to develop something similar in their neighbourhoods. It was, however, some time later, he saw the development starting to happen, inspired by leaders such as Councillor Violet Mitchell with Liz Shepherd, Vernon Openshaw, George McGee, Janet Wilson and Tony Dearing, establishing their own centres.

Doug Revell

Doug Revell was a founder member of HFCO and stayed in touch with it until his death in 2002 by which time he had been made an honorary member.



Doug Revell

Doug was employed by Hull's first ever community centre at 37th Avenue as 'warden' when it first opened. In his address to the Federation AGM in 1992, he described the fight people in North Hull had to establish a centre....and he was part of that fight. Once the battle was won and the original prefabricated building was in place, Doug is described by the current trustees as having supervised the rest of the building development. *"He was the overall runner of the centre, caretaker, the administrator, everything..."*

An impressive programme of activities was in place at North Hull at that time. At the same time, Doug was also the chair of newly formed Age Concern in Hull, an organisation that was described as underpinning the development of a range of community activities across the city.

When the Federation of Community Organisations was created in 1982, Doug chaired its inaugural meeting in September of that year, when it replaced the Community Centres Forum. He also chaired the joint working party on community centre development led by Violet Mitchell and where he was joined by other well-known figures in the community sector such as Karen Spooner, Jan Brooker, Kevin Curley and Lorraine Adams. It was Doug's persistence that enabled the newly formed HFCO to become an independent body and run by its members. Doug was the first chair of the Federation. His annual report in 1985 described the previous year as being one of further development and consolidation of plans and interests emerging from the ideas of the many people now involved in the quality of community development in the city.

Doug was invited back to address the Federation on its 10th anniversary, where he described the way in which he had linked what was happening in Hull to the National Federation of Community Organisations (Community Matters), by encouraging both the Hull Federation and individual centres to join. Doug himself was elected to the national committee of Community Matters and was therefore able to influence national developments as well as local.

Orchard Park Community Care Association



Community Centre, Orchard Park Road, OPE

Mark Lonsdale, now the manager of Bridlington Spa, became involved in Orchard Park Community Centre at the age of 18, starting, like most people, with a game of Bingo and then helping to sell the books or call, from where he became a member of the committee and then a trustee. Through this, he became involved in the Federation and “a young active member” for Community Matters. *“Community Matters used to co-opt two young people onto their committee to get a young people’s perspective”* and was there about three years and then got involved in Common Purpose.



Ann Wilson

Orchard Park Community Centre started life in an *“unprepossessing, slightly shabby prefab”* (Hull Daily Mail, August 2000) and continued there for 18 years. One of the key people behind Orchard Park’s success was Ann Wilson, as a mother of five and retired home help who had lived on the estate since it was built. Her plan was to move her *“small but welcoming centre”* into a new state of the art building which was designed to help fuel the regeneration of the area. The idea for a new building came from Ann’s attendance at Community Buildings and Working with the Community course in 1998 at the end of which they went to visit members of the School of Architecture which got them interested in a new building. The building fund opened that year with £500, followed by a number of fund-raising events and a lottery application. Edna Livingston, chair, referred in the 1997/8 Annual Report to the development of the new community centre to the north of Ellerburn Avenue.

“The community centre is so busy; it is bursting to capacity and the members desperately need to move to a bigger and better building” (Hull Daily Mail 2004) Activities included a Monday morning and Friday afternoon pensioners’ club, lunches, Bingo, Christmas activities, computer classes, line dancing, keep fit, open drop-in sessions and private bookings. Coach trips were organised to the seaside and Christmas shopping. Regular events such as karaoke,

quizzes and children's Christmas parties were held.

The "*slightly shabby building*" was brightened up in 2000 by a mural painted by pupils at Sir Henry Cooper School, with help from a development worker with Art Link Exchange. It was part of the Art Link HU6 Project aiming to make art accessible to residents in this part of Hull. It was also part of a School Link Project which focussed on improving relations between younger and older members of the community following a series of break-ins. The link with the school had been developed by the Secretary and Treasurer, Ann Wilson, also a volunteer at the school, who went on to receive the Hull City Pioneer Award for Leading in 2000.

Ann was proposed for the award by Carol Osgerby, Community Health Development Worker for HU6, for linking the organisation with many other different parts of the community and other community centres across the city. The award was presented at the UGC Cinema in Kingswood by John Godber and Councillor Pat Doyle, then Leader of Hull City Council. Her desire for better premises led to her joining the Orchard Park Shopping Centre Regeneration Board which was planning a new resource centre, which Ann hoped would house the community centre along with a health centre and council departments. A funding pledge of £300,000 was reported in the Hull Daily Mail in 2005, including £34,000 raised by community centre users. The building was also funded as a Private Finance Initiative.

The centre aimed to forge cross generational links by becoming a Millennium Volunteer Project with Hull Federation of Community Organisations which gave support to Mark, quoted above, in becoming first a trustee, then a Federation trustee, later co-chair and then involvement in the National Federation.

The new building provided Orchard Park Community Care Association with a room of its own which offers a hub for events and activities. However, Orchard Park Community Care Association is no longer registered as a charity.

Mark Lonsdale

Mark is currently General Manager of the Bridlington Spa. He got involved in Orchard Park Community Centre when he was 18, *"...literally just going and playing Bingo and then eventually helping on an evening to sell books or do Bingo calling..."*.

As a result of this involvement, he joined the committee and became Minutes Secretary and then became a Trustee which then led to becoming involved with the Federation. He became a young member of the Federation committee which led to involvement in the National Federation, Community Matters, who used to co-opt two young people to their committee to get a young person's perspective. He remained on the Community Matters board for three years and stepped down when Liz Shepherd recommended him for the Common Purpose Programme which eventually led to work with them.



