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NEWSLETTER No. 81

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Editor: John Jarrett

Pressure on space squeezed out the report on our Garden Party in the last issue, but here goes. It was, of course, beautiful weather with sunshine all day. Some 140 adults and children came, somewhat fewer than last year, probably because we'd had pretty poor weather till then. (You should trust us - have a little faith, baby!).

The LRA tries to vary the venue from time to time, both for variety and greater convenience for members from different parts of Loudwater. Your Editor heard only one complaint, about a lack of food, drink and people from one group. Sorry, chums, but I saw you arriving at 2.15, and the invitation clearly said "12 till 2 pm."

I personally have a thing about barbecues, but a more satisfied customer said: "Barbecued chops and sausages, great salad and all the wine you can manage, all for £6 - that's a real bargain". He was right, you know, so see you all next year - remember it's always the second or third Sunday in June.

COMMUNITY FEELING - YES OR NO?

In our last issue, Mr Stephens of Cherry Hill assailed the LRA and the Estate Board for not fostering community feeling in the area. The two chairmen have replied.

"The lack of community within Loudwater is evident although over the years many social events have been well supported."

"The LRA Committee can only be a catalyst in addressing this issue and is trying to proffer an environment and framework in which all residents can work together to create an improvement."

"The research initiative is a start. The response was only reasonable but sufficiently positive to start work in several areas of activity. In due course regular events, such as the Loudwater Bridge club, special events such as the Loudwater Golf Day, and social events like the forthcoming Antiques evening will happen if indicated preliminary interest develops. We have a number of ideas but we need to make haste slowly to ensure the success we are determined to achieve."

"It is intended that the annual Garden party, which people who attend enjoy, will be expanded into a fun day, if that is what the feedback suggests or perhaps we should have more than one with a different approach for the second."

"Mr Stephens can be assured, as I reviewed at the AGM, that we are very mindful and well aware of potential M25 expansion in the future. We are in no way complacent but do allow us to take some credit for what has been achieved. It is important that any widening is undertaken with proper attention to the environmental effect, particularly noise pollution. We are determined that advantage is taken at the time of any widening, within the curtilage of the existing land take, to address the problems we have specifically identified and which currently cause, offence to our beautiful valley and our residents."

"We thank Mr Stephens for troubling to write and hope others will join in the correspondence." Godfrey M. Crook - LRA Chairman

"I agree with Mr Stephens about the merits of the Loudwater garage. We were extremely fortunate when Rob completed his technical training and joined his father, Harry, at the garage where he continues to provide a courteous, completely reliable and much valued service."

"Rob provides petrol because he believes a garage without petrol is incomplete, and despite difficulties he continues to supply fuel as a service to Loudwater. In addition to paying higher prices for relatively small deliveries, he is not recompensed for the time he spends making this already unprofitable service quite personal. To make the situation worse, I hear today that his underground 4 star petrol

tank has failed its technical test and at some considerable cost, it must be completely de-commissioned."

"Mr Stephens is on less firm ground when he says the Company 'turns a blind eye to fences and walls popping up all over the place' and infers the Company has applied some edict to prevent Rob advertising his services. I suggest Mr Stephens has a word with the previous owner of his house, and the owner of the property next door, who, I'm sure will confirm that 'his blind eye' theory is rubbish. It is true that the whole Estate is covered by covenants which expressly prevent trade and commercial signs from 'popping up all over the place,' and I believe that most of us approve of that."

"The garage roof has been a problem since the arched structure was removed about forty years ago, and why the drips accumulate in a particular place during heavy rains is not at all clear, but one thing is sure no one has yet been willing to pay for the whole roof and its iron frame to be cut away and replaced."

"An observation not made by Mr Stephens, but I believe much more significant, is that the arrival of the 'Company' car removed a considerable part of Rob's technical servicing income. If people have to take their Company financed vehicle to a nominated dealer elsewhere for service, maybe they could be persuaded to have their second (or third) car looked after in Loudwater. This, I'm sure would be much more helpful to Rob than road side posters, increased petrol sales or the stopping of rainwater drips."

"I trust Mr Stephens' letter will encourage others to put a very safe pair of hands to work on their cars too." Derrick Speight - Chairman, Loudwater/Troutstream Estate Ltd

Having worked with both Chairmen and seen how many hours, despite busy working lives, they have given to Loudwater, I feel their replies are very temperate. Community feeling can be encouraged by Committees, but it is strengthened only by the participation of members, of whom Mr Stephens admits he has not been one.

