

Hereford Heckler



The bulletin of Hereford Solidarity League

FREEDOM, EQUALITY, COMMUNITY • #14 • JUNE/JULY 2010

“Disobedience in the eyes of anyone who has read history, is man’s original virtue. It is through disobedience that progress has been made, through disobedience and rebellion” —Oscar Wilde

No change to the dictatorship

Cllr Roger Phillips, leader of the council since God knows when, has been re-elected as leader again. The people of Herefordshire didn’t get to vote on this, the councillors decided it amongst themselves. Long live democracy!

SQUATTER ESTATE AGENTS



6 Lloyd Street, Portfields, Hereford

Empty for three years—NOT SAFE TO SQUAT.



8 Lloyd Street, Portfields, Hereford

Empty for three years—NOT SAFE TO SQUAT.

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



23 Cotterell Street, Whitecross, Hereford
NOW OCCUPIED BY NEW TENANTS



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.

Three years on...

HOUSES STILL STANDING EMPTY

A stand-off between Herefordshire Housing and an insurance company has left two houses standing empty for three years because neither party will take responsibility for the cost of repairs.

In a report compiled for the *Heckler*, Herefordshire Housing told us how tenants from the houses in Lloyd Street, Hereford were first moved out in 2007 because of a major subsidence issue, which is now beginning to affect the neighbouring properties.

A claim was made with their insurance company who offered £25,000 for an underpinning system. This was rejected.

What it now means is that Herefordshire Housing are refusing to pay for the repairs on their own property, whilst their insurers are refusing to cough up the full amount as well. What’s that figure we keep repeating? Five thousand people waiting for a home—**GET IT SORTED!**

We first reported on the Lloyd Street properties in our last issue, encouraging people on the housing waiting list to squat them; our position being, if the housing authorities won’t find you a home, take matters into your own hands and do it yourself.

Within days, grilles were put on the doors and windows of these two houses to prevent anyone gaining entry—the first bit of work that had been done to them in years!

Despite the danger, no safety notices were displayed up on the properties. This is still the case.

We asked Herefordshire Housing what actual work had been done to the Lloyd Street properties over the course of the three years and when proper repair work was due to start. **They failed to answer.**

And keeping schtum seems to be the order of the day: we

also contacted Herefordshire Council to ask why another empty house we featured in our last issue in Quicksets, Redhill, has also been left standing empty and in a terrible state of disrepair for years. **They refused to comment.**

So let’s repeat it again: there’s thousands on the housing waiting list! There’s people in temporary accommodation waiting for somewhere permanent. There’s people who aren’t even allowed temporary accommodation because housing officers tell them they’re not entitled to social housing. There’s people who are literally homeless! **And all this while landlords like Herefordshire Housing are too stubborn to pay for the repairs themselves.**

What we urgently need is housing to be controlled by the tenants, for the tenants. **Kick out the incompetent bosses on their fancy salaries, we can do a better job ourselves.**

Below:
Quicksets,
Redhill. An
eyesore to the
neighbourhood.



Councillors deaf TO ALL OBJECTIONS

Should next year's local elections change the rotten-to-the-core Herefordshire Council, the autocratic authority's all-powerful Central Planning Committee should be the first to get a thorough clean-out.

Two disgracefully lop-sided decisions were whistled through this Spring: the fatuous 'link road to nowhere' and a lacklustre housing development in the grounds of the listed Caradoc Court, near Ross-on-Wye.

After ruling that It's Our City founder, Cllr Mark Hubbard, had 'a prejudicial interest' in the outcome and expelling him from the Brockington debate, the 14-person committee (10 Tories, including the chair and vice-chair) took less than three hours to nod through the £14-million road, despite the committee receiving **an unprecedented 83 letters of objection.**

Even more scandalous was the planning department's contemptuous treatment of Hereford Civic Society's 32-page technical analysis of the follies of the Link Road, which had taken the society over 250 member hours to research, write and publish—**its existence warranted a mere eight words in the committee papers!**

HEREFORD GAY PRIDE

May saw Hereford's third annual 'Out in the Sticks' festival, with even more lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans themed events than last year.

The main event was a big diversity party on Castle Green. Highlights from the day included theatre from the About Face Theatre Company, a performance by 2 Faced Dance Company, Hereford Malayalee Association performing Indian dancing and a talk from gay rights campaigner, Peter Tatchell.