Mark Lonsdale

During this time, he maintained his involvement with the Federation, chairing the AGM for a few years.

He recalls some difficult moments on the Community Matters Board when, at the age of 19 when he was involved in making decisions about redundancies. He and Liz Shepherd were also involved in appointing the national director of the Millennium Volunteers programme and got funding for a local project in Hull. Mark also shadowed Paul Taylor as Chair of the Federation. *"I can track every part of my career to where I am now, all started off being a volunteer". "...but I think it's absolutely important that communities have the ability to do stuff, whether it's something little or something big, or something strategic. But as long as they're doing something that will grow over time"*.

He thinks that there is now a gap left by the Federation and by Community Matters as the national voice, informing policy at the Home Office. *"Its strength was its collective voice. It provided a conduit between the estates and the City Council, and nationally...I think its weakness was.... we didn't have the long term". "I think community development in the voluntary sector is such a huge opportunity for people to grow in themselves."*

Preston Road Action Group (PRAG)



Preston Road CC

Despite being closed by the time of this research, Preston Road Community Centre is being included because of its interesting history and because it was one of Hull's earlier community centres. The community centre, like many, was one of the results of work done by a local action group – Preston Road Action Group (PRAG). Paul and Karen Spooner moved onto Preston Road Estate in 1980 at a time when renovation work was being carried out to the housing. Along with others, they identified issues around lack of play provision for children and lack of community provision. The existing resident's association organised social activity but showed no interest in pressurising the council for facilities. They worked together with Barry Andrews to establish PRAG, which focussed very much on housing issues and particularly the expectation that people would have to live in situ while their houses were being renovated. *"so it was like living on a building site really. And they weren't receiving compensation, or very little"*. The campaign resulted in offers of a caravan in the garden for people and compensation for the upheaval.

This success led to setting up a youth club in what was then a church and is now Preston Road Women's Centre and a search for a building to set up a separate community centre, when someone identified an old decontamination centre that had been put in place in case of gas attacks during World War II... *"It was one of those buildings that was there but unseen, if you know what I mean..."* (Paul Spooner).

At that time, it was being used as a store by Humberside Fire Brigade and there was resistance on their part to giving it up... *"And of course, we never gave up and we kept on and on until they finally agreed..."*

PRAG received a grant to renovate it and create a community centre and also persuaded the building company renovating the houses to provide a kitchen.

PRAG was then presented with a much bigger campaigning issue when a local child drowned in the drain running through the estate. The group brought in experts from places like Holland and made a video, involving John Prescott and produced a regular newsletter. Improvements were made to reduce the steepness of the banks and put in fishing spots and lifebuoys, although Paul Spooner felt they could have pressed for the drain to be completely covered. PRAG was active in Hull Federation of Community Organisations and developed links with others, such as Spring Bank Action Group, which was also politically active in its own neighbourhood. Paul recalls a major campaign run by the Federation on the issue of cuts to summer playschemes, called the Outer Areas Action Campaign Group, with support from the Hull Daily Mail. This involved taking two busloads of children and parents to Leeds to stage a protest. The area was successful in persuading Humberside County Council to replace the cut government funding.

“So that was a great victory, really for the collective action of community associations around the city... So I think it was a very active period, I think the 80s, for the community sector”.

Involvement in community activity had an impact on the lives of individuals concerned, such as Paul who moved from working on the docks to being a youth worker and then heading Hull DOC and later, Janine White, a local community activist went to work for the Federation.

Paul described the strengths of the Federation as lying in the groups themselves,

“given the variety of people from different backgrounds, bringing their own particular local issues, so I think by bringing that into a citywide organisation, you got the full picture of what was happening in Hull”.

By the late 90s, the Preston Road Community Centre was offering Bingo two nights per week, receiving funding from Hull City Council for a youth club, a group for disabled young people, a craft group, line dancers, baby clinic, CAB, dog microchipping. This was all based on a questionnaire delivered to every house and followed up with a visit two days later to find out what people wanted.

One thing they discovered was that the local meals on wheels was closing. Janine White described how she opened a kitchen in the centre and starting with a simple café, moved on to a delivery service to houses on Preston Road Estate free of charge, with a delivery charge made to houses off Preston Road, developing a service where meals were dished up in people's houses, where they lacked mobility. The service was so successful that it produced a financial surplus which financed a range of activities in the centre. The meals were delivered by volunteers who often provided much more than a meal, but developed other informal support as well. This later developed to provide work experience for people seeking work, which provided a recruiting exercise for future volunteers. The kitchen also got used to deliver cookery courses.

Preston Road, along with Lonsdale, had the highest footfall of all the community centres at this time, averaging 700-800 people per week through the doors. At one stage, they secured funding from Preston Road New Deal for Communities (NDC) for a paid worker for 5 years, followed by a further 4 years paid for from surpluses made by the centre. Marion continued as a volunteer when funding was no longer available.

A number of services were lost when the NDC opened the Freedom Centre very close by, as many moved into it. Despite being offered space in the new building, the Trustees decided to remain where they were as it offered greater flexibility for community events and activities. They also wanted to be able to continue their own catering service. Despite Janine White being involved in both organisations, there was no room for negotiations to allow PRAG to operate in the new building in a way that would meet local community needs and Preston Road Community Centre stayed where it was and thrived, working together with the local community house in Craven Street and with community wardens.

The centre continued for about 15 years after this but as a result of ill health of key people, and shortage of trustees, a decision was made to close. The meals on wheels service was taken over by another company. Each group was given a Christmas party, the staff were treated to a meal and panto, the bills were paid and furniture distributed to those who needed it.

