The Croxley Green RESIDENT

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CROXLEY GREEN RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Editor: Brian Norman

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Spring 2005

Editorial

Spring brings with it the opportunity for renewal and time to reflect upon ones past endeavours. The winter allows one to contemplate on last years activities that directly concern or effect the community. Village spirit certainly prevails especially when our status quo is affected by outside affairs. New and established residents unite to preserve the unique surrounding and quality of life in the village. The Residents Association through its meetings continually monitors the community by receiving reports from our committee members, who actually participate in other committees and leisure organizations. Where necessary, reports are forwarded to the appropriate authority putting the communities case, likewise ideas to improve facilities and services in the village are welcomed.

Your support for the village's numerous sport and leisure activities are our responsibility to make sure of their survival in a society that has so many diverse distractions. I would like to take the opportunity to invite our many societies that are within to contribute to our community to use the facilities of "The Resident" to write a resumé of their activity or craft, thereby not only promoting their activity but also demonstrating the diverse opportunities available to the community.

A vital and unsung asset to our village are the numerous small parades of shops that not only offer diverse arrangement of goods but also a hidden opportunity for social interaction which is desirable to the core survival of any village society.

Brian Norman

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Watford & District Campaign for Real Ale

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127 Frankland Road

All sponsored parish councillors are ex-officio members, we currently have one, she is:-

Hazel Seeley

The Committee meets approximately six times a year and all meetings are open to the public. It is represented on many other local committees where it can make it voice heard and can bring back valuable information.

Even though Croxley is a relatively crime free village, we should not allow complacency to cloud our judgments and continue to get overlooked. Most of our household thefts occur due to opportunistic break-ins caused to premises not being properly secured.

Also unlicensed and false door to door sales representatives are a constant concern especially for our elderly residents.

Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators act as area messengers to inform resident as and when known problems could be prevailing in their part of the village. If you have concerns please advise your Co-ordinators of any unusual occurrences.

Some areas of the village have unfortunately been experiencing acts of vandalism that not only cause unwanted damage to public and private property but deep seated distress. If a resident is aware of any such occurrence, please inform the Police of the event and any details relevant to the crime, however incidental the act maybe. It should be within the communities own capabilities to address minor instances to show the offenders the error of their ways. It is important not to lose the well being of our village that has up to now been a desirable community to live and raise our family in, and in many instances to retire.

It is important to make the police aware of any circumstances that give cause for concern.

Articles and Advertisements for submission for next issue of The Resident

Please contact

Brian Norman
01923 779331

Rosemary Hanscomb
01923 449945

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The Churches in Croxley Green warmly invite you to share in our Sunday worship:

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6.30 pm Evening Worship
Revd Steve Moody - 231403

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Saturday 6.00 pm Vigil Mass
Sunday 10.00 am Mass
6.00 pm Mass
Canon Philip Cross - 231969

The Methodist Church, New Road
10.30 am Morning Worship
6.30 pm Evening Worship
Deacon Phil Osborne - 774011
Bookings Sandra Spragg - 773836

All Saints (C of E), The Green
8.00 am Holy Communion
9.40 am Junior Church (Except 3rd Sunday)
9.45 am Parish Eucharist
11.30 am Family Service (3rd Sunday in month)
2.00 pm Baptism (2nd & 4th Sunday)
6.00 pm Evensong
Revd Luke Lee - 772109

Churches Together in Croxley
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St Oswald's (C of E), Malvern Way
8.00 am Holy Communion
10.00 am Family Service (1st Sunday in month)
Family Eucharist & children's groups (on other Sundays)
Evening services as advertised
Revd Alison Walton - 232387

Library Column

Since my last library column the dates of our popular Baby Rhyme Time sessions have changed and they are now held on the 3rd Tuesday of the month between 10.30 and 11.00. (They were previously held on the 4th Tuesday). The next sessions will be on 19th April and 17th May.

I mentioned Channel 4's Richard & Judy's Summer Read last time. All the books featured in the show proved to be very popular in libraries too so I thought I'd include some information about the titles for their 2005 Book Club. The 10 titles include: **The Time Traveler's Wife** by Audrey Niffenegger, Justin Cartwright's **The Promise of Happiness**, and **My Sister's Keeper** by Judi Picoult. All 3 of these titles are in stock at Croxley Green Library, together with most of the other titles. One of the other books to be featured is **Cloud Atlas** by David Mitchell, a title that also made the shortlist for the Man Booker Prize. The eventual Man Booker winner was **The Line of Beauty** by Alan Hollinghurst.

