

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. 78

JANUARY 1996

Editor: John Jarrett

For several reasons, the most important subject for this Newsletter is Neighbourhood Watch. First, there is this rather disturbing notice kindly passed on to your Editor by John Watkiss, of the Estate Board.

"For the benefit of those who do not know already, the police are no longer acting when one resident reports a ringing burglar alarm in another house, unless the report includes other suspicious circumstances, such as breaking glass or screeching tyres. The reason? Too many abortive calls caused by defective alarm systems.

"This policy is a decision taken at national level, which our force has to follow. But the police will still call in cases of alarms fitted to an approved standard and connected to a security firm which reports to the police as soon as an alarm is activated.

"Otherwise, what can you do?"

"Obviously, still be vigilant and report if there are some suspicious circumstances: investigate a ringing alarm, but be careful: remember, if you go away, to avoid the obvious signs of an empty house, and in any case if you're away for more than a day or so, tell your neighbour or the local NW contact, and the police: for those on, or using the Estate, **lock the gates!** By not doing so, you increase the chances of you being burgled, let alone others".

By coincidence, your Editor already had a letter on the same subject. We don't like to print anonymous letters, but the reason in this case is valid.

"A friend and I are between us key-holders for five houses, a task we willingly undertake. In the past two years we, and the police, have been called out nine times. Everyone was a false alarm - window not completely latched and cat pushing it open, teenagers in too much of a hurry to set alarm properly, high wind setting off noise detector, low sun ditto heat detector. Neither of us want to complain, and don't mind wasting what is only a few minutes, but will the police not give up?"

"We asked a local locksmith for his views. He believes people want more sophisticated equipment than they can cope with, and of course security firms are happy to sell the most expensive gear. He says there are two alternatives, the householder AND all his family must be scrupulously careful (and don't keep pets), or else go for old-style mechanical alarms. They'll only protect main doors and windows but they don't go wrong! To avoid embarrassing our friends, may we sign ourselves just-ANON."

Well, you have your answer, Anon. And just to prove there is no perfect answer, your Editor was asked by one member the other day to request that householders who, quite within their rights, install strong lights to shine on their property at night, please make sure they don't shine into neighbouring houses which have a right to darkness.

Lastly, on Neighbourhood Watch, we have a new chief co-ordinator following the loss of Desmond Martin. She is June Curtis of White Woods, T.Way, (721583), June has already made some efficient changes to the NW chains, and sent out a bulletin. Thank you very much, June. May Loudwater remain as relatively safe as it is under your care.

A CHAIRMAN LOST

Almost all of you will have heard the sad news of the death of our former Chairman, Dr. Desmond Martin. Your Editor cannot compete with the warm tributes that were paid to Desmond at a massively-attended

service, but hopes he will be forgiven for recalling some of the more personal anecdotes, supplied by Desmond himself in chat during our long association in the LRA. Desmond succeeded me as Chairman.

Not everyone will know that as a student in N Ireland, during a boozy session with his friends complaining (as students do) of their poverty, Desmond accepted a challenge to do something to alleviate this state. He waltzed into Hoover's HQ and convinced them (as he could) that he was God's gift to selling. Bemused, Hoover let him loose on the country districts (he was, he said, too well known in Belfast) and at the end of the year, he got a prize (and a packet) for being Hoover's Salesman of the Year!

He was a police doctor for many years, and retained an affection for the Force. Disarmingly, he would tell of some occasions when, tired and emotional as Private Eye would put it, some police patrol would suggest it might be best if they escorted him home, just in case.

Like many people formerly very busy, he felt on retirement that he was surplus to requirement. A little arm-twisting persuaded him to join the LRA Committee and, a few years later, I judged it right to ask him to succeed me as Chairman. Joan Martin is kind enough to say that this involvement gave a new spark to his life. When I put the Chairmanship to him, his typical reply was: "I'm tickled pink and scared white."

No one would say he was our most bureaucratically-minded Chairman. He had an endearing habit of taking Item 2 on the agenda and then jumping straight to Item 9 - the one he was interested in. But he bore no malice for being hauled up, and he worked as hard as any Chairman ever did. No sub stayed unpaid once Desmond knocked on the door. He was totally magnanimous about others' failures, but a stickler for the protocol of politeness. Ignore his position as Chairman and the Ulster growl came out. We all loved him and miss him.

THE SHEIK OF AREA B

I have been waiting for some time to break one of the most bizarre stories ever in Loudwater. As the trail now seems to have gone cold, here goes.

A letter came expressing an interest in property that had been vacant for some time. According to the letterhead, it came from the London office of an Arab sheik. At the same time, the said Sheik wrote to the occupants of the property next door, saying that while he was indeed contemplating the vacant property A, he was also proposing to offer for their property, Area B. His reasons were that the two plots together would give him not merely a house for himself but also a place that could be heavily secured for his five wives. Moreover, the amalgamation of the two pieces of ground would give him room for his helicopter, while proximity to the river would be convenient for the disposal of blood from the animals he would want to have ritually slaughtered.

