

LOUDWATER RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER No. 62

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Editor: John Jarrett

As soon as we have one issue under control, up comes another! If it isn't the M 25, it's planning, or the river, or the boundaries. Now, it is our police.

Many of you will have heard that Richard Allen, our neighbourhood copper, has worried for some time whether a neck injury, sustained on duty some years ago, would allow him to continue on the force. While waiting for news of this, Desmond Martin (your N.Watch co-ordinator) and your Chairman attended a meeting at Ricky police station in November about N.Watch. There was naturally an exchange of criticisms. We felt there wasn't enough feedback from the police to Desmond as to what had happened to our work, and of course we mentioned that hardy annual, the continued delay in getting through to Watford or Ricky (even the recommended 999 call was recently put through to an answering machine!) The police know this isn't working — the officer who is supposed to inspect how well the switchboard is doing reported that half the time he found himself working it because of staff shortages.

The police complaints were two — (they would have been three but they were too tactful to mention how disheartened some policemen get at how poorly some of us protect our valuables).

First, they too want more information. They felt many people were too shy or busy to tell police if something seemed odd. So they have had printed a card that they'd like all of us to keep by our phones, so that, even if we're unable to make a call at the time, we can jot down some details *at the time* of a person's appearance, a car make, a noise whatever — because later on, a reported crime might jog a memory and you've got some facts on record. (The Inspector mentioned that, when investigating the recent murder of a Croyley Green girl, they found several people who had seen some girl being dragged towards a car, but they hadn't noted the details at the time. Had they done so, it could have been very helpful.)

Your local N.Watch co-ordinator has these cards — please see you get one.

The second complaint was about burglar alarms. 99% of all alarm calls, whether linked to the police station or not, turn out to be false! The police put the blame on user-error. Either the installing firms don't explain their equipment enough, or people don't bother to be sure they know how to operate them. But two policemen in a car taking half an hour to make a useless check — that's £50 of ratepayers' money down the drain, apart from the diversion of police manpower, already stretched.

(They also said, in passing, that two men wearing camouflage jackets in a white Maestro had been under suspicion of badger-hunting. Please watch out for them).

Then we heard that Richard Allen had indeed had to retire, as of December, and that there was some reluctance to replace him, the police preferring to rely on occasional Panda car patrols ("because, after all, Loudwater's crime level doesn't justify more!") and that the N.Watch co-ordination by the police would be a female civilian, mornings only, by phone from Watford, probably in about three months' time.

That started the phones humming, and we were invited to attend the Police Consultative Committee meeting in December. Desmond Martin again got the whips out and of 17 civilians there, nine were Loudwater N.Watch reps. (It is a tribute to you all that at these two meetings, almost every

N.Watch co-ordinator managed to turn up. The LRA, which started and has funded the N.Watch scheme, can feel proud of you all.) Our views pretty well dominated the discussion, and at the end, your Chairman was able to elicit from the relevant officer that he "intended and anticipated a speedy replacement for Richard Allen." We will see.

Incidentally, the Chief Super, while admitting that the police had promoted the N.Watch scheme, said they had never anticipated they would create "such a monster", and that there just were not enough staff to serve it. (It is reported there are now 92,000 N.Watch schemes in Britain.) The County had asked for 18 more police staff for 1992 — they have been given 4!

One cheerful note — the Estate Board are taking Richard on as their Estate Manager. So we shan't lose touch and he'll no doubt be keeping an eye out for wickedness.

Richard asked us to give this message. "I can honestly say that I am sorry to be leaving the Estate where I have met so many pleasant people who appreciate a police presence. Thank you all for your support and advice. I wish Dr. Martin and his co-ordinators good luck for the future and hope you will all remain vigilant in the New Year."

The LRA is sending Richard a small token of our thanks for all he has done, and wishes him well in his new career as a general decorator/handyman.

OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The LRA AGM will be on Thursday, May 14th — we hope at Chorleywood House as usual. We will be urging you to come in numbers because there will be several very important issues to decide — the M 25 situation, the policing problem, the river clean-up campaign etc.

It is also the last year in office of your present Chairman, John Jarrett, who thinks it is time for someone else to take over, he now having done two different 4-year stints. There will have to be nominations for a new Chairman, which is also important. But in any case, please come and see the old boy off!

NORMAL AND THE M 25

At the last LRA meeting, John Jarrett, as Convenor of the NORMAL group, reported that there were now new applications to join every week, and the group was now so large and so widely spread that the present rather ad hoc arrangements could no longer continue. It was also a question of whether we could restrict the group to Herts and Bucks. He therefore suggested it was now time for a more formal arrangement, with a proper committee and some token contributions from all members, rather than the LRA funding all the work (though it is true we have still spent less than the interest the kind donations of Loudwater people has gathered.) This was agreed and a special meeting, at which we expect some 20-25 organisations to attend, including perhaps the influential Transport 2000 and Friends of the Earth, will be held on Feb. 13. The issues, apart from setting up a more formal method, will also include our view on the one extra lane now proposed to be inserted, and the threat of the three-lane each side collector/distributor roads. Incidentally, our spies tell us that opinion is steadily coming round to believing that these will never be built — but let's wait and see.

What is clear is that all you good people who told us to

fight may feel proud that, in however small a way, you have started a campaign that has had an effect and looks to do even more so all over the Home Counties. The CBI, the AA, the Institute of Civil Engineers, the Transport Studies Group are all saying the same thing as us — more motorway lanes will not help industry, congestion, the motorist etc but will cause untold damage. David can make Goliath think again!

