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NEWSLETTER No. 61

OCTOBER 1991

Editor: John Jarrett

There are to be no extra lanes alongside the M 25 motorway. That is the big news. Christopher Chope, the Minister for Roads and Traffic, announced this on Sept. 6. To that degree, the LRA, NORMAL, and protest groups all over the area can claim a victory, thanks to your support.

When we first started our campaign, it was clear we had the support of most members. When it came to giving us money, the response (as usual) was cooler. Not, many said, that we don't support you but you can't win, so we won't throw money away. We accepted victory was unlikely. But we thought two things were on our side. First, the growing expense of building would become clearer to the Dept. of Transport: secondly, if they had to acquire land, there would have to be some public enquiries, which again would be more expensive and time-consuming if there were to be organised and articulate opposition.

During the past year we began to feel our case was less hopeless. First, the arch-road proponents, Mrs. Thatcher and Cecil Parkinson, went, replaced by men known to be more open to other ideas. Second, more and more public bodies, from the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature to the C.B.I. put out reports saying more motorway was not the answer. Thirdly came the recession. We believe it has been a combination of all these that have brought the new policy.

So far, so very good. But the battle has not been totally won.

First, the intention is to confine the extra lane, one in each direction, within the motorway boundaries, not carriageway. That means some verges already owned by the D.o.T. will be used — more seriously, in a number of places, embankments (which did offer some protection from the horrors of the motorway) will need to come down and be replaced by a narrow retaining wall, uglier and closer. Second, the thought of articulated trucks now roaring past fourteen inches nearer than before is alarming, as is the removal of hard shoulders near and under some bridges. Thirdly, the very creation of extra lanes will, as they always have done, attract more traffic on to the motorway, and that traffic will, of course, pile down the A404.

And more traffic, on lanes wherever they are, means more chemical pollution of our environment.

Even the D.o.Transport's advisers continue to posit that the M 25 will soon again become Britain's biggest car-park if nothing more is done than add extra lanes. There are therefore hints of attempts to impose a 50mph speed limit, more traffic lights at junctions, vetoes on lane changing at some points and closure of junctions. Of course, if Junction 18, a favourite for closure, goes, those who can do without it will cheer: many who, liking it or not, found it convenient, will now have all the unpleasantness without the use.

So on these matters the Department is still to pronounce. But the real sting, even if less immediate, comes in Mr. Chope's statement that, to take off the short-trip traffic, he plans to have collector/distributor roads by 2000 — and these will run directly alongside the motorway! This, in other words, is an attempt to widen the M 25 through the back door. Press reports, which have not produced one supporter of the Government's new plan, have included one estimate that these roads will be three lane, which, if true, would mean that everywhere within a quarter of a mile either side of the M 25 is at risk. Blight is also, of course, more widely spread.

At the last meeting of NORMAL (No More Motorway Lanes) there was unanimity that the new plan must also be

opposed. It should be re-affirmed that the campaign is not basically anti-car and that plight of some residents who, in today's lack of public transport, could not get to their work without the motorway is understood. Our point is purely pragmatic — that extra motorway lanes alone will not solve the transport problems of this area or the nation as traffic slowly grinds to slower and slower speeds. Long term residents will remember when Harry's bus ran through Loudwater down to Ricky station, and the 335 and 336 services ran frequently Amersham-Watford along the A404. Hundreds of residents saw no need to use their cars to go to work — now they have no alternative.

We know, and welcome, the fact that many of you have had the initiative to write to our MP, Mr. Richard Page, House of Commons, Westminster, stating your opposition to these plans. Some have also written to the secretary of State, Mr. Malcolm Rifkind (ditto). It will do no harm to write again, please, and to copy your letters to The Director, Eastern Construction Programme Division, Heron House, 49-53 Goldington Road, Bedford MK40 3LL, making the points about danger, pollution and (in the case of the feeder roads) the destruction of domestic and business property.

