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Hastings



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Social Landlord Leaves 53 Homes Empty

MERLIN BETTS reports from the
Housing Rebellion protest
and occupation of Clifton Court

The blocks of Clifton Court sit on the edge of Castle Ward, minutes from the town centre. They hold 53 flats, all empty. The tenants were asked to leave in autumn 2021, and apart from a mysterious stint as temporary housing (and a few squatters), they've remained empty since they left.

Housing Rebellion protests and organises against the misuse of housing, and thinks this is a travesty – given that we're in a housing crisis. They've gathered some serious evidence to support their concerns and have previously protested outside Clifton Court. The property is owned by Orbit housing association, which sought to rehouse all the tenants, although they wouldn't confirm if all were rehoused successfully. Tenants were offered £6,500 home loss compensation, free removals and new carpets.

It's now three years since the decision to empty the property, and Orbit is still in discussions with local

and national authorities about its future. Meanwhile, around 1,500 Hastings households are waiting for social housing. Orbit claims that demolishing to rebuild is cheaper and more useful than refurbishing, and Hastings Borough Council (HBC) is divided on whether it agrees.

While Clifton Court has been issued with an improvement notice by HBC and is not particularly energy efficient, there is no discernable reason why the flats should be left empty while Orbit works out its plans.

On 23 June 2024, Housing Rebellion occupied one of the blocks of Clifton Court for a 24-hour protest. They sent in two architects and a building contractor. HBC councillors and national media crews also visited. Ignoring any unusual issues that would only be picked up by a full survey, the experts agreed it is structurally sound, suitable housing and should not be

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HOUSING REBELLION



Lightning Fibre
Hyperfast Broadband

Lightning Fast
Full Fibre is here!





Chris Sav
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YOUR DESIGN, OUR COVER
Let's see your seagull on our cover!
Details from design@yourhip.co.uk

EDITOR'S NOTE

By the time you read this edition, Hastings & Rye may have a new MP - a voting decision perhaps influenced by HIP's electoral hustings (pictures back page, reader comments in Letters).

Heaving a collective sigh of relief at the election's end, many will want something to divert their minds from party politics.

Fittingly, in Disability Pride Month, the Community section hosts the first in a series of columns by local poet, Penny Pepper.

Among many delights in a busy Arts section, read of a triumphant Traviata at St John's church, a new Refugee Buddy Project-inspired mural in Robertson Street and the Hero's Journey, an interactive co-production between Afri-Co-Lab and Home Live Art.

Grassroots activism continues to thrive locally as reported to our News pages. The Brighton University Trust Academy funding and staffing dispute escalates, protestors take direct action against Orbit Housing Association and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign held a peace camp outside General Dynamics arms factory.

And finally, immediately following our recent laudatory review of the Sussex Exchange, the venue closed. The curse of HIP?

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News



1 ← empty – although it would seriously benefit from modernisation.

In 2021, Orbit told residents they'd spent 18 months examining the property and "found out that the way it's built lets heat out and damp in. There are also limits on how much we can alter the building layout because of the way it's built [...] We know that just updating the heating or changing windows or doors won't be enough. The building could be updated to meet modern standards, but it would cost at least £5 million." Whether they retrofitted or rebuilt, Orbit said, "residents would have to move out during the building works."

This initial letter to tenants is confusing because, at least when the property was visited on 23 June, no-one could find the damp. Even if it is present in the buildings that couldn't be accessed, that leaves many of the flats in the property still habitable, and damp can be fixed.

'INDEPENDENT SURVEY'
Orbit has since claimed that the £5 million estimate comes from an independent survey. We asked if Orbit would be willing to share the details of this report with local architects, or if they would be willing to meet with activists at their Hastings office. They have declined to respond, instead restating their purpose as a housing association and explaining:

"Orbit is developing two new 100% affordable housing schemes on Harrow Lane and Fredericks Road, which will comprise 80 affordable rent and 116 shared ownership properties, including 31 flats and 165 family homes. The 80 affordable rent properties will be allocated via the Council's Housing Register."

When asked if Orbit had any plans to provide social housing - as opposed to affordable housing - they declined to respond. Social housing is provided to tenants on a council list, and tends to cost half the market average. Affordable housing, by contrast, is set at 80% market rate - much more expensive for the tenant.

In December 2023 there were 1,547 Hastings households waiting for social housing. According to HBC statistics, some had been waiting for up to eight years, and the total number of properties let last year was just 189... so it's hard to see why these 53 flats at Clifton Court are languishing, slowly seeping into disrepair, when they are clearly needed and could be lived in.

Housing Rebellion's experts suggested refurbishment would likely be cheaper than demolishing and rebuilding, and certainly less environmentally damaging. It might

HASTINGS TIDES							
DATE	HIGH AND LOW TIDES				SUNRISE	SUNSET	MOON
FRI 5 JULY	L 5:55am	H 11:30am	L 6:14pm	H 11:47pm	04:51	09:12	NEW
SAT 6 JULY	L 6:47am	H 12:15pm	L 7:04pm		04:52	09:12	
SUN 7 JULY	H 0:33am	L 7:33am	H 12:55pm	L 8:28pm	04:53	09:11	
MON 8 JULY	H 1:15am	L 8:13am	H 1:34pm	L 8:28pm	04:54	09:10	
TUES 9 JULY	H 1:54am	L 8:48am	H 2:12pm	L 9:04pm	04:55	09:10	
WEDS 10 JULY	H 2:31am	L 9:18am	H 2:48pm	L 9:38pm	04:56	09:09	
THURS 11 JULY	H 3:07am	L 9:48am	H 3:24pm	L 10:15pm	04:57	09:08	
FRI 12 JULY	H 3:34am	L 10:20am	H 4:02pm	L 10:48pm	04:58	09:07	
SAT 13 JULY	H 4:25am	L 10:58am	H 4:42pm	L 11:28pm	04:59	09:06	FIRST
SUN 14 JULY	H 5:08am	L 11:41am	H 5:28pm		05:00	09:05	
MON 15 JULY	L 0:16am	H 6:01am	L 12:34pm	H 6:25pm	05:01	09:04	
TUES 16 JULY	L 1:12am	H 7:05am	L 1:40pm	H 7:32pm	05:02	09:03	
WEDS 17 JULY	L 2:19am	H 8:15am	L 2:58pm	H 8:40pm	05:04	09:02	
THURS 18 JULY	L 3:35am	H 9:21am	L 4:15pm	H 9:41pm	05:05	09:00	

* L= LOW TIDE H = HIGHTIDE For beach safety advice visit: nrlni.org/safety/beach-safety



PHOTOS: HOUSING REBELLION

also provide an opportunity to increase the number of flats in the property from the current 53. Orbit, on the other hand, claims any refurbishment would be costly and would cut the number of flats, whereas more could be added as part of a rebuild.

COUNCIL RESPONSE
A spokesperson for Hastings Borough Council declined to comment on the need for social housing as well as (and perhaps more than) affordable housing, but said, "Given the pressures on housing and on the council's finances, we need to work with our housing association partners to develop affordable rented housing and whilst we will always push for the maximum number of affordable homes we can, we want to hear Orbit's plans before we comment further."

Details about the property's use as temporary accommodation remain uncertain. For those who aren't familiar, people in temporary accommodation are still classified as homeless, and their rent is generally charged to HBC per day, costing as much as a hotel room. Whether Orbit charged such an exorbitant rate, and why it couldn't keep letting the property as temporary accommodation, we have yet to discover.

The Greens' Deputy Leader and Housing & Community Wellbeing Portfolio Holder, Glenn Haffenden, wrote on Nextdoor, "[Orbit] are demolishing to build more homes, more sustainable homes, cheaper-to-run homes, more environmentally-friendly homes and also homes that meet the current housing requirements."

Another Nextdoor user replied, "It is always more environmentally

damaging to demolish an existing building, with all the landfill, air pollution and waste of embodied carbon that it entails as well as all the carbon emissions and natural resources in building the replacement [...] It is very concerning that, as the new cabinet member for housing, you are going along with the developer 'greenwashing' of new builds as more sustainable than refurbishing."

Cllr Haffenden wrote, "I have no idea about the structure of the building as this was all done/decided before it was my portfolio." It is worth noting that Cllr Haffenden suggests this is a done deal, despite the council indicating it hasn't even seen Orbit's plans.

Hastings Independent Councillor John Cannan, who works with homeless charity The Seaview Project and attended the occupation, offered a different view: "I see examples everyday of the devastating impact lack of housing has on people in terms of both physical and mental health. I have raised the issue at Council to no avail."

"That is why I am wholeheartedly supporting this protest. It is a disgrace that Orbit is not progressing the refurbishment of Clifton Court as a matter of urgency. Providing affordable rents and secure tenancies should be at the very core of what they do. Instead, they sit back and prevaricate, make all the right noises whilst doing nothing at all to provide a roof over the head of the homeless in Hastings."



To sign Housing Rebellion's petition to refurbish Clifton Court use this qrCode or visit change.org

JASON ELLIS



BEN BRUGES



Striking Teachers Demand Better Funding

MERLIN BETTS

Earlier this week, members of the National Education Union (NEU) went on strike at five schools across Sussex, four of them in Hastings. The union's principal point of contention is that the University of Brighton Academies Trust (UBAT), which runs them, has been removing already scarce funds from several schools in order to change central admin services. Meanwhile cuts and restructuring at local academies have left staff complaining of crushing workloads, and many parents have agreed that this is putting the education and even safety of their children at risk.

