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NEWSLETTER No. 63

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Editor: John Jarrett

MAKE A NOTE, PLEASE! The AGM date and place has had to be changed. We find that Chorleywood House is definitely unavailable from now on, but we've found somewhere just as good, and closer — the hall of the Loudwater Farm. Those who've been to our musical evenings there know that it has charm, and there's parking space.

We've also had to change the date to Wednesday the 13th May. Another change is that this year, instead of a speaker, we are showing a short film, "The Importance of Being Albert," which is an edited version of a BBC film described as a "little gem" by the reviewers. It describes how a pair of enthusiasts found the hulk of the barge Albert, the first boat built by Walkers of Rickmansworth for Ovaltine, and lovingly rebuilt her and brought her back to Frogmoor Wharf. Some of you will know that the last head of Walkers now lives in Overstream, and the Dr. Wander who also lives in Loudwater, is the grandson and former Chairman of Ovaltine. So we have local interest and a charming piece of local history.

Apart from that, we shall be giving a major resumé of the M 25 fight, proposing a new Chairman, and — sorry — asking for the 1993 subscription to go up to the dizzy amount of £3. It's a meeting you should all come to.

A certain number of members are complaining, some vigorously, that your Chairman and the Committee are (a) not working vigorously enough to persuade the Dept. of Transport to make special anti-noise provisions for Loudwater and (b) not keeping members well enough informed about the M 25 campaign.

Taking the second point first, more space has been given to the M 25 battle in the last eighteen months than any other two items in the Newsletter. Indeed, your Editor has been worried that he might be boring the not inconsiderable minority who are less concerned about the motorway plans, or just as interested in crime prevention, the Chess, building work near them etc. If he has had the balance wrong, he apologises, and herewith is an M 25 update.

At the 1990 and 1991 AGMs, your Committee was urged to fight the plans to add two more lanes either side of the M 25, on a number of grounds.

There is no doubt that noise is the most obvious and prevalent concern to many members in the Greater Loudwater area. But, for those fortunate enough to be less affected by noise, there are other concerns. Had the original plans gone ahead, some members would have had businesses or homes destroyed or made impossible: mothers were concerned about the chemical and metal deposits in their childrens' food and garden produce: some were concerned about more jams on access roads, loss of open space, wildlife habitats, billions of taxpayers money spent.

Those plans, thanks to support from groups such as the LRA, were dropped. Now we face two new threats — an extra lane being inserted, perhaps in 1994, and two or three lanes of collector/distributor roads built alongside the motorway (35-55 metres wide) in 1997. We are pledged to fight both of these.

It is indisputable that, even if you have a just cause, you can change the mind of a Govt. department in only two ways. One is to alarm the Treasury about the money it will have to provide; the other is for enough MPs to tell the Dept. that the plans will lose their seats.

Your Committee very soon came to the conclusion that a case made for, and by, Loudwater alone would get nowhere,

even if all its 1,000 plus inhabitants spoke up (and not all would). The stand against the plans taken by Three Rivers D.C. was most welcome, but it must be recognised that even though opposition was on an all-party basis, the Council's majority or majority party was non-Conservative and so could be called just political. We therefore decided to spread the base of protest and, with a great deal of work, this has been done to such an extent that almost every affected District Council, Parish Council, Residents Association and environmental group in the areas of S.W. Herts, South Bucks, Hertsmere and St. Albans has joined and we are probably going to have support from groups in three other constituencies. All these organisations have now been collected in the body called NORMAL (No More Motorway Lanes) and national organisations are asking to be involved, too.

So, instead of protests from 1,000 LRA members, we have the pressure of groups that can be said to represent over 250,000 votes. That means influence.

But, in the meantime, we have not been silly enough to forget to prepare for the possibility of losing the second and third battles, just because we have won the first. And this, perhaps, is where we have failed to communicate, because it is clear that some members feel that, in pursuing the larger target, we have neglected the case for Loudwater's specific problems, particularly noise. We're very willing to hear of any experts available, but we've not been idle.