It is also probably not known to many how far our NORMAL group has grown. We now have participating in one form or another the Brickett Wood Ratepayer's Association, the Chorleywood Parish Council, the Denham Green Residents' Association, the Heronsgate Residents' Association, Herts County Council Environmental Dept., Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, King's Langley Residents' Association, the Local Authority Environment and Pollution Consortium, London Colney Residents' Association, the LRA, the Loudwater/Troutstream Estate, Sarratt Parish Council, the Chiltern Society, Tatling End Residents' Association and Three Rivers District Council.

We have also had applications to join — sadly, we can't help — from individuals in Watford, Theydon Bois, Runnymede and Enfield.

LOUDWATER LANE

This really does seem to be the GOOD NEWS newsletter — but keep your fingers crossed just the same. We have won something over the M 25. Now comes the news that Three Rivers has accepted responsibility for the edges of Loudwater Lane along the steep hill from the Chorleywood Road and will put a proper fence all the way down to prevent pedestrians falling down the steep slopes on to the jagged tree stumps. (Your Editor tried to get this done twentyfive years ago, which shows you should never say die). Once again, it hasn't happened yet, but we are told it's going to, largely through the efforts of our Treasurer John Reid and Cllr. Brian Gowshall.

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And still it comes. Again, it is a case of fingers crossed but it seems likely that we may see Beechengrove Wood (Sarratt Lane/Solesbridge Lane) being put back to rights. The wood suffered badly in the two hurricanes and suddenly we were looking at great bare areas in this, one of Hertfordshire's historic woodlands. It seems possible that, through the efforts of Don Cammell and the goodwill of the wood's owner, we may be able to persuade the relevant bodies to finance the major part of clearing and replanting this important site.

Lastly, it may be that the efforts of the Loudwater/ Troutstream Estate Board (backed warmly by the LRA) may be about to bear fruit in getting the woodland between L.House and V.Way/T.Way also cleared of the trees felled in the hurricane. This has also been a long patient process and we must be prepared for more delay. But the (literal) log-jam may have been broken.

None of this has just happened. It has been because you, the members, the community, cared enough and because over the years, the Committee — just four of us at first, but now a dozen — has worked hard and skilfully. It is vital that those who have moved in more recently understand this and continue to give the LRA all the support possible.

THE CHESS RIVER

We were surprised when the National Rivers Authority told the press that it knew nothing of Miss Julie Harrison's damning report on the condition of the river. We knew better and told the NRA so. Now their PR officer has replied apologising — it was the old story of the left hand not knowing what the right was doing. We were also promised that a senior pollution officer would contact us with the news of what was being done to improve the water.

This was progress. It would be untrue to say we were impressed with the follow-up. After six weeks, we had to ring up and remind the NRA of its promise, and even then had to be fairly brusque to get any action. We have now had a letter in courteous terms from the NRA Pollution officer, but all it does is largely to pooh-pooh our concerns. However, he has offered, and we have accepted, that he will come to an open meeting — date and place to be notified — to answer our questions. All riparian owners will surely want to hear the attempted defence.

AND STILL ON WATER

The Loudwater sewers are a maze that few can understand. When they were first installed, little information was kept in detail. Over the years, as more houses have been built to tap in to the system, roads have been dug up and re-surfaced so as to cover sewer locations, matters have become even more obscure.

And, as those who have ever investigated will know, tree roots can work through everything.

Now Three Rivers is going to replace the sewer that runs from the S. end of Violet Way all along L.Drive and to the beginning of L.Lane. Those in L.Drive and nearby will be pleased that back-ups and other problems should be lessened, less glad at the disturbance of their access and in some cases, gardens. We shall be watching to ensure the survival of one of L/water's more bizarre distinctions (mentioned by John Betjeman) the ten-foot high pillared and decoratively-tiled sewer that forms part of the gateway to Siva at the L.Drive/ L.Lane junction.