Teachers went on strike Monday

and Tuesday, 1 and 2 July. They picketed their respective schools from 7.30-9.30am. All but one of the five Academies closed for the duration – Baird remained partially open. The nursery at Robsack Wood Primary Academy also remained open while the primary closed.

Staff and parents picketing at Baird Primary Academy on Monday were joined by Green Councillor for Castle Ward (and prospective parliamentary candidate) Becca Horn. While many teachers at the school didn't go on strike, the picket was well attended. NEU District Secretary Jenny Sutton, who was also present, reported:

"Parents and staff were dismayed by the actions of Baird management at this morning's picket line. The head teacher had clearly

pre-arranged to meet non-striking staff in advance and lead a convoy of cars through the picket line, the inference being that they would have faced intimidation had they come in alone. Strikers and parents were insulted by this unnecessarily provocative, and indeed passive-aggressive, behaviour – staff could easily have entered through the back gate had they wanted to avoid pickets.

"We are all united in the campaign for better funding and staffing for our schools, and you would have hoped that a head teacher would welcome such commitment from the school community."

The most extreme individual funding case in the UBAT dispute is St Leonards Academy, where the trust has been shown to retain 26% (almost £3million) of its allocated funding. In the same period, support staff were leaving and not being replaced, the joint finance and health and safety officer was being axed, and many teachers were taking sickness leave for stress and mental health concerns.

NEGOTIATIONS

The NEU had called off a strike scheduled for Wednesday 26 June,

and later said that "negotiations since the strike was announced have resulted in the Trust agreeing to radically change the funding model for its schools."

But Phil Clarke, NEU East Sussex Branch Secretary and Vice-President, argues that "to resolve this dispute the Trust not only need to change their funding model, which they have agreed to, they need to guarantee that school budgets will not pay for the change. We cannot accept further job cuts and workload increases as a price for putting this right. They have chosen to fund their own central Trust at the expense of schools. It is the central Trust that needs to pay and the CEO who needs to start trying to win back the trust of the staff."

When asked for comment, UBAT spokesperson Alex Brewer replied, "The Trust remains committed to ongoing negotiations with the NEU to prevent future industrial action and to resolve the dispute."

Emily Ellis, a parent at one of the schools affected stated, "I fully support the strike. I am appalled that a CEO on a six-figure salary has made decisions to take money from our children's schools to fund marketing teams instead of teachers and teaching assistants. The funding crisis caused by the government is already unacceptable. To make that even worse at a trust level cannot be justified. Special Educational Needs provision, teaching assistants and classroom resources should have been put before executive salaries and corporate branding."

STRIKE DEMANDS

Jenny Sutton, NEU District Secretary, summarises the staff demands as:

1. Provision of a clear guarantee that all savings to reach target contribution rates will come from the central trust, not school budgets, and that charges won't be made on schools to claw back money for the central trust.
2. Reduction of the percentage for schools contributing over 9% of their budget next academic year quicker than is currently planned, so they can address class size and TA [Teaching Assistant] provision issues sooner.
3. An immediate increase in TA provision for Blackthorns Community Primary Academy in Haywards Heath.
4. That any restructuring keeps individual schools' business managers in those schools.
5. That curriculum planning time prior to September off timetable is built in for schools dealing with PAN (Public Admission Number) reduction.

In addition to this, she states: "while not specifically part of the trade dispute, there is a clear breakdown in trust and confidence in the senior leadership among our members."

Sussex Exchange Follows Azur into Closure

HUGH SULLIVAN

The Sussex Exchange restaurant, bar and cinema complex on the Queensway link road has closed after its operating company folded into insolvent liquidation. Prospec-

tive customers who had made restaurant or film show bookings were told last week that they were indefinitely cancelled.

It appears from documents filed with the Companies Registry that the company The Sussex Exchange Ltd, whose sole director and shareholder was Elie Fakhoury, was put

into administration in July last year, owing £260,000 in unpaid tax. It was also in debt to a large number of trade creditors, and to its landlord Sea Change Sussex, which originally developed the site with public regeneration money.

Sea Change at that stage accepted that the operator's business had been hit hard by the Covid pandemic. It agreed a repayment plan for reduction of the arrears of rent while allowing time for Mr Fakhoury to find a buyer. It has to be inferred from the closure now announced that no buyer has been found.

These are the second major leasehold premises in Sea Change's portfolio to be repossessed this year in

circumstances of the operator's insolvency following the closure in January of the Azur Marina Pavilion on St Leonards seafront.

Over five months later the Azur remains closed, though a Sea Change spokesperson said last week that the company has received "a good response" to its marketing of a fresh lease. There are, it was claimed, 11 separate parties who have put forward proposals for taking on either the whole or part of the building. "The company is now carefully evaluating these proposals to assess the best way forward," he said - a process which is expected to take "a number of weeks".

It emerged following the repos-

session of the Azur not only that it was suffering from severe water ingress problems but that there was some conflict over responsibility for them between Sea Change and Hastings Borough Council (HBC), who are the freeholders of the building. The council apparently retains an obligation to maintain some parts of the building under the terms of the superior lease. However, neither Sea Change nor HBC has been willing to expose their differences to public scrutiny. The Sea Change spokesperson said last week that the two parties "have been working together to investigate the problems and carry out works to address them, and the situation has now been resolved".

Bay Snatch in the Old Town: Who Dunnit and Why?

HUGH SULLIVAN

In May this year, Caroline and Nigel Harvey bought a small terrace house in Courthouse Street, which runs between the High Street and The Bourne in the Old Town. The house has no garden but a sizeable back patio, bounded from its neighbours by walls between seven and ten feet high. In the corner of the patio stood a mature multi-stemmed bay tree, around 10 to 12 feet tall, with roots in the soil beneath.

The Harveys were away from Hastings over the weekend of 22-23 June. When they returned, they found that the tree was no longer there. It had been sawn quite neatly at ankle height, and the whole of the trunk stems, branches and leaves had been removed.

They immediately asked their neighbours, tenants of the adjacent property, whether they had noticed anyone taking the tree. The neigh-

bours said they had been out at the time of the incident, and hadn't heard or seen anything. They had assumed that the Harveys had organised the felling themselves. They appeared equally shocked by the removal of the tree, which poked above their own back yard – they said their little dog had enjoyed its shade.

Caroline checked with the previous owners that they were not involved; also with Hastings Borough Council that no notice had been given for the felling (which would be a legal requirement within the Conservation Area). She then reported the matter in detail to Sussex Police on an online incident form, highlighting the apparent trespass and criminal damage.

POLICE RESPONSE

Within a few hours she received a written response from 'Jenny, contact officer at the Force Contact, Command and Central Department' confirming that a crime report file had been opened but continuing:



"I am sorry to hear that you have been a victim of this crime...Based on the information you have provided, this crime report will now be closed as a valid line of enquiry has not been identified. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any new information relating to this closed report. Thank you once again for contacting us. Kind regards."

Unhappy with this response, Caroline renewed her request for a police investigation. She pointed out that the patio is overlooked by several residences in the upper floors of Wellesley Court, a cul-de-sac comprising several town houses at the rear, and by other neighbouring properties. It would seem impossible

for such a substantial tree to have been chain-sawed, then for the whole of its weighty wood to be lifted above the height of the walls and removed, without anyone noticing. The evidence of trampled weeds, substantial sawdust on a shed roof, and a branch of the tree left by a wall indicated that intruders had climbed over this roof from the Wellesley Court cul-desac, felled the tree and passed it back over the roof. The perpetrators could then have exited Wellesley Court onto the High Street.

Caroline asked for the police to make enquiries in this direction, suggesting that witnesses would not appear without being approached. Sussex Police are, however, un-

moved. They have told her that the crime has been logged as "criminal damage, without any witnesses or CCTV. There would be no lines of enquiry, so would therefore be closed as per policy."

Since the police have offered no assistance, Caroline has told HIP the story hoping that its publication may jog evidence from someone who either saw the felling and removal or who may be aware of the wood being traded. Bay wood is not hugely valuable, but has a fine grain and moderate hardness that makes it usable for carving and marquetry or for manufacture of walking sticks.

Is that a clue? Miss Marple, where are you now?



Peace Camp at Hastings Weapons Factory

Palestine campaigners in Hastings held a 48 hour 'peace camp' outside the General Dynamics arms factory on Telford Road in Hastings last weekend from Saturday noon to Monday morning. They say that 100 or more people attended during the course of the encampment.

At the closing protest rally at 8am on Monday, camp organisers, the Hastings & Rye Palestine Solidarity Campaign (HRPSC), had been hoping to appeal to workers to refuse to handle military equipment bound for Israel that they believe will be used to commit war crimes. However, only a handful arrived that morning to walk past the campaigners; the rest appeared to have been given leave to avoid any engagement.

According to the American Friends Service Committee, a charity of Quaker origins based in Pennsylvania which makes a study of the arms trade, "General Dynamics supplies the Israeli military with a wide variety of weapons, including various bombs. The company's tech-

nologies are also integrated into Israel's main weapon systems, including fighter jets and armored combat vehicles ... For years, these weapons have repeatedly been used against Palestinian civilians, resulting in numerous casualties as well as mass destruction of homes and civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, and water and electric systems."

An arms embargo on Israel is supported by a wide range of NGOs, including Amnesty International, Christian Aid, Oxfam and Save the Children. In a UK poll conducted in April this year, 68% of those surveyed said they would support a ban on arms sales to Israel. A majority of supporters from all of the major political parties would support such a ban, with even 56% of Conservative voters agreeing. Yet neither Labour nor Conservative leadership has made any such call.

