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Loudwater, as has often been said, lacks a social centre, a club, a shop, a pub. Many a local gentleman has had a wistful look in his eye as he thinks of posting a letter or taking the dog for a walk and just happening to drop in for a quick half. Well, like many great thoughts, it's been considered before - by the Romans.

In a fascinating talk at our AGM, Stewart Bryant, acting County Archaeologist revealed that a Roman brewery existed about the 3rd Century AD on the site of the Water Gardens and Tropical Marine Centre in Solesbridge Lane and that ran for over 200 metres straight down into what is now Clearburn (that site again!) in T. Rise. Some years ago, we reported that Mr and Mrs Sinclair Watson, the then owners, had found Roman tiles when digging in their garden. The Solesbridge Lane site contains clear evidence of barley stores and a mill with a water wheel. (Of course, the one thing a brewery must have is access to clean water and the Chess in those days ran almost in the same banks as today). The water wheel fitment shows clearly the indentation of a grinding stone with its axle hole and, as there are only about a dozen sites in Europe where Roman water wheels have been found, this is very notable.

Alas, there is no evidence of Romans living on the site. To begin with, this was when the Imperial rule was falling apart and many of the troops and functionaries had already gone home, the work being carried on by Romanised Britons and slaves. They probably worked on a 9-5 basis and lived across to the North of the M25.

Thanks to the generous co-operation of Mr Sankey at the Marine Centre and grants from the English Heritage, this most important Roman site near the M25, has been mapped and photographed and the important artefacts saved, including Samian wine jars, parts of a grain weighing scale etc.

We are most grateful to Mr Bryant (year in, year out we do seem to find something of interest said about Loudwater). It's still a long way to the pub, but as you walk along the T. Way footpath, you might just imagine the faintest remaining scent of that rich barley and malt aroma.

WHAT'S THAT OUT THERE?

"All this wild life they talk about - I never see it!" (heard at the AGM).

To the dissatisfied lady, we can only say: "keep looking and listening." Many of us have seen the muntjac ambling through the garden (and sometimes nibbling precious trees!) and in May, June the male's short strangled bark for a mate was frequent. You'll be lucky to see badgers unless you're near a sett and willing to sit still for hours at dusk or dawn but their comic yip-yips can be heard some distance away. Anyone who's ever heard the blood-curdling baby-caught-in-a-mantrap noise the vixen makes when in heat will never forget it and the dog foxes are bold enough to stop on the road verge and give motorists a fiery-eyed stare. Hedgehogs, alas, seem rarer but if you are disturbed by half an hour of short grunts, you can be sure it's a male hedgehog going round and round his desired female in a courtship ritual. It's the hedgehog equivalent of the last waltz. If you're near the river, you can often see the red and silver flash of a trout now they are back in the Chess, and there's sure to be the grey and white statue of a heron near by. Lastly, of course, there are the Loudwater swans who, despite disturbance to the spit of land on the East of Loudwater House lake where they nest, have again produced cygnets.

COMMITTEE CHANGES

Chairman Desmond Martin announced resignations of two Committee members during the year - Mabel Tindall and Ann Tait. The handsome bench on T. Way remains as witness to Mabel's work while Jack Prince, who takes over from Ann as newsletter distribution chief, will soon find out what a great job she did. The new Committee members appointed at the AGM are Denise Preedy of Harewood and Sue Tippen from Chess Lane. Desmond and Godfrey Crook were re-elected.

...AND TALKING OF ELECTIONS

We have a new County Councillor in Tim Venner (Shire Lane) who surprised many people by winning the seat for the Lib. Dems from veteran office-holder Frank Cogan. The other local candidate Mr K. Andrew of The Walled Garden (see also below) was beaten as Conservative candidate for the Croxley seat. Margaret Jarrett (V. Way) has been elected Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council.

MORE ON THE MOTORWAY

We are now approaching a crunch point on the "rapid widening" scheme, that is the insertion of an extra lane into the existing M25 curtilage. The environmental Impact Statement is due to be put out in August/September, shortly after you read this. Although the Dept. of Transport has once again chosen the holiday period to announce its intentions (surprise, surprise) and may well try to give only three weeks for comments, the last time it did this NORMAL had 1300 cards sent protesting at this short time and it was extended to six weeks. We shall be watching. But it cannot be said too often that everyone who is concerned should learn all they can, either from the LRA motorway spokesman Eric Tindall or from John Jarrett representing NORMAL, about what is proposed.

