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NEWSLETTER No. 58

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Editor: John Jarrett

It was the warmest year on record — and it ended in floods. It was the year when holly and yew berried as never before, a sign of a hard winter, but there was little snow or ice. It was a year that began with peace continuing to win all over Europe and ended with war threatened in the Middle East. It was a year when half of us worried that our house values were tumbling, and the other half rejoiced as predatory developers went bust. It was the year when Chorleywood Bucks joined in, and the centre of Rickmansworth broke up. Whatever 1990 was for you, may 1991 be better.

WE STRIKE A HISTORIC BLOW

New residents may assume that Loudwater House, as the centre of the area, is protected as a listed building. Alas, not so. True, it dates back some 150 years when the returned nabob Panmure Gordon used his wealth to set up both the broking firm that still bears his name today and what he called Loudwater Park. But it has since then been so altered that it cannot claim historic interest. The humbler buildings that served the great estate have more claim — the garage with its mis-spelt motto, the coachman's house etc.

One such is Flint Cottage. It is so far set back off T. Way that few of you will have seen it but it was originally the gamekeeper's cottage and laundry and wash-house for the big house, and retains much of the original timber and stone. Some time ago, your Committee learned that development was going to take place on the site (the deeds allow this.) Don Cammell set to work and, with the aid of the present occupant Mrs Bicknell and neighbours Mrs. and Miss Melville Richards, produced documents and photographs to submit to the Historic Buildings Commission. Last month his hard work gained reward — Flint Cottage has been listed.

Apart from preserving a piece of Loudwater history, this will also make development of the site less likely to be insensitively rough.

THE M.25 — AN AWFUL PLAN

The consultant's plan was released late last year. Perhaps the simplest way of passing on the news is to reproduce here the letter we sent to the growing number of organisations that have joined our consortium, now called NORMAL (No More Motorway Lanes).

"M.25 Action Plan" the consultants' report on the widening of the M.25, was released in December. This report was with the Minister Cecil Parkinson for a year. It was surprisingly released within a few days of his departure and Mr. Rifkind taking over. We believe this was a pre-emptive strike by the motorway lobby in the Department of Transport.

Because the document was (a) very difficult at short notice for the press to digest (b) it was put out so soon before Christmas and (c) the Department of Transport refuses to supply it free to those vitally concerned but insists it must be obtained (with some delay) from H.M.S.O., at a price of £4.75 (for seven pages!), some Councils and Associations may not yet have been able to consider it.

NORMAL is therefore sending you this digest of the recommendations just in case. The Department is, of course, free to accept, reject or vary the recommendations.

The consultants recommend, in order of action priority:

- (1) as soon as possible, the squeezing of four lanes into the existing three.
- (2) before 1997, dual four-laning of almost all of the M.25.

- (3) by 1997, dual five-laning of almost all of the M.25.
- (4) achieving (3) in some cases by building outer feeder-distributor roads running parallel and linking junctions.
- (5) massive expenditure on lighting the whole of the motorway, restrictive lane marking, traffic lights at junctions and a new signalling system to warn of accidents, congestion, etc.

During our campaign we have been constantly advised by one local MP to wait and see what options would be chosen before raising any objection. Our scepticism of this advice may now be thought justified, as the consultants are not recommending any **one** option but indeed **every** possible option. It is our view that the prospect of articulated lorries being brought even more perilously close, two extra lanes spreading into adjacent homes and a virtual doubling of noise and pollution over the whole area represent an even greater threat than we had envisaged.

That letter went to the four Councils, seven residents' groups and two conservation societies — now in Bucks and St. Albans as well — that support us. We have also begun the major task of contacting every one of the Councils and residents' groups along the whole of the M.25. This is what a very little (under £200) of your money has so far been spent on. We shall have about £5,000 by the time you read this (one donation was handed over only the other day on Ricky station!)

There has continued to be correspondence, too much (I'm sorry) to quote even briefly — but all has been noted. However, I did promise to print one letter from a member who thinks we are wrong. Here it is.

"1. The exhaust emission level must be higher if you have stationary or slow moving traffic. Widening would alleviate this.

2. I agree noise abatement measures must be taken in our area — tarmac, not concrete, good quality screens with high noise-absorbent specifications.

3. The infrastructure has been built around the motorcar and lorry. An economist said the time for E. Europe's catch-up on the Western economy would be 40 years. A similar time-scale may apply to the radical change proposed by supporters of a public transport system. We all have a love/hate relationship with the car but until technology produces something more environmentally friendly we are stuck with it and should attempt to make the road system better by increasing car provision." — R. Hanati Fraval, Chess Hill.

Others will doubtless have other views. Those who watched the TV programme "The Magic Roundabout" may, as I did, shudder at the thought of the hard shoulder being abolished. Those who read the Royal Society for Nature Conservation booklet "Head-on Collision" may note its view that widening the M.25 by **one** lane each side would kill or damage, in our area alone, six major wildlife sites — Ladywalk Wood, Chorleywood Wood, the Chess Valley, Micklefield Green, Micklefield Great Wood, Cartpath Wood, Westwood Quarry. All told, in the South-East, the study identifies 372 such sites that motorway widening would affect.