The intention was to use the last weekend before the general election to demand "that our politicians put an end to Britain's complicity in



genocide and stop companies like General Dynamics from arming Israel". The camp included a debate between representatives of the Muslim Greens and the local Workers Party candidate for Hastings and Rye, Phil Colley, about how people concerned about Gaza should vote next Thursday. It also involved talks on the global arms trade; workshops

on non-violent direct action and protest rights; and music from Jude Montague, Allie K Stewart and Sam Brown.

One attendee Emily Price, who came with her six-year-old daughter Scarlet, said: "I can't believe that within two miles of my daughter's school they are making things to kill children in Gaza. I felt we had to be

here to show this is not being done in our name."

Three local residents – Laurie Holden, Thomas Delves and Clem McCulloch – will stand trial at Hastings Magistrates Court on 27 August on charges of aggravated trespass at a previous HRPSC rally outside the General Dynamics factory in February. All have pleaded not guilty.

A New Beginning

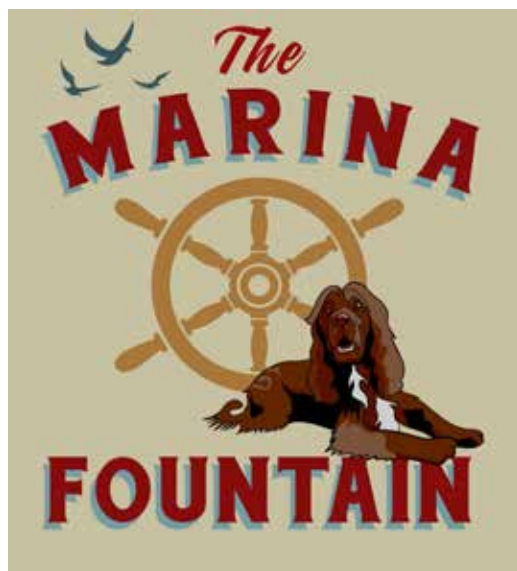
JJ and Paulina, the new owners of the Marina Fountain, talk to ROD WEBB about its future

The Marina Fountain on West St Leonards seafront has had a great five years: I have to admit that I was concerned for its future: like many others, I have fond memories of eating, drinking and listening to music there. However, on meeting JJ and Paulina, it quickly became clear that they not only had the experience to run a successful pub but were also determined to centre it round the local community.

JJ has been running pubs for 18 years, but the excitement of running big London pubs and managing a large staff has worn off – “spreadsheet operations” as he calls them. Newly married, he and Paulina are “looking to set down roots in the town”.

Paulina joined us and explained how she’d visited Hastings for a long weekend and “loved it”: the people, the sea, the atmosphere. JJ agreed, saying that they had come here for “the quality of life”.

He believes that the landlords should have a clear presence in the pub, either one of them being avail-



able at all times. “You need to live and breathe it,” he says. That’s not to dominate the atmosphere but to encourage everyone to feel at ease. He also believes in “exceptional service”, which he puts down to his Irish side (just 25%). This involves noticing things and being in tune with customers – especially noticing

when they might fancy another drink!

Talking of drinks, they will continue with the current range but plans are afoot to increase real ale taps to three later in the year.

The first decision was to increase opening to seven days a week. As befits a community pub, things will emerge organically around the needs of the customers. But there are plans for a weekly pub quiz on Thursday, once a month the proceeds going to charity.

We were interrupted by the arrival of the chef and moved on to talking about food. Audrey, who is French, came to work with JJ from London and has already created an affordable menu with vegan tacos (completely allergen-free) and a sumptuous sausage and mash. Although the kitchen is small, everything is prepared on site with locally-sourced ingredients – from Appleyard’s Butchers and Sussex Fruits, conveniently located just down the road, among others. Also, sourdough pizzas – the pizza oven now installed – bar snacks, and even retro offerings such as scampi in a

basket (with real scampi, of course).. And like so many establishments in the town, The Marina Fountain remains firmly dog friendly. In fact, Jarvis the cocker spaniel will be there to welcome them and keep order. And to make that clear to any visitor, Jarvis takes centre stage on the new pub sign.



Are House Parties a Thing of the Past?

FLO GRAHAM describes her experience of the decline of house parties and argues for their return

For many of my teen years, house parties were key to an enjoyable weekend. Friday and Saturday nights out on the piss only really began after ordering a ‘drinks drop’ to a random house – urging the delivery driver to let us jump in the back to save on taxi money.

What pleasure to spend evenings with friends and strangers of all ages, talking and smoking in the kitchen, crammed into a three-piece suite playing drinking games, group adventures to the bathroom to vomit into the toilet bowl, to lie in the bath and deep chat our problems away. Such fond memories of cheap nights out where we had each other’s backs.

Since then, I’ve noticed a decline in these parties; understandable

through the Covid years, but why have they not restarted? My personal hermitisation might have meant a lack of invitations, but having heard friends discuss the death of weekly house parties around pub tables, I’m assuming they’re in danger of extinction.

I can’t help feeling that anxiety about the precarious state of our living situation has made the renter uncomfortable about inviting people over. When I first started renting, it was possible to afford a one-bed flat, OK somewhat scuzzy and pokey, for less than £500 a month. Now, with rents what they are, more people are relying on the London-esque ‘room rental’ which might deter any but the most civilised of invitations.

With properties being transformed into holiday lets – cozycozy.com claim there are 800+ in the Hastings area, coupled with another 800+ long term empty properties (rushwittwilson.co.uk) – it’s no wonder that snagging a comfortable, affordable rental property is becoming a pipe dream.

Back in 2017, there was a ready supply of cheap(ish) flats in crappy, though liveable, condition. I didn’t feel anxious about adding another stain to a carpet that already resembled the hide of a Holstein cow; having people over didn’t pose a risk that might lose me my deposit – which currently equates to nearly a month’s income for most. Now, with the antisocial behaviour evictions, rising rents and stagnant wages, fear about stable accommodation is on the rise. Places like Hastings Old Town used to have all sorts of flats for rent, perfect for those who didn’t mind the noise from pub-goers. I’d spend many evenings with friends in properties along the George Street stretch. One



PHOTO BY TOBIAS TULLIUS ON UNSPLASH

of those very properties where I famously expelled tequila shots through my nose can now be booked for £215 a night via Airbnb.

So what does this mean for the next generation? There were plenty of firsts that happened at house parties, and I am grateful for having a safe(ish) environment in which to experiment at the time; there seemed to be more mutual understanding of looking out for one another that I can’t envisage in more upmarket affairs. If you were too far gone, there were familiar people to take care of you, if someone was

behaving aggressively, there was an allyship that enforced expulsion. Out and about in commercial venues, there seems more danger from antisocial behaviour, with management turning a blind eye when it happens.

Perhaps the answer is a community response, an anarchistic participation in the creation of a new-wave party scene: organising house parties in Airbnbs and bringing back to this mad-as-a-hatter town the debauched beauty of what it used to have.

Viva la house party!



Celebrating Refugees

NICKY TORODE

National Refugee Week - whose theme this year was *Our Home* - was a busy time for Culbaba Theatre (Dandelion Theatre), the Ukrainian amateur choir from Bexhill, Hastings and beyond.

Last Saturday, Culbaba Theatre performed at the Mriya festival (mriya means vision), organised by The Good Story Initiative, which took place under a promising blue sky at Manor Barn, Bexhill. The festival celebrated the rich talents of refugees and aimed to build a

more connected and compassionate community. It opened with the song "Prayer for Ukraine," performed by the choir, made up of 10 refugee women who met here in the UK after fleeing the war.

The choir were dressed in stunning traditional costumes from Ukraine and had spent many weeks rehearsing their repertoire and making their headdresses as well as others that were for sale. Other Ukrainian groups and individual singers also entertained the festival goers, who joined in the dancing on the lawns, holding hands in unity. The crowds were also drawn in by stalls selling Ukrainian chocolate, flowery

scarves, hand-made jewellery and hand-crafted greetings cards.

"Singing together is therapeutic," says Valeriya Dvornyk, founder of The Good Story Initiative. "It's times like these, more than ever, that people need to come together."

Members of the community had written their touching stories of the meaning of 'home', and these were laminated and hung, like prayer flags, on the outdoor staircase. The crowds also savoured a mouth-watering lunch of Ukrainian cuisine, served in the grand hall. Dumplings stuffed with potato and onion, stacks of sausages and fermented cabbage salad perfumed the air. Poppy-filled

pastries and buns of cottage cheese and apple flew off the serving plates. Credit for this delicious spread goes to head chef Valentyna Karpenko and the ladies who helped.

All proceeds from the festival went towards purchasing lifesaving tactical medicine to be sent to the frontline.

There was no rest for the choir. On Sunday they performed at Hastings Sanctuary festival, held in the grounds of Hastings Museum. This time the choir sang a cappella which foregrounded their amazingly strong and poignant voices.

And on Wednesday evening, Culbaba Theatre took to the stage - the

De La Warr stage. They performed alongside the London Mozart Players in *Story of the Folk*, a concert showcasing folk music from around the world.

The Good Story Initiative offers diverse wellbeing activities on Saturdays for displaced people, currently at St John's Centre, Bexhill where the Culbaba Theatre rehearses and makes their magic.