"We went out with a bang in 2016. The building was taken over by a local contractor who allowed them to continue the café and the market for a further year. "I loved PRCC – it was my baby, and I just did everything I could" (Janine White)

Barry Andrews

Barry has a long history with community centres in Hull. His initial involvement was with the newly formed Preston Road Action Group with Paul and Karen Spooner and Terry Taylor, after he found himself out of work as a lorry driver. He spent his spare time attending trade union courses around chairing skills, committee skills and getting people involved. Through Paul and Karen, Barry became involved with local campaigning and then working for a place to meet, which then led to involvement in the Federation. Barry was heavily involved in the Federation and talks about band concerts, summer carnivals, annual pub crawls, quizzes. *"One night, a knock on the door and a chap with a beard asked if I was interested in getting involved in starting a community centre group on Preston Road where we lived...and I had never heard of a community centre at that time...they were doing refurbs to the houses and leaving them in a right state"*.

It was Doug Revell taking the Federation on a visit to a community centre in Tyne and Wear that inspired Barry to set up Community Transport. Community Transport started at the back of Preston Road Community Centre when they acquired a second-hand minibus from CVS. Barry was then able to get some slippage money from the local authority to buy an accessible minibus. He was helped in these endeavours by Tony Dearing from Edinburgh Street Community Centre, also a professional driver. They eventually owned 15 buses and a Luton van with a group of fully trained drivers that they could call on. Ongoing costs were met by raising money through paper and cardboard recycling and collecting and auctioning second-hand furniture, and a £10,000 grant from the City Council. Barry still owns his own minibus and provides transport to pub lunches for people living in sheltered dwellings, with any surplus being made being donated to Lonsdale.

Later, Barry became involved in the Spring Bank Community Action Group which was set up in an old air raid shelter in Wellington Lane. Barry had previously lived in Stepney Lane and attended Wilberforce School so had local connections and an interest in seeing developments happen there.

Barry also talks about how Federation members started to realise the need to be as professional as possible, which led to the formation of the Community Work Training Group to provide the skills and knowledge people needed to run an effective community centre and made training videos. *"Now in my twilight years, I look back with mixed feelings – pride, anger, sorrow. Proud to have met and be part of a dedicated group of selfless wonderful people with one aim in life, to help other less fortunate...anger that spineless councillors don't stand up to uncaring politicians at Westminster...sad because I see able-bodied members of the older community being used as unpaid childminders..."*. *"Life for me has had its ups and downs but my time in the voluntary sector will always be a better time of my life"*.

He is disappointed that so many community centres are now closing because people fought so hard for them and they all had the same principles and aims – *"just wanted the best for the community"*.

He got involved with the community and people cared.

Spring Bank Community Action Group (SCAG)



Volunteers at the Spring Bank Community Centre who were organising petition's against a closure, pictured on November 10, 1983

Spring Bank Community Action Group (SCAG) was formed in 1973 by a group of people concerned with the lack of social activities in the Spring Bank area. Premises were found in the Wellington Club in Wellington Lane to run what was described as a “senior citizens club” and a room at Wilberforce School for a playgroup to meet and an afterschool playgroup at Park Road School. Their main aim was to find a building to be used as a meeting place and community centre by local residents, and they eventually found an old Civil Defence building in a neglected state, albeit structurally sound, on Wellington Lane. Urban Aid funding was provided by central government on the second application in 1976 and in May 1978 a committee of local residents and representatives was elected to be responsible for the development and day to day running of the building. SCAG became a registered charity and the centre was officially opened on the 26th February 1978 by Kevin McNamara MP.

Three years on, a team of five full time workers was in post under the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) Community Enterprise Programme which allowed the centre to be open longer and develop more activities. In addition to the youth club and playgroup, a drama group, photography class and a drop-in for unemployed people were set up.

SCAG was clear that they were about community action and bringing more resources into the Spring Bank area. They had support from Workers' Educational Association organiser, Alan Johnson, from Doug Revell who became a trustee and from Councillor Gordon Castleton: *“...if you want to develop self-confidence, community care and development in an area, who better to know what is needed there, than those who live there...”*.

Attempts to raise money for their own development worker through the Inner-City Programme were delayed by the City Council's plans to develop a future strategy for the management of community centres. Both City and County Councils had community development working parties. *"A community centre should be more than a series of rooms hired out to anybody, it should be the heart of the local community and for residents of the area."* (Jan Brooker)

Spring Bank had its own system for letting rooms, mostly to local groups who met the same aims and objectives and were prepared to commit to a cleaning schedule and attend committee meetings.

The annual report of 1981-2 documents an initiative taken to attempt to link various voluntary bodies involved in the local area to try to launch a community care scheme. An initial meeting was being called of various voluntary organisations and the Social Services department.

The rest of the report details the work taking place – the summer playscheme, the Sunday playscheme, pre-school playgroup, art and craft activities, charity concerts, MIND lunch clubs, public meetings. A number of residents associations existed in the Spring Bank area and the centre was able to help with providing a meeting place and with printing and publishing. Two very different events described were the Bonfire Night and a Rock Against Racism concert featuring top ranking local bands. The exploration of a potential City Farm project led to a Hull Daily Mail headline: *"Pigs seen flying over Spring Bank"*!

This was all happening in the context of being in the midst of a Housing Action Area and moves to develop an adventure playground and campaigning about the local playing fields, and the Group wanted the building to be a local resource.

Their AGM in 1983 was addressed by Ashok Ohri, development worker with the Federation of Community Work Training Groups, talking about community work in the 1980s. The Secretary's Report to that meeting detailed problems that stemmed from the lack of a community work approach to community buildings, with council officers unprepared to take risks and encourage innovation. It was critical of the absence of a number of facilities in Hull that were, by then, common in other cities.