A reply pointing out certain difficulties in these plans was sent. Nothing more was heard. However, it also happened that just before the Sheik wrote, a film company had also asked permission to film on the empty site, for a small fee. This was agreed though it was never clear what the film, all shot at night, was about. Then, some time after the Sheik, a different film company wrote saying they had talked to the other outfit and had discovered from them that the site was of great natural history interest being one of the few places where the Frog-Nosed Chavender (or some such fish) came to spawn with Mrs F.N.C. It did this at night. To film this, a figure in four figures per night was offered. A reply asking for more details again went unanswered.

Now, even David Attenborough would hardly pay several thousands for a few seconds of an obscure fish ritual. Your cynical Editor can think of only one kind of film that requires great privacy, is shot at night and can generate that kind of income - yes?

What is not funny about the whole story is that the rather elderly neighbours were given a nasty fright. If this was a hoax, it was a very cruel one: if an attempt by a would-be developer, even nastier. It seems we shall never know.

BITS AND PIECES

The Chorleywood Parish map has been a great success since its launch in November. Your Editor declares an unashamed interest in this because his wife, Councillor Margaret, launched and co-ordinated the idea. It was well, noticed in the local paper and is selling well, both as an ordinary map (price £5) and in its framed version (£30). Apparently many people have decided it is a rather nice idea to send the map for Christmas to family now abroad. It can be bought from the Chorleywood Parish office, the Chorleywood Library and the Chorleywood Bookshop. And, yes, Loudwater talent is represented - among the delightful paintings of local scenes are some by Hywel and Dorothy Francis, and former resident Mrs Joyce Wretham.

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Some of you will know how many times Liz Dorer, who has run her charity Swan Care for 17 years, has helped with Loudwater's swans. The local paper reported her concern that the recession and the lottery are cutting her donations. She says she gets £150 a year from Watford Council and that cares for just about one sick swan. I believe the LRA and the Estate Board have given in the past -perhaps they could again. If any resident wants to help - I know some have - Liz can be reached at 01442 251961. Every fiver will help.

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A new book, "Roman Hertfordshire" by Rosalind Niblett, has details of Loudwater life as an "industrialised" Roman settlement. Remains of a milling and brewing complex have been discovered running from the Solesbridge Lane site of the Highland Water Gardens right through to T. Way.

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A crop of newcomers whom we say welcome to. Pat Somerford and Jennifer Horwood in Violet Way : Peter and Jane Hanson and son Scotty in T. Rise : Mr and Mrs Constable and son David who have taken over the important listed house, Flint Cottage T. Way : Dr, and Mrs. Nolan, also off T. Way and Lars and Annalie Mölin in T. Rise. We hope you will all enjoy your life here.

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A letter in the local paper revealed the existence of a S.W. Herts Senior Alliance, campaigning for a better deal for pensioner. It has a local agent Joe Berry, in L. Lane (778913).

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We seem to have had a rash of planning decisions that are in our favour. The signs for Chess Hill and Chess Lane have been replaced. The awful black infill to the gates of Cariadd have been taken down and the site now looks relatively normal. The attempt to make a drive out of the footpath at Bridle Path Cottage has failed and the Council have installed posts at its Southern end to prevent such use. The owner has, however, given notice of an appeal. Even if this loses, the path will, because of damage by tree removal and heavy machines, be a quagmire this winter.

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To our surprise, we find there is another "Loudwater Newsletter". No problem, though - this is the journal of the Subud group at Loudwater Farm and goes only to Subud members. We note a proposal that will certainly interest Chess Hill and Chess Lane members, and it is to further develop the farm. The proposal is to refurbish the cowsheds into dormitories, so more people can attend Subud meetings. The Masons have been asked for help. The Subud would then release the Dutch Barn (with the caravan) and Mr Jackson, the farmer, can use it for his equipment.

The LRA has, in fact, for some time been concerned about the caravans and general horseculture activities in this field and has made this point to the Masons.

A PAGE WORTH READING

Josie Page, who lived in Glen Chess, has moved. Before going she sent us a charming letter, of which this is part.

"I find it almost impossible to put into words my deep appreciation of all that is done by the LRA Chairman and Committee over the twelve years I have been here. The difficult work on the big issues, such as the M25, river pollution and Neighbourhood Watch, even the lighter events such as Summer parties and musical evenings, all need careful organising. So much behind the scenes efforts to knit together residents of an area devoid of church, pub, school etc is no mean task. Please accept my thanks and good wishes for continued success." Josie Page.

PLANNING

- 8/0353/95 *White House, T. Rise. Detached garage. (Approved).*
- 8/0580-1 *Flint Cottage, T. Way. Extensions, alterations, detached garage. (Listed Building Consent).*
- 8/0600/95 *Trees, T. Rise. Single-storey detached garage.*
- 8/0606/95 *Glenhayes, C/Wood Road. Retention of garage. (Approved).*
- 8/0639/95 *Taormina, Bridle Lane. Two-storey rear extension. (Approved).*
- 8/0695/95 *Old Meadow, Wagon Way. Two-storey extension.*
- 8/0693/95 *Meadowlands, Chess Close. One-storey front and side extension to incorporate garage, first floor side extension.*
- 8/0966 *Dykewood, C/Wood Road. Detached double garage.*

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO THE UNSUNG MEMBERS WHO DISTRIBUTE THIS NEWSLETTER AND ALL THOSE NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH CO-ORDINATORS