If you would like to get involved, contact Valeriya at the.good.story2020@gmail.com, tel 07476972982

£100,000 Charity Giveaway

The David Hunt Trust announced in May that it had set aside £100,000 to donate to some of the smaller charities and community projects based in East and West Sussex.

The trust donated a similar sum in 2023 to a range of charities including Cancer United, Dementia Support and Worthing Mencap. David's partner Catherine, who helped him set up the charity and is now a trustee, explains. "Last year was such an outstanding success, we have decided we will try to make this an annual event."

David Hunt formed his charitable trust with money from the sale of his furniture business in 2010 after retiring to the Sussex Coast. Over the past 14 years, he has donated considerable sums of money to numerous

charities and supported local people, raising money for their community projects. David was voted Worthing and Arun Community Star of the Year in 2012 for his generosity to local people in need.

David is now 86 and, sadly, uses a wheelchair to get around following a spinal cord injury. However, he still takes an active part in the organising of the day-to-day needs of the trust. He is committed to carrying out his philanthropic work and was excited to launch his new £100,000 giveaway as an annual community grant scheme, funds permitting, for the people of Sussex.

This year, the funding awards will be divided into different amounts with £20,000 as the top

grant and £500 as the minimum amount. A total of 30-40 awards will be made.

All applications must be received by the end of July with a clear explanation of how the money will be used. The applications will be considered by a panel of judges, and the successful applicants will receive their grants in the autumn. Groups that are not registered charities can apply but will require investigation of their financial records by the charity trust as due diligence. There are plans to present the funding awards to successful applicants at the prestigious Ham Manor Golf Club, the venue for last year's inaugural ceremony.



Application forms can be obtained by emailing the David Hunt Charitable Trust at dhfoundation2020@aol.com or by letter c/o Jules Chatterton of Brennan and Chatterton, 113 Sea Road, East Preston, BN16 1NX.

Making the Most of Life

Often, the people and streets where we live lack the care and attention they deserve. If there isn't much sense of community in your neighbourhood, maybe more of us need to follow the example of 11-year-old Seraphina McAteer-Dahlberg.

Seraphina lives on the West Hill. She and her friend David Dinu were inspired to write a letter to her local community to urge people to make it a better place. In it, they ask people to do some litter picking every week and to help the homeless. But they also say: "Enjoy life while you can. And smile. Please make the world a better place for everyone."



Seraphina and David wrote and signed the message; then after a neighbour offered to laminate it, they stuck 12 copies on lamp posts around their local area. Seraphina's mother, Maria McAteer, says "They seem to be putting a smile on everyone's face. As it appears that the request is for a limited time only, perhaps we should all do our best ..."



JJ WALTER

Disability Pride Month

A new regular column by disability activist, PENNY PEPPER

Penny Pepper is an award-winning author and poet whose stories explore the disability narrative through provocation, humour and wisdom. Her memoir, *First in The World Somewhere*, was published in 2017; her poetry collection, *Come Home Alive*, in 2019. Her stories are featured in Hemingway Shorts anthology 2021, as an award winner, Lumpen and Mslexia. Her genre-breaking novel, *Nancy Jones and the Show of Wonders*, awaits a brave publisher while she works on her next, *The Widow of Rock-o-Nore*. She lives in Hastings with her cat Pixie.

As Hastings prepares for the final outcome of the General Election, I wonder how many readers know that July is Disability Pride Month? Official statistics state there are 14 million disabled people in the UK, so for my first piece for HIP, I am highlighting pride in a community

I am proud to be part of – one that has grown and matured through my life, from my earliest activism as a first-generation punk. Hastings has its own rich history of dissent and collectivism, descriptive words I’ve often heard alongside creative, quirky and dirty, so it’s a place that’s always a pleasure to belong to. Disability Pride Month is, as the BBC summarises, “an opportunity to raise awareness of disabilities, start positive conversations and

celebrate the diversity and differences of the disabled community”. They go on to say: “Disability Pride Month has its origins in the US, where in 1990... the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed to prevent people with disabilities being discriminated against.” The disability rights movement in the UK has been a global leader – something I’m proud to say has been part of my life since the ‘80s. Yet when the Disability Discrimination Act finally arrived in 1995, it was a diluted disappointment to many campaigners, who remain disenchanted with its replacement, the relatively (disability) weak Equality Act 2010. Yet I am proud to say every change that improves the lives of disabled people is predominantly led by disabled people themselves, whose stories are often overlooked or misappropriated. This happens in Hastings too, yet with my comrades, I remain staunchly committed to what we try to do. It’s important to note that the last census showed that “20.3% of East Sussex residents were living with a long-term physical or mental health condition or impairment” and that “34.8% of households in East Sussex had at least one member

identifying as disabled under the Equality Act in 2021”. This is not a tiny number, and it saddens me that we remain last in the Hastings queue. I and other activists from the local group HAVE (Hastings Access to Venues and Events), formed in 2015, recently featured on BBC local news, highlighting the atrocious lack of accessible toilets in our town. A majority of the most loved music and arts venues are not truly accessible. With my colleagues, I’ve fought for improvement for as long as I’ve lived here, now over 10 years. We are not a homogenised lump and come from diverse and intersectional communities. We crave the basics of equality: not pity, not magical cures, but the removal and moderation of barriers that *affect us all*, from the lack of toilets to the smallest step at a shop, and the absence of large print menus, etc. – which at least some local independent businesses have resolved without any fuss. We are a force to celebrate – our strength, our unity and our refusal to ever give up. This Disability Pride Month, inclusion allies, please join us!

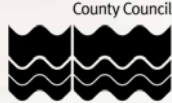
Learn more about Penny at pennypepper.co.uk



HM Government



MORE BUS LESS FUSS



East Sussex
County Council



Take time to connect.
Take a break.
Take the bus.

Get out and about for **free*** with your concessionary bus pass.



eastsussex.gov.uk/FreeTravel

*Travel restrictions may apply.

Brexit Misery Mines

Bleary-eyed and yawning, HIP's Downing Street mole, STUART ROBINSON, eavesdrops on a (possible) 5 July conversation between the new Prime Minister, Kier Starmer, and Cabinet Secretary, Simon Case.

SC. Welcome Prime Minister. Before you settle in there's a few 'for your eyes only' you need to be aware of....

KS. Oh, goodie. The nuclear codes? The hot line to the White House? I bet it's red.

SC. Almost Prime Minister. Green. No, the Brexit Misery Mines.

KS. The Brexit what?

SC. The Brexit Misery mines.

KS. You mean there's more than one?

SC. We have quite a few, Prime Minister.

KS. You're telling me we're mining misery? What on earth for? Hasn't Brexit already generated enough – unofficially of course.

SC. Indeed, Prime Minister. And, yes, officially, it's sunny uplands all the way. Entre nous, the Department for Brexit Opportunities is little more than a part time security guard and a switchboard. Also, part time.

KS. I had heard. But what about these... misery mines?

SC. We're not actually mining misery Prime Minister – no need – Brexit takes good care of that all on its own. No, we're actu-

ally trying to contain it. In mines. Disused ones. Remember the 1980s? Margaret Thatcher, The NUM?

KS. Of course, man. I'm not an idiot!

SC. Indeed, Prime Minister. Around Dover and other UK ports we began seeing our own domestic, off-grey, Brexit Misery mutate like Covid. Remember Delta and Omicron? People suddenly gesticulating and arm waving, or trying to be organised and serious, or taking siestas or donning yellow jackets and building barricades, all the while shouting about bureaucracy and queues in a linguistic soup of Italian, German, French and other European languages. Quite impenetrable.

KS. Well, that's Brexit for you!

SC. Quite so, Prime Minister. Forget the existential dread experienced by touring musicians or the financial torments of our exporters, this was very strange and was growing fast.

KS. But how?

SC. European Lorry drivers, Prime Minister. Their Brexit misery was infecting ours. So, we're

containing them, the lorry drivers. In mines. Until we can return them.

KS. You're telling me we're putting European lorry drivers down mines if they're upset by Brexit?

SC. Precisely, Prime Minister. What choice did we have? The economic harm would be beyond even Liz Truss's imaginings – and last considerably longer

than 49 days. Returning them isn't proving easy either I'm afraid: post-Brexit paperwork! And there's another thing, Prime Minister: we've also contained Boris Johnson – in his own mine.

KS. That's scandalous... the Europeans, I mean. You've put Johnson down a mine too?

SC. Call it 'Nature's Way' or 'Deep State' nemesis if you prefer,

Prime Minister. After all, Brexit misery is yet another bastard Johnson offspring.

KS. Is that wise? What's he doing with himself down there?

SC. Spaffing Prime Minister, up a wall, so I'm informed. No need to worry, he's quite used to being in a hole – of one sort or another.

KS. But, won't people notice he's missing? What about his Daily Mail column?

SC. Not a bit. Generative AI. 800 words of Johnson-esque drivel. No problem. Well, not so that Daily Mail readers would notice. His 'Only Fans' videos endorsing Tory election candidates: also, AI.

KS. What about Nigel Farage? Don't tell me he's down a mine too – think of the poor lorry drivers!

SC. Quite so, Prime Minister. No, unless you're a Putin or Trump supporter, unhinged or live in Clacton, no one is listening to Nigel. Besides, we're making other plans for Nigel.

KS. 'We'? What do you mean by 'we'?

SC. Prime Minister, can I suggest a book you might care to read? Nadine Dorries: 'The Plot'. It might shed some light.

