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Let it be said straightaway that your Editor does not make the news - he just reports what's happened. This, for some reason, is a grumpy newsletter. Perhaps it's the winter, perhaps the recession, or coincidence. Anyway, here goes.

First on the list is crime. After an unusually long period of peace, November saw one incident after another. All burglaries or even attempts are distressing, but we can at any rate report that almost all of them resulted in the thief being chased away or getting very little. Two homes were not so fortunate.

There are several points to be made about this little crime wave. First, almost all of them were outside the gated area. However understandably unpopular the gates are with those outside the Estate, it does seem more and more that the gates deter thieves banking on a quick getaway. Will those inside the gated area who insist on leaving gates open please realise they are jeopardising their own property as well as that of others?

Secondly, there was useful evidence of how Neighbourhood Watch is working. As most of you will know, from the Chief Co-ordinator down to Dr. Martin, (our Chief) there are four lines of communication. On the occasion of the most serious robbery the news went from top to bottom in one hour along one line, which is incredible, and within three hours along two others, which is very good. One line, alas, broke down when a new co-ordinator passed no message.

On the other hand, although we seem to be working our end of Neighbourhood Watch well enough, it is clear that there is cause for dissatisfaction with the feedback from the police end. The response in action is very good, even if it does not seem unnecessary to send three officers to every crime scene. But phone calls to the police about suspicious characters rarely produce any acknowledgement, and in some cases seem simply to be lost. One resident, for example, was asked to open a gate because, said the car's driver, having got to it to find it locked, he couldn't reverse because he had "no reverse gear. In fact, only first works at all!" The resident then said that he would have to report the car which clearly should not be on the road and was not only illegal but could not be insured. Having reported, he then found the next day that the driver was in fact a Loudwater resident, so he thought he'd help the police by passing on the information. Said the police: "We have no record of any such report!"

GROUCH TWO

Second on the unpopular list at the moment come badgers. Yes, protected, admired by us all, but not flavour of the month currently with several Loudwater residents, who have noticed gouge marks on their treasured lawns. At first almost all those affected assumed it was muntjacs, either showing off or fighting in the rut. But when local wild life experts were called in, they dismissed all charges against the muntjacs and said: "Badgers!"

Why this is suddenly happening, we don't know. It is possible that the work at Clearburn, or some of the preparatory works around the M25, have disturbed some setts. What is clear is that while nobody wants to harm such fascinating animals, they are currently a nuisance. What is the answer?

Badger experts have been consulted, and they say there are two alternatives. If you're really badger - friendly, then put out peanut-butter sandwiches. They love these and will pass up digging for anything else. If, on the other hand, you feel this an animal protection racket and the hell with it, then the answer is human urine. This is definitely a no-no for badgers and they will not go near it. So organise the household for a week, collect a bowl full and sprinkle it on their entry. I'm assured it works!

One resident who has had badger trouble is feeling somewhat sour about all our fauna.

"When we came to Loudwater 37 years ago, the dawn chorus

rarely allowed us to sleep after 4pm in springtime. The hawthorn hedges that residents were required to plant were full of blackbirds' nests, hedgehogs and foxes called at night and we even had a nightingale after dark."

"Then change. Blackbirds' eggs were found broken or thrown out of nests. It was grey squirrels. After the dawn chorus became muted we discovered a squirrel drey 80 feet up in a lime tree and a litter of four coming from it every eight weeks. We took pest control advice and caught very many squirrels. Damage to trees and shrubs ceased but there were few blackbird chicks. A greater menace had arrived - magpies. This spring, five pairs of blackbirds tried to nest but magpies attacked the nests, taking eggs. The few chicks that survived gave us our worst experience - magpies in a fir tree diving straight down to slaughter the babies. A blackbird chick being eaten by a magpie is not an easy sight to forget."

"Again, many of us have goldfish ponds. A nature reserve near the Aquadrome became home to at least five heron pairs, so now goldfish within a large radius have been eaten. I lost 120 fish in three mornings forays ten years ago, while a neighbour watched 'that magnificent bird' having breakfast"

"Now we have a new problem - lawns ravaged, tufts of grass ripped up in the night. No, not the sharp hooves of muntjacs but badgers, who, having eaten our hedgehogs, now root for grubs. But, having lost our fish, hedgehogs and most of our birds, perhaps we should be grateful for herons and badgers. And we don't need the dawn chorus, now we have the M25!" - Denis Longman, Violet Way.

