

Hereford Heckler



The bulletin of Hereford Solidarity League

FREEDOM, EQUALITY, COMMUNITY • #18 • FEBRUARY/MARCH 2011

Locals to reopen community pub

A Hereford boozier could soon become one of Britain's only community-owned pubs after locals decided to buy it from a national pub chain.

The North Tupsley Action Group plan to convert the White House pub on Whittern Way into a 'community hub' that would include a bar.

NTAG already has funding in place to buy the pub, which is owned

by national pubco, Punch Taverns, and the group are confident they can receive further grant money to set up the community cooperative company that would run it.

After the White House closed in 2010, NTAG had written to the local papers describing how they were now without a meeting place for their group's activities, including the much needed youth club. Not being ones to sit about moaning, they've

now done something about it.

NTAG's response to the closure of their pub should provide a model for communities all over the county (and country). Punch Taverns saw the pub as a business and closed it down because it wasn't making them money. The people of north Tupsley saw it as an important community resource and fought back!

Up the North Tupsley Action Group!

MARCH AGAINST THE CUTS



Saturday 26th March • 11am
Victoria Embankment, London

Herefordshire Schools UNDER THREAT AGAIN

A financial package going for final approval in March may seal the fate of a number of Herefordshire's small schools.

The package shows that funding for small schools and nurseries may be slashed as the schools budget is cut by £1.5 million.

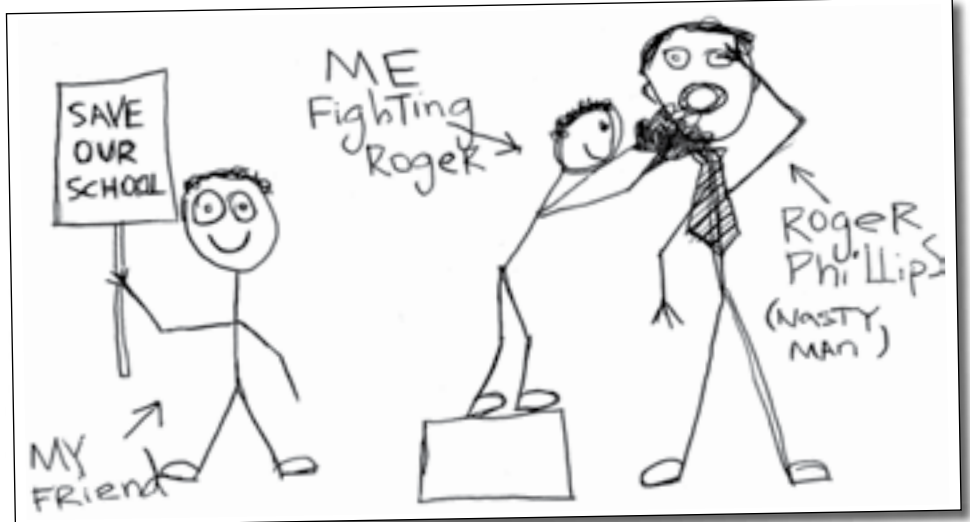
The schools budget loses some £500,000 through falling rolls while facing an increase in overall spending commitments of at least £1million.

This is not the first time Herefordshire's schools have come under serious threat. Back in January 2008 Herefordshire Council made proposals to close or merge 37 schools in the county.

Meetings, rallies and marches were quickly called to oppose the plans and to kick-start a protest campaign. In February there was a mass rally and march in Hereford, which attracted thousands of parents, teachers, school kids and concerned members of the public.

As a result of this huge public opposition the plans were put on hold, for 'further consideration' in 2011.

It would now seem that the



government's public spending cuts have given the council the convenient excuse it's been waiting for to revisit and implement these proposals.

Our rural schools provide vital and easily reachable education for many young Herefordians. Many are also the focal points of the community, providing a space for other out-of-school-hours

activities. Closing them would be a cowardly and damaging move by the council, putting their own interests and the interests of profits before the education of our children.