By this time, the Chair was Colin Challen, the Vice Chair was Richard Lees, Jan Brooker was Secretary and Sue Alvis, Bob Finch and Lynda Pritchard were Treasurers. That year's report documents the tensions of balancing the needs of the community with the needs of the staff. By this time, the Hull Community Work Training Group had been set up which was starting to facilitate training both in community work and in the practical aspects of running a building. A regular newsletter, Spring Bank News, was being produced and distributed, giving local people an opportunity to air their problems and needs. Annual General Meetings were attracting attendances of up to 80 people, Spring Bank Carnival was being held, and a Spring Bank Community Care Association was getting underway with grants from Social Services and Inner Area Programme. Meanwhile, the number of jobs at the centre, funded by MSC, increased to 17, providing opportunities for employment for local people, albeit with some misgivings about the temporary nature of the contracts.

At about this time, SCAG was looking at the prospect of establishing a Parish Council as part of a shift to “community politics”, acknowledging that Spring Bank was the first area in Hull to have its own independently managed community centre, to have an adventure playground, and to be a Housing Action Area.

An account is given in the annual report of 1985-6 of Hull City Council’s decision to close the Wellington Road Community Centre. This was based on a number of factors, including the cost of repairs snowballing from £3,000 to £90,000. A new-build centre was proposed by a local councillor and architects were commissioned. However, the plans of Hull City Council were to build a big new centre costing £333,000, to cover the whole area of North and South Spring Bank and not just that covered by the existing centre. They started to invite representatives from another association on South Spring Bank, to attend planning meetings where they revealed their plans to do this. The Council wanted the two groups to get together to manage the centre but faced opposition from both because of the dividing line of Spring Bank Road. *“People identified with their own areas and were not very concerned with what was going on the other side of Spring Bank, which had always been a very busy main road.”*

The final recommendation was that the new centre would be built on South Spring Bank, SCAG would no longer receive funding from the City Council and the Wellington Lane Centre would close, leaving North Spring Bank without provision. This prompted a proposal from SCAG to build the proposed new centre on Wellington Road and fund South Spring Bank to run the Thomas Stratten Centre, thus saving £140,000. At this stage, all the Wellington Road committee members stood down from their roles. It was also around this time that the adventure playground was destroyed.

The SCAG charity remained in place for some time running summer projects for children and young people, and is still described by those involved, as having been the basis for some lifetime friendships.

Spring Bank Community Association



Spring Bank Community Centre, West Parade, Spring Bank

Spring Bank Community Association was originally set up as a resident's group in 1980. Spring Bank is described by Frank McConnaghy in an undated funding application as the lowest household income area in England with one of the highest unemployment rates in the country. In 1989, Hull City Council and the Department of the Environment funded the building of a new community centre and the re-design of the adjacent play area, with the doors opening on Sunday 22nd April. The Thomas Stratten Centre became the home of Spring Bank Community Association and replaced a previous centre on Wellington Lane. It was described in a newsletter early in 1990 as something that had been awaited for about 15 years. Community groups were involved in the design and fittings of the centre, along with the College of Architecture, local young people and the school. Facilities included a photography darkroom, community workshop, under 5's play areas, social/quiet lounge and big hall with purpose-built stage.

The funding application referred to above (undated) describes the main activity vital to the local community as our free open to all IT suite delivering one to one individually tailored help with the assistance of volunteers. Other activities included free pool, pop-in café, table tennis and badminton facilities, and an IT repair facility. The Hull and District Disability Action Group offered a welfare rights advice service.

A later AGM statement reported well over 500 people "*coming through the door each week*". Work was being done to improve the centre's physical access and a full programme of activities was being offered, including almost daily toddler groups, youth clubs, junior clubs, Irish dancing classes, keep fit, country and western evenings, Bingo, music practice sessions, with plans to introduce more as finances allow. The Stratten Spitfires football team reached the semifinals in the Media Community Cup. An indoor flea market was being planned for a

Saturday. A plan to open a community shop had been thwarted by charity trading rules.

By 2003, toddler groups, which had been supported by an organisation called Playscene, had ceased but new activities had started, including Karate, old time dancing, meetings with the Bosnian Association, and church groups. Both Social Services and Adult Learning were making use of the centre for activities for disabled people and others, and sport development activities. They provided opportunities for local people with special education needs and physical disabilities to develop life skills and work towards independent living, and were a satellite of West Hull Leisure Centre. A local dance academy had three substantial weekly bookings. The community centre, like many others, had moved from developing local community activity to providing room space to groups from all over Hull and beyond.

One group it had opened its doors to, was noted in a 2001 edition of Fed Fax as that of asylum seekers and refugees, hosting a support group on two days a week. The support group was called “Global Friends” and provided social interaction and refreshments with an interpreter available. A health visitor was available for consultations, as was a range of donated goods, from clothing to furniture.

St Andrew's Community Centre



St Andrew's Community Centre

St. Andrew's Community Centre on Sutton Park was created in 1989 from part of the local primary school, when part of the School was redundant and in danger of being demolished due to a drop in numbers. It is on the outskirts of the city and was once on the edge of Sutton Park before Bransholme was extended and Kingswood was built, now it is surrounded by both council and private housing with Bude Park very close. The building belongs to the York Diocese, rented from them by Kingston Upon Hull City Council and in turn rented from them by the volunteer management committee.

The community centre has one large room, kitchen and toilets with three smaller rooms downstairs with kitchen area and two toilets, one for disabled use. The layout has changed over the years to make it what is today and to move with the times to suit those who need them.

