

Hereford Heckler

The bulletin of Hereford Solidarity League

FREEDOM, EQUALITY, COMMUNITY • #12 • FEBRUARY/MARCH 2010

Hay unites to save school

Parents and teachers from the Hay-on-Wye area have taken up the fight to save their local high school from closure.

As we go to press **over 2,000 people have joined the 'Save Gwernyfed High School' Facebook group** after documents were leaked confirming it as one of seven earmarked for possible closure by Powys County Council.

Activists have already held public meetings in the area and the campaign is gaining momentum.

Join their Facebook group to stay up to date with the campaign.



CAMERON GETS A MAKEOVER



Billboards promoting Tory cuts were defaced and destroyed around the country (centre and right) with Hereford making its own Elvis-themed contribution (left). Tory party central office later ordered their withdrawal after large numbers of billboards were defaced.

Nobody likes A TORY

WIGGIN IS A WONKA

Tory MP for north Herefordshire, Bill Wiggin, ended up in the chocolate after labelling concerned Cadbury workers as 'whingers'.

In relation to Cadbury's takeover by Kraft, he said "**Who wants to hire a whingeing workforce** when you can have a positive, up-beat one?" He then offered to meet with workers for a 'photo shoot', but the invite was turned down.

The takeover of the company by US firm Kraft has led to concerns about possible job-cuts and outsourcing. Union reps at Cadbury's Marlbrook factory near Leominster have written to Bill expressing the anger of the workers.

Unite's Jennie Formby said: "**Cadbury's workers are campaigning to protect jobs—it's not whinging, it's standing up for their livelihoods, homes and families.**"

Bill refused to apologise, instead he blamed the unions.

He had also refused to sign an early day motion calling for Cadbury to stay independent and has previously condemned Unite's campaign to keep Cadbury jobs in Britain. He later responded by saying: "The prospects of my constituents under Kraft's ownership could be jeopardised by Unite's ill-judged campaign." Yeah right Bill, and imagine the jeopardy Cadbury workers at Marlbrook would be putting themselves in if they sat back and did nothing!

Last year Wiggin, who went to Eton with David Cameron, was embroiled in the expenses scandal after claiming £11,500 on a phantom mortgage. His attitudes towards constituents and Cadbury workers alike are appalling and show he doesn't give a damn for the people he supposedly represents.

We support the Cadbury workers and their very valid concerns and believe the people of Herefordshire deserve much better than this slimy individual.

...And we can't stand Labour either!

'Revolution in local Labour Party': The recent 'coup' in Hereford Labour Party and why they've never been the party of the working class. Read it on the Heckler blog at <http://tinyurl.com/ykme8eq>



HEREFORD TIMES AND HEREFORD JOURNAL PROMOTE VIOLENT CRIME

Animal lovers across Herefordshire were appalled in January to see both the Hereford Times and Hereford Journal promoting violence against animals.

Both newspapers callously showed members of the notoriously violent Ledbury hunt parading through the town. The HT even wrote glowingly on the possible lifting of the hunting ban.

Strange that these two papers which are always quick to condemn anti-social behaviour can so blatantly promote a violent sadistic and illegal practice such as fox hunting.

Thank goodness for the Hunt Saboteurs Association. These brave people regularly come up against police intimidation and violent hunt supporters in order to stop this blood sport.



Lessons from Copenhagen

Nothing new was learnt from the recent United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. As if we didn't know already that capitalist governments don't give a damn about the environment! Get them all together, put them in a room ask them to come up with a solution and what do they do? They find different ways of making money out of climate change. Obviously this mainly involves ripping off poor countries, but they don't have a voice so who cares?

The people that **do** care are the ones demonstrating outside the convention centre suffering unprecedented levels of police violence. The myth of Scandinavian liberal democracy was put to rest with the mass arrest of 800 people, baton charges and Guantanamo Bay-style detention centres. We kid you not—the police built a human containment facility full of wire cages to lock up people who 'might' cause trouble.

So if the government won't do anything about the climate what do we do? As a climate activist from Ecuador put it: "the solution to the problem is not in the system that caused the problem." We agree. The time for voting or lobbying politicians has passed. We need organisation. The strengthening of ties between different activist groups is one of the few positives to have come out of this UN funded farce. Unions, community organisations, environmental groups and individuals from across the world stood in agreement that action must be taken at grassroots level.

The only way effective change is going to happen is through a mass movement of people working independently of governments and local councils. In Hereford we need to open up the environmental movement from the small but committed group it currently is and get everyone involved in an issue that affects us all. The key to this is in raising awareness of the real issues and empowering people to do something about it, a difficult but not impossible task.

