

PRESS RELEASE

30th July 2004

Gang Den Gone



Surveillance video showing Brooks and incidents available in VHS format

An Ashton tenant whose home became a gathering point for a local gang has been ordered to go.

Ronnie Brooks, his partner Glynis Thomas and their family provided a gang with their meeting place, and members of the family took part in over five years of anti social behaviour. One police officer told Tameside County Court on Tuesday that, in his opinion, “the family thought they were above the law, and could do what they wished at any time”.

The Court was faced with 19 separate witnesses including Greater Manchester Police officers and Tameside Patrollers as well as neighbours and New Charter staff. Residents described underage drinking, vandalism to cars, fighting, swearing and shouting - often till the early hours of the morning. Mothers said their children were frightened to use their gardens or even rooms in their homes because of the intimidating behaviour.



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Brooks' home on Smallshaw Lane became the rallying point for the self-styled "Hole Bottom Crew", a gang who acted with no regard for surrounding residents. One of Brooks' family, Ian Thomas, was seen wielding a fencing railing and threatening other youths. A Patroller was assaulted, spat at and had his spectacles broken when he investigated a crowd of 30-40 youths fighting in the street. On other occasions, elderly residents were 'mooned' at by occupants of the house, which became a magnet for underage drinking.

District Judge Gaunt granted an order for possession of the home after considering the weight of evidence against Brooks. The action under Grounds 12 and 14 of Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1989 means Brooks and his family will have to get out by September 27th.

The case is notable as it was used in April to join another action to the existing proceedings to speed up tackling anti social behaviour. New Charter was the first landlord in the country to succeed in using new powers under Section 85 of the 2003 Anti Social Behaviour Act which only came into effect on 31st March this year. Laura Hetherington, a family member, was issued an interim Anti-Social Behaviour Order in April, forbidding her from causing nuisance, congregating in groups of three or more people and restricting her supplying alcohol to minors.

New Charter's Group Chief Executive, Ian Munro praised the bravery of the witnesses. "The intimidation from this family and the gang they attracted was appalling. The Court had statements from ordinary residents whose lives were made a torment by Brooks and his

visitors. One woman told me her late father had not been able to attend her wedding reception because he feared for his home had he left it unoccupied for an evening. My staff have done an excellent job for the neighbourhood, and will remain vigilant and active in the area”.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. New Charter formed in 1999 as the new landlords to own and manage nearly 16,400 properties transferred from Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council in Greater Manchester. With a turnover of £49million a year and a workforce of 800, New Charter is one of the twenty largest Registered Social Landlords (RSL's), and is regulated by The Housing Corporation, a Government watchdog.
2. Ronnie Brookes, 213 Smallshaw Lane, Ashton-under-Lyne, dob 13.06.48. New Charter entered an action to seek possession in Court on 20.02.04.
3. Laura Hetherington, dob 26.01.83 is a daughter of Glynis Thomas, and was formerly the tenant of 41 Hope Street, Ashton-under-Lyne. Her tenancy was ended at Oldham County Court on 17th February 2004. She received two suspended sentences for her contempt in breaching injunctions to control her behaviour. District Judge Gaunt issued an interim Anti-Social Behaviour Order forbidding Hetherington from causing nuisance, congregating in groups of three or more people and restricting her supplying alcohol to minors. See New Charter press release “No show, no home” issued 18th February 2004, “Joined up first” issued 1st April 2004, and “Drink ban success” issued 22nd April 2004 available from our website www.newcharter.co.uk
4. Tenants whose tenancies are ended this way are “no n-qualifying persons” and will not be rehoused by New Charter.
5. **iN business for neighbourhoods** is a major new campaign, through which housing associations and companies across England are demonstrating the positive difference they make to people's homes, communities and quality of life. New Charter is one of over 360 housing companies and associations supporting the initiative. We've made a commitment to neighbourhoods, customers and excellence. Our commitment to customers is to do everything we can to prevent neighbourhood problems, and to deal firmly with people who are bad neighbours.
6. This action is also a success for the Tameside Strategic Partnership, a board made up of 30 members from local business, the voluntary and community sector and key public bodies. Through consultation with local people, it creates and then implements the Tameside Community Strategy – a three-year plan to improve the quality of life for



local people. It was set up in 2000 and meets three times a year. It ensures actions are taken within six key areas, including: *A safe environment – cutting crime and disorder.*

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