GROUCH THREE

The LRA became concerned that, once again, collection plates on postboxes weren't being used, so we wrote to the Royal Mail. An officer admitted there had been problems, as follows.

"The collector takes out sufficient time tablets for the boxes and should return with the same number from the previous collection. In practice, many stainless steel tablets mysteriously went missing. These were replaced by plastic tablets which proved a disaster as they deteriorate and break. Another problem was that Rickmansworth performed early morning collections and Watford the rest and tablets went missing between the two. Now Watford has taken over all collections and new steel tablets have been supplied." We will be watching.

GROUCH FOUR

Lastly, we have the perennial problem of bonfires. Your Editor has had a couple of readers wanting this aired and he has been involved himself. Some years ago, one resident, now gone from us, wrote a vigorous letter saying how wasteful and dangerous leaf bonfires were. Now it is true that the local Council has long urged everyone in the interests of the environment to compost leaves but in an area with as many trees and many broadleaved at that, it isn't easy and it takes time. It is also true that, although there have been reports that leaf smoke is carcinogenic, the jury is still out on this.

So there isn't an easy answer, but if you must burn, let good sense prevail. Try to avoid the wind blowing the smoke straight into a neighbour's house (your Editor ignored this once and was properly rebuked by a neighbour who'd just redecorated and had all windows open to get rid of the paint smell!): if possible, warn neighbours. Don't please, says the Estate Board, burn on the road - road charges are high enough already.

NOW THE GOOD NEWS

A letter from our former milkman Paul Noon.
"I have some good news at last. I have found myself a job as a security officer at Newlands Park College in Chalfont St. Giles.

I will be working with the public again, which I enjoy. I hope all is well in Loudwater and best wishes to all my friends." Paul's address is 164 Severalls Avenue, Chesham, Bucks.

Your Editor's thanks to the several kind people who offered to fill the gap in his newsletter collection, especially to Mr and Mrs Baker who came up trumps first. Now I have a complete collection, other residents have asked if they can copy mine to fill their gaps. Nice to know people think it is worth keeping.

Our funds are healthy. As we have often said, we don't aim to keep a large balance and the General fund of just under £3,000 is quite good enough. More donations have come to the M25 Fund - thank you - which now stands at £5,000 plus.

ODDS AND ENDS

After years of sterling work, Bill Pitt-Ford is giving it a rest as a fund-raiser for the Cancer Relief Macmillan Nurse Fund. Well done Bill. And guess who's taken over - Mary Niven, known to many and a former Committee member, as Mary Filose.

A lot of welcomes to offer: to Andrew and Jackie Weiner and son and daughter at L.House: to Mr and Mrs D. Clifford and family at Lightwoods, T.Way: to Paul and Carol Ellis and baby Charlotte at South Winds, T.Rise: to Mr and Mrs Lobb from Australia at The Warren, T.Rise: to Alan and Pat Cohen at Clearburn, T.Way and to David and Denise Diamond plus son and daughters. Hope you're all happy here.

IN RETROSPECT

A few people did say they thought reprinting occasional items from the past was worthwhile, either because it was news to newcomers or brought back memories to others. So here goes.

In October 1977, the Estate Board had to fight hard to prevent the garage being shut, as the Council kept saying no commercial business should be allowed on the Estate and the structure was decrepit. In 1978 the Subud arrived at Loudwater Farm, to some concern, since completely gone. There was a threat of a racing stable and gymkhana in Beechen Grove Wood, and at the 1978 AGM, we had a sparkling talk from (the late) Geoffrey Cornwall, who had an exhaustive knowledge of the area's history. He spoke of the origins of L.House where Panmure Gordon, the stockbroker who bought it, entertained royally and lived likewise, stocking the then extensive grounds with deer and wallabies and acquiring more and more vehicles, including a mobile dining-room coupled to a mobile kitchen to serve meals while travelling and probably, the first amphibious vehicle of its time, a coach that drove round the grounds and then, by ingenious machinery, converted into a boat to run into the lake. But Mr Cornwall's greatest success was reading from the brochure put out by Cameron Jeffs in 1927 when he developed and sold plots in Loudwater. We printed some of the blurb, as follows.

