

Hereford Heckler



The bulletin of Hereford Solidarity League
FREEDOM, EQUALITY, COMMUNITY • #13 • APRIL/MAY 2010

Houses being left to rot?

Herefordshire Housing tenants in South Wye believe their properties are deliberately being left to rot.

Reports have emerged of Belmont residents complaining that their calls for repairs are going unanswered.

But Herefordshire Housing's chief executive, Peter Brown, was quick to deny it all: "Blocks of flats put up in the 1960s were given a 30-year life," he said, "but they're now 50 years old". Surely they're unsafe to live in then. Or maybe they're still structurally sound but their undesirable appearance means they can't charge any more for them. Quick, time to build some new ones and raise the rents!



TEMPORARY HOUSING?

Empty shops in just one Hereford street

COUNCIL FAILING ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING TIME TO SQUAT

To buy an average-price house in Herefordshire you would have to be earning **£48,856 a year**.

Those are the findings of housing charity Shelter, which brands Herefordshire Council as one of the worst providers of affordable housing in England.

At the current rate of availability it would take almost eight and half years to house the estimated 5,207 households on the waiting list for affordable housing in the county.

Shelter found that 1,113 new affordable homes would need to be built each year in Herefordshire to keep up with local need. By their own admission, council officials have said that only 531 new homes were built over the last four years. At an average of just 133 a year this is clearly not good enough!

But as we revealed in our last issue, almost 2,500 properties are lying unused across the county. What is Herefordshire Council doing to bring these back into use?

Here at Heckler HQ we have a radical solution—albeit short-term: squat the lot! If the council can't get their act together and continue to waste millions on a new shopping centre no one wants then we'll have to house ourselves.

Despite its bad image, squatting is still legal and it's not just something for people with dreadlocks and thin dogs on string.

Squatting has a history in England dating back to at least 1649 but more recently, there was a huge squatting movement involving ex-servicemen and their families following World War II. This involved thousands of people occupying sites as diverse as former military bases and luxury apartment blocks in West London.

With this issue we are launching our 'Heckler Estate Agents', a listing of long-term empty properties around the county that could be squatted by families desperate for a home. Although squatting is perfectly legal, some methods of gaining entry aren't and we strongly advise anyone considering this option to seek legal advice first. Get in touch with the Advisory Service for Squatters and get hold of their excellent 'Squatters Handbook' for more information.

Armed with knowledge and a genuine need to be housed, squatting may give you the solution to your problems. Let's show the council that if they won't house us, we'll house ourselves.

HECKLER ESTATE AGENTS



6 Lloyd Street, Portfields, Hereford

Property close to city centre. Empty for at least two and a half years.



8 Lloyd Street, Portfields, Hereford

Property close to city centre. Empty for at least two and a half years.



23 Cotterell Street, Whitecross, Hereford

Semi-detached house in desirable location.



Old NHS building, Eign Street, Hereford

Next door to old Eye Hospital. Large property. Could house several families.



1 Quicksets, Redhill, Hereford

Property on the edge of the city. Empty for several years. Has potential.

We are pleased to report that after years of standing empty, the last of the old SAS houses on the Stirling Estate, Putson, are now being renovated and are coming back into use.

Let us know of empty properties: kay.bulstreet@hotmail.co.uk / Advisory Service for Squatters: Tel. 020 3216 0099 or visit www.squatter.org.uk

Hereford BNP announce candidate



Hereford's next MP?
John Oliver, looking
like a prize idiot

Attempting to keep up with the local political game, the British National Party have recently announced their candidate for the Hereford and South Herefordshire constituency. Twenty-four year-old, self-employed 'businessman' (odd-job man and gardener), John Oliver, has been chosen to represent the party locally. However, one thing the BNP failed to announce is that John is in fact not from this area at all – they're shipping him in from Newport, Gwent to stand in the election! Considering John announced that his campaign would focus on the local economy and 'halting the

immigration swindle' there is some irony here.

This choice highlights numerous things about the local BNP rag-tag. Firstly it shows the incompetency of the local branch, not being able to find a single suitable candidate in the county. A bit strange, considering this time last year they were bragging to the local press about how much the party had grown in the area, and how many 'decent people' they had attracted. Along with the fact that we haven't heard a peep from them since the European elections, the evidence suggests that somebody may have been telling porkies.