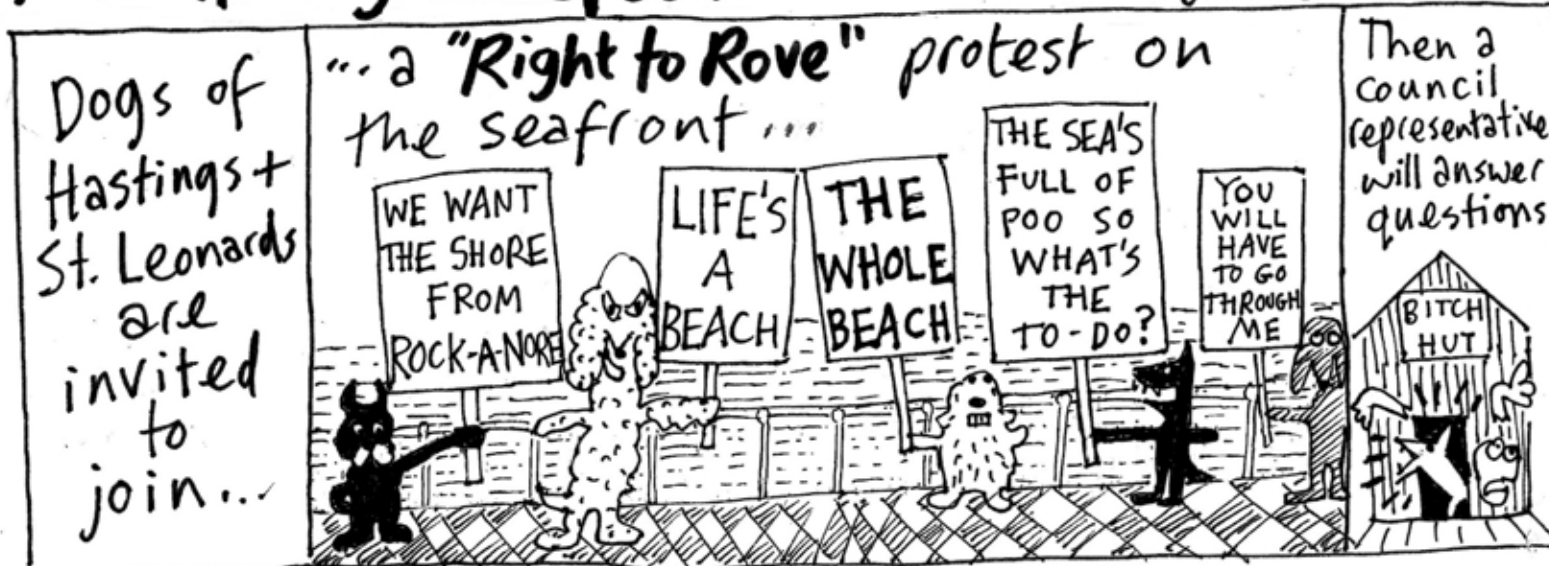
KS. It might shed some light? I'm the Prime Minister! Aren't I in charge?

SC. YES, Prime Minister....



More Hastings less Speed

Annie Lawson





All Power to the Mighty Gig Poster

Hastings Flyer – one of Hastings largest gig-listing websites – is full to bursting with posters promoting events, but has also gone a bit retro with a growing archive of the poster artform. We thought we should ask the man behind the site, JOHN BOWNAS, what this obsession is all about and what makes a good design.

When I set up Hastings Flyer way back in 2016, I did it because, at the time, there simply wasn't anywhere to find all the gigs and events happening in town. I only seemed to hear about things after they had happened.

Calling it the 'Flyer' was a deliberate nod to my younger days when every gig I went to was swarming with people handing out physical

flyers to upcoming shows in the area.

Although the site was entirely online, this seemed as good a name as any.

But posters and flyers go hand in hand, and it recently struck me that maybe I should add another page to the site, something more visual for people to browse through. So, alongside the task of laboriously creating calendar list-



ings, I've now added a feed that I can update in seconds from my phone of any posters I see stuck in windows or walls around town. I also do screen-grabs of digital 'posters' that bands or venues have created for their events.

And although it's a new addition, people are showing a lot of interest. The page is rapidly gaining viewers, and people seem to be spending a fair bit of time looking through the pictures.

There are no links from the images to the events, so if one catches your eye you will have to do a little more digging to find out more or buy tickets. But that's always been the case with physical posters, so I figured, why not just pack in everything possible and leave it to the designers to make their show stand out visually from the crowd?

And of course that's the trick – knowing what makes a great event poster. So I asked AI, but all it told me was what I already knew, so I scrapped that and wrote it myself.

The first principle might seem blindingly obvious – the starting point for any design would be, "What am I trying to tell people?" But when you browse through the examples on the site, you'll see not everyone gets this yet, which is more than a little strange.

The answer is of course: "What is happening, where, and when – and how can people find out more?"

Once you have that fixed in your head, the design comes next and this is where a little mix of science and art comes into play. The science part is about the choice of font, case and colour for your text. But it's not rocket science.

People tend to find things easier to read if the font has no serifs, is written mainly in lower case, and uses a colour that contrasts clearly from the background and doesn't

cause issues for people with common colour vision issues. Look at the Hastings Record Fair poster, for example, and note how you can take it all in really quickly.

Then comes the art.



This is the fun bit but also the really critical stage, because most people will be drawn in by a poster's visual appeal before they read the words.

So, be creative and try to come up with something that really jumps off the page. Be bold and don't be afraid of garish colours – they can be your friend. The Hastings Comedy Festival poster by Georgie Wheeler is a great example here.

At the same time though, if the venue or the band has strong brands or logos, you should leverage the time they've invested in building this brand by incorporating it into your design. Take a look at The Piper – they've put a lot of time into branding and you can tell one of their shows a mile off. The Julian Marley gig makes perfect use of a strong and easily recognisable image of the performer.



Alternatively, if you are promoting a new band with no clear 'image' and needs an explanation, you need to think about whether to do this visually or through text. Remember that people rarely spend time reading things, so if you do go down the text route, keep it short and punchy. Something along the lines of, "If you love Hawkwind, you'll love these guys."

However, if you are trying to 'sell' the band with images and graphic design, then what you need to do is think about how to get this same message across by replicating the feel of old prog-rock album covers or something similar. The poster for the Cold Stares' show at The Carlisle takes advantage of a good photo supplied by the band that provides a fairly powerful idea of what sort of music will be on offer.

My final tip is to finish your design, sleep on it and look at it in the morning. Imagine you are seeing it for the first time in a shop window. Ask yourself, "did that tell me everything I needed to know at a glance?" If the answer is "no" then it's back to the drawing board.

So what makes me such a fan of this artform? Well in a way it's because it's so fleeting and disposable, at the same time as being something that has the potential to be a future collectible. It's also utilitarian and has a purpose at the same time as requiring a particular set of aesthetics where 'form' and 'function' need to work together – or the fundamental brief has been missed. Not every gig poster will be a future masterpiece in the same way that not every band goes on to become a Glastonbury headliner, but the potential is always there.

Go to www.hastingsflyer.com for listings and select 'Hastings Gig Posters' to browse the collection.



Beren Kader Fidan (Violetta) with Tylor Lamani (Alfredo)

Barefoot in the Church

VICTORIA KINGHAM on the eternal appeal of Traviata

Where to begin writing about Jenny Miller's recent Barefoot Opera production, *La Traviata*? Being staged in elegant St John's church on the longest day of the year, perhaps, lent it some magic. Having the score carefully arranged for four instruments (there was one particularly lovely clarinet melody in Act 2, played with a mellow and beautiful tone by Michelle Hromin) and enthusiastically conducted from the piano by the arranger and director, Laurence Panter, was definitely part of the charm of this production. It was the premier performance, but there were no false starts, indeterminate endings, under-rehearsed fluffs. Perhaps the choice of costume – simple, almost androgynous, including, at the beginning, a ghostly drinking chorus in grey and white, singing joy but foretelling tragedy (“Let’s take our pleasure of wine and singing in mirth, till the new day dawns on us in Paradise”), was inspiring. Perhaps it was something to do with

the absolute minimalism of the set, a platform of blocks and a screen, variously arranged for different scenes by whoever was on stage, in a little ballet. Perhaps it was the elegant symbolism of Violetta's grey filmy shawl, used on stage variously as a signifier for love, loss, conflict, and reconciliation.

THE PLOT

The story is simple enough – a courtesan (high-class ‘mistress’), Violetta, is consumptively ill from the beginning, and leads a life of sad dissolution, a desperate frenzy of drinking and gambling. “I put my faith in pleasure as a cure for all my ills,” she tells her friends. She is kept by a wealthy baron, but there doesn't appear to be much affection between them. Enter young, pretty Alfredo and declares his love in a heartrending aria. Violetta can't believe she is loved for herself, but eventually comes to believe him. However much she wishes for free-



Drinking to forget: Ghostly voices (Voiceworks choir & Bexhill College)

dom (“Free and aimless, I frolic from joy to joy”), she commits herself to him and sells everything she has, so that they can set up home together in the country.

Enter Alfredo's father, the baron, who tells her that she cannot be part of his family as her reputation as a *traviata* (fallen woman) is ruining the marriage chances of Alfredo's sister, who is pure as an angel in driven snow and courted by a rich man. (Whether this sister exists or not is questionable: she is not represented in the opera and some critics believe she is merely a ploy to remove Alfredo from a socially questionable relationship). Violetta truly loves Alfredo, and as a victim of society's perpetual double standards, finally agrees to give him up.



