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NEWSLETTER No. 83

APRIL 1997

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We try to ring the changes in the Newsletter stories but sometimes a return to one subject is unavoidable. So it is with Great Poplars.

In our last issue, we dealt with the tree felling along the Hillpoint and Great Poplars verge of L. Lane. The question of the legality of the Hillpoint felling is still sub judice, while the appeal against the Council's refusal of the Hillpoint building plans has just been heard by an Inspector. So no comment.

But the new controversy is over the metre-high, white concrete post and chain link fence down the Great Poplars verge. (For those who have asked why this wasn't mentioned in the last Newsletter, it didn't go up until we'd gone to press.)

The fence story is a sadly ironic one. For decades, the LRA has been trying to have the lane fenced, as it used to be - some sections can be seen. We wanted it because anyone slipping down or being forced off on to the steep embankments either side would tumble on to spear-like broken tree stumps. Secondly, as the last Newsletter said, the Great Poplars felling, however distressing, was done by the book. But the fence - for whatever reason is not clear - was put up without the permission it needed, and retrospective permission has been applied for. The Council has refused this. We now wait.

What is known is that TRDC officials say they have rarely had so many protests, so fast and so vehement - "a Stalag-like eyesore" is just one view. Your Editor managed to find an old picture of L. Lane showing the old modest, two-barred black iron fence, half a meter high and the LRA will be citing this at the hearing. Clearly, the owners of Great Poplars will argue the case, and the fence is well-built and expensive. But...

A last word. Several members have been kind enough to send our Chairman and your Editor copies of the letters of protest about the fence. The LRA would remind all members that, while letting us know is important, just that isn't enough. Individual letters to the Planning Officer or your District Councillor are what really count.

NEW ESTATE GATES

First, let's get one thing clear. The LRA has no responsibility for the gates. It is purely an Estate Board matter, and the Estate's AGM decided they should be changed to electronic control. By the beginning of March, they were all swinging in a majestically sedate manner in response to touch cards or remote control units.

There will, undoubtedly, be mixed views. There will also be a keen look-out to see how well the system works. N.B. If any impatient driver tries to nudge them to go faster, they will jam - if kids swing on them, they will jam. If they do work, they will certainly solve the problem of gates being left open (these are self-closing). But most people would, I think, feel that this is as far as we want to go. There are private estates in Surrey with not merely electronic gates but guards with dogs. Fortress Loudwater must not be created.

Two footnotes here. Digging in Violet Way, workmen uncovered remains of a wall c. 1850, probably the coach path from L. House to the L. Drive lodge house. (This was after - inevitably - someone put a pick through a carelessly-laid power cable).

Secondly a bouquet to Peter Lough, who organised this operation for the Board. Often soaking wet and in the dark, Peter spent hours down at various gates, particularly in V. Way.

GETTING THE BIRDS

"Apart from the welcome appearance of a new pair of swans, who we hope will make a permanent home, we spotted cormorants on the lake on Jan. 18, and for the next ten days or so there were up to eight perched high on a tree on the island, occasionally extending their wings to dry, and then diving into the lake for fish. They now appear to have moved on - perhaps just as well because a cormorant nest in a tree can cause a lot of damage, and the fish would soon go. But with cormorants, badgers, muntjacs, what a wonderful place this is to live." *Barbara Holden, L. Drive.*

"A snipe was seen in a garden in Sarratt Lane on Jan. 8. There was still a light covering of snow on the ground, but the snipe spent an hour and a half searching for food where patches of grass were exposed on the lawn. Apparently, snipe can sometimes be seen in the Chess Valley, but it seems unusual to find one in a small garden on the brow of a hill." *Hazel Nest, Sarratt Lane.*

THE HEIGHT OF ELEGANCE

The beauty of Loudwater is its habitat - water, trees, gardens and flowers, rather than its houses. Our older buildings are fine but much restored: the Macnamara houses are sound and pleasant, but not architecturally or decor distinguished. But Flat 4 in Glen Chess, which has just come on the market, is something else.

The Newsletter does not carry any commercial plugs, so, although we will say the sale is being handled by Peter Robson, of Chorleywood, we won't give the price, and we will tell you that anyone with children or animals might as well give up now. This flat is for gracious living. It has been lovingly restored by Peter Archer, - largely in Georgian Regency style. Almost all the pieces of furniture are genuine antiques, as are the chandeliers and wall paintings. The flat gleams with gilt, crystal, polished mahogany, walnut, lemon silk drapes and so on, all looking out right across the valley.

The creator of this little jewel, Peter Archer is one of Britain's leading stained glass restorers. He is working at the moment on creating two new stained glass windows for Westminster Abbey, and The Independent last month had a feature article on his work in restoring the great West window of the chapel of Magdalene College, Oxford. In the seven years he has been at Glen Chess, Mr. Archer has created something quite special.

BUSY, BUSY, BUSY

The Residents' Association has been firing on all cylinders lately. Despite the wet and windy weather, the bridge club has continued to attract 20 people each time: thirty-five people came to the second antiques event: the theatre club was launched with a pilot visit (for Committee only) to the Watford Palace for an ingenious production of "Kind Hearts and Coronets".

Further dates. The bridge club meets fortnightly, and April 2 and 16 are this month's dates: there'll be another antiques event in a few months: the theatre club is going to see "California Suite" at The Mill, Sonning Word of mouth has already seen most tickets go, so apply quickly.

On the serious side, a sub-committee has been formed to try to set up traffic calming measures in L. Lane, and at its last meeting, the two County Cllrs. concerned, Barbara Lamb and Tim Venner attended....

Meanwhile, June Curtis has fixed the date for the Neighbourhood Watch property marking day. It is to be on Sunday, April 20, and a leaflet about it will go to all members a few days before. Remember, the Crime Prevention trailer will be there to mark items you bring along, and to arrange to come to your house to mark what's not capable of being brought to the marking site.

