



CHRISTOPHER PLEDGER



Police had to carry away a number of protesters who refused to move from the entrance to the exploratory drilling site outside Balcombe, East Sussex

# Villagers' fracking revolt leads to arrests

Residents pledge to fight on against plans to drill for gas after police swoop on 'hard core' of activists trying to block entry to the site

By Louise Gray

IT STARTED as a peaceful, middle-class protest against fracking, with music and even a cricket match. But it ended in 16 arrests yesterday as "professional activists" clashed with 90 police officers.

The protest against plans by the fracking company Cuadrilla to explore for oil and gas at a site just outside the sleepy village of Balcombe, East Sussex, began on Thursday.

Local people, including mothers and children, set up gazebos and bunting by the roadside. Tea and cakes were handed out and there was even a singalong.

Activists included Natalie Hynde, the daughter of Chrissie Hynde and Ray Davies of The Kinks. But the mood turned

at midday yesterday as a hard core of activists refused to move from the entrance to the drilling site, despite repeated requests from the police.

Around a dozen linked arms on a log rolled across the private access. Officers, who had parked more than 10 cars nearby, appeared in ranks. Mothers and children among the other protesters quickly left, many visibly upset.

In all, 16 people were arrested by the end of the day, many shouting and claiming they were being physically hurt.

Sussex Police said that five were held for causing danger to road users, and nine for attempting to stop workers from accessing the site. There were two further arrests later. None of those arrested were believed to be from Balcombe. Rafe



Other protesters were less confrontational

Usher-Harris, 17, a villager and student at Michael Hall, a private school in nearby Forest Row, said that villagers were shocked. "It is disgusting," he said. "People from the village do not want this."

Helen Savage, a 38-year-old mother, said that villagers were not willing to be arrested but would not give up.

"We are completely committed to protesting through every legal channel we can," she said. "This goes beyond Balcombe, it is not a Nimby campaign. It is against government policy, which is to track nationwide. Once people realise what this means they will be extremely concerned. It means a fracking rig every two miles. It will industrialise the landscape."

Within an hour trucks started arriving

on the site, although verbal protests continued from behind police lines.

Cuadrilla said that rigs were being brought in only to drill exploratory wells. All safety regulations would be met and fracking, or hydraulic fracturing, in which water is blasted into rocks deep underground to force out gas or oil, would only happen later if viable and approved, the company said. A spokesman blamed a "small minority" for causing a dangerous situation where arrests had to be made.

"To date, the vast majority of the protesters have been peaceful and good natured," the spokesman said.

Francis Maude, the local Tory MP, said that Cuadrilla should be allowed to conduct exploratory drilling but that more discussions were needed before any

extraction. Fracking has been blamed for earthquakes and contaminated water, but a government study has said that any tremors are minor and that the risks of contamination are insignificant.

Villagers maintain that they will continue to negotiate with Cuadrilla and make legal, peaceful protests.

But the 30 or so activists remaining on site were not willing to say whether further extreme actions may take place.

A spokesman for Frack Off, an umbrella group, said that activists from other sites around the country planned to come to Balcombe. Tabitha Smith, 28, from Brighton, said: "This is a battle I think will be repeated across the country."

Geoffrey Lean: Page 22

## Church's money in Google does not break rules

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his concerns the Church may still retain its investment in the controversial company because it is not in breach of the rules.

The Church says it made a £32million investment in a US venture capital fund, which in turn invested in a venture capital company called Accel Partners. Accel invested £75,000 of the money in Wonga.

Under its ethical investment rules, the Church cannot invest in a company which draws more than 25 per cent of its turnover from high interest lending. It argues that the investment in Wonga represents just 0.3 per cent of the original £32million it put into the venture capital fund.

Edward Mason, secretary to the Ethical Investment Advisory Group, said: "It is not a breach of the rules. The Church and the Archbishop of Canterbury have spoken about it, and they will look at whether an inconsistency like this is appropriate."

Under its rules, the Church can invest in firms that derive no more than 3 per cent of their revenues from pornography, 10 per cent from weaponry and 25 per cent from tobacco, gambling, alcoholic drinks, payday lenders and cloning embryos.

The Most Rev Justin Welby said: "We are going to have to review these levels and how we do it. The reality is, if you invest in a hotel chain, a lot of hotel chains sell pornography in their hotel rooms. The complexity of the thing is enormous.

"If you exclude any contact with anything that directly or indirectly gets in any way bad, you can't do anything at all."

A spokesman for Google said: "We have a zero tolerance attitude to child sexual abuse imagery. We use our own systems and work with child safety experts to find it, remove and report it."

"We recently donated \$5million (£3.2million) to groups working to combat this problem and are committed to continuing the dialogue with the Government on these issues."

A Church of England spokesman said: "We share the Government's concern about access to child pornography and are glad they are engaging with Google on this issue. We engage ourselves with internet companies, relating to pornography and take this issue very seriously."

## We should not lecture adults about private enjoyment of legal porn, says Tory minister

By Rowena Mason  
Political Correspondent

CONSERVATIVES should not lecture adults about their "private enjoyment of legal pornography", one of David Cameron's ministers has suggested.

Nick Boles, a Tory planning minister, intervened in the debate about pornography following the Prime Minister's attempts to stop children accessing sexual images online.