See <http://icopl5.org/> for more info

Hereford Heckler – THE FIRST TWO YEARS

This issue marks the second anniversary of the Hereford Heckler, first printed back in February 2008. **Almost 40,000 copies have been distributed during this time** through pubs, shops, out on the streets but mostly door-to-door across many areas of Hereford.

The first issue focused on the planned closure of almost 40 schools across the county and was launched by Hereford Solidarity League members who **took part in the 'save our schools' march in Hereford**. The campaign was successful with the council agreeing to keep the schools open, although a review is planned for 2011.

As well as this **we have campaigned against the closure of the LEA swimming pool**, which was used by many schools and community groups across Hereford. **We have also written extensively about the housing shortage in the county.** At the start of 2009 it was revealed that the council's housing waiting list hit over 5,000 and with plenty of empty buildings and available land across the county we found this a disgrace!

Anti-fascism and anti-racism has always been a major part of our politics. In an interview for BBC Hereford & Worcester radio in May 2009 we exposed the Hereford Farmers' Club as a venue hosting local BNP meetings. Despite our contradicting evidence, the club claimed to be 'unaware' they were taking place.

In the run-up to the European elections last year **we extensively delivered thousands of anti-BNP leaflets across Hereford**. And in October **we organised a protest against a major BNP fundraising event being held in Ross-on-Wye**, which saw many local people turn out to show their opposition.

In recent months **we have been campaigning against the Edgar Street Grid development**. We have covered the councils' disgraceful lack of public consultation, the greed of the developers and the idiocy of the plans. **In November 2009 we organised our own 'march against the ESG'**, which linked up with hundreds of supporters from the It's Our City campaign for a lobby at the Shire Hall. The council largely ignored the 10,000-strong petition—bring on round two!

Our own group has grown during this time, backed up a large group of supporters. In November we held a successful fundraising gig that packed out the venue, with similar events planned for 2010. Hereford Solidarity League now also has an internet presence with a blog, a Youtube channel and a Facebook page.

Over the coming months we will be planning an 'election campaign' and launching a manifesto of our own, and upping the ante in the fight against the ESG. Watch this space.

Here's to another two years of the Hereford Heckler!

Almost
2,500
homes are lying empty in the county...

...And more than
5,000
people are waiting to be housed. But the council continues to do nothing.
www.squatter.org.uk

MALVERN HOTEL STAFF STAGE SIT-IN PROTEST

Workers at the Foley Arms Hotel in Malvern held a sit-in protest after an unexpected closure on 25th January.

The sudden closure by the hotel owners resulted in 21 staff being laid off without pay, with them first being told of the news via e-mail.

Over a dozen staff occupied the hotel for the week, preventing it from being repossessed and refusing to leave until their wages were paid.

Former manager, Nigel Thomas said: "I received an e-mail asking us to vacate the building and hand over the keys. I told him [the owner] until we have been paid I'm going to stay." Staff were paid and left the building on Friday 29th.

Well done for digging your heels in.



Love Hereford, HATE ESG

After a well-earned Christmas break, the campaign against the Edgar Street Grid has swung back into action.

As we go to press, It's Our City have called for objections to the link road—running from Edgar Street to Commercial Road—which is an integral part of the ESG masterplan.

It's Our City recently faced an almost disastrous loss of support after a statement was released to the local press in support of the alternative DRE Group plan proposing a 'Tesco on stilts', and other retail development, on the cattle market site. IOC have since come forward to dismiss the statement supporting a plan that is essentially much like the ESG itself.

"The 'press release' supporting Roy England's plan was not agreed by the campaign," said campaign leader, Mark Hubbard.

"The person who wrote it and sent it out has now resigned from the It's Our City campaign and will no longer be taking any part. There should be NO retail development on the ESG site—it will kill our historic town centre."

Regardless of this, **It's Our City desperately needs to start involving more local people;** public meetings need to be less of a 'show'

and more about involving everyone in decision making—what the campaign does should be up to its supporters and not the people who have taken it upon themselves to run it for us.

Secondly, the campaign needs to step up its action and forget about the importance of looking 'respectable'. Respectability never won the vote for women, it never won a strike or defeated the poll tax. Herefordshire Council have ignored a petition of almost 10,000 people; this campaign will fail unless the council see the active involvement of the thousands that have signed this petition. Let's get out on the streets and make our really voices heard! No ESG!