Michael Spenceley, co-director



Alfie Chesney, co-director



Laurence Panter, musical director

plicity of the plot, the lead parts of this most famous of operas are only achievable by the finest of singers, particularly the soprano, who is on stage almost all the way through. An extensive range and a great deal of vocal agility is required to produce the high coloratura necessary for Act 1. Traditionally, the final aria in that Act (*sempre libera*) has a penultimate triumphant very high note that was never written into the original score. All of the above were managed with grace, expression, and apparent ease, the true mark of an excellent singer, by the young soprano chosen for the part, Beren Kader Fidan.

In fact, the choice of both lead singers (Alfredo was sung by Tylor Lamani) was inspired. Both have excellent vocal expression, matching an accompanying mobility of facial and bodily language: an exceptional chemistry emerged between them. Together, they elicited the same kind of tears you have watching any good love story on any media, where you know it's all fictional convention, but your heart is touched in a more primeval place than that of your reasoned intellectuality, and in the end, that's what matters the most.

Details of further performances are as follows:

- Findon Place, West Sussex – Friday 19th July (outdoor performance)
- Down House, Lamberhurst – Saturday 14th September (with Tunbridge Wells Choral Society)
- Norden Farm, Maidenhead Music Society, Maidenhead – Tuesday 17th September
- St Michael and All Angels, Brighton – Saturday 21st September (with Brighton and Hove 6th Form College TBC and choir TBC)
- Grimeborn Festival, Arcola Theatre, Dalston, London – 24th-28th September (with Hackney Voices)
- Wooburn Festival, Bourne End – Saturday 5th October

When she does, Alfredo thinks she has rejected him for the baron, is heartbroken, cynically throws his gambling winnings at her, denounces her and leaves. His father finds him, however, condemns his behaviour (in spite of having instigated it), and explains all.

The lovers are reunited by her bed: “Death cannot divide you from me so soon. Live, or a single coffin shall enclose me with you,” sings Alfredo. But it is too late.

THE SINGERS

So trite, you might say. So fairy-tale, so old-fashioned operatic. But there is something about the power and beauty of certain voices that renews an eternal story. And this is where the singing came in. For all the sim-



Full details at whatsonstage.com/shows/inner-london-theatre/la-traviata_228246864

Open Arms

GARETH STEVENS reflects on the new mural in Robertson Street

Over a relatively short number of years Hastings and St Leonards has become a veritable treasure trove of high-quality street art. Our free urban gallery thus bears testament to both the intense climate of creativity and sense of community we share. Our grassroots murals give us such a positive counterpoint to the capitalist propaganda of billboard advertising - they reclaim our streets and celebrate the town's shared values.

Abraham O. relocated from El Salvador around two years ago and before he received his right to remain in the UK he was 'dispersed' to Hastings. Friends suggested he contact the Refugee Buddy Project and through this, and because he was already an established street artist in Central America, he began an association with Stella Dore Gallery in St Leonards and they have supported his work ever since.

Abraham has already made a significant contribution to our local street art scene. In May 2023 he completed a very impressive work on a huge wall of the W.Ave Arts building on the Bexhill Road, West St Leonards. The mural features Sir David Attenborough: broadcaster, biologist, natural historian and author. It is a stunning portrait that shows just what a very talented

painter Abraham is.

During last year's Refugee Week, Abraham decorated the large window of the Dove Café with painted portraits of some of Hastings asylum seekers. Once his own future in the UK became more secure (he received his right to remain in late 2023), he decided to move to London to further his creative career. However that has not stopped him from being involved in this year's Refugee Week programme. As a result of the second year of receiving Arts Council Funding, the 2024 week was its most comprehensive and exciting to date.

Rossana Leal, Founder and CEO of the Refugee Buddy project, works tirelessly to not only support refugees and asylum seekers, but to build a climate of welcome. She believes that this is essential to opposing the current government's deliberate aim to create a 'hostile environment'. The Refugee Week in Hastings is just one of the many ways the Buddy Project seeks to celebrate the creativity, culture and contributions of newly settled migrants and those seeking asylum.

The strong sense of openness and support Abraham felt during his stay in our town led him to want to give something back. What a tremendous gift he has given us! The



Left to Right: The artist, Diana Carolina Lopez, Rossana Leal (CEO, Refugee Buddy Project), Steph Warren (Director, Stella Dore Gallery), Vicky Duffey (Owner, Bullet Coffee House)

mural he has created on the wall outside Bullet Coffee House is stunning. It features a portrait of one of the asylum seekers who resided at the Chatsworth Hotel when it was furtively purloined by the home office to hold recently arrived refugees and migrants last year. The man holds his hands aloft, clapping with gratitude. Another pair of arms holds a clutch of received items - a pair of boots, a bowl that signifies nourishment and the iconic black net shops and the Stade

beyond which becomes the design of his collared tee shirt. A third set of hands holds a banner which asserts 'Hastings Welcomes Refugees'.

Vicky Duffey, the owner of Bullet Coffee House, tells me just how thrilled she was to be able to participate in this project. Of mixed heritage herself, she spoke of just how important it is to make a commitment to changing the narrative surrounding the 'migrant issue'. Most of the men housed at the Chatsworth and Lansdowne hotels had

reason to frequent Robertson Street, she tells me, mainly when making their way to the Refugee Buddy Project offices which used to be based there. Many of the cafes and shops along this road extended a warm and hospitable welcome to them and Vicky says: "It is so lovely that we now have a visual representation of our 'open arms' for all to see."

Please go along and see it for yourself. Therefugeebuddyproject.

STABLES THEATRE



Scene from America Ground, The Musical, by John Knowles, shown recently at The Stables



Scene from The Miss Firecracker Contest, performed last week at The Stables by the Chicago Heights Drama Group

APOLOGY

In the last issue, we mis-labelled the photograph accompanying Ben Thompson's article "A Touch Too Much" about improvised jazz at The Pig. The image we printed was in fact musician John Butcher playing the soprano saxophone. To repair the error, here's an actual photo of Matthias Muche, with a beautifully horizontal trombone, taken by Elmar Petzold.



Wild Daisies and Divers

HELEN MURPHY & NICK PELLING
at the Electro Gallery

We found ourselves in the Electro Studios on Seaside Road a few weeks ago, in one of those drifting wanderings. And it proved to be well worth the drift. The show, entitled *Uncertain Transitions*, was quite something.

At first - when we read the blurb explaining that the three female artists on show were Polish - we thought the show would be somehow about the pain of transitioning from the Chopinesque glories of Poland to West St Leonards. But we were quite wrong. It was not about elsewhere; it was about here. To be a bit more accurate, the artists decided to use the grassy old swimming pool site, in front of the gallery, as locational inspiration. The works in the show were actually the outcome of a two-week residency at

the gallery in which three women worked alongside each other. The Studios is quite a big space. As one of the artists, Agata Read, said, "it's just great to be able to make a mess." Interestingly, they decided that all the work from the residency should be without titles, presumably to help it combine as the product of one group experience.

Agnieszka Dabrowska, in particular, had delved into the history of the once wonderful open-air pool. In the back room of the gallery, black-and-white snapshots of the lido in its post-war heyday were projected on to a wall. The imagery evoked a lost world of fit national-service types displaying themselves like Kirk Douglas or frozen in a permanent swallow dive. (The weird soundscape in the room, cre-



Untitled, Ania Goszczyńska

ated by Current 93, with its tinkly sounds of children playing, really helped to conjure up a forgotten St Leonards.) Agnieszka was inspired by these strangely moving frames

of people enjoying their own bodies. There is something sensuous about the way she uses paint to suggest water moving on and around the body, and the way her

bodily forms seem to shimmer and dissolve.

By contrast, Ania Goszczyńska's work uses harder lines, reducing life's chaos to something linear and serene. She also works as an illustrator and her graphic approach comes through in her sharp economy of style. In her almost abstract versions of the swimming pool the diving board is a stark shape from which all human traces have been tidied away. Soft colours brought a little warmth; the overall effect was almost meditative, Renaissance.

Of all the three artists, the one who had perhaps moved furthest from the poolside was Agata Read. She works in photo-silkscreen, slightly in the mode of Warhol, but with imagery that almost repeats, never quite does. Nevertheless, it has a unique power. In one work, wild daisies spattered the canvas like little explosions of summertime. We loved it so much we wanted to buy it.

Overall, the exhibition was as evanescent as its theme. We drifted in and we drifted out, but we were somehow enriched.

To see more of these artists' work go to instagram: @dabrowska.a or @aniagoszczyńska or @agiread

Here, Now and Next for Hastings

CAF FEAN considers *The Hero's Journey*, an epic tale

Join the crowd under trees adorned with glitzy streamers. Pick up a non-alcoholic cocktail, a box of popcorn, and receive a wristband from a local robot who reminds you that it is now 2124.

Through reproduction artefacts called 'silent disco headphones', music is playing; a friendly voice welcomes us to the museum, for a celebration of the Hero and to discover what took place 100 years ago...

Brutalist high-rise buildings, starkly posted on to the redbrick façade of Summerfields Gym, served as the backdrop to a factory where signs for large brands are being made - and remade. The fate of those living in 2024, working too long and too hard for too little, struggling to survive... performers wear light pastel shades, working in unity, and then slowly but surely fragmenting.

The music intensifies. Arguments break out and a riot follows. Then, the Hero appears, gives a speech, uses placatory language, speaking in nothings and everything. The listeners are excited, hopeful for change.

