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NEWSLETTER No. 79

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Editor: John Jarrett

Several people have asked what has happened to NORMAL. The answer is that it still exists but its task is probably over.

Many of you have, rightly in our view, seen the proposals to widen the M25 to 12-14 lanes as the greatest threat Loudwater has ever faced. A few, on the other hand, have said we "banged on" about the M25 till they were bored stiff.

As Chairman of NORMAL (thanks to the LRA), your Editor has for over two years insisted that any widening of the M25 was dead for the foreseeable future. Now the D.o.T. has conceded that most of its plans are completely dead, and the remainder unlikely. It has announced:

1. Widening beyond four lanes for Junctions 16-21a has been withdrawn.
2. Widening to four lanes for Junctions 16-19 is "being reviewed as a potential small scale improvement" In Whitehall speak, being "reviewed" means it is right on the back burner.
3. No widening schemes will start before 1998. That means after the election. Widening plans of any kind are unlikely to be in the Conservative manifesto (because they would be so unpopular) and even starting a fourth lane could not occur before 2003 if Parliament agreed, and both opposition parties have pledged not to go ahead with more lanes.

At the instigation of the LRA, NORMAL was founded to fight the 12-14 lane widening. Most, but not all, of its members also opposed the fourth lane plan.

Because the main threat is over, NORMAL last year went into suspended animation. It seemed likely that, as no new threat has emerged during the year, it would close down at this year's AGM, but a number of members showed even greater distrust of the Dept. of Transport than I do, and so NORMAL will continue for the time being. However, I felt that I had done my job as Chairman, and I have stepped down. Happily, the Loudwater connection will be maintained as the new Chairman is former Bridle Lane resident, Cllr. Geoff Liley.

This is perhaps the time for me to say how grateful I have been over the past five years for the support of the LRA and its representative, Eric Tindall.

I am unashamedly proud of what we did in NORMAL. We took on a Government Department (but what good fortune it was that Three Rivers started the fight for us), and we did it on a budget of some £500 a year - and in the end, we even managed to pay the LRA back the £200 it kindly gave us. One last thought. When, some six years ago, the LRA asked, both for itself and for NORMAL, for money, a lot of people gave (and even got some of it back). But some said no, their reasons being "You can't fight the Government, they'll go ahead no matter what you do" or "You'll waste all your money on lawyers and so-called experts, and still get nowhere". To them, with the greatest respect, I say: "Yah booh, sucks!"

THE M25 - LAST KNOCKINGS

To confirm the end of this mad scheme, we now learn that all the houses in the Three Rivers area that were accepted by the D.o.T. as blighted and bought, subsequently offered on short leases, are now to have the leases ended and the houses put on the market for sale. As most of them were bought in a higher market, and some (not the few in L/water) have been badly treated, it is probable that we taxpayers will have lost quite a few million pounds on the deal.

To nobody's surprise, those who took on these leases are up in arms, some claiming that the houses they took on were in awful condition, others that they cannot afford to buy or go elsewhere. It is difficult to see that they have any legal leg to stand on; it is just another appalling piece

of misery inflicted in the name of motorway mania.

THOSE SHINING LIGHTS

To my surprise, the part of last issue's article on Neighbourhood Watch that got the biggest reaction was about security lights, especially those on all night. There seem to be quite a few members who are irritated at the way their neighbour's lights shine into houses nearby. In one case, admittedly, there is little love lost between the neighbours, but all the others say that, because they get on well with the owners of the over-lighted house, they don't want to make a fuss. Well, I think the effort should be made. But, just in case it may help those timid souls, can I suggest you circle or underline the next paragraph, and slip it through your neighbour's door (unsigned, of course)!

Are you sure your lights aren't shining too much into your neighbours' houses? Changing the angle just a few degrees might make all the difference. Why not talk to your neighbours and ask if your lights are being a nuisance? If they are, you'll be doing a good deed.

MAKE A NOTE - NOW!

The LRA AGM will be on May 22, Wednesday, at, as usual, the Loudwater Farm. This is your chance to tell us what we have done wrong, or not done, or even (?) to say "Well done!" If we are to feel we are understanding what YOU want, it is essential we get a good number of you along.

The second important date is our ever-popular Garden Party. This will be on June 9, Sunday, venue to be announced later. As usual, there will be excellent food and wine, so you don't have to rush back to get Sunday lunch, and it is the one big occasion on which you can meet all those neighbours you've meant to contact but never got round to...