CRIME — IT'S UP TO YOU

Our neighbourhood copper, Richard Allan, is back on the beat after illness, and has given me the crime figures for the year. (His beat, in fact, doesn't quite match that of the LRA, including some outside and omitting some inside). Burglary

and theft are up. Thefts of and from cars and other crimes are down. What is interesting is that the biggest item in theft (25 cases, costing £14,500) was garden furniture, lawnmowers, tools etc at nearly £10,000. Thefts of motorcars cost £57,000, but £55,000 worth was recovered!

As police spokesmen keep saying, in the long run it's up to us. Motor-mowers are four-figure jobs now; don't protect them with a cheap shed and lock. An expensive radio cassette? Disguise it. A valuable antique — don't put it in the front window. And lastly, especially for the more timid of us, don't let yourself be scared — physical violence in this area is, and always has been, almost non-existent.

FIFTY YEARS AGO

Isabel Johnson, the LRA Vice-Chairman, recently made contact with Mr. John Clements who used to live in her home The Tile House, T.Rise, fifty years ago. These excerpts from his letter may stir memories among older members.

"I found your newsletter very interesting. What a cosy and cared-for community you are! On my recent visit, I was amazed by the growth of trees — when I lived there we had extensive clear views from our patio. My father and step-mother lost their hearts to Loudwater on a Sunday afternoon walk and ferreted out Mr. Macnamara, the builder, to move in in 1934.

"During the war an oil bomb was dropped in the valley and my father promptly had a deep shelter dug in the garden. When the East End got fierce bombing, my elderly parents had two boys evacuated on them. Our maid nearly gave notice when she found them using the fireplaces as toilets!"

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Muir Stratford, whose wife Margaret was a valuable member of our committee when they lived in T.Way, has resigned from the Board of Watford FC after 20 years, during which he with Elton John helped to bring Graham Taylor to the club. Ms. Alison Cluster of Bridle Lane has become President of the Federation of Image Consultants.

Three regulars have cropped up again. Tireless Bill Pitt-Ford of T.Rise was pictured in the local paper when it was announced that his S.W. Herts Macmillan Nurse Appeal had raised over £94,000 — it's bound to be £100,000 by now.

Carrying out his duties as Deputy Lord Lieutenant, Philip Groves of Whisper Wood was shown at the 40th anniversary of the WRVS at Croxley House. Tony Williams of L.Drive was reported as breaking another power-boat record on Lake Windermere. Lastly, Mary Buckley of Lower Plantation has asked us to thank the people of Lower Plantation and Violet Way for giving £40 to the door-to-door collection in September for the Spastics Society.

BITS AND PIECES

The Estate Company sends us the following.

The two Company flats above the garage will shortly be available for occupation, and will be placed in the hands of the Letting Agents within the next few weeks. The Company would be happy to give priority to local residents, who should get in touch with Alan Crisp of Burnside, Troutstream Way, who will put them in touch with our Agents.

The new gate has been installed at the bottom of Violet

Way and residents are thanked for their patience and co-operation during the period when the gate was broken and could not be used.

* * *

To our regret, Margaret Homan has resigned from the Committee. We will miss her willing efficiency — those who came to the Musical evening will know how well she catered for us.

* * *

The Chorleywood House saga goes on. After the Working Party (still unattended by its Chairman, Cllr. Grindell) announced its recommendation of offices and flats, a group of local residents formed themselves to try to create an alternative use for local businesses, community associations and flats under a Community Trust.

* * *

We have a birthday. The re-formed LRA is 15 years old. It was towards the end of 1975 that Messrs. Davis and Pattinson announced that for lack of support they were no longer prepared to run a Residents Association. Among the few at that meeting, a couple of people felt this way a pity and resolved to re-form it. The first announcement to some 50 members went out that December and the first newsletter in 1976. We widened the scope and, greatly daring, we set the sub at 50p. Now we have over 400 members and the sub has soared (!) in 15 years to £2! Thank you all for your support — see you again for a real celebration when we are 21!

PLANNING

- 8/1144/89 Old Meadow, Wagon Way. Two-storey front extension. (Approved)
- 8/34/90 Kytes, L.Lane, Two-storey rear extension. (Approved)
- 8/98/90 Long Ridings, L.Drive. Detached garage. (Approved)
- 8/545/90 Troutstream Hall, T.Way. Two-storey rear extension. (Approved)
- 8/637/90 Long Hedges, L.Lane. Front, side and rear single-storey and rear first and second storey extensions. (Approved)
- 8/718/90 Water Gardens, L.Plantation. Roof extension to garage. (Approved)
- 8/747/90 Handa, T.Rise. Single-storey side extension.
- 8/768/90 Swandrift, T.Rise. Part single, part two-storey rear extension. (Approved)
- 8/799/90 Ladyswood House, T.Way. First floor side extension. (Approved)
- 8/870/90 Little Petherick, T.Way. Conservatory at rear.
- 8/873/90 Wedgewood, Sarratt Lane. Single-storey rear extension.
- 8/878/90 Nightingales, Whisperwood. Detached garage bay extension.