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According to Thames News, NORMAL, by holding a protest meeting about the M 25, has begun a fight that will be as fierce and prolonged as that over the Channel Tunnel rail route. It is odd, isn't it, how television people think nothing has happened unless they've covered it, because NORMAL has, as members will know, been going hard for nearly two years!

However, NORMAL now exists, the media have said so. Those who were kind enough to support the LRA's early opposition to the M 25 widening may feel pleased to see how their work has borne fruit. Certainly, the coverage we had for the protest meeting was considerable. Apart from several local papers, we did interviews for LBC, Thames TV News and South East TV News. As your representative on, and Chairman of, NORMAL, John Jarrett in one day did LBC (at 6.45 in the morning!), Thames from 11.00 to 12.15 and South East News from 4.00 till 6.00 before going on to the protest meeting at 7.30 till 10.45. The actual meeting attracted an audience of over 300 people, whose feeling of opposition was very clear.

There was from the floor strong criticism of the fact that not one of the MP's invited, six in all, turned up. From our area Cllr. Frank Cogan, District Cllr. Alan Littlejohn and Parish Cllrs. Tim Venner and Margaret Jarrett attended.

The spokesman from the D.o.T. had a difficult task since he had to follow the official brief, and produce the official platitudes. For instance, over the insertion of the extra lane and the worries we feel about that, he had to say that the lanes would be significantly narrower only where configuration of the land compelled it (small comfort to those who find an artie six inches closer at any spot), that the hard shoulder will be maintained with diligence wherever possible (it still is going to disappear near bridges) and, silliest of all, that there were no plans for the collector/distributor roads - which is only official evasion of the fact that while the Dept. of Transport may not have yet an official order to build such roads, the Governments wish to do so has been plainly expressed.

The County Cllrs present from Herts and Bucks made it plain that, while they were also still officially in the dark about the Dept's plans, they were opposed strongly to what they understood was being put forward. The D.o.T. spokesman also made much of the programme of tree-planting that goes with any motorway work, as did Mr Carlisle, Roads Minister, when interviewed by Thames News. However, the audience were quick to point out how many trees are destroyed to build the road and also how many years groups such as Three Rivers and the LRA had to struggle to get any landscaping done when the M 25 was first built.

The crux of the matter remains, of course, time. Although it will probably be five years before the extra lane, if it goes through, will be completed and twice that for the collector/distributor roads, nevertheless the plans for Junctions 13 to 15 have been announced. The Department, typically, put these out in mid-July and said that all comments and objections had to be in by August 14, a scandalously short time and, of course, in the middle of the holiday season. With staunch help from the Friends of the Earth, NORMAL decided to have cards sent to the Department demanding an enquiry on the whole principle of widening before the appeal time for those junctions ran out. In Chorleywood and Rickmansworth we succeeded with no difficulty in getting some 1500 people to sign the cards. As we expected, all we had as answer to the basic question was an acknowledgement of the request but, surprise, the Department has extended the appeal time to Oct. 30 "because of renewed evidence of public interest".

The protest meeting passed nem.con. two motions. The first repeated the demand for a public inquiry after debate in Parliament on the whole motorway widening plan and for all action on widening to be suspended forthwith. The second urged all MP's for the six constituencies NORMAL operates in to reconsider their refusal to arrange for a deputation to see the Minister of Roads. The fight goes on.

BLIGHT HITS LOUDWATER

NORMAL has discovered that blight is creeping closer. Local estate agents and surveyors say that the Dept. of the Environment has already paid out £10 million buying up houses where they had to admit blight. Once the D.o.E. owns the houses and the settling of what is a fair price, as well as clearing legal necessities, can take a year - it tries to re-sell them. It is seldom successful on the ordinary commercial market, so in Chorleywood, most have been transferred to Housing Associations, who then rent, on various lengths of lease, to people who find getting a house difficult.

However socially meretricious this is, concern is expressed by house holders nearby. They feel that those renting, especially if short term, will not maintain their properties very assiduously, and so standards in affected roads will deteriorate. This, they feel, will in turn depress market values that are already falling because of the recession, and the threat of the M 25 widening. Clearly, if the Government insists, for what NORMAL considers pointless reasons, on buying up houses for schemes not even formalised yet, let alone legislated, there must be a cut-off point for definition of blight. But it is felt as hard by those householders whose property is devalued by being close to blighted houses.