FIFTEEN YEARS AGO

In the 1990s early on, we used to have some excellent nature notes from Janet Moore and others who were clever enough to see animals, birds and flowers and fish that the rest of us missed. Janet, for example, wrote that in the Spring of 1980 she heard chiffchaffs, willow warblers, blackcaps and lesser whitethroats as they passed through on their migrating trail. She also spoke of that very elusive British bird, the hawfinch (which made me feel quite puffed up, because we then had a pair). Dorothy Francis, who at that time wrote the Newsletter, asked why none of the fairly numerous Loudwater artists ever sent in anything for publication. I repeat that we'd love to have good black and white sketches from members.

LOUDWATER LANE - OH DEAR!

"When are the residents of Loudwater going to raise their voices about the problems of Loudwater Lane?" asks Peter Phillips of Armitage Close.

"Many drivers have now discovered that Loudwater Lane is a short cut between Exit 18 of the M25 and Watford, via Croxley Green" he writes. "This means that in the rush hours the traffic is terrible, and because these drivers do not care about the neighbourhood, they drive at speed far in excess of what the Lane can take. Should there not be speed ramps to slow the traffic, and further should there not be a 20mph speed limit? A narrow pavement would help too, because walking in the lane is positively dangerous."

Phillips has another grouse, and one which has cost him and his family dear. "Whenever it rains hard the part of Loudwater Lane by L. Drive can become totally flooded. Goodness knows how many times the drainage there has been worked on but the Council has not found a remedy. The problem is, once you get to the flood there is no way you can reverse away from it by doing a U-turn. In December 1994 my wife

drove our BMW through one of these floods by necessity. The car stalled, she was knee deep in water and Rob of Loudwater Garage had to be called out to help. The outcome was that the car was ruined and had to have a new engine. Neither Three Rivers Chief Executive Alastair Robertson nor Councillor Peter Crispin could help. It is said that lightning does not strike twice in the same place. The same mishap befell my daughter, Caroline Griffith, of Croxley Green in December last year. Her Renault Estate also needed a new engine after going through last December's flood water. The cost to her, even though insured, was £800".

Therefore, altogether, the Phillips family have about £1200 worth of flood damage to cars due to the inadequate drainage in Loudwater Lane. (A taxi from the Addison Lee Minicab Company in London, in which Phillips travelled, was also a write-off because of flooding in that part of the lane).

"There must be some other folk in Loudwater who have had the same problem. Three Rivers say road maintenance is up to Hertfordshire County Council and not them. We must therefore petition Herts C.C. to ask them to have yet another go at the drainage," says Phillips.

Anyone interested in signing a petition should contact Peter Phillips at 5 Armitage Close on 778431.

ODDS AND ENDS

Despite the freezing temperatures, Loudwater House lake did not ice over. Having lived in Loudwater for over forty years, I am probably the only person that can remember skating on the lake. It was very rough, but I shambled my way around for some time. Does anyone remember when that was - it was not 1947 (the other big cold) because I came later?

June Curtis, our charming and efficient N.Watch supremo, tells us that the LRA has bought a property marking kit for the use of all LRA members. If you would like to borrow the kit, call her on 721583.

In passing, does everyone get to see the N.Watch magazine, you all should. In the issue now circulating, there is a strong plea from the police for marking. Of course, marking does not stop a theft, but the police point out that every year they have to dispose of thousands of items that are recovered from thefts but cannot be returned because of lack of identification.

They also say ruefully that very few people even keep a note of the serial number of even expensive TVs, videos, camcorders etc. It would also help if valuable items of non-standard type had colour pictures taken, with a ruler or something similar alongside to show size.

One warning-some items can lose value if marked; if you're in any doubt consult the police.

Hazel Geary, of Lower Plantation, had a letter in the W. Observer saying there was nothing for teenagers to do in Rickmansworth or Chorleywood. I can hear the generation-gap cracking as I write this. I could list a dozen organisations that are crying out for younger people to come and join them, but I imagine they are not what Hazel has in mind. To add to the problem, the disco that does operate in Ricky has had so many trouble with drunken, violent teenagers (to be fair, these kids are mostly outside and cross at not being let in) that extra police have to be on duty when it is on.

The police tell us the team that has been burgling this area about whom we warned you (the red Ford Escort with the sticker "No Fear" on it) has been caught and are now doing their time in gaol.