Hereford Solidarity League demonstrate at the Shire Hall against the ESG

Hereford's Radical History—part one

The Whitson Riot 1605

At 5 o'clock in the morning on the Tuesday of Whitson 1605, the vicar of Allensmore, Richard Heyns, was woken by a commotion. From the window of the vicarage he saw 40 heavily armed people carrying out a funeral ceremony. The deceased was Alice Wellington, who, being a Catholic, had been denied a burial.

England at this time was rife with anti-Catholic feeling due to the Protestant reformation. The reformation involved the replacement of the leadership of the Vatican with equally dodgy people closer to home. Herefordshire had become a safe haven for Catholics. But life for the vast majority of people living in this part of the county was extremely hard, most people survived by spinning hemp, begging and scrumping unlike the decadent lives of the privileged landowners.

Heyns, being part of the privileged ruling class, rushed off to Hereford to tell the bishop what he'd seen. In those days, authority in Herefordshire rested with the church, the head of which was Richard Bennett, the bishop. Bennett's reaction to the commotion in Allensmore was to send the High Constable to arrest those that had taken part in the illegal burial.

After a struggle in which some of the constables were injured, Leonard Marsh was arrested in Hungerstone and lead back to Hereford. As the group passed Belmont they were ambushed by 40 men. Due to being threatened with more than just a bloody good hiding, the constables released Marsh.

When news of these disturbances reached London, the king demanded that an example should be made of the 'Herefordshire-men'. This news emboldened the 'rebels', but worried the bishop and his magistrates, who feared provoking a wider uprising. And so followed a state of lawlessness that lasted for six weeks, in which a game of cat and mouse was played between the bishop's men and the locals. The constables often rode into deserted villages while looking for the supposed ringleaders. The communication network that existed in order to evacuate these villages is an example of the high level of organisation that prevailed during the 'disturbances'.

It eventually became clear that the Bishop of Hereford was unable to reassert his power, so the Earl of Worcester was given the task. Being a Catholic gave the earl the influence he needed to convince the people to get back in line, and with minimal effort the rebels of south-west Herefordshire were subdued. As with most uprisings, a suitable scapegoat had to be found. That person was William Morgan of Kilpeck who was sent to the Tower of London for supposedly organising, what is now called, the Whitson Riot.

This article heavily referenced Whitsun Riot by Roland Mathias (1963) Bowes & Bowes London

We'd like to hear from anyone who has experience or memories of radical movements in Herefordshire. Were you involved with a local socialist, communist or anarchist group? Did you take part in a memorable strike, protest or march? Did your trade union hold a lot of power and influence or did you help achieve improvements for its members?

If you have a story, we'd love to hear from you. Please get in touch with us by emailing kay.bulstreet@hotmail.co.uk

Life in the UK citizenship test

As part of a film about what it means to be British, three members of Hereford Solidarity League recently took the same citizenship test that immigrants are given. Despite being British as can be, all three failed.

Supposedly the test is to ensure that those who want to live here have knowledge of the English language and culture. Looking at a sample of the questions here, we have to ask what is the relevance?

Before we get critical about the test, let's explore our attitudes to immigration:

Tory: We'll put a cap on immigration—only our rich friends get in.

Labour: Only we can decide who gets in.

Lib Dem: A combination of the above

BNP: Only white, blond, blue-eyed, English speaking, British people get in.

Lefty guilt: No borders, we colonised, we made war, they all should come in.

In the 80s Margaret Thatcher raped the country of any prosperity, leaving the working class deskilled and demoralised.

Despite their so-called best intentions, the gap between rich and poor increased during the Labour years and Cameron is already threatening to cut education budgets, making university training available only to the toffs, who use their training and skills to further exploit those of us who did not have the opportunities to begin with.

The result? England has no choice but to import doctors, nurses, teachers, dentists, radiologists, social workers etc. Worse still, the obsession with social mobility and the greed of business owners has crippled Britain of builders, painters, engineers and mechanics, leaving us with no choice but to import and further exploit these workers.

Arguably, Britain is only a little island, but who of the above can we live without, those who can pass an irrelevant test?