At roughly the same time, the Works and Services Dept. is taking samples of levels to see if they can this time find the right way to end the continuous flooding at the L.Lane dip N. of Glen Chess. An official admitted that what had been done before was a "total waste", as it ignored the fact that water runs downhill.

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

There was a charming documentary on BBC 1 (Sept. 4) called "The Importance of Being Albert". It dealt with the history, near tragedy, and rescue of the motor narrow boat Albert built by Walkers of Frogmoor Wharf, Ricky for the Ovaltine Company in 1926. Anthony Walker, of Overstream, is one of the last Walkers at the wharf and the film shows with what skill and patience Albert was once more put in working order. There is, of course, another link with L/water in that Dr. Albert Wander, of the Ovaltine family, also lives in the area.

In May, the local paper covered with a picture the 60th anniversary of the PNEU School in Ricky, Headmistress Miss Margaret McLeod, of L/water House.

Only because her mother casually let it drop did we learn that Catherine Longman, until recently of Violet Way, was chosen to fence for Great Britain at the world championships.

Going to school may always seem an ordeal, but not many

of us have to cross a war zone to do it. Tony and Sheena Thompson run a foreign student language school in their Chorleywood Road house which usually has a number of students from Yugoslavia, particularly Slovenia.

Their non-appearance would have hit the school hard. But, despite the airport being bombed, the 47 teenagers were brought by coach and after a 27-hour journey arrived just five minutes after their scheduled time of five past midnight.

BITS AND PIECES

A sign of the times — two houses in the Loudwater estate are being advertised for sale as "bank repossessions"!

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The County Plan, now in its last draft, reveals that since 1934 Herts has lost 96% of its flower-rich grassland, since 1930 98% of its heathland ponds and since 1944 44% of its ancient woodland.

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A good idea that we fear is not going to work. After much pressure, an experimental hopper bus service linking Ricky and Chorleywood started on August 17 to replace part of the (minimal) 128 and 336 service. It runs from roughly 8 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. at two-hourly intervals. We'd have liked it to be earlier, later and more frequent, but all the same it was to be welcomed because not everyone can or does drive.

BUT it was started with so little publicity and with a complete lack of timetables at bus stops or to local organisations that we suspect people will only just be thinking of it and using it by the time the Council has to decide whether it has been viable.

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The Estate Board's annual report makes the following points. There was a deficit of some £3,000, largely because of repairs to the Company flats near the garage. All such objections as the Estate Board made to development plans were successful. The hurricanes have shown that a number of trees need work earlier than expected. A new hump has been built in T.Way.

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We hope that by the time this newsletter is published the bench in memory of Cyril Brine will have been installed in T.Way with a small ceremony. As reported beforehand, the LRA was prepared to fund this completely but a number of people have said they would like to make a contribution. If you wanted to, please do it soon, because we shall finalise the money as soon as the bench is there.

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A warm welcome to the following. Kenneth and Elizabeth Andrew and their two children at The Walled Garden, T.Way; Jim and Joan Hedges and their two sons in Chess Lodge, T.Rise. Nice that both showed interest in the LRA as soon as they got here.

PLANNING

- 878/90 Nightingales, Whisperwood. Detached garage bay extension, canopy. (Approved.)
- 14/91 Rasehill, Clwood Rd. Erection of garage. (Approved.)
- 53/91 Wren Top, Bridle Lane. Part single, part double, first floor extensions. (Approved.)
- 153/91 Tayholm, Lower Plantation. First floor side extension. (Approved.)
- 257/91 Loudwater Farm, L.Lane. Change of use of store to residential. (Approved.)
- 261/91 Beechwood, T.Rise. Swimming pool enclosure, two-storey side extension, car port. (Approved.)
- 313/91 9, Ladywood Close. Single storey side extension. (Approved.)
- 400/91 Dovecote, T.Way. Single storey side extension. (Approved.)
- 526/91 The Dingle, Whisperwood. Erection of conservatory.
- 567/91 Masonic School, L.Lane. Erection of 22.5m high communications mast plus equipment cabin.