A lot of nice people have said nice things about the Newsletter so your Editor might be getting a swollen head. No chance! One member asked if he had noticed something relevant in the Newsletter, said: "I might have done, but I leave things like Newsletters to my wife"

It does seem that Chorleywood House has at last been sold. The new owner apparently intends to convert it into flats. The LRA representatives at the discussions on its possible sale years ago, derided the Council officer's estimate of its possible value, because we knew how much would have to be done to it. The final price of £350,000 is little more than a third of what the Council said it would fetch.

None of us should need reminding that appearances aren't everything, but... One L/water house, expensively furnished, with two luxury cars outside, and a long line of local credit, has just been repossessed after the gardener (owed money) came in to find it stripped, cars and all, and the owners flown.

Former Loudwater resident Peter Waters, now Treasurer of the Rickmansworth Society, had a long article in the Watford Observer on his memories of Rickmansworth when it was much more bustling. Like your Editor, he feels the heart was torn out of the town when the old Swan coaching inn was knocked down by developers for shops and the Post Office.

Although the piece is very much a la recherche du temp perdu, it has some interesting views of Loudwater. Mr Waters as a child lived in Sarratt Lane. He is somewhat acid about the "get-rich-quick" growth of Loudwater in the 60/70s, and about the gates, humps etc. He remembers with affection the 336B, the "Harry" bus which ran through Loudwater and would often drop residents outside their door as well as making regular stops. He mentions one visible reminder of the bus, the lay-by specially built for Harry outside the T. Way gate with Sarratt Lane.

Former LRA Chairman Barnaby Osborne, now in Gt. Missenden, had a letter in The Times bringing up a problem few of us would have realised. Barnaby is red-green colour-blind and asks if someone can find a way of helping him decide which bank he should use when disposing of bottles, green, white or brown. Bravo for still trying to be environmentally responsible, Barnaby.

The LRA has two new committee members. A very warm welcome to June Curtis, of T. Way, who, after taking over the Neighbourhood Watch so efficiently, has now become a Committee member. An equally warm welcome to Joan Martin, who has stepped in to take over where the late Desmond Martin left off. Though nobody could replace Desmond, Joan will bring her own special talents to the work. Thank you both, ladies.

Our "welcome to" has an exotic flavour this issue as we say "Hello" to our first-ever Latvian family. They are Viktors and Vita Kokorevica, with Raits, Mirdza and Janis in L. Drive. Does anyone else in Loudwater speak Latvian - I'm sure a little conversation would be welcomed by the ladies of the house, whose English is not fluent.

Welcome also to Christopher Hamlin, and children Ann, Mark, Paul, Olivia and Charlotte in L. House.

After a long spell of freedom, we had a couple of thefts in March. Of thefts in the last twelve months, five have been of valuables from unlocked cars! I know one shouldn't have to lock everything away, but...

PLANNING

- 8/0580/95 *Flint Cottage, T. Way. Extensions, alterations, detached garage. (Approved)*
- 8/0600/95 *Trees, T. Rise. Single-storey detached garage (Withdrawn)*
- 8/0693/95 *Meadowlands, Chess Close. One-storey front and side extension to incorporate garage, first floor side extension. (Refused)*
- 8/0966/95 *Dykewood, C/Wood Road. Detached double garage. (Approved)*
- 8/0782/95 *Contino, Whisperwood. Single-storey rear conservatory (Approved)*
- 8/0112/96 *Loudwater Lodge, L. Lane. Single-storey rear extension.*
- 8/0137/96 *Mulberry Cottage, T. Way. Single-storey rear extension, first floor side extension.*
- 8/0158/96 *Burnside, T. Way. Alterations and extensions.*
- 8/0175/96 *Bridle Path Cottage, L. Lane. Erection of double garage, creation of driveway, use of bridle path for vehicular access. (LRA objecting).*

THIS IS THE ISSUE WITH WHICH WE HOPE TO COLLECT YOUR SUBSCRIPTION. IT IS STILL £3. YOUR LOCAL PATCH WARDEN WILL BE HAPPY TO COLLECT FROM YOU. BUT IF YOU WANT TO SAVE HIM OR HER THE TROUBLE, KINDLY SEND YOUR CHEQUE OR POSTAL ORDER, PAYABLE TO LOUDWATER RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION TO MAURICE ESCOW, OUR TREASURER, ADDRESS AT THE HEAD OF THIS NEWSLETTER.