Lynda was the first secretary of the management committee and as she had young children at the school at the time, she picked up on discussions with other parents the need for a parent and toddler preschool group and the chance of using one of the rooms downstairs. It was her involvement with this group that she was invited to join the management committee representing this group. When it first started the centre was used by not only the Parent and Toddler Group, but a Local History group, St. John Ambulance and a Breakfast/After School Kids and Holiday Club, Dance Class and Slimming Groups. During some of the school holidays there were playschemes running and were extremely popular. However, as times have changed other groups have been accommodated and helped to succeed.

Summer playschemes started in 1995 with funding from the Council “25p admission, 40 places....and very popular” running at Easter, half term holidays, and two weeks in summer that continued for about ten years. There were 80 children on the register in 1999, which ran five days a week, morning and afternoon

A Thursday Youth Club “that used to be brilliant....”also ran from the premises on a voluntary basis... “and there was a good turnout...” there were 56 young people attending in 1999 with a number of neighbours helping out. The Local Authority then gave financial support to enable the centre to employ someone to run the first one. “We would have meetings about what we were going to do to set up...Then after a year or so we felt more confident to run it ourselves so we applied for the funding and everything...”

The centre is currently run by a small management committee including the local vicar and two other church representatives. user group and individual members. Support was received from John Girtchen, who was one of the Councils Community Officers... “...he was really good” and a few members have been on a few courses such as How to run a Community Centre probably delivered by Liz Shepherd.

Brownies and Guides were at the centre for a short period before amalgamating with a group at St. Andrew’s Church.

Community Wardens used to have a base in the centre and were really good offering help particularly the elderly people in the area and are missed by many. Councilors’ Surgeries have been held in the building and is also used as a regular Polling Station.

Bridie is now the Chairperson and also runs, with her sister Kirsty, the preschool and kids club. A parent who was on the management committee and struggling with child care started the kids club in 2000 and Kirsty became its co-ordinator with lottery funding. “as time went on it built and built.... and things have just thrived from there.” Bridie came on board and opened a preschool and built on the parent and toddler group, when the school became inundated with numbers. Bridie described them as “...lovely days “. In 2012 a capital grant was applied for to provide an outside area and as times changed again and parents came under pressure to take on paid work which led to the application for funding to extend the building in 2017, this provided more space to increase the numbers of preschool children.

As well as above, activities now include, slimming group, karate, Pilates, yoga, scouts, tots play, children’s dance classes, children’s parties at the week-end and a Pentecostal church meeting on Sunday mornings. A Women’s Institute which met regularly for a couple of years has now stopped but carried on as a social group.

Victoria Dock Village Hall



Victoria Dock Village Hall

Victoria Dock Village Hall is the newest of Hull's community centres. According to a history of Hull's Victoria Dock village (Colin McNicol, 2002), it is "*the village within the city*". It has been hailed as a "*unique housing development*", replacing a dock and shipyard that was thriving in the 1980s. Chris Hall, Chair of the Trustees of Victoria Dock Village Hall, described the campaign mounted by local residents for a community building. He recounted the stories of the residents' meetings held in portacabins that also housed a nursery. The original plan was to provide another two portacabins for a meeting place for the proposed 2-3,000 homes, which prompted the Residents Association to form a subcommittee to lobby for something bigger and better. Meetings took place in people's homes. Their campaign was based on the requirement in the original development brief for a community centre to be provided by the developer. The informal meetings led to further meetings being set up between the subcommittee, or working party as it became, and members of Hull City Council Department of Planning and Design, to discuss detailed plans for what became the village hall, and then to meetings with the developer to turn the plans into action.

Work began in 15 April 1994, to dig the first foundations. Alongside these negotiations was running a programme of fundraising activities, such as car boot sales and car washes, to underpin the planned activities at the hall. Chris recounts the meetings to name the rooms in line with Hull's shipping industry the office is the Galley, and others are the Commodore's Room, the Captain's Room and the Admiral's Hall. They also developed a nautical theme for the décor, of yellow and blue. The plans were also based on visits to Hull's other 25 community centres open at that time.

It finally opened in January 1996, having already been visited by Prince Charles earlier in the year. A local vicar, Reverend Tricia Wick, started to hold Sunday services and Sunday School. Annual Fun Days were held in the neighbouring Victoria Park – and are still being held 30 years on, attracting approximately 3,000 people. The Civic Opening took place on Saturday 4 May, carried out by the Lord Mayor, Councillor John Black.

The Residents' Association was also asked to get involved with a company setting up a local pub and gave some input to finding appropriate premises and now the pub is viewed as a second community centre.

The Village Hall is still thriving 30 years on, with one member of staff who runs the office. It is raising sufficient income to keep the building decorated. Up until its closure, it was an active member of Hull Federation of Community Organisations, hosting the regular monthly quizzes and often "*cleaning up on the prizes*". They attended meetings of the Community Association Liaison Committee and got support from Federation staff, and still attend the regular CVS networking meetings.

Current activities include: yoga, chess and junior chess, toddler music sessions, toddler reading sessions, Slimming World, the Friends group, Talking Tables, ballroom dancing, line dancing, an all-ability arts group, karate, Kung Fu, church services and Alcoholic and Renew Support groups, and they produce a regular newsletter delivered to every house and placed in public buildings. They stayed in touch with people during lockdowns and missed only one Fun Day. A Friends Group has been organising a Warm Bank and plans are in place to re-open the café to run alongside it. Over the years, it has been host to keep fit classes, line dancing, a youth club, Guides, Scouts, Brownies and Cubs, carpet bowls, badminton, table tennis, chess, Judo, Adult Ed classes, aerobic and Residents Association meetings. It has also hosted wedding receptions, birthday parties, christenings, dinner dances, craft fairs and carol concerts.