NATURE NOTES

For the past three years, Janet Grant (T.Way) has monitored birds visiting her garden and writes here of some of the thirty types she has seen.

"Each year, in Spring and Autumn, a pair of grey wagtails are visitors. This year, a pair of pied wagtails joined them on the terrace, mixing with long tailed tits, pecking up tiny biscuit crumb fragments. Green woodpeckers are all-year-round sights, feasting on red ant nests in the lawn (deliberately left untreated). The great spotted woodpeckers come daily in the season to feed and teach their young despite my presence in the garden.

"The nuthatch is often seen, feeding head down on the nut cage. In hot weather a kingfisher drinks from my fountain and dives for tiny newts in the ornamental pond, which has no fish, and then perches on the head of a statue to eat. Mistle thrushes and song thrushes come, though not so common as in the past, to the rockery where they catch snails and slugs. Slug pellets are harmful to thrushes, so use other safer methods for slug and snail control.

"Wrens nest each year and peck seeds from the aubretia, and this Spring greenfinches nested in the laurel hedge. Robins are, of course, very territorial but last Winter there were three pairs in the garden. One was very aggressive but the others weren't deterred."

"Not all birds are welcome, and sadly I have occasionally witnessed swift success by a sparrowhawk, and the continual increase of the magpie population is a real threat to small song birds in the breeding season. The grey squirrel is also a major pest, not only to trees and breeding birds but also your loft!"

"During the Winter, siskins are a welcome addition, enjoying peanuts and on very cold days seeded fatballs, while the tree creeper is attracted to an old apple tree, probably host to many insects.

"With weasels, voles, muntjacs, foxes, grass snakes and so much birdlife, Loudwater is a tiny English paradise. May it always be so."

(Thank you, Janet. The Newsletter has wanted expert nature notes for some time. Other contributions will be welcome. Ed.)

THAT COMMUNITY INITIATIVE AGAIN

1. There was a good response to the idea of an antiques evening (writes Joan Martin), so we have fixed one for Wednesday November 13.7.30 till 10 pm. We have been fortunate to secure the services of two experts from Bonhams. The event, along the lines of the Antiques Road Show, will be at Loudwater Farm, in the restored barn - probably Loudwater's oldest surviving building. You are invited to bring one "antique" for discussion and valuation.

"Please make a note of the date and tell friends. The charge of £5 a head will include a glass of wine and (very) light refreshments and any profits will go to the Watford Hospice appeal. Information about applying for tickets will be available early October".

2. There was an encouraging response (writes Godfrey Crook) to the idea of a bridge club, so we are writing to each member who expressed interest, and we have been in touch with the English Bridge Club. Once again, it seems that Loudwater Farm would be a good venue. In early October, we shall call a meeting of all those interested date to be announced soon."

BITS AND PIECES

Former Lower Plantation resident and Committee member Fred Bingham was in the train that crashed outside Watford Junction. Luckily, he was unharmed.

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One member had the frightening experience of being followed home by a louche-looking type on a motor bicycle to his gate. Unsuccessful, the young man made off. The police when called, asked if the watch the member was wearing was a Rolex. The answer was yes. "Fastest-growing theft target today" said the policeman. "You can fence one of those for twice what you'd get from several house burglaries!"

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Barnaby Osborne's letter about the difficulties he found in disposing of bottles because he is red-green colour-blind brought him many replies. Mr Michael Blackstone, an optician from L.Ridge suggested assistance could be given by using a lens incorporating a red filter of the appropriate hue, or an X-Chromet lens. Barnaby says he is digesting all the information and adds: "If you see a shifty-looking character in rose-tinted specs putting all the bottles in the emptiest container, it may well be me!"

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Now it's official - those too bright security lights are not merely eyesores but don't work. An article in The Times deploring the loss of skies lit only by moon and stars, says: "Householders, conned by the industry, surround their homes with ultra-bright security lights which actually (as even the Home Office Crime Prevention Unit admits) make life easier for burglars who can move freely around in the deep shadows at the edges of these blinding corridors."

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For only a short while - thankfully - V.Way had its unfavourite driver, "The Nudger", around again. This young lady not only has neither the time or the consideration to shut the gate behind her, she's in such a selfish hurry, she can't even bother to open it fully - she unlocks it and then, back in her car, nudges the gate open!