"We hope to have another family-friendly event next year," says Herefordshire Rainbow Forum's secretary, Lynsey Radmore, who co-organised the event with Christian Mather of Gay Pride UK.

"It was great to see people from all our diverse communities on the green having a great time, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity."

Our respect goes to the organisers for another fantastic festival—we're already looking forward to next years.

What's that egg smell?

URGHHHHHHHH, IT'S THE BNP

Hereford BNP members were shown the contempt they deserve as they arrived at the election count on 6th May.

Fascist candidate John Oliver, and local leader Chris Gower, were among the BNP members to be pelted with eggs, glitter bombs and an endless barrage of abuse as they tried to make their way into the count.

Our supporters on the inside reported how John 'Billy-no-mates' Oliver never spoke a word all night and his 'party' were completely ignored by everyone.

As the results were announced, **he stood on the platform like a "silly little schoolboy" clutching his egg-stained jacket** and then promptly left without making a speech.

John Oliver held no public meetings and spoke at none of the election hustings, despite invitations. He failed to secure the necessary 5% of votes to save his election deposit. What a joke.



One member of the public who was given leave to speak under the three minute rule was local photographer Keith James, whose business premises directly faces the new road's junction with the A49. Mr James—who was never sent a formal notification of the planning application—said that despite his constant barrage of letters to the road's promoter ESG, **he was first paid a visit by planners just 48 hours before the Brockington meeting!**

No fewer than six planning committee members raised the matter of the horrendous traffic problems which the new cross-city road will impose on residential roads such as Barrs Court and Bodenham. But the two people who should have been present to speak up for their constituents, Aylestone ward councillors Nick Vaughan and Brian Wilcox, were conspicuous by their absence.

Two weeks later the committee was back to give the green light to a complex of six bland, executive-style detached houses, to be built in the grounds of Caradoc Court, the partially-restored 17th century mansion at Sellack, which was mysteriously gutted by a fire in 1986. Even a 300-signature local petition failed to impress the committee, which approved the scheme ... **submitted by the property's owner, local Tory county councillor Harry Bramer.**



We would like to hear from a MS LEOKADIA BUTLER. Please get in touch.

Below left: Merton Meadow car park, site of the link road, phase 1. Below right: Caradoc Court, before fire.

POLITICS IS FOR LIFE, NOT JUST THE BALLOT BOX

In our last issue we laid out our own political ideas. We said **voting won't change anything ... but the involvement of each of us in our communities will.**

In any neighbourhood a whole range of positive and practical things can be organised and encouraged which bring people together and build up community spirit:

- encourage discussion in your street or block of flats
- do local door-to-door leaflets or newsletters about local issues
- start a community action group
- hold public meetings on topical local issues
- organise street parties, picnics and other social events
- campaign for play and youth facilities
- demand traffic calming
- fight for better housing
- defend useful community facilities threatened with closure
- make sure the streets are kept clean
- promote recycling projects
- plant trees in streets and parks
- start a 'park friends' group to protect and improve green spaces
- set up and support parents' groups in schools and playcentres
- find positive ways of reducing anti-social behaviour
- make sure local historical sites and buildings etc. are protected

The possibilities are endless and with a community action group you could start to do them all! **Why not get together with two or three neighbours you know and start meeting regularly in each other's homes or the local pub?** Give yourselves a name. Call a meeting of local residents to publicly launch your action group.

Discuss what people feel are the important issues, and things you can start to do together; deliver reports of these discussions to all interested neighbours. Link up with other community groups around the county. Contact the council to find out what's going on about various issues. Take action for the improvements your community wants.

It's about taking 'ownership' of our own neighbourhoods and our own lives. Most importantly, stick at it and you and your community will be stronger for it.

SUPPORTERS FIGHT CAFÉ CLOSURE

More than 2,500 people have signed a petition against plans to close a popular Malvern café.

St Ann's Well café tenant, John Redman, has been told by the Malvern Hills Conservators group that he must vacate the building in October to make way for a redevelopment that will include a visitor information centre.

Mr Redman handed in the petition when he recently attended a Conservators board meeting.

Supporters were also in attendance and the evening was characterised by hostile interruptions before being adjourned twice.

The fight to save the café continues. Find out more by joining their Facebook group '[Save St Ann's Well...!!!](#)'.



