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NEWSLETTER No. 97

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Editor: John Jarrett

No LRA occasion (apart from garden parties) has attracted such support as our 'Millennium' event. Eighty three members went in a double-decker bus and a minibus down to London to go on the London Eye, and then dine in a luxury cruiser down to Greenwich. What is more, we were blessed with fine weather, so the view from the Eye was spectacular - a few vertigo sufferers missed a lot by staying earth-bound.

Most of us got our exercise rushing from one side of the cruiser to the other to see the sights along the banks, some magnificent buildings (and some that made you want to eviscerate the architects) and marvelling at that great engineering feat as we went through the Thames Barrage. On the way back, when the lights were on, we had a fine view of the Dome. All right, it does look like a wok and it's a financial disaster and an indictment of political vanity, but, lit up, it is spectacular on the outside.

Perhaps the bonne bouche of the evening was that, as we came up to Tower Bridge, a tall-masted barge was coming through and we saw the bridge open and shut, a lucky coincidence.

One caveat. The double-decker was a nice idea, but a bus isn't as comfortable as the coaches we normally use, and has no pockets or racks to put anything, and as we had the luxury of being given champagne on the way in, we sat holding bottles and glasses. But two coaches would have put the cost up, so...

Two notes. If you haven't been on The Eye, it is worth buying one of the brochures, because there are no maps in the pods to tell you what landmark is where and it's maddening not to know.

Secondly, just as an indication of how much planning by the committee went into the trip, it was thanks to the attention to detail that the bus-driver was prevented from going under Rickmansworth railway bridge - clearance 6' 3" - in a 6' 4" bus!

THE INTENTIONAL GARDEN PARTY

At the risk of repetition, it was one of the best ever Garden Parties. Reasons? First, we were very kindly once again allowed back to Micklefield Hall in the back of the lovely old house, and with great views over the valley. Secondly, we were weather-proofed.

It will easily be understood that the great worry about the Garden Party is the weather. We have been extraordinarily lucky so far, but there's always a first time.

However, it so happened that there had been a big wedding at the Hall the day before and they had asked for a marquee to be put up. Mr Edmonds' daughter and son-in-law, Mr and Mrs Rankin, were kind enough to say that, if the LRA was prepared to clear up the mess from the wedding party, we could use the marquee. (Another reason to be grateful to Committee members - it was quite a shambles after a couple of hundred wedding guests had made merry!)

So everyone could sit down in the tent to eat, though many chose to picnic in the sun on the grass. A good time, as they say, was had by all.

(Richard Page, MP, and several Councillors attended by invitation of the Committee. It is only your Editor's view, but one that he and previous Chairmen have upheld, that only residents should be invited to a residents' occasion. All those concerned behaved quite properly, but ...)

THE ESTATE AGM

This was again held in Watersmeet, necessary for the large attendance expected, but very stuffy.

Many turned up because of the two issues that had been advertised as important.

The first was the final decision on what to do about preventing the Estate roads from collapsing under increased use by HGV's.

The consultants used by the Estate Board had produced an alarming picture of surfaces breaking down and services beneath the roads, particularly drains, being smashed. Some roads were, they prophesied, liable to collapse in under ten years.

To remedy this completely was estimated to cost seven figures, and even partial work could involve a four-figure sum from every household, while doing nothing was not an option.

The Estate Board has therefore decided that to prevent is better than to have to cure. It got the meeting's approval to set up a manned barrier at the bottom of Kingfisher Lure to forbid access to HGVs over a certain weight through the Estate except with prior agreement in special circumstances. It is recognised that this will have to be paid for, and that local building firms may well charge extra for sending two smaller lorries rather than one giant.

It is expected that the whole plan will be up and running before Christmas.

The other main issue was the Road Fund charge. As mentioned in previous issues, there have over the years been complaints that the charge was inequitably levied. However, the ingenious scheme described in our last issue turned out to be in danger of breaching the covenants. So a new proposal was made and accepted nem con at the AGM.

