

LOUDWATER RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER No. 95

APRIL 2000

Editor: John Jarrett

We have lost a major part of Loudwater history. Loudwater Garage is closing down after seventy years. The skilled and willing Rob Simmonds has at last decided that he has had enough and is leaving the garage and his Stag Lane home to move down to the West Country near his wife's parents. Rob wrote to all his customers, giving his reasons for packing it in. Basically, he said that there was not, and would not be, any future for a small local garage. Many cars nowadays do not need, or get, even a yearly service: company cars that do get serviced are often tied to a garage near the office: and supermarkets can now sell petrol cheaper than a big garage can buy it, let alone a small outfit such as Rob's.

The Estate Board has made enquiries locally to see if any other garage wanted to take Loudwater Garage over, but the response has not been encouraging. All one can ask is that whatever happens to the site, the very charming primitive plaster motifs are not hidden or destroyed, especially that which is the wrongly-spelled legend "Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Panse"

It is a sad end to seventy years, which Rob has been kind enough to outline for us, despite being up to his neck in closing and clearing the garage and selling his house in Stag Lane.

"My father, Harry Simmonds, came to work for Cameron Jeffs, who owned the estate, in 1926. Jeffs was converting the mansion (Loudwater House) into flats. The garage premises, originally the coach house and stables, together with a large shed including an inspection pit, were used to service the various vehicles used by workers on the estate, including the bus which ran to Rickmansworth Station from Loudwater Village, as the timetable called it.

"My father said his first job was to plant fir trees between each existing tree from the mansion forecourt west along the drive to the junction with T.Way. Most of them still stand.

His many duties included maintaining Jeffs lorries and vans, driving the vehicles and carrying materials and livestock feed from every corner of the estate, which then stretched from what is now the M25 to the Rickmansworth Park area, later sold to the Masonic School.

"Jeffs started his private bus service to Ricky Station in about 1924 and Jon Frieth and my father shared the driver's role until he was called up in 1943. (He was also expected to chauffeur the residents of the Mansion flats).

"Between the late 20's and the early 40's, Mr. Jeffs had the four glass and iron domes of the garage roof replaced by flat asbestos sheeting. My father and others erected the elm board double garage which now serves as the forecourt shop and museum.

"Early in this period, petrol pumps were installed. ESSO, who supplied us for over 50 years, were keen to do so, because the garage was a prestige site for its two pumps. Brands over the years included R.O.P., Pratts, ESSO and Anglo.R.O.P did not find favour because some motorists would not buy Communist (Russian Oil Products) petrol.

"After demob - and Mr Jeffs death my father returned to a different Loudwater, with the estate broken into smaller units. He leased the garage premises in 1959 and ran it with one employee till I joined him in 1971. He retired in 1975 at 70 after 49 years working in Loudwater.

Time - and landmine damage - had taken its toll on the garage structure, and the landlords decided in 1979 to demolish the once magnificent glass and ironwork structure. I persuaded them to leave the roof in place, forming a canopy. I was thus able to reinstate the walls, update the workshop, install lifts and modern equipment.

"But now small economic units cannot survive. How ironic it would be if, after witnessing the demise of the horse and carriage as transport for the gentry, then accomodating the maintenance and feeding (petrol) of motorised transport for the

masses, the premises could possibly revert to stables for the ever-increasing leisure pursuit of riding for pleasure. Oh well, that's progress!"

The affection and respect in which Rob has been held, is nicely expressed in the following letter.

"It was with great regret that I collected my car from Loudwater Garage this week for the last time. Since arriving in Loudwater nine years ago and discovering Rob Simmonds, it has been a pleasure to entrust the maintenance of our cars to him. What a refreshing change to give one's business to a firm which not only prides itself on offering 'personal and courteous service' but also delivers this, and more.

"This is a great loss to the Loudwater community, but sadly also a sign of the times when a business of this calibre is no longer viable. We wish Rob and Kathy all the very best for their new life in Cornwall." Clifton and Cathy Melvin, Whisper Wood.

We are sure this letter represents the views of many people in Greater Loudwater, even though many of our members are outside the Estate. Therefore, the LRA has taken upon itself to raise a testimonial fund for Rob and Kathy in their new life. A form through which you can subscribe comes with this Newsletter and we urge you to send something, however small, with good wishes to the Simmonds.