THE LOUDWATER SWANS

Those of us with properties on the Chess are privileged to have swans as visitors almost every day, but no doubt many others have the pleasure of seeing swans majestically cruising the waterways.

Sadly they are too often threatened either by vandals or thoughtless "clearances", or, most often, by discarded fishing tackle. For this we are lucky to have urgent help from Liz Dorer who spends much of her time (and money) in operating "Swancare" from her Hemel Hempstead home. The last crisis was in June last year when the pen (female) seemed very ill. I succeeded in capturing her for examination, and Liz confirmed that nylon fishing line had damaged the pen's lower mandible and there was also a blockage in the throat that needed surgery. The vet's bill for operation and medicine was nearly £30 and Liz's mileage was some 80 miles.

A different problem occurred earlier in the year when the cob decided to prefer the remaining female from the previous year's family, and she also decided to attack the old pen. In the end, I had to ask Liz for help and she arranged to have the cygnet relocated in a lake near Tring.

I know of one other resident who gives some financial assistance to Liz Dorer in recognition of her help to us in keeping a pair of swans. Perhaps other residents might care to make a small donation via our Treasurer John Reid to help Liz Dorer continue the good work.

Derek Woolcock, Chess Falls, L.Lane.

(We gather the matter is urgent and Liz may soon not be able to carry on. The LRA committee will be asked at its next meeting to give generously. Ed.)

THE RIVER CHESS

Our apologies to those of you who intended to come to the meeting between ourselves and the National Rivers Authority Pollution Control Officer, Mr. Shepherd. He unfortunately had to cry off at the very last minute because of family illness. However, we have fixed another and definite date, Feb. 6. It will be at 8 p.m. at Chorleywood House as before. Miss Harrison (author of the critical report about the state of the river) intends to be there and so does the local Fisheries Protection Officer. Will as many riparian owners as possible please attend so that we have an informed audience — anyone is, of course, welcome.

THE GARDEN PARTY

We asked for views about the Garden Party. Our much-loved former Chairman, Jack Cognet, wrote from Worcester where he now lives to say that the key to previous successes (over 200 people) was the efforts of the late Nick Nicholls and his band of helpers who went round every house and got people to buy tickets. Jack says he knows some people are shy about this but no one who bought ever complained and the "do" is really good value. (Jack sends goods wishes to all in the LRA).

ANOTHER VIEW COMES FROM GLEN CHESS

For a while now I have believed that for many reasons, some quite mundane, 'drinks only' mornings are losing popularity, even among younger members. As one nearing the Biblical quota, standing for several hours with a drink in my hand is not my favourite occupation — hence my support for the musical evenings at Loudwater Farm where entertainment is coupled with comfort and vittles.

It has to be faced, however, that, whatever social gathering is arranged, a follow-up in what our American friends refer to as "neighbourliness" is not likely to be dramatic because of the sheer shape of Loudwater: there is no church, no school, no public house, no village store nor village green with cricket whereby people in the natural course of their lives may be drawn together.

Finally, I must commend Mrs. Grace Nicholls for her public spirit in patrolling Loudwater to clear litter from the banks and verges — I wave as I pass her in my car, but it isn't always possible to stop and say how much we appreciate her good work.

Joan Townend, Bridle Lane.

(Bless you, Mrs. T.! and Grace, too. Before your editor is swamped, let me say that I do know of at least three other ladies who also do splendid work picking up litter on their walks. Thank you, too, Ed.)

BITS AND PIECES

Cllr. Gowshall, whom we thanked for the news that the S. end of L.Lane is at last to be fenced where the fall is dangerously steep, has conveyed to the Editor that he feels our report was wrong. We invited him to correct it but unfortunately he has not had the time to do so. We understand that the point he wanted to make was that Three Rivers is taking responsibility for fencing only those verges it owns but feels that it can persuade private owners to do likewise.

* * *

Three Rivers has changed its mind about replacing the sewer along L.Drive. The two alternatives of closing L.Drive for months if the sewer went there, or digging six-foot trenches in L.Drive gardens if it went higher were both found unsuitable. Now the old sewer is being cut off at Siva and a new section added cutting across the bend in L.Lane and joining a new pumping station just opposite Glen Chess.

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Clearburn, T.Way, the home of the late Lady Lewis and now of her daughter and son-in-law Mr and Mrs. Sinclair Watson, has been sold at auction with the adjoining former farm land. We understand this vital Loudwater site is destined to be for keeping horses.

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People being what they are, it sometimes happens that our patch wardens don't always tell us of new arrivals. Our welcomes are therefore sometimes late, for which apologies. They are, nevertheless, just as warmly meant. Welcome to John and Tracy Hewitt at Willowisp, Chess Hill with daughter and son: George and Thelma Hunter at the Rose Garden, T.Way: to Martin Barker and Helen Lloyd at Sherwood, L.Lane: Mr. and Mrs. Clifton Melvin and their children: Mr. and Mrs Andy Phelps and sons at Highcleve, K.Lure and Mr. and Mrs. Wharton, their son and daughter at Old Meadow, Wagon Way.

PLANNING

630/91 Waverley, Lodge Drive. One-storey conservatory at rear.

681/91 Pine Cottage, T.Rise. First floor side extension.

757/91 Branksome House, L.Lane. Detached house and garage adjacent to Branksome House.

766/91 Cherry Hill Cottage, T.Rise. Two-storey side extension and porch.