Under this, every householder under the aegis of the Estate Board will be asked to sign a contract to agree to a new arrangement. Each year, the Estate Board will decide a figure for work on the roads, and that will be divided by the number of households concerned. Each household will then be charged an equal sum, no reference to frontage, number of cars, rateable value etc.

The Board feels that such a scheme is totally fair and should be acceptable by all.

The Estate Board's assets have risen notably to £64,000.

There are still shares in the Company available, and the Board would like to see these taken up, as mentioned above.

The account also notes, with no regret, the departure without paying his dues of one resident, now apparently bankrupted, who turned one house into a semi-Colditz. Your Editor had some experience of the man concerned when he complained of another member whose dog had jumped up on his daughter. "I told her" he said, "that I've got a mate who breeds blank-blank Rottweilers and if that blank dog ever touches my daughter again he'll come back to you in a blank dog sandwich!" - No loss, this family.

Lastly, but by no means least, Derrick Speight announced his retirement as Chairman after 23 years on the Board, 12 as Chairman.

It is no exaggeration to say that Derrick has been the best Chairman the Board has ever had - concerned, patient, innovative. But only a few, older residents will know that the Estate's present financial soundness is almost entirely his creation.

For many years, the Estate problem was that it had no source of free income, Road Fund dues having to be spent only on roads. It was Derrick (supported by your Editor, he is proud to say) who persuaded the Board, for the first time ever, to borrow enough money to knock down the dilapidated sheds behind the garage and build lettable garages. The loan was repaid in less than half the planned time, and an income continued which in turn allowed the financing of building new flats and improving old ones, to produce more income.

The new Chairman is John Parsons, who will be a worthy successor.

BITS AND PIECES

Several large extensions in the area seem to have run into all sorts of problems, leaving an unpleasant amount of building site chaos here and there.

However, nothing stops the giddy spiral of rising prices. Mont au Source in L. Drive is on the market for £2 million!

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Geoff Saunders of River View, L. Lane, thought his lucky day had come when he opened a letter from the TV programme "Find A Fortune", but, alas, the owner of River View they were seeking was not him but a previous owner decades ago. But find him, they did, and on August 4th, that owner, Mr Richard Barker was handed a cheque for £33,000!

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The Loudwater Childrens' Contact group now includes 67 children of all ages. In addition, it now organises a baby-sitting register, an au pair/nanny register and a monthly pre-nursery group, and there are bi-annual childrens' parties where the whole family can meet others. The next party, with a Christmas theme, will be on Sunday, December 3rd. If you are interested in joining, contact Ann Garner on 01923 770633, and if you have new neighbours with children, please let them know about the Contact Group.

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Terry Ride, of Bridle Lane, was one of 60 riders who cycled from London to Paris in aid of Action Research. The 300 mile trip went off without a hitch and raised several thousand pounds for the charity.

Nothing daunted, he and two local friends are now talking about more such rides to India and Cuba!

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Welcome to Joe and Maureen Moran at Elmwood (now Tall Timbers), Rooks Hill.

P.S. No way is this the only new family to come to Loudwater in the last three months. Why won't you tell me about new arrivals, please?

YOU WRITE

"Fellow residents may be interested in our recent experience with a wasps' nest lodged behind a soffit board some 30ft up the house side. Through the Council Environmental Health office, we arranged a visit from their outside contractor. He viewed the nest from the ground for about two minutes, declared it to be bees, and demanded a cheque to TRDC for £22.30.

"On his advice, we got Chiltern and Three Counties Pest Control to remove the bees. They declared the 'bees' to be wasps and treated the nest. Examination of the dead insects confirmed they were wasps. This cost £25.

"I rang the Council Office with this story. Their comment was to wonder why we had involved another company since 'we can do bees'. They can't. I might, they suggested, be entitled to a refund, but the section head who could authorise this was out of the office for a few hours. He would call back, I was promised. He didn't. Three further calls over the next four weeks produced the same result "just slipped out but he'll call back". He didn't.