The senior Conservative MP strongly backed Mr Cameron's move, saying that the Government needed to help parents who seek to stop their children being exposed to "appalling risks and horrors" online. However, he suggested that the Tories should not go so far as to sound disapproving about legal pornography for adults.

"As a Conservative, my starting point is that people should be free to live their

lives as they choose," he said. "And I am not going to start lecturing consenting adults about their private enjoyment of legal pornography."

Mr Boles made the comments in an article for his local newspaper, the *Grantham Journal*.

It comes as Mr Cameron finds himself at the centre of a fierce debate about the role of pornography in society.

Some anti-censorship groups warn that Mr Cameron is coming dangerously close to restricting freedom of speech with his plans to block certain internet searches and outlaw simulated images of rape.

However, some campaign groups argue that he has not gone far enough to regulate the publication of sexual images.

He has come under pressure from campaign groups to criticise images of topless women on *The Sun's* Page 3 and do more to stop pornographic magazines

being sold in supermarkets. Last month, the Bishop of Derby also called for a stop to be put to sexual images being so readily accessible on the internet, arguing much pornography is "abusive of women and children."

"We do have to encourage the Government to legislate and stop this material being so easily available," he told *The Daily Telegraph*. "I think all the evidence shows there is quite a strong link between people who view pornography and deviant behaviour."

Earlier this week, the Prime Minister acknowledged the issue of internet pornography is "frankly difficult for politicians to talk about" but he promised not to shy away from further regulation if necessary.

Under his new proposals, internet companies will ask every UK web user whether they want access to sexual images. Rather than blocking all pornog-

raphy automatically online, people will be given the option of making up their own mind.

He threatened to bring in new laws affecting internet companies if they do not remove images of sexual abuse from search results and promised a ban on the glorified depiction of rape and other extreme sexual offences.

He has also got Britain's six biggest companies providing access to wireless internet in cafés and railway stations to block legal pornography where children could view it.

However, Mr Cameron admitted earlier this week that this may not be enough to protect children, because viewing pornography has become a "rite of passage" for teenagers.

In a further measures, parents will be given government advice on speaking to their children about the dangers of swapping sexually explicit text messages.

## McCanns' spokesman to fight Green seat for Tories

A FORMER BBC reporter who became the spokesman for the family of Madeleine McCann has been chosen to challenge Britain's first Green Party MP at the next general election.

Clarence Mitchell has been selected as the Conservative prospective parliamentary candidate for Brighton Pavilion.

The seat is held by Caroline Lucas, a former leader of the Green Party, who won it with a majority of 1,252 at the last general election.

Mr Mitchell was selected from a final shortlist of three. He wrote on Twitter: "Absolutely delighted to be selected by Brighton & Hove Conservatives tonight. Huge honour. The fight for Brighton Pavilion starts now."

Ann Norman, a councillor who chaired the selection meeting, said: "We are very pleased to have Clarence as the Conservative candidate as he is ideally placed

and qualified to take the Brighton Pavilion parliamentary seat back into Conservative hands, as that is where it truly belongs. He's got very good credentials and he's a very good candidate who is starting work immediately. There is no reason that, with the right candidate, we cannot win the seat."

Mr Mitchell said that he still worked with the missing girl's family "when and where required" and his relationship with them would continue. This month Scotland Yard opened a formal investigation into the disappearance of Madeleine, who went missing, aged three, from a holiday flat in Portugal in 2007.

Mr Mitchell said he intends to move to Brighton "as a priority". "I see Brighton Pavilion as a key target seat if we are to gain an overall majority," he said. "I believe it's entirely winnable and it will be an assertive campaign."



### Racket change Fresh start on Centre Court

Just under three weeks after 15,000 people roared Andy Murray to the Wimbledon title, a tractor engine was the only sound on Centre Court as groundsmen began relaying the surface

## In Brief

### Blakelock trial date set

A provisional trial date of March 4 next year has been set at the Old Bailey for a 44-year-old man charged with the murder of Pc Keith Blakelock during the Broadwater Farm riots in 1985.

Nicholas Jacobs is accused of killing the 40-year-old officer, who was stabbed as he tried to protect firemen tackling a blaze at a supermarket at the height of the unrest in Tottenham, north London.

No application for bail was made and Mr Jacobs was remanded in custody to appear before a plea hearing in October.

### Wedding knives murder

A man was found guilty yesterday of murdering his wife using knives given to the couple as wedding presents.

Ty Medland, 26, of Peacehaven, East Sussex, killed Samantha Medland, 24, in February after their marriage broke down.

Medland had admitted manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility but denied murder. A jury at Lewes Crown Court convicted him of the more serious offence. He will be sentenced on Monday.

### Tattooist inked children

A tattooist was ordered to destroy equipment after giving a 14-year-old girl a tattoo which read: "Everything I like is either immoral, illegal, fattening, addictive, expensive or impossible."

Aaron Goddard, 18, admitted two offences of tattooing children at Grimsby magistrates' court. The student told the court he did not realise the legal age for tattoos was 18. He was given a one-year conditional discharge.

### 50p bowl sells for £18,600

A chipped bowl bought for 50p at a charity boot sale sold for nearly £19,000 after it was recognised as 18th century china.

An unnamed couple from Kent took the bowl to an auctioneer's free valuation day after suspecting it was Chinese.

Experts confirmed it was a celadon jade bowl with the mark of Chinese emperor Qianlong on the bottom, but only valued it at £1,500. However, a Chinese buyer later paid £18,600 for the item at auction.

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