The Hereford Heckler repeats the call it made in 2008:

NO SCHOOL CLOSURES!

May Day holiday to be scrapped?

The government has announced plans that could see the May Day bank holiday scrapped in favour of a day off in October.

This disgraceful insult to the workers' movement has been put forward by tourism minister, John Penrose, who will publish a White Paper by the end of February.

The May Day bank holiday has connections to International Workers' Day (1st May), which celebrates the achievements of left-wing and labour movements across the world.

May Day also commemorates the Haymarket Massacre that happened on May 4th 1886 in Chicago. The Massacre took place after a workers demonstration demanding an eight hour workday.

Dynamite was thrown at police who retaliated by gunning down and killing several protesters.

In Britain on May Day, demonstrations involving various unions, anarchist and socialist groups now take place in cities around the country.

For the right-wing government to announce that they are planning to scrap this holiday is clearly a politically motivated act. They don't like the connections to protest and revolution; as Dad's Army's Lance-Corporal Jones would say, "they don't like it up 'em".

Well tough! We don't want some pseudo-patriotic 'UK Day' in October, May Day is our day and we'll be celebrating it whether they like it or not.

Local Radical History – part six

Warren James and the Forest of Dean Riots of 1831

The threat of forest privatisation is nothing new to the folk of the Forest of Dean. Over the centuries they have challenged every move to deny them access to the forest.

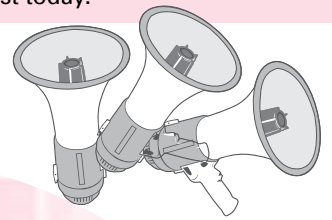
Perhaps the most memorable confrontation occurred in the mid 1800s. The process of enclosing common land by the rich had pushed many people into a life of poverty and misery. In the Forest of Dean there were still laws guaranteeing Foresters, free miners and peasants free access and use of the forest's resources. But things were beginning to change. The greed of landowners led to the passing of an act of parliament. The act set out to increase the enclosed land from 676 to 11,000 acres, denying people the ability to secure even the most basic of livelihoods.

When an economic slump hit the Dean at the beginning of the 1830s the Foresters lives became unbearable so they got organised. The Committee of Free Miners was set up. The Committee elected local lad Warren James to lobby those in power to reverse the enclosures. James was well aware of the hardships facing the people, so when the Free Miners demands were ignored he tabled to motion that all enclosure fences be torn down.

Things quickly escalated and at its peak there were 3,000 men, women and children organised into gangs, destroying fences, turnpikes, crown buildings and the houses of local gentry. Eventually troops managed to end the rioting, and although James was arrested and transported to Tasmania, other rioters received quite lenient sentences. Most of the fences were rebuilt but the radical nature of the Foresters has lived on and many free mining and commoner rights still exist today.

BANK SHUT DOWN

in anti-cuts protest



A Hereford bank was forced to close last month after anti-cuts protesters occupied the building for two hours.

Lloyds TSB were targeted by around a dozen activists from Hereford Solidarity League on Saturday 15th January in a protest against government spending cuts and excessive bankers' bonuses. The sit-in protest, which was peaceful and good-natured, received overwhelming support from members of the public.

Protesters handed out leaflets and held placards reading 'fight the cuts' and 'make the banks pay'.

Managers at Lloyds TSB decided to close early, an hour into the protest, before the demonstrators agreed to leave just after two o'clock.

The five biggest banks will make profits of £52 billion this year—£1 billion a week. The financial fat cats who caused the crisis we're in want to award themselves an incredible £7 billion in bonuses after bringing the country to its knees. These selfish bankers are actually demanding more money to finance their millionaire lifestyles while the rest of us are forced to tighten our belts!

This year began with brutal attacks that unfairly hit working class people—the rise in VAT, public transport fares up, food prices up, fuel prices up. All this comes on top of shattering public service cuts, job losses and pay curbs for millions.

If Cameron and Clegg get their way this will be a horrendous year for ordinary people. The only way to prevent that is to make it a year of fightback and resistance and to turn the class war back on them.