Some time ago I mentioned a book called **Sequels** which is shelved in the reference section at the library, near the Enquiry Desk. It lists titles of books in sequence and is very useful for tracking down the next book in a series, such as Bernard Cornwell's Sharpe adventures or Sue Grafton's crime novels featuring Kinsey Millhone (the most recent of which is titled **R is for Ricochet**). The latest edition of **Sequels** was published last year and has recently been added to stock. Anyone is welcome to make use of it although it can't be taken home. Another useful recent addition to stock is **The Good Reading Guide to Crime Fiction** which lists crime writers who write in a similar style and contains useful suggestions for what else to read once you've finished everything by your favourite crime writer.

Helpful ideas for further reading can also be found in the magazine **newBOOKSmag** which is published 6 times a year. The latest copy is shelved on the newspaper and magazine shelves near the study area. It's packed with book reviews and articles about authors and each copy also contains extracts from newly published books to whet your

appetite. Readers also have the opportunity to order a free book from each edition of the magazine, only paying for postage & packing.

For teen readers **BOOX** magazine is full of reviews, topical articles and interviews and there's even a spoof problem page featuring well-known fictional characters. Young people, including pupils from schools in Hertfordshire, produce most of the content.

Finally, those of you who use neighbouring libraries may be interested to know that Watford Central Library will soon be opening on Sundays between 1 pm and 5 pm for a year long trial period. All the usual library services will be available including access to their public computers, CD, video and DVD loans, and newspapers and magazines to read. The first open Sunday will be 20th March.

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I have lived in Croxley Green for twenty five years, and have been attempting to write for the last five, I saw an advert in the local publication called the Croxley Resident.

I heard that there may be an opening for articles by local (Talent?) to write for this publication, I pondered long about sending an article to the Editor John Hedges, subsequently I met John, he said write something and I will put it in the Resident. This was music to my ears; my next question was what would you like me to write about, I thought that it would require Croxley based articles only, but bless him, John said write what you like. If you have never tried to get published then you will not know just how frustrating the whole thing can be at times, when the fruits of your labours have not been seen in the light of day, this from an editor is like music to a struggling writer's ears. So began a fruitful partnership, there have been times when I had to send a smaller piece than usual but it was always at the Editors request and usually meant that there was a limitation of space, prompted by cost as most things are today. I thought that people would like to know that along with you all I have lost a good friend and colleague. He will not easily be replaced if ever, especially by this humble beginner who found an editor who became a very good friend.

JOHN PERRY

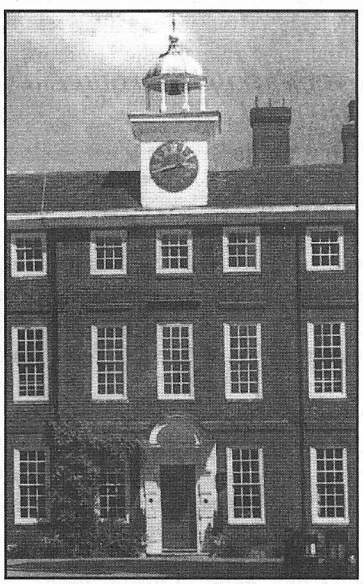
Travelling Pets

From last year, our pets can now have proper Passports like we do! There used to be certificates which pets required to travel (as part of the pilot travel scheme), but now the government has started issuing official Passports for pets. For those new to the concept, the purpose of this all is to allow people in the UK to take their pets abroad, and then return to the UK - without the old traditional 6 months quarantine. It also means that pets from certain countries can enter the UK without quarantine, as long as they comply with certain requirements. Essentially, the consequence to us as pet owners is that we can take our pets abroad on holiday with us, if we plan appropriately. Instead of having to holiday in Norfolk or Cornwall in an attempt to find a destination where we can take our pets, they can come with us wherever in the world we want to go (within reason!) Perhaps this decade will be full of travel writers talking about 80 days around the World with their dog, or Pole to Pole with their cat? I do have a friend who takes her cat everywhere she goes with her instead of putting it into a cattery- so perhaps people really will start taking their cats on holiday too? But seriously it Is nice to put the days behind us of pets having to be in 6 months quarantine unnecessarily.