Hereford's Radical History – part three

“When farmers became gentlemen, their labourers became slaves” —William Cobbett, 1830

The system of land use that developed up until the 19th century in Herefordshire mirrored that of the rest of the country. Each household had a share in available land and access to woodlands in order to produce sufficient food and fuel for the household. Any surplus was bartered at the local market. This system led to the 'common land' that can still be seen in the county today, the most important of which is the Lugg meadows to the east of Hereford.

Much of the agricultural land and woodland was owned by the lords of the manor. These land owners, many of whom were MPs, realised that great power and wealth existed in land ownership and so set about enclosing common land and removing the rights of the rural people. Through a series of laws six million acres of land were enclosed.

The most damaging effect of the Enclosure Acts was the forcing of previously independent people into wage slavery as agricultural labourers, who often earned the lowest wages in the country.

Life became increasingly hard as the 1800s wore on. Many rural folk had to endure 'mop fairs' where they stood on the street like cattle while prospective employers looked them over and then haggled with them for their wage. Many people moved to the city or emigrated to look for a better life.

Discontent with appalling living and working conditions finally resulted in the organising of agricultural unions in the county. **In 1871 at the Lion Inn in Leintwardine, 350 people turned up for what resulted in the North Herefordshire & South Shropshire Agricultural Labourer Improvement Society.** This was followed a year later by the Hereford Agricultural Labourers Union after a meeting at the Old Gore Inn in Yatton.

Although the methods of action differed between these unions both had similar goals: improvement of labourers cottages, increase in wages and conditions, abolition of the mop fairs and land reform. **This was the first time many workers had organised themselves. Agitation and strikes lead to successes in wage increases and living conditions.** As trade unionism took hold branches were organised in most villages with many thousands of members across the county.

This article can only begin to touch on the subject. For an in-depth study we highly recommend the book '*Roses round the door?*' by Tim Ward published by Logaston Press.

Do you remember a local socialist newspaper called 'The Bull'? Email us at kay.bulstreet@hotmail.co.uk

ESG lose funding—STOP IT ALL NOW!

Another blow has been dealt to ESG Herefordshire after critical funding for the link road was withdrawn.

The government's Homes and Communities Agency has frozen funding for phases two and three of the link road with money for phase one still unsecured.

The council has now put all compulsory purchase orders on hold as the entire ESG project looks set to grind to a halt.

Now is the perfect opportunity for the council to wake up and smell the steaming pile of excrement that is the ESG—the people of Hereford don't want this project and there's no money for it anyway!

ESG Herefordshire claims it is coming up with alternative "innovative" funding plans. What could these possibly be? Jumble sales? Where do they think they're going to find the millions of pounds needed now the government has said no?

They've wasted millions already, with nothing to show for it. They've paid themselves a very pretty penny to come up with a set of plans no one supports. They've totally ignored the voices of Herefordians. **The whole project is a joke. Stop it all now!**

Cllr Roger Phillips, leader of the council, can be bombarded with complaints on 01544 340269 or by email rjphillips@herefordshire.gov.uk



Council leader, Roger Phillips, waiting for your complaint

Bill Wiggin supporter forces closure of Mordiford Post Office

Mordiford Post Office is to close this summer following a massive rent increase by the landlord and Bill Wiggin supporter, Major James Hereford.

Mordiford postmaster, Harvey Harwood, says that the new rent is now more than he is paid by the Post Office and that it is very unlikely that anyone else would be able to take over under the circumstances.

Major Hereford was pictured supporting North Herefordshire MP, Bill Wiggin, on one of his election leaflets ... the same leaflet that—ironically—trumpets Wiggin's supposed opposition to Post Office closures.

Herefordshire has a long tradition of the rural rich screwing over the rural poor—it's good to see Major Hereford is keeping that spirit alive.

Summer festivals—our pick

By the time the next *Heckler* comes around some of us at Heckler HQ may have lost a few more brain cells, due to our favourite festival, Nozstock, happening on the 9th–11th July. And if last year is anything to go by some of us might not make it home at all.

Where as we wouldn't normally dream of telling you what to think, say, or wear on your head, we feel we have to tell you to get down to Bromyard on that weekend and enjoy the summer.

