

LOUDWATER RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Chairman
Godfrey Crook
Keruing Cedar
Chess Hill
R. 776567

Vice-Chairman
Isabel Johnson
The Tile House
T. Rise
R. 772873

Treasurer
Maurice Escow
Wildwood
L. Heights
R. 771810

Correspondence Secretary
Don Cammell
Martins
Ladywood Close
R. 776126

NEWSLETTER No. 77

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Editor: John Jarrett

At some stage every three months, your Editor can be found in a state of perplexed gloom, muttering "I've got nothing for the Newsletter!" "Luckily, nine times out of ten, something turns up that he hopes he can use to disguise his poverty. This time, no. Nothing, nada, niente, nichts, rien, zilch.

It's your fault, you know. Why aren't you doing anything wonderful or wicked? We've had both in the past. On the good side, we've had three Lords, several MP's, one rock star, several show business headliners, three very senior and decorated military men, international musicians, at least one multi-millionaire and the President of the Magic Circle.

But what I remember with more interest, probably because I have a low turn of mind, like all journalists, are the bad boys and girls. They come to mind because I have just heard news of one of them whose life of cheerful rascality has not prevented him from keeping in touch with former neighbours. They recently visited him and found that, after a headlong flight from the Inland Revenue and the VAT man, he is now living in Lord of the Manor style in France in a chateau in the middle of a large vineyard. (Oddly enough, three successive residents in the house he lived in all either appeared in court or were due to do so.

We had that charming rough diamond who brought a nice house here and was a generous neighbour to the day the police called and took him away in connection with a Heathrow bullion robbery.

We've had our share too, of the more humdrum problems. There was the man who was known throughout the area for his commitment to work in the community, and his devoted family life, for which people forgave him all his ill-favoured looks and brusque manner. Nevertheless, two local ladies at the time found themselves retreating hastily round the three-piece suite before his unexpected ardour. To be fair, they were both smashers. There was the family who were somewhat taken aback when in the same month two indignant fathers arrived with daughters impregnated by the same 17 year old son.

And, of course in a community such as this, there are always going to be the bottle bashers. It was well known of one of them that you had, if you wanted any sense out of her, to see her after eleven in the morning (hangover subdued) and before two in the afternoon (next session starting). She was actually well-loved and very generous, but older residents may recall the time she buttonholed our bird expert to report sighting on her lawn "some exshraordinary ducksh!" (It was well into the evening gin, after all).

All kinds were suggested, and she dismissed them with scorn. "Oh no", she cried, "these were speshal, they were that exshtinct kind of ducksh".

(Of course, no sooner had I written this, than at the last moment in came two important items. They put the rest of you to shame so I haven't changed my complaint! More, please. Ed.)

BEECHENGROVE WOOD - A DECISION

The LRA has for several years urged the owners of Beechengrove Wood to take advantage of Forestry Commission grants to regenerate the woodland after the hurricane damage in 1987 and later. Now we are delighted to report that Benjamin Clutterbuck and his sister, the present generation owners, have agreed a project to begin this Autumn.

This sixty-acre ancient woodland, lying between Solesbridge Lane and Loudwater proper, is a major asset. The green canopy of tree preserves the rural nature of that side of Loudwater, as well as being a barrier of M25 noise and pollution. There are earthworks of a settlement probably over 2000 years ago: there are rare flowers, woodland orchids, mosses and lichens, and on October 22, the Herts Countryside Commission is

making a "flora foray" into the wood: muntjacs, foxes, badgers, rabbits and hares can all be seen there, and of course many types of birds.

The wood had, and still has, some fine mature forest trees, but... Two hundred years ago, many previously coppiced woods in the Chiltern district were planted with beech, oak and ash to supply the growing local furniture industry - some old sawpits are still visible in Beechengrove Wood. But as timber demand this century changed to taller, straighter trees, small managed woods became neglected. Now most of Beechengrove's beeches are over-matured at about 150 years old, and recent storms have found them out and torn the heart out of the wood. The periphery, luckily, is fairly intact.

The agreed project by the Chiltern Woodland Trust (a body founded by the Countryside Commission and several Councils including Three Rivers) plan to clear a 10-acre sector and replant with 2000 wild cherry, hornbeam, ash and oak, thin the centre and Millfield Plantation thicket by 30%.