In fact, the LRA's Technical sub-committee, under Eric Tindall, has been quietly amassing a heap of information about noise-reduction techniques, such as floating concrete base, concave or honeycombed walls, larger earth mounds etc. It has also gathered material about American and European best practice, about EEC environmental legislation, Environmental impact studies, etc. We have gained offers of help from the Chiltern Society, the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Friends of the Earth, Transport 2000 and the Environmental Lawyers Foundation. These often offer free or cheaper advice from experts on noise-reduction, land law, giving evidence at public hearings etc. If, and when (election result permitting), the fifth lane plans are announced towards the end of this year (and it won't be before), we have a list of expert names we can call on to make the case for NORMAL generally and for Loudwater specifically. We have also had with gratitude some carefully-worked out suggestions from some of the dissatisfied members (though their answers might not commend themselves to all LRA members.) We have helped to have two sets of noise levels taken by the Council.

It is hoped that this long note will reassure any who are worried and will stimulate generous response from members if and when we have to pay (we'd rather not do so) for expert testimony at public hearings, for which our present £5,000 would certainly not be enough.

Lastly, it is alleged that we have not been vigorous enough in urging members to write in protest. Well, we've said it at both AGMs and in three of the last four Newsletters but we'll say it again (with apologies to the 50/70 members who have written.) Please write to the Eastern Construction Division, 49-50 Goldington Road, Bedford MK40 3LL, and Malcolm Rifkind, MP, copy to Richard Page MP — the simplest address is the House of Commons, London — and tell them that the plans for an extra lane and extra roads will increase, not decrease, congestion, damage the countryside, particularly Loudwater, and cost taxpayers a fortune.

THE CHESS — CLEAN BUT LOW

Our postponed meeting with officials from the National Rivers Authority took place in Three Rivers House. Thank you to the twenty-six people who turned up. We are now satisfied that the NRA's efforts to clean up the river have succeeded and, indeed, some T.Rise residents have reported seeing trout in the river once more. But the years of low rainfall and the heavy demands we all make on the water table are leaving the flow very low. In fact, the Daily Telegraph reported that the river has disappeared from view in Chesham. Water is something the NRA can do nothing about. They are planning a major silt-dredging — already behind schedule, alas — to give a faster flow. One mystery was revealed — some riparian owners reported a common experience of the water level dipping over every weekend — the NRA will look into this.

There seem to be only two answers, other than rain like Noah's flood. One is piping and pumping water from the North to the South, and no party yet seems willing to undertake something so expensive. The other is water-metering. If that comes, some of us who use washing-machines, dish washers, bathe every day, wash cars and hose gardens will have a nasty shock. There's only one answer — save it.

THE ESTATE AND THE LRA

So many new people — there's a turnover of 12% each year — that I've been asked once more to explain what the LRA is and what the Loudwater/Troutstream Estate is. To those who've heard it often before, sorry — you can skip this bit.

The Estate Board came into being far earlier. It is the actual legal body controlling the houses on the estate — that is, almost all those within the gated area and some outside, i.e. Loudwater Heights. Its powers come from covenants property owners have with it, and its ownership of the roads and verges, the garage site and some small pieces of land. Anything to do with roads, gates, speed bumps, verges, soakaways, planning matters *inside* the gated area should be addressed to the Board whose Chairman is Derek Speight, Upstream, T.Rise. It covers about a hundred properties.

The LRA covers what we call "Greater Loudwater", i.e. an area stretching from half way to Croxley Green along Loudwater Lane N. taking in Bridle Lane and Lower Plantation through to Solesbridge Lane junction with Sarratt Lane, cutting back through into Chorleywood Road S. along to L.Lane down towards and including the Chess Hill/Chess Close area, and including in this quadrilateral the Estate. We have no legal powers whatsoever, but exist through the willingness of members to support us and, because we have potentially some 420 members, we do carry some clout with the local authorities. Bridle Lane, Lower Plantation and the Chess Hill area also have their own organisations but the LRA is the umbrella group for everybody.

We re-formed ourselves in the 70s because it seemed necessary to have some group that could concern itself with the *whole* of this beautiful area, whereas the other groups could only deal with their own patches. We also felt that we could try to create a Loudwater community feeling by our newsletter and our social events that would transcend the smaller individual groups — after all, the M 25, the Chess, crime, helicopters, sewers etc. cannot be dealt with piecemeal.