They lost some groups during COVID but got some new ones, which seems to be part of the regular pattern of activity among centres. Unlike other community associations, Victoria Dock Residents Association did not pour all its efforts into the hall, but put in place a Hall Management Committee and continued to lobby for improvements to the estate, campaigning for primary schools, sheltered housing, shops and health facilities, and a park, in the face of developers changing their plans as a result of "*changed economic conditions*", adopting a slogan of People before Profits. Despite losing some of the arguments with the planning department and the developers, the Residents Association is still thriving and meeting in the hall and the hall is still thriving!

Community Development in Hull

Community Centres were one result of new ways of working that were developing in the 1970s and 1980s. People started to take action to address issues that affected their everyday lives. Citizen action was not new, witnessed by rent strikes, development of trade unions, and the co-operative movement developing in the 19th century. Community development as a way of working and an approach was starting to be recognised in the 20th century by statutory bodies and by funders. Nationally, the world saw the development of the Association of Community Workers, the Standing Conference on Community Development, the Federation of Community Work Training Groups, Community Development Foundation, and Community Matters and others, all set up to support locally based community development work.

Roslyn Abbott was the first worker with the Hull Federation of Community Organisations and had come from Glasgow in the early 1980s, which was very active in terms of community action, and was surprised to find a lower level of activity in Hull. The high level of union organisation on the docks had led her to expect more. However, there was *“more going on than appeared on the surface but there wasn’t the organisational structures and support like you had in Glasgow...”*.

Hull, at this time, had a long-standing Labour council which tended to produce a culture of dependency and paternalism. Two developments were happening to challenge and change this: the Community Council of Humberside had a brief to establish the Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS) across the county, and the first was in Hull. The first employee of Hull CVS was Kevin Curley who came from Newcastle with a commitment to ensure that CVS was relevant to what he could see was the most obvious types of neighbourhood work that was going on in the very under developed Hull voluntary sector. People were aspiring to open community centres on their own estates. Hull CVS was the driver of community centre development through the 80s, with the easy availability of money.

The second development involved groups of people across Hull, who were challenging authority and trying to develop things for themselves or in partnership with other people. Roslyn described a community association as something that brings together in partnership, people who live in the area, people who work in the area, people who have got an interest in the area, so that they can decide what’s best for the area. Community centres then were really only part of what a community association did and the Federation became something akin to a union for community centres – representing and fighting for their interests. See, for instance, the work of Preston Road Action Group and Spring Bank Community Action Group. The 1980s saw a burgeoning of activity in Hull, and elsewhere, arising from local people wanting to address the needs of local people. As the Federation was starting, so local branches of Citizens Advice Bureau and Age Concern were opening, often starting with a base in a community centre. Hull Independent Housing Advice Centre (HIHAC) opened to provide support and representation for people with housing needs and issues. As the Cod Wars closed down Hull’s fishing industry, so Humberside Law Centre was set up to represent fishermen in their claims for compensation. Social and Economic Action Resources for Churches in Hull (SEARCH) was established to provide community development support to churches.

Humberside Co-operative Development Agency was formed to support worker co-operatives. Community Focus was set up by Probation to establish local area reference groups. *“They tried to work with everyone in local communities and set up a community chest for community grants and community centres would have benefitted from these”.*

This organisation eventually joined Hull DOC, which had started in the 1990s to work in Single Regeneration Budget areas where there had been housing regeneration, to bring in all the social and economic development that needs to go alongside it. Hull DOC workers were based in community centres around the city.

Andy Dalton, Diocesan Social Responsibility Officer and chair of Hull DOC, described it as *“a good journey and not just a destination as it employed a lot of people who would not have been employed by the local authority. It was meaningful work with a strong ethical base and a good working environment. It brought light, colour and fun”.* – a description that could apply to much of the work happening in Hull at that time.

Alongside the work taking place in the voluntary sector, the City Council was establishing a team of Community Officers to support community centres. HFCO wanted this to be based with them but, despite the Leader of the Council at that time being pro voluntary sector, was based in Leisure Services, which raised the question of whether they were there to support or to manage. There were also tensions about whether these officers had a community development role. Councillors, particularly those in the Labour Party, often saw community associations as eroding their power, as there was no role for them on their committees. They felt very threatened when people started campaigning against the Council. There were also dynamics within local government at that time that increased the feeling of being threatened, such as the abolition of Humberside County Council and councillors losing seats, as well as having to work within the constraints of a Conservative government. *“There were big debates about committing further generations to running these centres”. “There was political pressure on the Council to meet as many needs as possible. At that time, it was quite exciting and challenging but also scary sometimes.”*

As Urban Programme funding started to be withdrawn, and Hull Federation of Community Organisations lost its financial support, the Federation became dependent on sources of money such as National Lottery, etc, and got sucked in to developments such as Millennium Volunteers and Local Area Agreements – diverted into delivering services because that was where the money was.

Community development in Hull, and elsewhere, had moved away from the position described by Roslyn Abbott in Michael Pitchford’s book, *Making Spaces for Community Development* (2008) as being about promoting change and challenging power – *“Community development workers had very strong political views. That’s why they were doing that work.”*

Learning Points to come from the Research.

1. Many community centres were developed by community associations which had been established to improve conditions in the local neighbourhoods around issues like housing, play facilities, safety. Preston Road Action Group, Spring Bank Community Action Group, Bilton Grange, all started in this way. All were enthusiastic about having a physical base from which to operate and some took on disused wartime buildings and others were eventually provided with newly built premises. A former CVS director, Kevin Curley, described the centres as never having enough grant money to run properly, which meant they were forced into levels of fundraising that drained people's energies and took them away from the work they should be doing, like identifying needs on their estates and developing services to meet them.