This decision also shows that they are no different to the rest of the political parties in the area; shipping in politicians to fight the election, who will be quick enough to up sticks and scuttle off to the next place after the people of Herefordshire vote. The Tories moved millionaire and old Etonian, Jesse Norman, into the county following his failed attempt at becoming a representative for Cheltenham. The Liberal Democrats moved in Sarah Carr, who seems to jump on every bandwagon rolling past. Labour have announced Neil Sabharwal, a businessman from London to stand in the North Herefordshire constituency—he didn't even turn up at a recent election debate in Bromyard, sending one of his campaign team to speak instead!

Obviously a lot of people move around the country, but these political parties seem to move in career politicians, use local people to their advantage (get our vote), and then leave if they don't succeed. This attitude is damaging and dividing to local people, using constituents as political pawns or cannon fodder, and putting their own personal political careers and agendas before any real desire to represent us or work to our benefit. The BNP are no different, and despite their claims of being an 'alternative to the old-gang parties', they offer very little more. As they have shown numerous times across the country, once elected into a position of power, they repeatedly misuse their position and are just as crooked as the rest! Their Barking & Dagenham councillors on the take and countless suspensions from councils across the country are examples of this. So if you are looking for an alternative to the Westminster liars, cheats and crooks don't look towards the BNP!

**It's Our City
Day of Action**
High Town
10th April 2010
www.itsourcity.org

and smoke, and still not buy anything. There were real rock stars coming and going and as Buzz Music expanded into PA hire for major rock tours there was a real feeling of being at the centre of the counter culture. Once Buzz closed down there were all sorts of rumours that the PA hire was more to do with smuggling for a certain Mr H Marks (nice!). There were several pubs that took on the role of centre of counter culture too. The Saracen's Head was famous for its cheap cider and hash dealers, as were a few others in the town. There was a real feeling in the air as the 70s progressed, that the 'straights' were losing the argument ... and then punk happened! All of a sudden, instead of a few long haired hippies noodling on guitars representing our counter culture, we had aggressive loud youths shouting about it and how anarchy was going tear down the state! Youths were getting political. The punk movement faded into the mainstream but from it came a new kind of political awareness, namely that the ruling classes are corrupt and full of self serving rich crooks getting richer! This was a radical view in '77, but today it's what most people think.



Illegal, immoral and IGNORED BY THE LAW

Saturday 27th February 2010—This is a dead harrier, being picked up from the A49 by one of the whippers of the evil Ross Harriers who aimlessly chase innocent and beautiful animals around the countryside for fun for eight months of the year.

The out of control hunt, ran onto the fast moving road where inevitably a car struck the hound. No sign of the harrier pack using false trails or 'flushing to eagles'—clearly hunting live quarry.

Hunting is illegal, as you would expect in a civilised society, but 'overlooked' by the authorities, as you would expect in a country where the law and police force only exist to preserve the power of the ruling class.

But the law would hardly be an issue where our Leominster MP proudly announces his support for illegal and shameless torture of animals by having his 'Countyside Alliance Award' blazoned at the foot of his headed paper.

Our suggestion? Contact your local hunt sabs at www.huntsabs.org.uk and wipe the smiles off these hunter's arrogant, twisted faces. Our solution? Send a donation, we're saving up for a gyrocopter.

Hereford's Radical History—part two

Hereford's counter culture

Growing up in Hereford in the 70s I was surrounded by alternative radical influences. Hereford had a thriving music scene that grew out of the hippie era—and Hereford was well known for its hippies! There were gigs at the Flamingo, at the art college and various venues.

A place for meeting up and hanging around was Buzz Music in Widemarsh Street (now a car park; how unsurprising!) This brightly painted music shop was a candle to us young impressionable moths. You could go in and listen to records all day, drink coffee, smoke and

smoke, and still not buy anything. There were real rock stars coming and going and as Buzz Music expanded into PA hire for major rock tours there was a real feeling of being at the centre of the counter culture. Once Buzz closed down there were all sorts of rumours that the PA hire was more to do with smuggling for a certain Mr H Marks (nice!).

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LABOUR HAVE NO CLUE ABOUT LEOMINSTER

Prior to the general election, the Labour party has announced the candidate they will be standing for the Leominster constituency, a previously unheard of Neil Sabharwal. And as per usual, Labour have got things disastrously wrong.

Neil Sabharwal, a Cambridge graduate who studied economics, is a former financial analyst for global company Ebay and lives in London where he continues to operate within the business world, presumably in between fighting the struggles of the working man.