To travel abroad with your pet, a pet passport is now required. To obtain this there is a set procedure. First you need to microchip the animal, and have one or two rabies vaccinations. Then a blood test is needed to confirm if the pet has now generated a sufficient immunity to rabies. Once this is completed, the passport can be issued by your vet. You can leave the UK at this stage, but it is very important to note that you cannot return to the UK until at least 6 months after the date of the blood test; once this period has passed, you are free to travel as you like, provided that the rabies vaccine is kept up to date. If it goes overdue, you need to start the process again unfortunately. Before returning to the UK, in the country you are departing from you need to find a local government-authorised vet to obtain a stamp/certificate of treatment against tapeworms and ticks 24-48 hours before you leave the country. All this occasionally is changed or updated, and can vary for which destination country you are going to, so it is important to contact DEFRA (the Government Ministry) to confirm exactly what requirements are, before you travel.

While there is a lot of paperwork and bureaucracy involved, the aim of this is to both protect the British public and our pets from getting Rabies which obviously is a killer disease we are fortunate to not have on our Island, while also relaxing the regulations to bring them more up to date to allow for International travel and migration. Good luck with your animal travels!

Matthew Murdock , Veterinary Surgeon
Croxley Green Veterinary Surgery



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The New Out-of-Hours GP Service

Things have been going on down at the surgery. They certainly have in mine, and I bet they have in yours too. If you have needed to see a doctor out of normal hours, I expect you have already noticed. The latest change in out-of-hours health care happened last October when the Watford and Three Rivers Primary Care Trust took it over. The PCT now runs the service between the hours of 6.30pm and 8.00am Monday to Friday, and all day and all night at weekends.

Historically GPs had 24-hour responsibility for delivering a primary care service for their patients. Many used to be on call at night themselves, and indeed this is what the two Croxley Green practices did when I came here in 1982, right up until 1997. Other GPs used to do little or no out-of-hours work, and subcontracted it to deputising service doctors to do it for them.

In the late 1990s GP co-operatives started to spring up around the country as a direct alternative to the deputising companies. The co-ops were simply local GPs who got together to set up an out-of-hours service from bases called Primary Care Centres (PCCs). In 1997, the Croxley GP practices joined with other surgeries in Watford Doctors On-call co-op, originally based in the old clinical psychology building behind the town hall in Watford. The WatDoc doctors all came from around the Watford, Croxley and Rickmansworth area, and provided the service in the evenings and at weekends, although the night shift was covered by a deputising service. Later WatDoc moved to the Avenue Clinic behind Watford library. No doubt many of you will have been there.

Having personally feared the co-op idea might reduce the quality of care for patients, I came to change my mind. It proved convenient for patients to have a medical centre to go to without needing to call the doctor out, but there was also a car and driver to get the doctor to a housebound patient when the need arose. The key difference between a co-op and a deputising service was that the co-op was run by local doctors and staff for local patients.

WatDoc has now gone. The big change came with the advent last year of a new contract for GPs. This was driven by the government, aiming to raise standards of primary care across the country, and it has changed life for patients and doctors alike. One big change was that for the first time GPs were allowed to give up their 24-hour out-of-hours responsibility, and the great majority of them voted to do just that. Which brings us to where we came in with the Primary Care Trust taking over.

So, you may be asking, what happens now when I need to see a doctor out of hours? What has the PCT put in place? Rather than try to design a new system from scratch the PCT opted to contract all of its out-of-hours work to a larger GP co-op. In place of WatDoc, there is now "Harmoni". The concept is the same but the organisation is bigger.

There is some logic behind the bizarre name. Harmoni was started up by two GPs in Harrow in 1996, and a colleague of one of them came up with **HAR**row **M**edics **O**ut of hours **N**etwork **I**nc! At that time, all the Harrow GPs used deputising services for out-of-hours care, and one aim of Harmoni was to entice local GPs back into evening and weekend work, with the intention of improving the service for patients. The idea took off and Harmoni grew. It now provides out-of-hours services over a wide area from London to Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

Our local Harmoni out-of-hours Primary Care Centre is located inside the Accident and Emergency department at Watford General Hospital. The doctors who work there are mostly from local practices, including yours truly. On some nights we have a nurse who also sees patients. Although situated in A&E, the Harmoni PCC is separate from the casualty area and has its own receptionist and waiting area. Patients are seen by appointment so that waiting around is kept to the minimum. There are other PCCs at Hemel, Borehamwood, Potters Bar, St Albans and Amersham, but we are lucky in that the Watford one is open 24hrs. All the communications for Harmoni are managed from its offices in Rickmansworth.