"Eventually, we had a letter referring to 'swarming' insects (we never reported any swarm), which proved they

were bees 'since wasps don't swarm'. Despite the overwhelming evidence of wasps, he decided no refund was justified.

"The conclusion - if you have a problem with bees/wasps, don't waste time with the Council. Chiltern and Three Counties Pest Control (01494 778826) were fast, efficient and courteous - and it doesn't take five calls and many weeks to speak to the man in charge."

Dr. S. Dixon, Nantucket, V. Way.

"The general policy (if that is not too strong an expression!) of the Estate Board on Company-owned trees is remediable work where general safety may be involved. We have no funds for "beautification", but, as an example, we have just spent £1,650 on fifteen trees on Company verges where the trees were too big or at risk. One worthy of mention was thinning an Evergreen Oak (did you know of such a tree?) on the verge opposite the T.Rise junction with T.Way.

"We have had a meeting with a woodland specialist company about Barnes Wood. Possibly (I stress possibly) this may lead to a development programme in conjunction with TRDC and the Woodland Grant section of the Forestry Commission. The wooded areas of Loudwater are a special feature and the Company is not neglecting what may be possible to enhance and protect them."

John Parsons, Director LTE.

CALLING THE LAST DITCHERS

Your Editor feared his vigorous views on those residents who have still not paid their subscriptions might offend some people.

In fact, the only comments have been on the line of "Good on you", especially from loyal subscribers who know one or two of their neighbours who haven't paid.

The good news is that over half the defaulters have coughed up. The bad news is that there are still nearly 90 who haven't, despite further letters being sent them. It beggars belief that many residents are trying to free-load, even if a few are that cheap. Most will, it seems certain, fall into the categories of "thought I'd paid", "meant to pay", "can't remember if I've paid."

Please check. If in any doubt, Maurice Escow or June Curtis will be happy to check for you and send you a Standing Order form, so you won't have to worry to be chased next year.

PLANNING

- 00072/99 Elm Cottage, Chess Lane. Replace detached dwellings, erect garage. (Approved)
- 00091/00 Micklefield Hall, Sarratt Lane. Replace eaves on The Stable. (Listed Building Approval).
- 00074/00 Rookery Nook, V. Way. Convert garage and conservatory (Approved).
- 00515/00 Trout Rise Farm, T. Rise. Riding area, extend feed room, erect sheds (Approved).
- 00602/00 April Cottage, B. Lane. Two-storey side conversion. (Approved)
- 00640/00 Micklefield Hall, Sarratt Lane. Convert farmhouse to two dwellings.
- 00680/00 Chesswood, Sarratt Lane. Demolish existing, erect new building. (Approved)
- 00713/00 Roundspring Farm, B. Lane. First Floor side extension. (Approved)
- 00753/00 Micklefield Hall, Sarratt Lane. Convert farmhouse to two dwellings.
- 00862/00 Tree tops, Cherry Hill. Two-storey side extension. (Approved)
- 00899/00 8, Lower Plantation. First storey rear conservatory. (Approved)
- 00959/00 Flint Cottage, T. Way. Erect pony box, store.
- 00998/00 Land between Larchmead/The Farm House, T.Rise. Erect detached, garage.
- 01002/00 Cherry Hill Cottage, T. Rise. One-storey side extension, porch, one-storey extension to garage.
- 01047/00 End House, Chess Lane. One-storey front, first floor side and part two-storey rear extensions.
- 01094/00 - 01097/00 The Dell, L. Drive. One and two-storey side extensions.
- 01137/00 Mansard Cottage, L. Lane. Demolish existing, erect new building.
- 01163/00 Tall Trees, L. Drive. Access to L. Lane via Tall Trees for Bridle Path Cottage.
- 01178/00 Loudwater Garage, T. Way. Redevelop to form four residential units.