This, by the way, is not an innovation. Members have in the past shown their generosity to others - to Harry Cross, the last driver of the Loudwater bus and to two of our milkmen, both injured in the course of delivering. We are a decent lot, it seems.

Rob has also asked for this letter to appear "Dear Residents, "I would like to convey my sincere thanks to all of you who have communicated your best wishes to me after hearing I was ceasing trading. After so many years associated with Loudwater, it was a decision not taken lightly. Kind regards." Rob.

THAT LOUDWATER STORY

As George Bernard Shaw (and others) have said: "You never can tell".

When, because of the shortage of news, your Editor decided to fill the gap with his socio-historical picture of Loudwater, he rather felt he was short-changing you all. Well...

Nothing in the history of the Newsletter has had such a warm reception. Over two dozen people took the trouble to write, phone or say personally how much they enjoyed it, and used words such as "brilliant" and "fascinating". Thank you all so much.

One lesson the reaction did teach. Part of my concern was that the history had been told too often - and probably older residents might have felt that. But with the population of Loudwater changing 10-12% a year, the story is always new to many.

One of those congratulating nevertheless did express a worry that the remark that the Asian community did not join in might be resented. Much thought was given to the phrasing of this statement of fact, and it neither criticised or defended. Happily, as far as the votes are in, it does not seem to have caused offence, because two of those expressing appreciation were from that community, and one has taken action by volunteering to distribute the Newsletter.

One point that was brought to your Editor's attention that is probably worth making. Greater Loudwater contains an unusual mixture of nationalities. A fairly unscientific check has produced a figure of over twenty-two different nationalities in the area, from Japan to (the former) Yugoslavia, from Cuba to China, from Australia to Austria.

MY MISSING MILLION

One member who has disliked the Newsletter for years was particularly critical of my mention of Loudwater's affluence. "Why let the people of Rickmansworth think that we are all millionaires?" she cried. Now, vain as your Editor might be, he does not feel he penned a world scoop in saying what he did. Ricky residents (who do not, in fact, get the Newsletter) might just have worked the situation out before. But now, she will be even more upset. A business information research unit was reported in "Metro", the give-away London paper, as citing Loudwater as the third richest area in the country with 362 millionaires.

Their basis is, of course, very specious, namely the value of houses in the area, which ignores debt and mortgages and many other things. (I am indebted to Dennis Longman for a 1956 Express cutting which said almost the same thing during another housing boom).

Now there are roughly 410 houses in Greater Loudwater. Your Editor is thinking of founding a society of the poor in Loudwater to be called WHIGAM (Why haven't I got a million)!. He hopes the other 47 residents will elect him President on the sort of salary that will remove him from his humiliating position.

OUR CHILDREN'S CLUB

There are at present 68 children in the Loudwater Children Contact Group (founded in 1998). Families new to Loudwater are welcome to join. Its purpose is to: enable children to meet others of similar age living locally: offer a confidential register of families in the Group: provide a list of recommended baby-sitters: keep an au pair/nanny register for contract and friendship: run a regular pre-nursery and toddlers parent group: organise a bi-annual children's party: provide an optional school run sharing scheme: organise social events for teenagers.

If you are interested contact Ann Garner on 01923 770633.

TIME FOR A NEW SUBSCRIPTION

Over the past couple of years, our subscription collecting has, for various reasons, been patchy. One reason, certainly, has been a drop in those with the brass neck of your Editor who has no hesitation in calling and holding out his hand. We are now changing the system, as explained in an accompanying leaflet.

But, of course, if no one has knocked on certain doors, that means we haven't caught up with changes in residents. Hence this long list of people whom we welcome. To those who should have been welcomed some time ago, our apologies.

In Bridle Lane, Denis and Anita Ryan, Mark Breslauer and Elizabeth Friedman with children Jack and Anna, Gare, Lisa and Colin Wragg, Don, Maeve and Tyler Marchok, Abdulla and Khatijeh Javeri and children Anisa and Karim. In Chorleywood Road, Mr & Mrs R Wilson (and large family). In Glen Chess, Mr H Saito, Mr M Clifford, Mrs P Tait and Mrs P Rice. In Sarratt Lane, Mr & Mrs D Ryan. In Trout Rise Mr & Mrs Carroll with Malcolm and Allison, Mr & Mrs P A Trudeau with Jack and Thomas and Mrs Baldwin. In Loudwater Lane, Carl Francis and Lesley Scott, and finally in Loudwater Drive, David and Clare Ridler and Megan. Good luck to all of you.