YOU WRITE

"At the risk of enraging those who loved our bushy-tailed friends, I report my experience over the past year. I decided I had had enough of trying to keep the numbers down. Perhaps, if nature were left on its own, the population would stabilise, and no one else seemed prepared to shoot squirrels. But last spring, they came back to their old drey near a lime tree top and produced young regularly.

"Our red horse chestnut flowered in May, but before the flowers died away, squirrels attacked the still-to-be-formed 'conkers'. They gnaw the branches and when one falls, take off the unripe nuts, leaving the tree badly damaged. When the daffodils died off, the squirrels began digging bulbs up, particularly dwarf daffodils which only flowered once, because squirrels dig up the balls of peat that cover a delectable dish of daffodil/crocus bulbs.

"Our golden holly was covered in berries and I expected the birds would have a feast. But squirrels got there first. The holly pricked them, so they climbed up the trunk centre and gnawed at each berried stem till it dropped and they could pick berries off the ground. Finally, our winter store of apples was robbed little by little. We found out when we went to help ourselves at Christmas."

Denis Longman, Violet Way.

(There's no justice. I live just opposite Denis, and our squirrels produce one pair who buzz off, and only once have they dug up bulbs! Could it be our fat cat keeps them subdued? Ed.)

"I wish to put on record my disappointment with the new gates.

One of the quoted reasons for the electronic system was to obviate the need for anyone - a lone female in particular - leaving a running car to unlock the gate. But the new system's design confers no such security, unless the driver has a remote control unit. I consider the £40 extra cost excessive for an occasional user.

The man installing the system told me that there was no reason why the card reader could not be placed to be accessible from a car window, as in most car parks. I also raised my concern with the responsible Estate Director, only to be told: 'If you don't like the system, you can go round the other way.'

Am I alone in feeling no better off, particularly financially?"

Catherine Melvin, Whisper Wood.

AND A WELCOME TO...

Mr and Mrs Rathbone, Wedgwood, Sarratt Lane. My apologies for delay here, particularly as Mrs. Rathbone is our first Cuban-born member, thus adding one more to our international list: to Miss Oonagh Blackman, of L. House: and to Mr. and Mrs Michael Wood, of Tanglewood (a new house) off Sarratt Lane. Hope all goes well for you all.

BITS AND PIECES

Costas Kleanthous, of Bridle Lane, had a letter in The Times querying the sense of a "national" examination being conducted by so many different exam boards.

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The lake did freeze over in the winter, but while the crust at the edge would bear a body weight, further in the layer was thin enough to break with a stone. (The ducks were grateful!)

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Some time ago, I suggested the names of our longest-resident members. I know the champion is Mrs. Kathleen Richards of Watersmead, T. Way. I also mentioned Miss Cole-Marshall of Sarratt Lane and "Tiny" Thorndick, of Rooks Hill. I now know I

missed one, Mr. Gardner-Hopkins, of Bridle Lane. Mr. Gardner-Hopkins celebrated his 90th in February and he and his wife are probably our third in the table of long residence.

Talking recently to "Tiny" who has baby-sat for so many in Loudwater, including your Editor's children and grand-children, the question arose of how many babies she had sat for. "Oh, I know that" she said. "One hundred and twenty-three." Even counting the one-off's, that's quite something. "Oh no", she said. "I haven't included one-off's - that's the regulars."!!!

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For those who've asked what's happening about the Inspector's order that the damage to the Bridle Cottage footpath be put right the resident so instructed has raised a legal point about the legal procedures and settling that takes precedence. The resident in this case is also involved in the Hillpoint application.

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Your Editor is often asked to give publicity to this or that activity-musical, theatrical etc - that some member is taking part in. Sorry, but no can do, for two reasons.

First, all you good folk are both so talented and so community-minded that this Newsletter could be half full with such announcements every issue. Secondly, and perhaps just as important it is very uncertain how often the dates would be of any use. This Newsletter is compiled some three weeks before the invaluable Jack Prince gets it to distribute to those who are kind enough to take it round. Some get it delivered almost straight away. Others for various reasons can't manage that for a couple of weeks. With an advance deadline of five to six weeks, too many events might be learned about only after it was too late.

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For various reasons, the LRA is short of a substantial number of 1996 subscriptions. With this Newsletter, comes the form for the sub for 1997. If you don't think we succeeded in collecting your subscription for last year, please help by paying both when we contact you. It's still only £3 a year, and I don't think even £6 will bankrupt anyone in Loudwater.

MAKE A NOTE NOW, NOW, NOW

THE LRA AGM WILL BE ON MAY 14. THE GARDEN PARTY WILL BE ON JUNE 8. WRITE THESE DATES IN YOUR DIARY NOW!

PLANNING

- 0766/96 Breydon, C/wood Rd. Extensions, alterations, new garage. (Approved)
- 0776/96 Globe Trotter, Lower Plantation, one-storey side conservatory and dormer. (Approved)
- 0808/06 Tayholme, Lower Plantation. Raise roof for first floor extension. (Approved)
- 0872/96 Ockley House, Lower PLantation. First floor side extension. (Approved)
- 0910/96 Dacres, T. Way. Demolish and replace existing house with integral garage.
- 0930/96 Ladywood Close. One-storey rear extension, one-storey detached garage, convert garage to habitation. (Approved)
- 0026/97 4 Harewood. Retention of one-storey extension to garage.
- 0027/97 Great Poplars, Rasehill. Retention of existing chain link fence. (Refused)
- 0299/97 Hillpoint, L. Lane. Variation in visibility splay for access.
- 0104/97 Thurwin, L. Heights. One-storey rear extension, one-storey detached garage.