So, if it's Loudwater-wide, come to us — if it's specific to one of the other areas, go to them.

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Sir Frank Rogers (newspaper magnate) of L.Drive has been reported in the press lobbying in Brussels against the EEC attempt to ban certain types of advertising (alcohol, cigarettes).

Tony Williams of V.Way who became one of our Parish Councillors in May, left the district in December. He has arranged a long rent with an American family. (We now have ten American families in Loudwater!). Welcome to Paul and Sharon Kerns from Indiana and daughters Stacy and Kelly.

Philip Groves, the new Chairman of Hertfordshire Community Trust, was reported to be launching a new plan to raise funds for local charities. Mr. Groves has just finished a term of office as President of Herts Chamber of Commerce.

BITS AND PIECES

Some victories are sweeter because they've taken so long. It is nearly thirty years since your Editor (long before he had any connection with the LRA) asked that something be done about the dangerously steep falls on to jagged tree stumps alongside L.Lane. Well, it's happened. The paling fence that has been put up is not what we'd hoped for, but it's a gift horse not to be looked in the mouth.

We've also managed to have two unpleasant dumping grounds — both in different parts of L.Lane — cleared and an intrusive notice (also L.Lane) taken down.

Nothing, we're sorry to say, has yet happened about the two woodland projects, but, as the above shows, we won't give up.

Several people have expressed concern about what is happening to the recently-sold site at Clearburn, T.Rise, home formerly of Mr. and Mrs. Watson, daughter and son-in-law of Lady Lorna Lewis. We gather the new owner is in negotiation with the Estate Board over plans to make it a livery centre, about which there might be some views expressed by those who often walk the footpath nearby.

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Mrs. Liz Dorer, of Swan Care, has asked us to thank the residents and the LRA for the donation of £65 we made to her work after the appeal in the last Newsletter. That is about the average cost of saving the life of a swan that has suffered from fishing lines, hooks or lead weights.

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Again, a victory. We were delighted to have a new copper on the beat assigned to us, P.C. Sanders. Some of you will already have met him. We wouldn't have got him had not members been willing to come to the meeting and make our case.

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We have a new Committee member, Mr. Jack Prince, of Stamhus, T.Way. We can't say he replaces Dorothy Francis, who has resigned, because nobody could. Dorothy has not only served the Committee for many years but also ran the Newsletter splendidly for some of them. Thank you, Dorothy.

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For only the second time in your Editor's memory of Loudwater (30 plus years) the lake behind L.House froze solid in the January cold spell. Last time, some brave soul actually skated on it. This year, only the ducks were skidding.

AN APOLOGY TO TWO LADIES

Through an inexplicable oversight, your Editor managed to run the top half of one letter on the bottom half of another (and strangely it seemed to make sense!).

However, I must apologise to Miss Josie Page, of Glen Chess who wrote about our Garden Party for lopping off her last para in which she praised the friendliness of her neighbours and for letting it seem as though her letter came from Mrs. Joan Townend, of Bridle Lane, the last para of whose letter we printed. Mrs. Townend's first paragraphs (which we omitted) said some nice things about your Committee and urged members to write, as she had done, about the M 25. To Mrs. Townend also grovelling apologies.

PLANNING

8/550/90 Rasehill Cottage, Clwood Rd. Deposit soil, regrade garden (Approved)

8/681/91 Pine Cottage, T.Rise. First floor side extension (Approved)

8/751/91 Branksome Lodge, L.Lane. Detached house and garage on land adjacent. (Refused).

8/776/91 L.Lane. Construction of pumping/sewerage station. (Approved)

8/807/91 Tile Barn, T.Rise, Two-storey side extension. (Plans revised)

8/3/92 Broad Oaks, T.Rise. Double garage.

8/48/92 Old Tiles, T.Way. Single storey rear extension, first floor extension dormer window.

IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN

With this issue, you will be asked for your subscription. It's still only £2. It does save work if you could give it to your patch warden, or send it to the Treasurer. Thank you.