But, of course, there was a price to pay-not only in hard cash from the owners as well as the grants, but also the necessary felling of some 100 mature beeches and oaks. This will create a workable area, give space for replanting, and generate some income from timber sales. The loss concerned the LRA and with the help of a very supportive Three Rivers and a sympathetic ear from the owners, the loss was reduced to 80 trees, so as to preserve more on the Sarratt Lane boundary. Inevitably, when felling does start, there will be some noise, traffic disruption and wood smoke.

However, there is even better news. Through the centre of the wood from the top down to the Chess near the water gardens, a 10-metre "ride" will be created, and this will become a "permitted" footpath (i.e. not a right of way) for walkers, opening up the beauty of the wood for Loudwater residents.

Yes, it may take 100 years before the new trees reach full maturity. But then, someone once took that long a view to plant trees we enjoy today.

(The Editor is very grateful to Bernard Greaves of Ladywood Close, not merely for this report but for the energy and skill he has put into the negotiations on behalf of the LRA).

BRIDLE LANE UP IN ARMS

Planning permission for a house has recently been granted at Old Meadow, Bridle Lane, despite opposition by Bridle Lane Estates Ltd. and the District Council whose agreed plan states that this area is already fully developed. The Bridle Lane Estate holds a covenant prohibiting building this house, but the developers are applying to the Land Tribunal to overturn it.

As its recent AGM, B.L.E. voted unanimously to oppose the application, despite the risk of considerable legal costs. A fighting fund has been set up and legal specialists employed. It is felt that an application, if successful, could be followed by a number of others and be to the disadvantage of all of us who live in the semi-rural peace of Loudwater, whereas a successful defence will be to all our benefit.

B.L.E. would like to hear from anyone who has had any experience of Land Tribunal cases concerning covenants. Please contact Bill Hope (772497) if you can help, because the outcome could affect us all. (The Editor's thanks to Bill for the above).

THE BURNING BUSH

We had no Moses but we did have a burning bush on the second of August running from the junction of L.Lane and Sarratt Lane up into the field behind Bridle Lane.

To deal with the flames and black smoke, seven fire engines with thirty-five firemen turned up and it took them from 12.10pm to 1.50pm to put the fire out, using, believe it or not, 6,000 gallons of water. The engines came from Rickmansworth, Watford and Garston and needed help from Amersham and Chesham as well.

How did the fire start? This is a mystery. The hedge on to L.Lane burned fiercely, so later did the field behind it. Now all you can see is dead stubble. It had been full of barley earlier, but luckily this had been harvested.

Several members saw the spectacle - June Baish of Armitage Close while driving home, Peter Phillips (also Armitage Close), but perhaps Graham Duce of Round Spring Farm saw most. He reports that the fire touched some of the woods behind Bridle Lane and that residents there and in Armitage Close were lucky no damage was done to any homes. The barn in the field next door was saved by the fire brigade.

But as to the reason, Mr Duce says he saw a bonfire nearby the day before and wonders if it was properly doused. But the cause could have been a careless driver throwing a burning cigarette end into the parched hedge, or was it just an "act of God"?

It is sad that we should have had two fires in Loudwater (the other in Chess Hill) in such short space of time.

(The Editor is grateful to Peter Phillips for the above. Peter has kindly offered to help with the Newsletter. Incidentally, the last fire in the area was in 1979 when sparks from a builder's workmens' fire caught in the thatched roof of The Rose Garden and caused major damage).

ON THE OTHER HAND

A colleague, reading my complaint about lack of material, pointed out one Loudwater category I have unfairly neglected, its remarkable ladies of advanced years, I am sure we all have our nominee but I would like to mention three who would top virtually every list, and one of them has in fact provided me with material. Step forward Loudwater's oldest inhabitant, Mrs Kathleen Richards of T.Way who can be seen taking her 95-year-old constitutional along T.Way most fine days. She writes of moving into Watersmead in T.Way in 1939.

"The day we moved in, a man suddenly appeared and said "Hello, I'm Mac". The was the start of a friendship with a wonderful family. Mr Macnamara and his architects were responsible for most of the building of the Estate, but because of the war, work had stopped, except for hurrying to finish work in progress, and starting building air-raid shelters. Among many war-time activities, many organised by Lady Lewis, was wastepaper saving. I and others had the lowly task of sorting through sacks of crumpled waste paper dumped in a shed behind the garage, every inch of which had to be flattened and packed flat in cartons.

"Mr Macnamara's daughter was a teacher. She got permission to start a small kindergarten for the Estate's small children, a boon for carless mothers. Mac converted part of The Coach House, where he lived, into a schoolroom.