"By drawing neighbourhood activists into running community centres, they were unable to focus their time and energy on other things, like housing conditions on the estate, child poverty, traffic management, etc".

2. The Council never envisaged what the long-term costs of running community centres would be and therefore never developed a future strategy for maintaining them, both in terms of revenue and capital.
3. Although community owned and run buildings had existed for decades, particularly in rural areas, there was a feeling of moving into unknown territory. Bus trips to other parts of the county had taken place as fact-finding missions but this was a new development in Hull and.

"People got involved with things with community centres and activities and didn't always understand why they were doing things".

4. Community centres are now experiencing not just declining levels of income but also declining numbers of volunteers to run these buildings and their activities. There are some notable exceptions to this, but many are now being managed by declining numbers of older committee members who are unable to recruit new people. A number of societal trends may be contributing to this. These include:
 - The raising of the pension age and the demands for more older workers to return to the workforce.
 - More retired people having to care for grandchildren as nursery provision declines and more women are returning to the workforce early as well as caring for older members of the family.
 - Women are under greater pressure to return to the workforce after childbirth, either through necessity or pressure from the Department for Work and Pensions.

- Neighbourhoods being less stable in terms of their population – much former social housing is now owned by buy-to-let landlords and tenants have no security of tenure so are less willing and able to invest long-term in the local community.
 - Community centres are now likely to be used by communities of interest rather than by people living locally; activities are often undertaken by people living in different parts of Hull and outside the area of benefit because of the quality and type of activity. This means that community centres are often offering a room hire service rather than developing activities important to their local communities.
5. Community Officers were sometimes frustrated by the unwillingness of groups who raised significant sums within the centre to subsidise other groups and activities unlikely to bring in much income but needing some subsidy, such as parent and toddler groups.
 6. Bingo obviously plays a key role in community centres. Nearly all offer it; it is obviously popular. Most importantly, it often provides a way into involvement in the centre. Whatever the stereotype of the typical Bingo player, nearly everyone interviewed, whatever their gender or age, had become involved by attending a Bingo session and then moving on to help and then call and from there onto the management committee.
 7. When centres were very much community based, the people who ran them were also neighbours. While this had benefits in terms of encouraging community involvement and working together, it also meant that neighbour disputes often spilled over into centre management and vice versa, which could often be difficult to manage.
 8. Managing a community building is a complex process which needs some training input, at times, in places, and in ways that are accessible to people.
 9. Some community centres are now becoming the base for community enterprises, particularly around childcare. As parental work commitments and patterns have changed, so have childcare needs from parent and toddler and playgroups, with parents accompanying their children, to breakfast and after school clubs and holiday provision to enable parents to take up paid work.
 10. Two major users of community centres were summer playschemes and youth clubs, until the 1990s. The needs and circumstances of parents have changed as described above and the Children Act of 1989 and subsequent related legislation, introduced tighter regulations which will go some way to explaining the decline in playschemes. It is less easy to understand why youth club provision has declined and as local authority youth services have been cut so drastically, it would be assumed there was a gap for the community centres to move into.

11. People who provided support for community centres claimed that the hardest thing was getting across to the public who were not involved. *“People are frightened of commitment”.* *“The biggest thing we ever did was events, which were all about promotion”.*
12. Involvement in community centre activity in Hull has been significant over time, with high levels of involvement in running activities, in managing them, at Federation level and at national level in Community Matters. The changes described above will not be unique to Hull. A question posed by one former Community Officer was *“how would we do this differently if we started again now, knowing what we do now?”* Maybe this should inform future planning.
13. The decline in the number of community centres has also coincided with the demise of both Hull Federation of Community Associations and the national Community Matters. The archives kept of the work of the Hull based organisation contains evidence of the levels of work and support provided to community run buildings. There is a need for appropriately skilled and knowledgeable infrastructure bodies to support the people who are running increasingly complex operations.
14. Some of the early centres were established as part of the implementation of a community centre strategy, albeit one that had to be abandoned eventually as financial resources became scarcer. A Federation of Community Organisations was key to ensuring that the local authorities and others were kept aware of the long-term benefits of community space and the need for support for the people giving their time on a voluntary basis to run and manage those spaces.
15. The rationale behind having a Federation of Community Associations was about providing a voice for people in local communities – for people who used the centres, for people who provided activities in those centres and for people who managed those centres. Without a current Federation, that voice is having some difficulty being heard.
16. At the same time as the research for this document was taking place, Hull CVS were in receipt of funding for a programme of support and review of Hull’s council supported centres. There is some clear scope for exploring new roles for established centres around health and wellbeing agendas. They already play a big role in alleviating isolation and loneliness and thereby have a wider impact on both mental and physical health. There is scope for assessing the social value of community centres in terms of the return they bring the City Council and others on the investment made in them. The instigators and authors of this document would urge policy makers and others to pursue this as a course of action and apply resources to calculating the savings community centres make for the public purse with a view to investing in them.

The aims and purpose of Hull Federation of Community Organisations.

The HFCO was a network of community associations, neighbourhood groups, voluntary and statutory organisations with a concern for improving local conditions, neighbourhood services and leisure time activities.