Members should be clear that, under existing law, the basic decision to insert the extra lane cannot be challenged. BUT every and any detail of how it is to be built can be. If you are not happy with the proposed surface or embankments, protection against pollution and chemical run-off, noise insulation, methods of managing traffic flow on the extra lane, at the junction and at the access roads, these are matters that can be raised with the local MP and with the Transport Minister Mr McGregor. The LRA is in contact with traffic specialists with a view to employing them to give expert advice on what issues it can raise and as a member of NORMAL, the LRA is also part of a continual political pressure from bodies representing over 300,000 people in three Counties. The more vigorously we express opposition to attempt to build this lane in a cheap and nasty way, the better chance we have of making the Dept. think again about its insane plan for six more lanes.

Fighting this cause will cost money. Decent expert advice will probably cost between £5-8,000. Please send what you can to John Reid for the Loudwater Fighting Fund, or even to NORMAL.

A WOODLAND GIFT

Derrick Speight, Chairman of the Loudwater (Troutstream) Estate Ltd writes:

"I am very pleased to tell readers of the Newsletter that Mr & Mrs Barnes of Chessbord have made a very generous gift to the Loudwater Estate Company of the woodland in the triangle of Violet Way, Troutstream Way and the approach road to Loudwater House."

"The Company, in acknowledging this gift, will accept responsibility for the care and maintenance of this piece of land, and will continue to ensure that it remains open to residents, and a natural area of conservation."

"We have consulted the Forestry Commission, who advise that very few trees require attention, although some of the undergrowth needs to be cut back to encourage the growth of new saplings and bushes, and the path through the woods between Violet Way and Troutstream Way will be cleared and obstructions will be removed. The Board intends to maintain the area as nearly as possible, in its natural state whilst ensuring the safety of traffic on perimeter roads."

"We should be interested to hear from any residents, who would be prepared to assist with the preservation of "Barnes Wood" with its flora and fauna. The heavier work would, of course, be carried out by contracted Tree Surgeons, but an interested voluntary group of residents could add considerably to the healthy growth of the shrubs and tree by regular inspection and care."

"The fact that this land now passes to the Company will further ensure that it will remain an area of natural growth and unthreatened by commercial development, and we thank Mr & Mrs Barnes, on behalf of the Estate residents, for making this transfer of ownership possible."

THE INSPECTORS CALL

Bill Hanman writes:

"Last month we had the unprecedented experience of two public Inquiries by Department of the Environment Inspectors, following appeals against the Council's decisions on planning applications by Mr Andrews."

"The first concerned a new house, on a 1/5th acre plot, within The Walled Garden, alongside Loudwater House. Amazingly, Planning officials originally recommended approval, saying that the proposal complied with the District Plan. The LRA and the Estate Company immediately alerted Planning Committee members, pointing out that the scheme was diametrically contrary to the Plan's policy for this area. The few neighbouring houses on small plots were established 100 years ago, way before current planning criteria. The new development would set a precedent for small plots throughout the Estate. The Planning Committee agreed and refused the application and appeal to the DOE followed. Written objections to the appeal were lodged by the LRA, the Estate Company, the Parish Council and adjacent residents."

"At the Inquiry the main issue was whether the proposal accorded with the District Plan. The technicalities of this were well argued by the Council's lawyer, backed by the (now converted) Planning Officer Don Cammell and Bill Hanman also weighed in."

"The up-shot is that the Inspector comprehensively dismissed the appeal because the standards set in the District Plan should be upheld; the proposed house would detract from the character of the area; and it would establish a precedent, prejudicing the policy of maintaining Loudwater's special character."

"The second Inquiry concerned the livery activities behind Clearburn Trout Rise, by Mr Roberts. You will remember that last year this development was vehemently opposed, but eventually the Planning Committee approved, subject to 17 conditions intended to minimise the impact on the character and amenities of the locality. In January the developer decided to appeal to the DOE against conditions concerning floodlighting, use by people not stabling horses on the premises, gymkhanas and similar activities, landscaping and fencing, and access hours. Also he wanted 24 horses rather than the original 18 maximum."