Sabharwal's selection only further proves how out of touch Labour is with the people of this country, especially in rural areas such as ours. Leominster faces poor education from the sub-standard Minster College, people facing unemployment after Skymark shut down, plus possible job losses in the future at Cadbury, so Labour select a filthy rich Cambridge graduate from the City, a guy who has no idea how people in a small market town live their life, and what problems they face. The only alternative Leominster faces is the dominant Conservatives, headed by the obnoxious Bill Wiggin, a man so insultingly ignorant of real life that he called workers fearing for their jobs "whingers". Given the choice between a ranting toff and a wealthy City boy, it's no wonder that fringe parties such as the BNP are winning votes from disillusioned working class voters who believe that none of the major parties care about them.

Rather than wanting to make Leominster and the surrounding area a better place, for politicians like Neil Sabharwal, this election is just one big job interview.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Annually on 8th March, thousands of events are held throughout the world that inspire women and celebrate achievements to mark International Women's Day. The day has been observed since the early 1900s and is now an official holiday in many countries including China, Russia and Ukraine, but not in the UK. Why not?

Many women from a younger generation feel that all the battles have been won for women while many feminists from the 1970s know only too well the longevity and ingrained complexity of patriarchy. With more women in the boardroom, greater equality in legislative rights, and an increased critical mass of women's visibility as impressive role models in every aspect of life, it is easy to be deceived into believing that women have gained true equality.

The unfortunate fact is that women are still not paid equally to that of their male counterparts, women still are not present in equal numbers in business or politics, and globally women's education, health and the physical, sexual and emotional violence against them is worse than it's been for decades.

Switch on your telly and you are bombarded by negative images

TRUCKER STANDS UP TO BOSSES

A Ross-on-Wye trucker has exposed a local haulage firm who were bullying and intimidating their drivers into cheating on their driving hours.

Wye Transport had their operating license removed by the Department of Transport and the driver was praised by Nick Jones, the traffic commissioner for the West Midlands.

This company was putting lives at risk by making drivers work longer hours than was legal or safe. The bosses put profit over the lives of their employees and other drivers. The haulage industry is being squeezed hard at present and many bosses are hiring in vulnerable drivers at cut rates and cheating on hours. This brave bloke stood up to the intimidation and reported the dangerous practices, he has been praised and the company closed down—we should follow his example and expose dodgy bosses whenever we can.

This is yet another example of the individual standing up for himself and it goes to prove that we don't have to suffer the poverty wages and life shattering hours that bosses are happy to inflict on us, whilst they line their own pockets!

The Wobblies are growing

As the latest recession (or reorganisation of capitalism) bites and the class struggle intensifies with rising job insecurity and unemployment, workers are looking for organisations that can defend our class against these latest attacks on our living standards.

The mainstream unions are, on the whole, showing once more their lack of fight and reliance on support of the Labour Party. Many workers including long standing trade unionists are deeply disillusioned and are seeking an alternative in the Industrial Workers of the World (nicknamed the Wobblies). The IWW is not a 'trade' union it is a syndicalist union. Syndicalist unions are different in three main ways in that they:

- Organise by industry rather than trade helping to unite all workers rather than pitch them against each other.
- Organise at the place of work, have no union bureaucracy and no gravy train. The national structure is federal and fully controlled by members.
- Seek to abolish wage slavery and the class system creating a free and equal society.

In the past few years membership has increased five-fold with new branches opening all across the country. The IWW welcomes all workers, pensioners and unemployed. Join the efforts to build the 'one big union'—a fighting union.

Hereford Solidarity League will be hosting a public meeting of the IWW. Details to be announced on our website in May.

The IWW is an officially registered trade union. Central Region IWW, 54 Allison Street, Birmingham B5 5TH. Tel. 07970 575 154 or visit www.iww.org.uk

Women march in London against domestic violence

of women, that promotes the above. Between Katie Price, Patricia Hewlett and the Queen, we hardly have a standing chance!

With the upcoming elections, the mainstream parties are actively recruiting and fighting for the woman's vote. Where are they the rest of the time? One in four women suffer domestic abuse, 6% of rapists get convicted, politicians are forcing women back into work whilst their children have to go to expensive nurseries, and yes, Mother's day is celebrated in the place of Women's day!

They still want us in aprons, with pregnant bellies doing the washing up, because the modern man enjoys to cook—aren't we lucky!