BITS AND PIECES

Under the heading "The Chorister who charmed millions" the Observer reported the death of Ernest Lough at 88, the former choirboy whose 1927 recording of "O For The Wings of a Dove" has sold over five million copies. It was made with the Temple Church Choir, the first ever record by a church and - with no playback facilities in those days - it was done in one session.

In 1953 Mr Lough sang at the Queen's Coronation together with his son Peter who was a Chapel Royal chorister. A somewhat older Peter now lives in T.Way and is an Estate Board Director, we send him our condolences.

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Your Editor's wife featured twice in the local paper, but in her far more important role as C/wood Parish Councillor. She was commenting in one case on the C/wood Common management plan to fell weaker trees, letting more light in for walkers and encourage the restoration of grassland.

The second item was to receive a sapling from a 4,000 year old Yew tree, donated to the Parish Council to mark the millenium. The cutting came from an ancient tree in Gwent which was alive at the time of Christ. The sapling was blessed and sprinkled with holy water at a service of dedication in

St.Alban's Abbey and has been planted in the Lawn Cemetery behind the Parish Office.

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Sir Ivor Broom was also in the Observer, congratulating the paper on describing the New Year's Honours List correctly, and not, as some nationals did as the "Prime Minister's Honours List". "Awards", wrote Sir Ivor, "are by the Sovereign's Command, not the Prime Minister's."

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It is a great relief to see the jolt and judder track of L.Lane re-surfaced, in no small way thanks to the LRA's constant pressure, even if we have to wait for more radical measures, such as chicanes, bumps, changed speed limits in L.Lane and Sarratt Lane.

P.S. Clearly the County road maintenance budget is badly stretched to keep up, but it is hard to believe it could'nt run to filling in the two twenty-to-thirty yard lengths of L.Lane that have been left, even though both contain potholes.

THE CHAIRMAN WRITES

We thought it would be useful to produce a Calendar of our club's meetings and special events. It comes with this Newsletter and I hope it may interest some people to join in. Pin it on your notice board.

Special events include the Summer Garden Party on June 18th, a quiz evening and probably a wine appreciation evening organised by a Wine Club. For a Millennium special, we have organised a dinner party cruise on the Thames September 9th. We have reserved the Silver Dolphin (one of the best Thames cruisers and totally enclosed) and we plan to start on the London Eye, not compulsory, I hasten to say. There will be the usual coach travel from the Masonic School.

Our AGM is again at Loudwater Farm on Wednesday May 31st. Please come along, meet friends, have a glass of wine and join in the discussion about caring for our beautiful Chess Valley.

PLANNING

- 02159/99 The Walled Garden, T.Way. Install bay window (Approved).
- 02164/99 Willows,L.Drive. Two-storey rear and side extension (Approved).
- 02329/99 Rooks Hill Cottage,R.Hill one-storey rear extension (Approved).
- 02360/99 Wendover, B.Lane Part two and one storey and one storey side extension (Approved).
- 02363/99 White Webs, Cherry Hill. Three-storey side extension.(Refused).
- 02370/99 Tall Trees, L.Drive. Two-storey rear extension and conservatory
- 02374/99 Trout Rise Farm, T.Way. Extend manege, erect stables, shed, associated bldgs.
- 02388/99 12, L.House. Replace windows with French doors, patio. (Approved).
- 02395/99 Five Trees, T.Way One-storey front extension (Approved).
- 02400/99 Littlewold, Sarratt L. Erect detached garage and car port (Approved).
- 00070/00 Land adjacent Hillpoint & rear Glenhayes. Erect four detached dwellings.
- 00072/00 Elm Cottage, Chess Lane. Replace detached dwellings, erect garage.
- 00113/00 Old Meadow, Wagon Way. One-storey side extension to garages (Approved).
- 00137/00 Willow End, Chess Hill. Convert garage to room, one-storey side extension, new garage.
- 00147/00 Old Meadow, Wagon Way. Erect detached house, garage.
- 00255/00 April Cottage, Bridle Lane. Two-storey side extension.

Club numbers - Childrens Group 770633: Bridge Club 778241
Investment Club 774907: Theatre Club 721583.