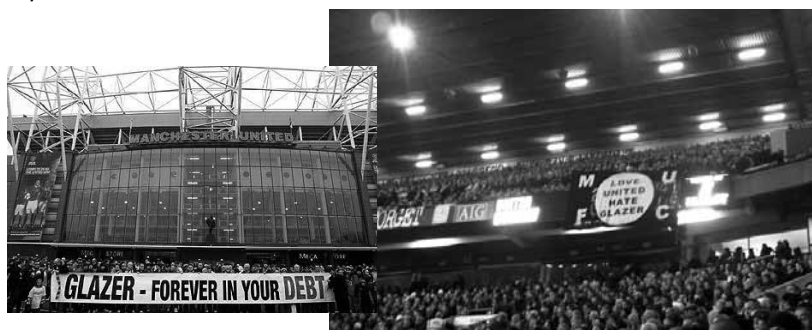
JOHN TERRY KILLS FLUFFY KITTENS

Does anyone else think that holding footballers up as examples of good morality is like blaming rock music for turning our kids into psychos? Whether it's John Terry's sexual exploits, Gazza's domestic violence, Lee Bowyer's racism or any of the players found using illegal substances, does anyone really look at them and think, "yeah, I'm going to get off my head and batter someone because they do"? Of course not.

Clearly it's all part of celebrity culture—take a working class lad, give him thousands of pounds a week in wages, fast cars, beautiful girlfriends to be photographed with, and put him on the front page of gossip magazines, then expect them to live to some straight-laced, pseudo Christian ten commandments standard!

We can play computer games that involve drugs and violence, we have constant coverage of our boys killing the 'enemy' in Afghanistan, politicians repeatedly try to divide and rule us, but John Terry having an extra marital affair is a threat to the fabric of society?!

Maybe he's really a gay, black, Muslim, asylum seeking terrorist that's spreading swine flu under the guise of being England captain! Maybe I should be writing for the Daily (hate) Mail.



United fans show their hate for Glazer

Man United fans REVOLT

Manchester United fans recently stepped up their on-going campaign against the club's corporate owners, the Glazer family.

Over 300 angry united fans attended a meeting between the Independent Manchester United Supporters Association and the supporters trust, a grassroots body fighting for the fan ownership of the club.

Since taking control in 2005, American tycoon Malcolm Glazer and his family have saddled the club with a massive debt of over £720m, including interest repayments of £60 million a year, and they are in the process of borrowing a further £504m, fuelling fears the club has no money left.

Some vocal fans have taken the campaign to the terraces unfurling 'Love United, Hate Glazer' banners and singing anti-Glazer chants throughout games. Some have also started to wear green and gold on the terraces, the original club colours when they formed in 1878 as Newton Heath, a team of workers from the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway depot in north Manchester.

In the second issue of the Hereford Heckler we reported on the original protests after the Glazer takeover and mentioned **FC United of Manchester**. Originally formed by disgruntled united supporters in 2005, FCUM are a fan-owned and fan-controlled football club. After being admitted to the second division of the North West Counties Football League for the 2006–2006 season, they were promoted for three consecutive seasons, and now play in the Northern Premier League Premier Division. **With an average crowd of over 2,000, they are widely regarded as an example of a successful grassroots football club.**

For more information on FCUM visit www.fc-utd.co.uk or for information on the recent events at Old Trafford visit www.loveunitedhateglazer.com

■ **Hereford Solidarity League** works to build a society based on the ideas of **freedom, equality and community** ■ **Anti-fascism is an important part of our politics**, but we believe that all politicians maintain a system of inequality, privilege and control that divides communities ■ Real change does not happen at the ballot box and can only come about by **independent working class action**; that is, people looking out for each other and organising themselves to deal with the problems that they experience on a day to day basis ■ Our aim is to increase the fighting spirit and self-confidence of working class people to change things for themselves.

Find us on the internet—Join our **Facebook group 'Hereford Heckler'**; visit www.herefordheckler.wordpress.com; or email kay.bulstreet@hotmail.co.uk



Helen Heckler

■ First to Leominster, where village idiot Bill Wiggin has described Cadburys workers who are fearing for their jobs as "whinging". Which gave me an idea: why not threaten Bill's job, with no real justification aside of cutting costs? Don't worry, he won't complain, he hates "whingers".

■ What have Jesse Norman and a porn star got in common? Neither will come unless there's a camera on.

■ A poster of David "one's daddy worked down the pit" Cameron has been defaced in Hereford, with the image of Cameron being made to look like Elvis Presley. Towards the end of his life the media labelled Elvis as an unattractive, greedy racist. But I don't see how any of these values can be associated with the Conservative Party.

■ In other news, a recent English Defence League (think the BNP in trackie bottoms) protest erupted into chaos when the EDL members began brawling with police officers stewarding the march. Onlookers described it as "a group of violent fascists with no regard for basic morals or principals ... fighting with the EDL".

HEREFORD 20–28 LUCTONIANS

An action packed derby game, a crowd of over 1000, quality local beer, it's just a shame that Hereford couldn't beat the the toffs. Oh, and take note Mr Turner, under 16s got in free!