Apologies for the technicalities, but they are relevant to this area. Already Chess Way is virtually a "dead" road and blight has been allowed in Wyatts Road, Wyatts Close, Parkfield, High View, Chestnut Avenue and Nottingham Road. Most relevantly, one house in T. Way has successfully claimed blight and another is in process of so doing. This mad plan has inflicted its first blow on Loudwater.

MUSIC FOR YOU

Our musical evening was again a success. But it is infuriating. Why? Because your Committee has to work very hard to sell all the tickets - but we do it. We put it in the newsletter, we put up posters. And every year, after it is over, people say: "I hear it was a great evening, I wish I'd come."

The entertainment was by a group led by Tim Venner. Some of you will know him as former Head of Geography at Clement Danes, some as a Parish Councillor. The group - four of them - which has done acts as varied as medieval banquets in historic houses and concerts in Abu Dhabi, this time performed a Cook's tour of Europe with songs and readings.

But almost as important as the actual entertainment is the opportunity it gives for Loudwater people to meet and talk with one another in the half-hour interval, relaxed by a few glasses of wine and excellent tit-bits, courtesy Mrs Martin and Johnson.

LIVERISH ABOUT LIVERY

The depth of feeling about the planning application to turn Clearburn T Way into a livery establishment was very clear when Three Rivers Council chamber was packed to the gills by Loudwater residents come to hear the application discussed.

It was a very cogent example of the dilemma councils find themselves in. Apart, obviously, from the applicant there was not a single supporter of the plan; clearly, also, not one of the Councillors were happy. But, on the facts as presented, it was

the view of the Council officers, and eventually of the Councillors, that there were not adequate grounds for rejecting the application. Moreover, only a short while before the meeting, the Government had again weakened the hands of Councils anywhere in the country faced with this kind of problem. The Department of the Environment had noted with concern the number of farms going out of business as a consequence of the recession and could see heavy falls in rate income unless these lands were commercially used. It had therefore advised that the definition of "agricultural use" should be more generously interpreted, which was no help to the Estate's case or the Council's (we sometimes feel the initials "D.O.E." stand for "Developers own England", just as the Department of Transport is known in Winchester as "Destruction of Twyford"!)

Derrick Speight made an eloquent appeal for rejection with massive support from the public seats, but the application was passed. It is fair to say in conclusion three things. First, that those who were at the meeting would have welcomed some evidence from the officers for their repeated assertion that a rejection would not stand up on appeal; second, that the Council did in fact impose a very large number (15) of restrictions and Cllr. Shaw constantly strengthened into absolutes restrictions the officers had put forward as permissive; and thirdly, while we all are for the Council fighting every case we feel should be fought, we do also complain when legal costs of lost appeals put our rates up!

In the last newsletter, I reported the lengthy discussion that took place about Clearburn at the LRA AGM. I have been asked to make it clear that Bill Hanman had been briefed to make a formal statement for the Board, but unfortunately family illness prevented him from attending. He did send apologies which I apologise in turn for not passing on at the meeting - those who were there will remember that the first few minutes were pretty hectic as we tried to squeeze everyone in. In Bill's absence, Maurice Escow dealt on behalf of the Board with all the questions very ably, and the attendance at the Council hearing bore witness to the Board's energy in dealing with the issue.

DRAWING THE LINE

Nil desperandum has to be the motto for any group such as the LRA, because, however long it takes, you do always have a chance of winning in the end. We were pleased to say in a previous newsletter that we had obtained agreement to restore centre white-lining round the bends of L. Lane. But months went by and Godfrey Crook and former Chairman John Jarrett had to return to the attack. But now, there the white lining is for all to see (including the road-hogs). Seeing that some 75% of the lane now has white lining, we shall now make the obvious point that it must take more time starting and stopping the white-lining than to do the whole length.