Well, the Estate Board at its AGM on September 25 is asking for views on making the gates electronic by signal or card, so that they shut automatically. It will, of course, cost. We will keep you informed.

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Violence on the Estate, but not from burglars or muggers. A house at the T.Way/Sarratt Lane gate end had a teenage party. As can happen, it was gatecrashed. Moreover, the crashers then parked their cars all across the gate entrance. Peter Lough and his son, getting no response to polite requests that the cars be moved, then called the

police on a mobile phone. While so doing, both were thumped, the young Lough getting a fractured, cheekbone, a damaged nose and one damaged eye. The assailants will be in court soon.

YOU WRITE

"On April 10th, L.Lane recieved its third visit this year from vandals. From the river to the junction with Sarratt Lane, Plant pots were pulled into the road and broken, signs pulled down, flowers uprooted and tiles broken from walls and road signs moved. These attacks happen early in the morning, during school or college days.

"The police have been informed. They believe the vandals are not from outside but live in the area. A suspect group were last seen a.m., on Saturday July 20th, so if your son/daughter fits into this story, have a word before there is a knock on the door." (Ed. For obvious reasons, this correspondent has asked for anonymity.)

"I would like to thank the LRA for their most generous presentation of a watercolour of the Chess, painted by a local artist Max Greenwell. This was to mark my retirement from the Committee. I was persuaded to join the Committee by John Jarrett seven or eight years ago and found everyone friendly, encouraging and hard-working. More goes on behind the scenes for Loudwater than many members realise : support is always welcome, so do give the Committe or John some feedback.

"We are up in Cheshire at the moment but you may not have seen the last of us yet, as we haven't decided where to settle. In the meantime Ray and I would like to thank everyone in Loudwater who gave us their help and friendship. Living there was enjoyable. We hope you will make the Westfords, who have moved into The Tile House just as welcome." - Isabel Johnson

And lastly, this from (very former) Loudwater resident Peter Waters, now a power in the Rickmansworth Society.

"The October 1995 issue carried references to two old friends of ours since my short-trousered days, Grace Nicholls and Tiny Thorndick, both of whom we still see from time. (When I say we, I include my mother, 86 next January, but still going strong)."

"In case anyone accuses me of having an even shakier memory than is the case, Harry's bus was the 336A, not the 336B which was a short-lived Sundays only service to Northwood. In its last years the 336A made one journey to Northwood and back for school children.

"P.S. I entirely agree with the LRA stand on the bridle path which I walked or cycled countless times : the damage that has been done is a disgrace and should be restored. Ditto, the ghastly vulgar gates to Cariad. Keep up the good work!"

AND WELCOME TO...

Neil, Anne-Marie and James Hodges in L.Lane : Judy and David Fox and children in Kingfisher Lure : Gary and Gill Westford and children in T.Rise : Gary and Jan Zuckerman in Bridle Lane. And a specially sympathetic welcome to Larry and Tenly Raithel, their four children and Labrador puppy Sandy, who have come from America to Sarratt Lane and got stuck in the L.Lane flood the day after they moved in! Things can only get better!

PLANNING

0229/96 *Cherry Hill Cottage, T.Rise. One-storey rear extension.*

0262/96 *Wrentop, Bridle Lane. Renewal part-double, part-single storey and first floor side extension. (Approved).*

0282/96 *Meadowlands, Chess Close. Part double and first floor side extension. (Approved).*

0326/96 *4 Harewood. Single-storey rear extension with balcony. (Approved)*

0378/96 *Land adjoining Hillpoint, L.Lane. Two detached dwellings, ancillary works and access. (LRA objecting).*

0400/96 *The Old Stables, Bridle Lane. Convert garage to living room, single-storey garage extension.*

0409/96 *Cherry Tree Cottage, T.Rise. Detached double garage, first floor store, single storey rear store. (Approved)*

0410/96 *Meadowside, Bridle Lane. Two-storey side and single storey front extension. (Approved).*

0453/96 *Rear of Tilehurst and Dencombe, C/wood Road. Detached house and garage. (Refused).*

0496/96 *Med Mills, T. Rise. Convert room to garage, front and rear extensions, first floor side extension. (Approved).*

0671/96 *Variant on 0378 - see above.*