We are led by our friendly guides in pink boiler suits, torch lamps in hand, ushering us as if guiding planes in to land. Now, in front of a hologram exhibit of everyday objects from 2024, the pastel-clad people move to animate household objects in perfect time to the music.

Turn around to the flank of the museum and capture a scene dedicated to 'home'. Each object is delicately carried and given to a happy recipient. She sits down and tells tales of gratitude for being part of a community, for having a home: a tribute to our wonderful Hastings Give-and-Takery. The great data loss of 2051 is mentioned... the fragments of story had been carefully pieced together in the aftermath - my stomach flips.

Then people are arriving from the airport: smiling. Meandering through us, each of them lays out a piece of fabric from a suitcase. A beautiful tapestry of ribbons and colourful sheets are ceremonially placed on the ground and tied together by the pastel people. To utopian electro music, the completed



A Hero's Journey: Company and Audience

canopy is raised into the sky, and we run underneath.

The tempo shifts, the Hero runs past.

Following slowly, sedately, to a sealed off courtyard. The doors open, and... welcome to a mash-up of all the wonderful carnivalesque, festival personas that make up Hastings and St Leonards! A beautiful Book Festival nymph, a Morris dancer, a yarr-ing pirate, someone with a pram on their head and a merry Jack-in-the-green spirit. Me: grinning! We are all dancing! The community of onlookers becomes our own community - sharing something special.

Then. Then. Then! Into the Museum. Colourful lights. Beautiful

tapestries adorn the ramp that takes us down, down, down to the Durbar Hall.

Pastel people reappear. Holding boxes, different colours - jumbling, shifting them, in cooperation. A completely different movement from the disjointed and angry factory workers of the show opener. This community is in flow. And, the crescendo of the piece! Disco lights. Movement. Dancing. Euphoric music. Glitter falls to the ground as the Hero returns.

Statuesque, the Hero stands at the stairway ... and what a sight. SO still, so enigmatic. So strong. I wanted to cheer, shout, dance! HOORAY! The Hero removes her

cape, and beneath, is dressed in pastel shades. She happily rejoins the group, in community and co-operation. And then, the pastel people open their boxes. Inside, a light - and the look of PURE JOY on their faces communicates home, hope, togetherness.

I looked around. "The Museum is doing something special here," I think, "and we - the community - have made it happen."

I'm so blown away. Thank you, Afri-Co-Lab, Home Live Art, the performers and all those who created and supported this wonderful project. I can't get over how BRILLIANT things can be when we work together with open hearts.

BOOKBUSTER REVIEW

The Invisible Doctrine: The Secret History of Neoliberalism

By George Monbiot & Peter Hutchinson
Published by Allan Lane
REVIEW BY TIM BARTON

The first wave of ‘neoliberal’ ideology was influenced by a century-long tradition beginning with Charles Gide, and moving toward the present via Milton Freidman, Hayek and von Mises. The term was first coined in 1938, and has become synonymous with an anti-regulation, anti-tax, anti-welfare, anti-trade union extreme version of capital accumulation, based on an equally extreme ‘conception of liberty: an absence of coercion’. This is fundamentally an unfettered, ‘do as you like, I’m alright Jack, and bugger the consequences’ take on freedom. Under it, devil take the hindmost, red-in-tooth-and-claw definitions of human nature and morality are promoted, an exalted ‘freedom to’ that explicitly does battle with ‘freedom from’. For Hayek, this includes freedom from democracy, when democratic choices include rolling back capitalist fundamentalism.

Back in the Eighties the beginnings of this ideologically ‘American’ economic coup began to roll out across the British economy. Channelling Ayn Rand and Nietzsche as much as the ‘Austrian’ and ‘Chicago’ schools of economics, it came to us via Maggie (Thatcher), and her much vaunted valorisation of Adam Smith’s ‘invisible hand’. This toxic neoliberal agenda began to invade our hearts and minds, and manifested in small true-believer organ-

isations such as the ridiculously influential lobby group The Adam Smith Institute. Similar ‘think tanks’, such as the Institute of Economic Affairs, are the subversive method by which neoliberal ideology has infected our institutions. Low on accountability, high on influence, and with their claws in deep with the elites that run our country, such organisations are often deeply undemocratic and ideologically out of tune with the electorate.

THAT ‘UNEARNED INCOME’ RENT

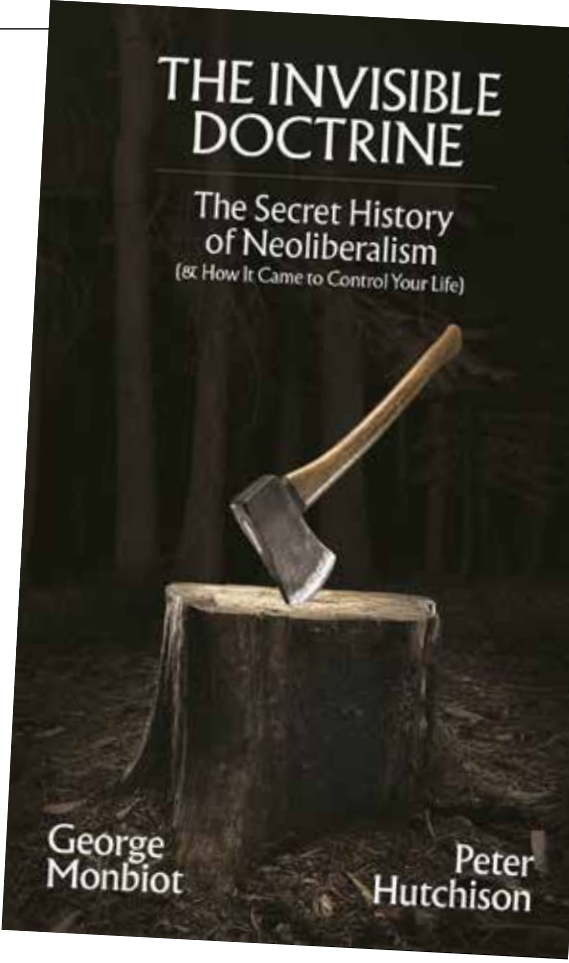
George Monbiot and Peter Hutchinson bring us a new analysis of neoliberalism, informing us in some detail, albeit in a short book, ‘how it came to control your life’. Their conceit is that, as per the title, neoliberalism is ‘invisible’ to us mere mortals. As someone who has consistently railed against the concept for over three decades, I dispute that ‘invisibility’, but agree that those promulgating its pernicious values go out of their way to hide its true nature from the public. In this regard, check their chapter ‘Invisible Doctrine – Invisible Backers’, and, later, their section on the ‘Pollution Paradox’.

As the authors note, the economic and political entrenchment of neoliberalism has manifestly done the opposite of what its advocates cynically propagandise. Far from leading to a ‘trickle-down’ that ‘lifts all boats’, neoliberalism has firmly entrenched a growing wealth-gap, whereby wealth ‘has increasingly

become concentrated in the hands of those who already possess it.’ Another element is that ‘unearned income’, rent, as the authors explain, something also critiqued in recent reviews here.

THE ANTI-DEMOCRATIC HEART OF CONTEMPORARY CAPITALISM

Re-defining ‘capitalism’ as a vampiric beast ‘founded on colonial looting’, the authors show how neoliberalism is a rocket-powered extension of what went before. Naturally, profit is at the heart of capitalism, but profit based on ecological destruction, and off-loading of many of the costs (in terms of resource depletion, and of waste disposal, for example), as ‘externalities’ not included in corporate cost-benefit analyses. Society, us, and the poorest pay these costs instead: ‘...while neoliberal capitalism continues to loot the South to enrich the North, it also loots the future to enrich the present’. This ‘capitalism on steroids’ model of economics is all too swiftly



destroying our very life-support systems, the global ecology itself.

The absolute arse-end of this pernicious economic and political ‘culture’ was exposed to all in the person of Mary ‘Liz’ Truss. The authors quite rightly describe her recent book *Britannia Unchained* as ‘a semi-literate polemic’, but it is no aberration except in its willingness to be seen in public, in fact I argue it is the Id of the Tory Party (and, at least from Blair onwards, the Labour Party too). In a chapter on the UK free-market playground they address something that has been at least a bit ‘invisible’, freeports. Both these, tax havens, ‘secrecy regimes’, and the anti-democratic heart of contemporary capitalism will be looked at in a future review (of the book *Crack-up Capitalism*). Monbiot and Hutchinson conclude that ‘we should see Truss’s government as an experiment: what happens when neoliberal ultras, backed and advised by dark-money think tanks, get everything they want? Answer: Economic life falls off a cliff.’

FIGHTING TALK
Margaret Thatcher famously said ‘there is no alternative’, claiming this dangerous ideology to be ‘the natural order’. But this book argues that this is a lie. ‘Catastrophe is not a matter of fate. It’s a matter of choice [...] We need a new story.’ Indeed, ‘A New Story’ is the title of chapter 22. The following chapter is titled ‘The Politics of Belonging’, and the next ‘Private Sufficiency, Public Luxury’. Because Monbiot and Hutchinson are here to promote hope and a new narrative. Here, they discuss deliberative democracy, participatory culture, the commons, and the reality that the Hobbesian view of human nature we’ve been sold is a lie, that in fact humans ‘have a remarkable capacity for altruism.’ In promoting a new ‘politics of belonging’ they hope to offer an alternative to that ‘common response to political and societal dysfunction’, ‘fascism’, instead building bridges across and between communities. This is diametrically opposed to Thatcher’s self-serving ‘there’s no such thing as society’, instead seeking to re-weave the fabric of community.