We must maintain the pressure on the government and the bankers.

They must NOT be allowed to get away with their crimes against the poor.



Protesters occupy Lloyds TSB

THE LESSON FROM EGYPT: REV

GO ON THEN! GET LOST!

And take your Tory friends with you!

The rich bankers who caused the financial crisis have been throwing their toys out of the pram, threatening to leave the UK if they don't get their way over bonus payments. Incredibly, despite bringing the country to its knees and taking over £37 billion from taxpayers these selfish bankers are actually demanding *more* money while the rest of us are forced to tighten our belts!

Even more incredibly, the government is allowing them to stick two fingers up to the beleaguered British population! While the rest of us have to deal with rising prices, a massive hike in VAT, job losses and cuts in services the greedy parasites in the City are being allowed to award themselves around £7 billion for doing their job so badly!

Why is the government siding with the fat cats in the City? Maybe it's because so many Tories come from the financial sector! A recent investigation has revealed that 70 Tory MPs are or have been in the pay of the banks—including Hereford's own 'compassionate Conservative', Jesse Norman, who used to make huge profits for Barclays before he started pretending he cares about ordinary people.

The truth is that hypocrites like Norman don't have a clue about our lives. How could the bunch of toffs who make up

the government—half of whom went to private schools—know anything about being short of money? They talk about sticking up for people but it's all just an act designed to help them desperately cling to power. Their actions—allowing tax avoidance by big companies and doing nothing about obscene bankers' bonuses—prove that they just care about protecting themselves and their rich friends.

So, here's a thought. Let's call the bankers bluff and let them take their failures elsewhere! We don't need them or their Tory toff friends.

Let's keep up the pressure and get rid of both!



RIGHT: Jesse Norman, who recently claimed £1,500 in expenses for furniture. It's a hard life being a greedy, millionaire politician you know.

COUNCIL'S WAR ON OPEN SPACES

Council plans to sell off or build on green spaces in the county are once again hitting the headlines.

In Ledbury there have been fears of a new housing development on the town's cricket and football pitches off New Street for some time. There are currently major plans to build 800 new homes in the town, most of which will be around the viaduct to its north. However, there are fears that public spending cuts may force the council to sell off the cricket and football pitches, leaving them to the mercy of developers.

Meanwhile, Herefordshire Council has admitted that discussions are underway regarding the sale of the Bishop's School's playing fields in Tupsley. It is believed an offer has been put in for the site, which could be used to build more houses.

The playing fields are currently used by the school for many sporting activities and also by Herefordians Cricket Club, which plays its Marches League matches on the site.

John Escott, a sports teacher at the school for 31 years, has said the plans would "cause outrage" if they were to go ahead.

Residents living in Newton Farm have also been dealt a blow in their battle to save a patch of open land near Argyll Rise. The near five-year campaign of the Newton Farm Town Green Action Group to get the area registered as a town green and therefore protected, was dismissed by the council's regulatory committee in January.

Martin Gilleland from the action group said that the ruling 'adds to the distrust that communities have with local politics.' The landowner, Herefordshire Housing, said that it may be some time before the land is built on, but certainly didn't rule it out.

It is clear that Herefordshire Council's commitment to protecting green, public spaces and school playing fields is a secondary matter when faced with the prospect of money from property developers. It also shows that all kinds of community resources are being hit as a result of government public spending cuts. We must defend our open spaces, sports fields and school playing fields, which are currently in place for the benefit of everybody!

Hands off our forests

At the beginning of January members of Hereford Solidarity League joined over 3,000 people to protest against government plans to privatise vast areas of Forestry Commission land. The rally, speeches, music and ritual burning of Big Ben took place at the Speech House outside Coleford in the Forest of Dean.

The demonstration took place to show opposition to the coalition governments Public Bodies Bill. This privatisation of state-owned forests will allow developers and energy firms to get their hands on some of the most beautiful and important land we have.