"Written evidence was submitted to the DOE by the appellant, the Council, the Estate Company, LRA and numerous residents. At the Inquiry, on 19th and 20th May, professional experts for both sides amplified their cases and were cross questioned thereon. A planning specialist and lawyer retained by the Estate Company also played their part. A splendid contribution was made in statements by individual residents (Margaret Bianchin, Mike Flint, Janet Grant and Jack Prince), Don Cammell for the LRA and Councillors Jane Weitzmann and Alan Littlejohn."

"We are optimistic about the outcome, but the decision is unlikely before August. In both Inquiries the Inspectors were impressive and proceedings interesting. Some 60 residents attended for Clearburn, a good number on a working weekday. Regrettably the turnout for The Walled Garden was abysmal.

True, the immediate outcome affected few householders, but the potential impact throughout the Estate was quite as serious as the issues at stake at Clearburn."

EVEN IN LOUDWATER, ALAS...

Over the years, Loudwater has not escaped its share of being burgled. We have, however, always been able to put the point that nobody should be frightened, because, however distressing it may be to come back and find strangers have been in your house and taken things you valued, violence is not part of that act.

Sadly, that is no longer true. For the first time in the memory of your Editor, which goes back 30 years and more, there has been a physical assault on one of our members, a resident in his 70s who was expecting his wife to ring the doorbell when she came home, opened the door to a ring and was knocked to the floor by three thugs who menaced him and tied him while ransacking the house.

A CID spokesman at our AGM went to some lengths to point out how unusual this was and to tell residents not to feel besieged and that message we repeat. Nevertheless, we have to offer our sympathies to the member concerned and deplore the fact that even here, we are not totally safe from thuggery.

BITS AND PIECES

Apologies to John Overend (L.Heights) We said in our last issue that he was the new Chairman of the Rickmansworth Society, and apparently we moved him up one stage higher than we should.

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Most people will have by now have heard that Paul, the milkman who has supplied much of Loudwater for many years, has packed it in. The LRA has had a couple of letters from Paul and they are both sad and heart-warming. There is no doubting Paul's sincerity when he writes of the many customers he has had who have become friends and there is no doubt many of us will miss his ruddy, smiling face.

What has happened is another of those changes that are described as progress but are in fact merely a question of money. The supermarkets, by offering one type of milk and no delivery, are able to charge less for it than dairies such as the Express. So dairies have some time been saying that a house to house delivery service is not economic and they want to end it. The first stage clearly has been the franchising operation that has lost us Paul. Under this, milkmen would pay so much for the float and the round and then (roughly) keep what they make. Paul, having looked at his figures, decided they didn't seem worthwhile. That is his decision - Dave, who used to stand in for Paul when holidays came up, has decided to give it a go.

Leaving aside the fact that we will lose a courteous, cheerful milkman, one has to say that if door to door services such as this go, the worst losers will be those for whom the milkman and the postman were a daily link with life often providing an unofficial but welcome social service to the old, lonely, housebound. I'm sure many of you will already have left Paul some token of your affection - if you missed doing so, either Dave or the LRA will be happy to pass it on. We wish Paul and his family the best of luck in the future.

WELCOME, WELCOME...

We welcome the following people to Loudwater and the LRA and hope they will be happy here. Dymphne McConnell, Branksome Lodge, L. Lane; Peter and Carol Kells and family, Atholl House, Sarratt Lane; Michael and Mary Bucks in Chesters. T. Rise while the Reeces are away: D. Diamond, Faraway Cottage (formerly Mayswood), Bridle Lane; Richard and Celia Butterfield, Elmwood, Rooks Hill; C. Brothers, Highfields, T. Way and we welcome back Georgio and Pat Lovisetto, Corner Croft, L. Heights.

PLANNING

- 8/45/92 *The Walled Garden, T. Way. Erection of dwelling on adjoining land. (Objected, refused, appealed, dismissed.)*
- 8/20/93 *Cherry Hill Cottage, T. Rise. Erection of detached garage. (Approved)*
- 8/30/93 *Valley View, Rasehill Close. Single storey rear extension. (Approved)*
- 8/39/93 *Endways, Chess Close. First floor extension rear, new pitched roof. (Approved)*
- 8/164/93 *7 Lower Plantation. Single storey rear extension. (Approved)*
- 8/167/93 *Polstreath, Bridle Lane. Erection single storey conservatory. (Approved)*
- 8/237/93 *Cariad, Sarratt Lane. Erection of boundary wall and gates.*