THE LOVELY LARKFIELD

Chorleywood Common is strictly outside the LRA area, but one part of it was so spectacular in June-July it deserves mention. The Common is now, because of its special value, the subject of much help and advice from the Countryside Management Service. They were particularly interested in one area, the Larkfield near Dog Kennel Lane, and with their advice on when to cut it (and, just as important, when not to cut) the Larkfield was suddenly aglow with hundreds of red-spotted burnet moths; iridescent blue wings with vivid red spots on them. It's worth going up next year to see the picture, hear the thousands of crickets, and spot a dozen different butterflies.

BITS AND PIECES

There is a change in the Committee. Mabel Tindall, after doing great service to the LRA, including most of the inspiration and work behind installing the bench in honour of Cyril Brine, has stepped down. We still have Oversream represented by her husband Eric, the master of M 25 technicalities. In Mabel's place, the Committee have co-opted Mrs Denise Pready of Harewood. We have long needed someone along that stretch - thank you Denise.

We note with condolences the death of Jeremy Clutterbuck, the doyen of a family whose name goes back many years in the Sarratt/Chorleywood area. The Clutterbuck estate includes the important site of Beechengrove Wood where the LRA has for years been interested to make some joint effort to maintain and improve this critical piece of woodland.

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Members may have noticed that the gates on the Loudwater Estate have had extra posts and in some cases fences added. The Estate Board says that it realises that this must be an inconvenience to those who, perfectly reasonably, have been accustomed to riding horses round the gates. But the Board is concerned to maintain the private nature of the estate as a matter also of security and wishes to deter motorcyclists etc. It is hoped that these restrictions will be accepted as for the good of all.

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One of Loudwater's best-known residents is leaving us. Jim and Marjorie Davis, of Whisperwood, are moving to Shardeloes in Amersham, both because they want somewhere smaller and to get away from the M 25 thunder. Loudwater has much to thank Jim for. But the family connection goes on, because their son, Guy and family are taking the house over. Because Jim's mother lived in the Whisperwood house, the arrival of Guy and his children will mean four generations have lived there.

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Two residents made the local papers in the past few weeks. Bill Pitt-Ford of Trout Rise was given the Cancer Relief Macmillan Fund's highest award, the President's Medal, for his fifteen years of work organising and raising funds.

Former committee member Mabel Tindall (see above) baked a scale model of the Holy Cross Church for the Sarratt Flower Festival. Her work was called the star attraction of the event to raise money to preserve the church.

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As well as Guy Davis and family, mentioned above, we also have to welcome Martin and Elaine Hughes with children Benjamin and Cass to Baystock, Whisperwood.

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A literary sidelight for lovers of "Rebecca" and "Jamaica Inn". In a biography of Daphne Du Maurier, the author says that the family - famous actor Gerald Du Maurier and children - escaped from London to two different country homes, one in Croxley Green, the other "Solesbury House" in Solesbridge. Daphne wrote of long walks down back lanes from one to another, and that must have taken her through a then undeveloped Loudwater!

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At our AGM, it was suggested that the LRA used a little of its funds to restore the sign for Loudwater Drive. Poor Loudwater Drive - it's unadopted, no mother or father and nobody owns it! But no so long ago, it was re-surfaced by one kind resident, so we were all prepared to get Richard Allen to make a new sign. Hey presto, someone has done just that and very handsome it is, too. But we don't know who did the deed. Strange, but thanks anyway.

Planning

- 8/3/92 Broad Oaks, T.Rise. Double garage (Approved)
- 8/48/92 Old Tiles, T.Way. Single storey rear extension, first floor extension, dormer window. (Approved)
- 8/291/92 15 Glen Chess. Erection of balcony. (Refused)
- 8/304/92 Clearburn, T.Way. Change of use to private livery stable and associated works. (Objected, approved)
- 8/303/92 Oak House, L. Lane. Erection of conservatory. (Approved)
- 8/336/92 Contino, Whisperwood. First floor rear extension and loft conversion. (Approved)
- 8/451/92 The Walled Garden, T.Way. Erection of dwelling on adjoining land. (Objected)
- 8/458/92 Cariad, Sarratt Lane. Swimming pool enclosure. (Approved)
- 8/471/92 Cob Cottage, T.Rise. Extensions and alterations. (Approved)
- 8/575/92 4 Ladywood Close. Raise roof to enlarge first floor, single storey side and rear extension.