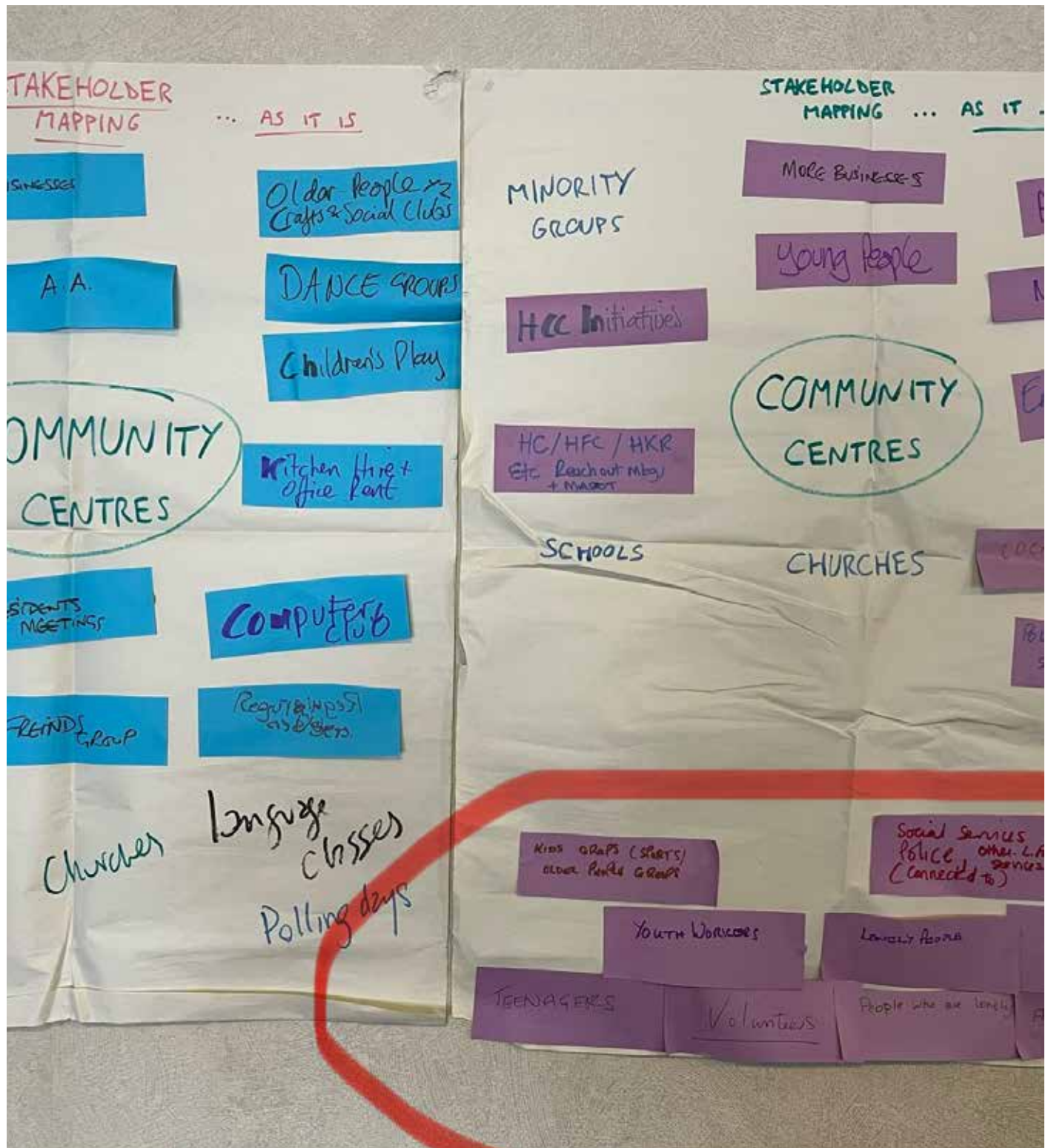
HFCO and its members saw the value of 'getting people together' in joint effort for the common good of the community.

HFCO aimed to achieve this by

- arranging regular meetings for members and providing a forum
 - to meet together and share and solve problems
 - to discuss community issues
 - to make policy
 - to share expertise and skills
 - to listen to members' needs and develop activities and services to meet those needs
 - for other organisations to reach out and receive information and request help.
- developing regular representation on and liaison with other organisations such as Hull CVS, Humberside Council for Voluntary Youth Service, Outreach Community Arts, Humberside Co-operative Development Agency.
- representing members' collective and individual views at the Community Associations Liaison Committee, the County Council and the Community Development Working Party regarding policy, premises and community development.

Results of Focus Groups

Two focus groups were held in March 2024 by Gill Hughes and Juan Pablo Winter Sepulveda from the University of Hull. Invitations were sent to all those who had taken part in the interviews. The first was held at Balfour Street Community Centre and the second at North Hull Community Centre. They were attended by a mixture of people from community centres past and present and people who had been involved in supporting their development in some way or had been involved in community development in Hull.



Focus group results



Focus group results

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, thanks must go to Liz Shepherd and Roslyn Abbott for making the decision to document the history of community centres in Hull and for recognising their importance in post war Hull. Thanks also to Dave Coates at Lonsdale Community Centre, for supporting the project, for providing space to meet and for providing access to the comprehensive archive kept carefully in a cupboard in Lonsdale Community Centre for many years. Particular thanks should go to Wendy Green (now Drury) and Sue Mellors for keeping the archive in such an immaculate condition.

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Particular thanks must go to Gill Hughes and Juan Pablo Winter Sepulveda from the University of Hull, for agreeing to run two focus groups at Balfour Street Community Centre and North Hull Community Centre, to bring people together as the project was nearing its end and producing such interesting results.

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Abbreviations

DOC Developing Our Communities

HANA Hull All Nations Alliance

HCVS Hull Council for Voluntary Service

HFCO Hull Federation of Community Organisations

NDC New Deal for Communities

PRAG Preston Road Action Group

PRCC Preston Road Community Centre

SCAG Spring Bank Community Action Group

SEARCH Social and Economic Action Resources for Churches in Hull

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