So here is what happens when you need medical help out of normal weekday hours. It is safest to always start by ringing your own surgery so that you get the right number for the next step – all GP surgeries can have slightly different arrangements. You will usually then be asked to ring (or perhaps your call will be automatically diverted to) the Harmoni switchboard.

You then hear a voice say "You're through to the Harmoni out-of-hours doctors' service. For your information your call is recorded. You will now be transferred to an operator". The operator will then ask you for the name of the patient, their address and telephone number, and some idea of what the medical problem is. These go on to a computer file, are printed on to a call sheet and passed to a doctor or nurse, based in Rickmansworth, who will call you back. The aim is to call all patients back within 20 minutes. I am told at the time of writing (early February) that the service is currently very busy on Saturday mornings and the delay can be longer – if you have a choice, therefore, it makes sense to avoid Saturday mornings.

The doctor or nurse who returns your call may be able to give you advice that will deal with your problem on the phone. They will not however have access to your medical records at your GP's surgery, so it is not a good idea to use Harmoni for purposes other than emergency treatment or advice.

Alternatively you may be asked to go to the Watford PCC for an appointment. In this case, you will get a second phone call, this time from the receptionist at Watford, giving you an appointment time to try to ensure you don't have to wait long when you get there. If it is clear that a home visit is needed, your details will be passed to the mobile doctor who spends his shift doing all the house calls. One of the directors of Harmoni told me that whenever nurses in the call centre are giving phone advice to patients, they are always working alongside, and supported by, doctors.

And that is what has been happening in out-of-hours care since October. If you have used the service, I hope it has worked well for you. If not, the Watford and Three Rivers PCT will want to know about, as will your GP. No doubt there will sometimes have been problems as the system settled down. From what I have seen (I usually do one evening shift a week) the Harmoni staff have worked very hard to try to deliver a good quality service. The biggest worry, for patients and doctors alike, is that out-of-hours systems like this one could be too slow to respond to someone whose need is truly urgent. Assuming it is adequately resourced in the first place, it needs staff who communicate well and work efficiently in the interests of local patients. And it needs patients who use the service thoughtfully, only when they need it, and not as a substitute for their usual GP surgery. And finally never forget that in a real medical emergency you should ring the ambulance service on 999.

Nigel Corp, general practitioner

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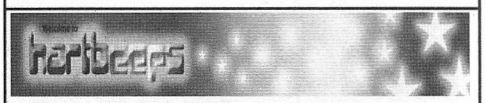

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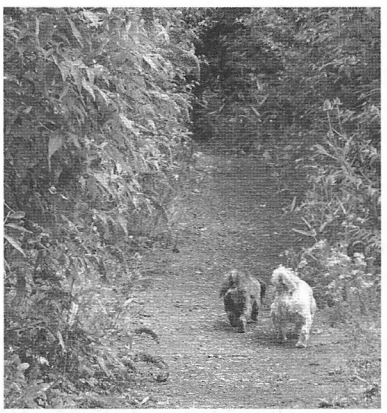
An update from the Keep Croxley 'Green' Group

Just to remind you, the Keep Croxley 'Green' Group was formed a) in response to the need of the community for a focal point and b) so that a true and concise representation of the views of the community could be voiced in opposition to the recent application by London Underground to build a replacement rail track depot in Long Valley Wood, on the south side of Croxley Green.

This application was unanimously rejected by the Council's Planning Committee last September, but unfortunately, LUL have appealed to the Planning Inspectorate. As the application has aroused such overwhelming local interest there will be a 4-5 day Public Inquiry - a preliminary start date for which has been set for the last Tuesday in October - at Three Rivers House. The Group will be a party to the Inquiry process and we will be able to cross examine LUL and challenge their evidence and arguments. We urge you attend the Inquiry. It offers a rare opportunity for villagers to flex democratic muscle. We really believe we can repel this industrial development so we urge you to mark your diaries and lend us your support.