Another locally run festival—now in its second year—is Aestival, featuring folk to rock, reggae to dubstep. The event is happening 19th–20th June at the Yurt Village, Fromes Hill.

nozstockfestival.co.uk aestivalfest.co.uk

Cuts

The government's looming cuts will be ruthless and destructive, but we would be wrong to blame any one party. This recession was caused by an aggressive, profit-hungry global system—capitalism. Unless capitalism is overthrown by way of revolution we will continue to face a never-ending cycle of recessions and cuts.

SPORT

WORLD BLIND FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS COMES TO HEREFORD

While the attention of the mainstream media, the FA and FIFA are firmly focused on an over hyped corporate event in South Africa, people closer to home are preparing to make history. The largest disability football event ever to be held in England is coming to Hereford.

Between 14th–22nd August the Royal National College for the Blind (RNC) is hosting the men's 2010 IBSA World Blind Football Championships. All the games are taking place at the Point4, the new international standard sports centre at the RNC.

Ten teams including the hosts, England, and current champions, Argentina, have been drawn into two groups. European Championship runners up, England, are in group A and kick off the tournament against Spain at 3pm on the opening day.

For those of you that haven't experienced this sport before, blind football is played on an indoor pitch with five players on each team. Outfield players are all blind but the goalkeeper can be fully or partially sighted and operates in a small area. Touchline boarding is in place to enable a free flowing game and also enable players to orientate themselves on the pitch. The football contains ball bearings so that it makes a noise when it moves.

The buildup to the championships has seen school children from around the region wearing blindfolds and taking part in blind football matches. As well as promoting the tournament this is increasing the awareness of issues faced by those with disabilities and the benefits of sport for all sectors of the community.

We at Hereford Solidarity League think it's great that an event that has previously been held in Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires is coming to our city. With tickets costing £5 for a day pass we hope, like us, you will go along and give your support.

For a fixtures, tickets and general information visit www.blind2010.com or phone the RNC on 01432 265725.

STUDY QUESTIONS HOMOPHOBIA IN FOOTBALL

Researchers at Staffordshire University are currently running an online survey to find out fans opinions on gay footballers. A small pilot study of 250 fans found positive attitudes to homosexuality.

Ellis Cashmore, professor of culture, media and sport said that initial findings found that most people are relaxed about the presence of gay footballers in the English league. He went on to say that many would welcome more honesty from players about their sexuality.

Only one high-level footballer has ever come out. Justin Fashanu revealed he was gay in 1990. He committed suicide eight years later.

Fuel has been added to the debate on homophobia in football in recent months. In February the FA postponed its anti-homophobia campaign when the accompanying film was criticised by gay rights campaigners. Last month saw the screening of the BBC documentary 'Inside Sport – The Last Taboo'. Sports commentator Mark Chapman said he had been called, among other things, "naive, stupid and brave" for making the programme which featured out gay sports stars.

Previous studies have found that English football is rife with homophobia. A representative of professional players was quoted as saying that he was representing gay and bisexual footballers but had advised them to stay in the closet to avoid ruining their careers.

Co-researcher from Staffordshire University Dr Jamie Cleland suggested that if more players were aware of fans' positive attitudes, they were more likely to come out. He said: "Fans encourage footballers to come out. As one fan put it, 'someone needs to do something heroic, and step forward before it [homophobia] can become a thing of the past'."

To participate visit www.topfan.co.uk Source www.pinknews.co.uk



Helen Heckler

■ Well, with the election all done and dusted, we've been left with David Cameron in charge. Before being elected, he claimed that "Britain needed change". After his cuts to education, public sector jobs, pensions and benefits, the people of Britain won't need change, we'll be begging for it.

■ In other election news, fox meat connoisseur and Heckler fan Jesse Norman is now our MP for Hereford. Not only is Hereford currently 'represented' by a man who earns more than most Herefordian businesses, and refuses to send his children to school in the county, but we had to see Jesse's deeply unsettling smile on Midlands Today. Not that we'll see much more of him over the next five years. "Fight the ESG you say? Sorry old chap, too busy, those NHS jobs won't cut themselves!"

■ Just to solidify his place as an absolute scumbag, North Herefordshire MP Bill Wiggin has refused to sign a document condemning the practice of detaining children within the immigration process. This barbaric feature of our immigration system has been condemned by everyone from Amnesty International to David Cameron, but apparently imprisoning children is A-OK in Bill's book. Between his mocking of fearful Cadbury workers, his part in the expenses scandal, and now this, we here at the Heckler think he should sling his hook. Only a few weeks back into the job and he's already showing what a prat he is.

■ **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