SPORT

HEREFORD UNITED *season round-up*

The 2009/2010 season has been a very poor one for Hereford United, both on and off the pitch. Following our relegation from League One this time last year, things have dipped to a new low. **The fact that we are staying is little consolation for supporters.**

On the pitch we've had a team that at best looks like they're glad to get paid, at worst, like they don't want to wear our shirt. With a recent 3-1 defeat to our rivals up the A49, a 5-0 away loss to Notts County, and a terrible performance which saw us go from 2-0 up, to lose 4-3 at home against Burton. This has left us struggling in the league, seated firmly in the bottom half of the table.

Off the pitch attendances have suffered greatly, often reaching lows of around 1,200. **Whilst crowds across League Two are down 10%, Hereford's are down by an average of 30%. With very poor facilities and unattractive football, it is little surprise that people are reconsidering paying £13 every other week to come to Edgar Street.** We at Heckler HQ believe more can and should be done to encourage people to attend; cheaper gates and more incentives for school and youth groups to come along. **More should also be done to expand and build upon the community work that the club does; encouraging and facilitating local, grassroots football and involvement in local schemes to help the young, disabled and others to enjoy the beautiful game.** Scunthorpe United is a good example of a league club with great ties and involvement with their community through their community trust, and in turn they've been rewarded for it!

After calls from all directions for Trewick to go as manager, Graham Turner finally made the decision and took temporary reins over the team. This has been followed by two good wins for the Bulls, with a passionate victory over Bradford and a decent away win against Chesterfield—young Birmingham loanee Jake Jarvis scoring in each of these matches. We hope for a decent, committed and honest manager next season, and look forward to the building of the new stand and improvement of Edgar Street's aged facilities. **The club is what we, the fans, make it—get behind the Bulls for the 2010/2011 season and let's have more of that 2006 promotion spirit.**



Helen Heckler

■ The potential MPs for Hereford attempted to capture the young vote recently, attending a debate at the sixth form college. They mainly focused on their views on the future of Hereford, at the same time accusing each other of being out of touch, career politicians. Which settles it, no matter who we vote for, we still get a posh kid who thinks Hereford is in Wales.

■ ***ADVERTISEMENT*** If you would like to book Paul Keetch for your event and/or function, just ask parliament to discuss your local area the day after and the Mr. Blobby of Herefordshire will be there ASAP! Rent-A-Keetch: adding ease to your sleaze!

■ Apparently Nick Griffin is set to be appearing on another edition of question time this year ahead of the general election, despite the fact that he looks about as comfortable on camera as a hostage reading their ransom. While everyone hates Griffin, we hope his racism won't distract people from Gordon Brown's racist immigration policy, David Cameron's unequal welfare ideas, or the hilarity of someone from UKIP wearing a suit. Our stance is clear: none of them represent us, and none deserve power over us.

■ Finally, Alistair Darling's budget has recently been released, detailing a 10% tax increase on cider. As it only applies to strong ciders, this means only the small, locally focused breweries will be hurt by this. Yours truly is hardly a fan of the Labour Party anyway, but now Ali D wants the people of Hereford to put up with only drinking rubbish like Strongbow, it just got personal.

The real cost of sport

As we enter the aftermath of last year's recession, the government and local councils are earmarking cuts and cost savings. Social services, health, education and even community centres and groups are all the targets for these cuts. So is it right that we should pay for the failings of the banking system while billions of pounds of our money are being spent on international sporting events?

The continually rising cost of the London 2012 Olympics now looks set to reach £10 billion. That is an enormous sum of money that would surely be better spent funding our children's education or providing housing that is so badly needed in places like Herefordshire.

Many of us in Hereford Solidarity League are sports fans, but it's clear to see that while governments love the opportunity for a bit of patriotic flag waving, the bank accounts of sports governing bodies like FIFA and the IOC are filled with our money. We can no longer justify the costs of these tournaments, but when there is so much money to be made by advertisers, international corporations and government backers, it's hard to see when they'll be scaled down or stopped.

And spare a thought for the people of South Africa. £3 billion is being spent on this year's football world cup. This is in a country where millions suffer due to homelessness, unemployment, rampant crime and trigger happy cops.

Of course, if you are a sport fan without the worries of work, housing or feeding your family, you'll be looking forward to hours in front of the television watching our boys and girls doing their bit for the country. But while you're enjoying the spectacle spare a thought for those that are paying for it.

■ 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**