More than anywhere else this government sponsored land grab will affect the people of the Forest of Dean, but they are not sitting back and accepting it. The newly formed Hands off our Forest (HOOF) describe themselves as a broad alliance of groups and individuals campaigning to keep the forest out of private hands. And they have history on their side. From the riots of 1612, to Warren James in 1831, to the campaign that stopped the 1981 forest privatisation, the Foresters have shown themselves to be a committed and passionate bunch, so don't be surprised when they win this battle.

Visit www.handsoffourforest.org

EVOLUTION IS POSSIBLE DAVID CAMERON WATCH OUT

WE WOZ ROBBED!

Brave Bulls mugged by the richer clubs

Those thieving blighters have been at it again! No, we're not talking about the pickpockets who relieved Spurs manager Harry Redknapp of his sweets (and his wallet) during a trip to Madrid. We're talking about those rich clubs who plunder the lower leagues of English football, taking the best players and coaches just because they can.

Brave Hereford United were the victims of this crime against fair play twice in January as first, technical director Lennie Lawrence, and then young striker, Mathieu Manset, were snatched away by Championship clubs. The experienced Lawrence and top-scorer Manset have been key figures in Hereford's recent run of good form—a run that has seen them perform heroics in the FA Cup and climb out of the relegation zone.

Unfortunately, it brought them to the attention of big clubs Crystal Palace and Reading who snapped them up in return for a pittance—probably less than the amount in Harry's wallet!

The rich are doing their best to ruin 'the beautiful game' all over the world. The decision to stage the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, despite legitimate concerns about summer temperatures, human rights issues and infrastructure problems, was clearly a financial one. The head of the Asian Football Confederation recently described the sport as "quite a business involving a lot of financial, media, marketing". Indeed.

But the beautiful game is also the peoples' game! Football originated in working class communities. Despite everything, it still represents those communities where its played all over the world. Money will never be able to change that.

We at the Heckler wish Hereford United good luck for the remainder of the season. They're going to need it. But if all of us show our support the Bulls might just beat the odds and snatch an unlikely victory!

SHHHH!

The Russians are coming!

England's Hereford based blind football team are back in action for the first time since last year's World Championship. They are taking on the Russians in two friendlies at the Point4 up at the Royal National College and hope to build up momentum leading into a busy summer of football.

Although the England team were disappointed to only finish fourth at the World Championship, the tournament as a whole was a massive success. The organisers at the RNC managed to put on a great event. They did this even with a completely uncooperative Football Association, and a low flying SAS helicopter interfering with a match. Good on you, RNC.

Anyone who was lucky enough to go and watch a World Cup game will know that tickets sold out and these games against the Russians will be no different. If you've never been to a blind football match then now is your chance to experience it. Get a ticket, get up to the Point4 but, Shhhh, leave your air horn at home.

MATCH DETAILS

Friday 18 February at 7.30pm / Saturday 19 February at 3pm
Ticket details - call The Point4 on 01432 376376



Helen Heckler

■ Spare a thought for poor old Richard Keys! His future in sports broadcasting is uncertain but not because he was caught making derogatory remarks about female officials and directors. Oh no, it was because of 'dark forces'! Really, Richard? Would those be the same dark forces that starve women's football in England of coverage and resources and reduce any discussion of female performance to whether she is a 'looker' or not? Richard, there's a reason Karen Brady didn't answer your call. She didn't want to waste her time listening to a whiney sexist prat!

■ 'Hate-filled anarchists' are planning to 'wreck' Wills and Kate's big royal wedding, says The Sun. Woop woop! Good on them! Those royal parasites should be paying for their own wedding. Someone tell them we're not interested. Anyone for commemorative sick bags?

■ Congratulations to the people of Belgium! They haven't had a government for seven months now as squabbling politicians there are refusing to work together. And yet, everything is going on as normal in the country. People aren't rioting, looting and killing each other. They're just getting on with their lives. "People can act where politicians fail," one Belgian said. Blimey! It's almost as if we don't really need governments at all...

■ **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