"Loudwater, the village of natural beauty and health, for the strenuous-living man or woman who must have copious country air and restful allurements nightly...Father blackbird and his mate have made Loudwater's sparkling stream valley their happy pitch...even that gorgeous little chap, the kingfisher, has known the secret of Loudwater. It's the trees, the fairy dingles and a hundred and one things on which Dame Nature's fingers have lingered long, work so affectionately appreciated by the Estate owners that they follow her lovely toe in in courteous imitation..." They don't write ads like that any more.

THE M25 - AN EXPENSIVE ASPIRIN

The revelations about the M25 continue to come. In December, the National Audit Office pointed out that the original estimate for the widening was £862 million, but now the scheme will cost £1.175 billion! Blight payments alone, it says, will be £309 million. What is more, when NORMAL inspected the documents for the Environmental Impact Statement exhibitions in the Denham area, it was confirmed by the staff of consultants

Sir William Halcrow that the extra lane proposed would be fully congested in four years and the link roads in ten! As the Chairman of NORMAL (yours truly) said when speaking at a Surrey protest meeting: "No headache ever had a more expensive aspirin!" Apart from the other two parties, both pledged to oppose link roads, NORMAL now has statements of support from fourteen Conservative MPs.

By the time you read this, we may have details of the insertion of the extra lane from junctions 16-21. The D.O.T. is required by law to publish an Environmental Impact Statement (that is publish brochures, hold exhibitions etc.) and objections to the detail, **not** the policy, can then be made. This E.I.S. was due in September, but kept being postponed until it was promised for December 23rd! A furious protest by 3RDC, NORMAL etc; made the D.O.T. back off and the E.I.S. is now set for January.

FOOTPATH AND FRIENDS

If you have seen Chorleywood Parish Councillors in explorer's gear vanishing into the undergrowth lately, don't worry. They have been making a complete survey of all footpaths and bridleways in the Parish. Until recently the County Council controlled rights of way but delegated their maintenance to District Councils. Now the Countryside Commission has persuaded Government to let local bodies, primarily Parish Councils, have funds to look after footpaths etc;

First of course, somebody had to look at - and in some cases find all the footpaths. Councillors did find sign posts missing, stiles absent or broken, properties encroaching, but they have all been checked and the Council will take over from May.

Margaret Jarrett, Chmn. of the Open Spaces Committee writes: "We know that people care very much about their Rights of Way and we hope to enlist help in an 'Adopt a Path' scheme, whereby members of the public walk a path on a regular basis and keep the Council informed of its condition. If you would be interested in helping us in the Parish Paths Partnership, or if you'd just like to know more about it, the Parish Council is holding a public meeting about this plan at Christ Church School on January 27th at 8pm. Please come along because we need to hear your views and have your help".

THE END OF THE SAGA

It appears that Chorleywood House has at last found a buyer. It is said that someone has agreed to buy it as a private residence for £414,000. The LRA took part in many discussions about this site when the Council first announced that the Government was demanding it be sold as surplus to requirements. We had hoped, but were not confident, that it could be saved for the community: we also said that Council officers' statements that it would fetch nearly a million were wildly optimistic.

PLANNING

- 8/346/93 *Troutstream Hall, C/Wood Rd. Extension and development. (Approved).*
- 8/396/93 *Long Ridings, S.Lane. Erection of new dwelling detailed plan (Refused).*
- 8/404/93 *9 Lower Plantation. One-storey rear extension (Approved).*
- 8/440/93 *Beechen Hill, S.Lane. Erection of conservatory (Approved).*
- 8/452/93 *Whitewoods, T.Way. Part single, part double rear extension (Approved).*
- 8/582/93 *Flint Cottage, T.Way. Erection of new detached dwellings (Refused).*

(Readers may remember that the LRA some time ago with help from local residents succeeded in getting this accepted as a listed building, as the old washhouse for L.House.)

- 8/631/93 *Chess Place, L.Lane. Certificate of lawfulness for existing use of building for garage and car port.*
- 8/679/93 *Bridle Path Cottage, L.Lane. Erection of double garage.*
- 8/705/93 *Imber, Bridle Lane. Single-storey conservatory at rear.*