"Cameron Jeffs, who was the money behind the Estate, kept a sharp eye on his amenities. He was a very religious man and had a Minister of his demonination hold a service every Sunday afternoon in the little thatched chapel house at the top of Kingfisher Lure, with tea afterwards. When the house in Cherry Hill was hit, my husband drove the family to stay with friends - the cat, emerging from a day-long hideout, was only just in time to join in the evacuation". Kathleen I. Richards.

Two other ladies are to be regularly seen walking and doing good at the same time. Mrs Grace Nicholls, from Branksome Lodge, marches the Northern part of L.Lane, collecting every bit of litter on the way and Mrs "Tiny" Thorndick, of Rooks Hill, trudges to the bus to get to her volunteer work in the Mount Vernon canteen. I don't think it is ungallant to say neither will see 80 again. Bless you all!

BITS AND PIECES

Some members have been concerned about what seemed to be an extra dose of aeroplane noise in June and July. Enquiries confirm that some at least of this was due to stunt flying connected with the new James Bond film which is being shot at Leavesden Aerodrome.

All of us are very glad to hear that Flint Cottage, T.Way the old wash-house for L. House and a building the LRA had listed, has been bought.

The cherry trees which suffered so alarmingly last year have done so well this year. The reason is apparently that the bacterium that so scarred them last year thrives only in damp weather. This hot summer has killed it off.

A current matter of concern has been the attempt by one member to convert the public footpath alongside Bridle Path Cottage, L.Lane into a driveway. After a number of members informed TRDC and the LRA of what was happening and of trees that had been felled, a Stop Notice was imposed by the Council. The matter is now before the Planning Committee.

We welcome one new family this quarter - Janis and Clive Rees and their children Jonathan, Bethan and Helen to Armitage Close.

A moment of sympathy for our ex-chairman, Desmond Martin and his wife. Not merely has Desmond had to go back into hospital again but the plan for him to convalesce at home has been thwarted. Just before that was to happen, a young women driving down L.Lane ran out of the road on the Glen Chess bend and instead of taking the curve went straight through the Martin's gate into their porch. The porch and the lavatory behind it will have to be rebuilt and several weeks of building work will make it impossible for Desmond, so he's in the Harefield Nursing Home.

Just to top it all, the drain system installed just north of the Martin's, which so far has succeeded, gave up in the recent heavy rain-probably because of silt washed down - and flooded again.

GETTING MONEY BACK

Over a dozen of you have been kind enough to write your thanks for the return, small as it was, of some of your kind donations to the M25 Fund. One donor said: "I am astounded. When I read that any money used would be returned, I said to my wife: "That'll be the day - seen the last of that!"

It is good to know that the LRA can restore faith in promises! Several of you, when writing, have thanked me personally. I must point out that although I was Chairman when we asked for donations and made the promise of return if possible, it was a Committee decision then and now to make the refund, not just mine. So the member's wife who wrote to thank me for "sending the money my husband had given up expecting which I promptly squeezed out of him for a new hat" should thank all the Committee.

A number of you also combined this letter with comments on my retiring from the Committee. Our Chairman, Godfrey Crook, has been kind enough to say I would be discourteous not to acknowledge this feeling and has allowed me to be immodest enough to print one such.

"Dear John,

"Thank you for your letter and the refund from the M25 Fund. We are most grateful to you for all your hard work and persistence in the face of many obstacles as Chairman of NORMAL. You must have some influence on the Department of Transport. Well done!

"Thank you also for your sterling work as Chairman and Committee Member of the LRA. You have achieved a great deal in the past twenty years, not least as Editor of the Newsletter which we greatly enjoy." Joan Townend, Bridle Lane.

To Joan, JR, JG, AW, JW, HB, DL, AM, DW and DF, all of whom wrote in the same vein, my blushing thanks.

PLANNING

- 8/0626/94 *Lowlands, C/Wood Road. Certificate of extension to business and residential use. (Approved).*
- 8/0209/95 *Krupa, T.Rise. First floor extension and conservatory (Approved).*
- 8/0294/95 *Chess Place, L.Lane. Balcony, stairs, conservatory at rear (Approved).*
- 8/0321/95 *Great Poplars, Rasehill Close. One-storey rear garage extension, glasshouse over. (Approved).*
- 8/0353/8 *White House, T.Rise. Detached garage.*
- 8/0376/95 *Mont Au Source, L.Drive. Infill extension, dormer windows, one-storey detached garage. (Approved).*
- 8/0482/95 *Chess Cottage, L.Lane. One-storey detached garage.*
- 8/0512/95 *Thurlwood House, L.Lane. One-storey garage and store.*