‘We will fight those nefarious forces by building rich, engaging, collaborative, inclusive and generous communities. In doing so, we will restore harmony to the land.’ Now there’s fighting talk for you!

The Invisible Doctrine: The Secret History of Neoliberalism is available from Bookbuster, 39 Queens Road, Hastings TN34 1RE

POETRY CORNER

Moving Stillness
(at Rye Harbour Discovery Centre)
BEN FAIRLIGHT

Heron and Egret pin the in-flowing shallows,
Wait and watch for the right wiggle
In water and ripple.
Yellow-speared grey, black-spiked white,
Unruffled statues on shimmering swirls.
Water and ripple wait and watch Heron and Egret.

Minutes go by, gallons go by.
Minutes, gallons.
Heron stabs, misses, Egret stabs, catches
Silver – tosses and swills lithe silver.
Poise returns.
Minutes, gallons.

Heron jabs – at Egret. Egret
Shifts one yellow-wellied leg, then stabs –
And catches more silver. Heron
Has had enough; Egret’s sent flapping.

Two stilted quick-steps, a stab – and wriggling silver
Dangles from Heron’s yellow scissors. A flip and a long
Slow throaty swallow. A splash of water
To help it down.

Statue reinstated.

So pass minutes, gallons,
A whole tide.

CROSSWORD CORNER

- Across**
- Vehicle males use for opera (6)
 - Narrator who counts the votes (6)
 - Not Ian getting into a state? (6)

- Down**
- Partly decant one into a political subdivision (6)
 - Run one about transmitting nerve impulses (6)

Crossword Solution: Answers on page 5 of The HIP List

1						2
3						
4						

CRICKET

Priory Dismantled Twice in Eight Days

22 June:
Hastings Priory 214 for 8;
Preston Nomads 217 for 0
29 June:
Hastings Priory 139 all out;
Bognor Regis 142 for 0

HUGH SULLIVAN

The cricketers of Hastings & St Leonards Priory suffered a torrid fortnight as they lost back-to-back matches in the Sussex Premier League without taking a single wicket.

On 22 June, playing away against then league leaders Preston Nomads, they won the toss and chose to bat. After Dylan Woolley departed in the third over for a duck, Caleb

Laloo (32 off 78 balls) and Alex Osborne (40 off 109) shared a careful partnership of 73, but both they and the middle order following them found it very difficult to increase the scoring rate. Captain Harry Scowen, coming in at four, faced 34 balls for his 13 runs, Adam Keane 64 for his 33. Only Iden McCleave (34 off 24 balls including two fours and three sixes) and John Morgan (22 not out off 15, also three sixes) loosened the shackles and raised the innings total to 214 for eight off the maximum 58 overs allowed.

Any hope that this score would be competitive was quickly eclipsed. Priory were fielding a weakened attack, with Seaver Cowley sidelined following recent illness and Osborne unable to bowl because of a strained



Caleb Laloo: 228 runs for Priory this season

side. Preston's openers, 20-year-old Sussex Academy prospect Zach Lion-Cachet (120 not out) and Nathan Poole (91 not out), sailed to their target in under 40 overs, helped by a series of dropped catches.

A week later, Bognor Regis came to Horntye. On a dry pitch with a fast outfield Laloo (41) and Woolley (21) gave Priory a solid start, but once again the middle order were unable to move into a higher gear against accurate bowling, and after Scowen (23) departed, the innings

disintegrated. William Hutchings, Morgan and Richard Smith failed to score a run between them. Only a few blows by Satchi Mahendran (22 not out) gave comparative respectability to the final score of 139.

The Bognor Regis openers replied in brutal fashion, Ryan Maskell hitting 102 not out off just 54 balls with 13 fours and six sixes, while his partner Theo Beynon-Ayres scored 39. McLeave's two overs cost 22 runs, Osborne's solitary over went for 20, and Adam Page's for 15.

Cricket can be a harsh game if you're out of form, out of luck, or just happen across talented opposition who are enjoying a field day. Lion-Cachet and Maskell are the two leading run-getters in the Sussex Premier League this season, each having scored nearly 400 runs over the first eight games at an average approaching 80. By comparison, Scowen has managed 282 (including centuries in the first two matches) at an average of 40 and Laloo 228, but no other Priory batsman has scored more than 200.

The team's overall bowling statistics make even poorer reading. There is no Priory bowler who has taken even ten wickets, Page being highest with nine and Cowley (absent for the last three games) with seven.

In recent seasons Priory have competed successfully by teamwork. They may not have the individual free-scoring batsmen or penetrative bowlers of some of their opponents, but have often found enough potential contributors in their ranks to hold their own collectively. They now lie eighth out of ten in the league table, ahead of Worthing, who have lost all eight of their games, and East Grinstead.

Next up is a tough trip to Horsham tomorrow (Saturday) followed by a home match on 13 July against Roffey, whom they defeated in the first fixture back in early May. It's time to rediscover that early season form.

FOOTBALL

The Late Late Show

HUGH SULLIVAN

You can stay at home and watch every match in the current European championships live on mainstream terrestrial TV. Two, three or even four matches per day have dominated both BBC and ITV schedules for days on end, shared on a multiplication of channels. But with the preliminary group stage brought to a conclusion with some mainly predictable outcomes – Scotland going home early, Germany and Spain winning plaudits for their attacking flair, Gareth Southgate's England team squeezing through with just two goals scored in three games – last Sunday was time to abandon the home armchair and join the community experience. If the way the England team plays causes you to yell abuse and throw things at the screen, it may be more



Fans in the Pilot Bar salute England victory

cathartic to do it along with fellow supporters.

There's a fan zone on Hastings pier with a giant screen and overpriced beer, and several bars in the town centre offer cramped views and sweaty companionship. But for the five o'clock kick-off against Slovakia, I opt for the Pilot Bar at the Hastings United ground in Elphinstone Road – a family atmosphere of kids, young footballers, season-ticket regulars.

The language doesn't respect family values for very long, most of it expressed in indignation at the erratic behaviour of the referee and the stumbling incoherence of the

English team. Our revered superstars seem incapable of making any incisive moves to break down the massed defence in front of them, though they spend long periods shuffling the ball sideways and backwards between midfield, defence and goalkeeper. The Slovaks, by contrast, counter-attack with precision, passing in neat triangles, finding gaps in the English back line and exposing them. It's no surprise to see their striker Ivan Schranz poke them ahead halfway through the first half after a mix-up between John Stones and Mark Guehi. The volume of complaints around the room about the team's tactics and

personnel and Southgate's responsibility for them moves up a gear.

At half-time, the TV pundits – Roy Keane, Gary Neville and Ian Wright – agree that the manager needs to make immediate changes. Get Cole Palmer on, get Anthony Gordon on, get some energy! But the English team emerges for the second half unchanged for another 15 minutes. When Palmer eventually replaces Kieron Trippier, there's some progress: Declan Rice hits the post with a shot from the edge of the penalty area, Harry Kane heads wide from a free kick. The spectators may be on the edge of their seats, but put their hands to their heads in ever-mounting frustration as the score stays at 1-0. The 90 minutes are up, we're into the last of the six added minutes. The commentator is telling us what this defeat will mean for English football in general and Southgate in particular – the end of an era.

Then it happens. From nowhere, Jude Bellingham's outrageous overhead kick flies into the Slovak net. Pandemonium in the Pilot Bar, as across the nation. Men, women, kids leap vertical, arms in the air, shouts not so much of triumph as of laughter. An hour and a half of frustration and misery turned into ecstasy by just one moment of athletic prowess. That's football for you.

Kane's winning header at the start of extra time is equally celebrated, like the same joke told twice and getting almost the same laugh

because we enjoyed the original so much. Another 25 minutes of jittery defensive struggle ensues before the 2-1 win is confirmed. The kids rush out into the yard outside to mimic the game they've just watched. The rest of us emerge dazed and head-sore, but ready to surrender ourselves to the drama again tomorrow afternoon (Saturday) when England take on Switzerland in the quarterfinal.

A FOOTBALLER'S FAMILY IN HASTINGS?

The great-great-nephew of a long-deceased professional footballer named Sam Jennings is looking for traces of his family in the Hastings area. Philip Jennings, who is writing Sam's biography, has documents showing that he died in Robertsbridge Hospital in August 1944 at the age of 45 and is buried in Hastings.

Sam Jennings played not only for numerous Football

League clubs in the inter-war years, including Norwich City, Middlesbrough, Brighton and Nottingham Forest, but also for Olympique Marseilles and Club Francais (Paris).

Any knowledge of or about Sam or his family should be communicated to Philip at philthewizard@hotmail.co.uk.

Alright on the Night

Organising hustings for an unexpectedly early election was a massive challenge. Fortunately, in partnership with Hastings Online Times, the support of many local people and particularly the White Rock Theatre, the night proved a resounding success.

The forum was moderated and structured to ensure everyone had the same amount of time to speak and on the night both audience and candidates behaved with commendable mutual respect, en-

suring all voices were heard - a contrast to many ill-tempered national debates.

Hustings aren't cheap, so please support your community newspaper and make an, however modest, financial donation: hastingsindependentpress.co.uk/product/donate. Or become a Friend of HIP: hastingsindependentpress.co.uk/become-a-friend/



JASON ELLIS



DAVE YOUNG



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