The Keep Croxley 'Green' Group held a public meeting just before Christmas, primarily to advise local residents about the procedure for a public inquiry, but also to appeal for support before and during the inquiry period. As a result we are now able to advise you that nearly 500 letters of objection were lodged with the Planning inspectorate within the allotted 6 week period. We were also delighted to be able to introduce Dr Brenda Harold at this meeting, who, amongst other things, is a voluntary wildlife site surveyor for Herts & Middx Wildlife Trust. Dr Harold contacted our Group after reading our article in the Optima Magazine. She has been visiting the Buddleia Walk (as the site has become known locally) for a number of years and has photographed and recorded a huge variety of plants, including some species uncommon in Hertfordshire. As a result of her findings she believes the site fulfils criteria that will permit it to attain the status of a Wildlife Site - an application is now on the agenda for the next annual Wildlife Sites Ratification Meeting. We are urging English Nature and Herts Biological Records Centre to reassess the site and update their comments on the development of this site.

Some of you may know that the Keep Croxley 'Green' Group has also

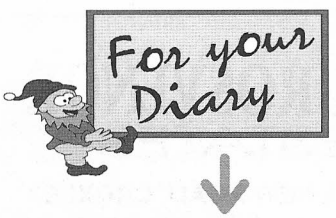


applied for the site to be recognised as a 'New Village Green'. This status protects any area of land that has been used, as of right, by a neighbourhood. We believe we fulfill the criteria required and our application is currently under consideration. If we succeed in getting Village Green Status, it will protect the wide variety of wildlife that inhabits the site and save the site as an amenity for future generations!

If you would like any additional information about the Keep Croxley 'Green' Group please do not hesitate to contact us.

e-mail: keepcroxleygreen@gmail.com

or visit our website:
www.keepcroxleygreen.co.uk



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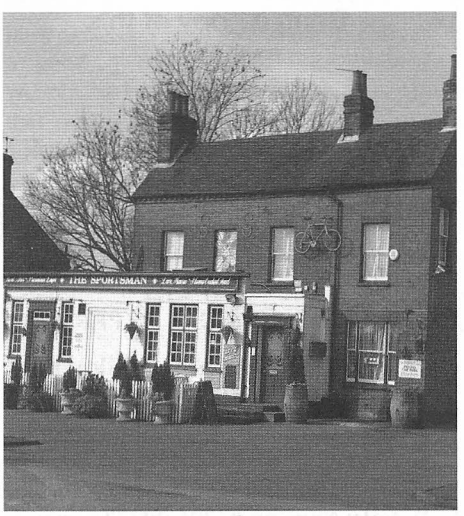
PS. You can charge your (nokia) phone here, but you can't borrow a cement mixer!

Mary and Jackie



Welcome to hartbeeps

Mums Mean Business'

Sarah Godwin, mother of two, tells us about her work experience and the launch of her new business Hartbeeps. I am a busy mum with two girls of 8 and 2 years. I have always worked and remember going back to work when my first daughter was 3 months old. I commuted to London on the 7.30 train every day and used to lock myself in the office toilets to have a good cry several times a day. Although my various employers have been sympathetic after a fashion, I have never managed to achieve the 'work/life' balance; personally I think that's a bit of a myth. However I am finally working for myself and I love every minute.

My Business is called Hartbeeps and involves the creation and delivery of experiential music based workshops for young children. I came across the idea, after attending various local music groups with my children and seeing just how much children benefit from creative play through music. I have undertaken various courses in the past within psychotherapy and creative therapy and have also recently been studying art and music therapy. I am trained as a singer and pianist and music plays a large part in our family life. I have also been working more recently as a fund raiser within a multi-cultural community and have been working on creative projects within a wealth of cultural activities.

I have teamed up with a very talented song writer (who is also about to qualify as a primary school teacher) and we make up Hartbeeps, the first of its kind, sitting between a music group and music therapy. We take children on magical journeys through mountains, streams, jungles and most importantly their imagination. Workshops allow children and parents/carers to experience a variety of cultural and contemporary sounds, while gaining an understanding of the environments that have influenced the music. We have teamed up with a local children's activity centre to deliver age specific sessions, an arts/tea pavilion in a lovely park setting to deliver more creative sessions and we are currently working with local and national funding bodies to further develop the project, ensuring that all children of all abilities can take part in these sessions.

Within the next year music/prop packs will be available to buy and also programs for early years organisations, Multi-media graphics and Hartbeeps characters along with story lines will also come on board. I am in my element and truly love the reaction I get time and time again when I deliver these magical sessions. My children take part in many aspects of the business from trialling new sessions, to taking part in singing in the recording studio. I can't say that I am not flat out busy, but I am at home more often than not and have the flexibility to be a `working mum' and I don't miss out on the important aspects of my daughters' growing up years.

www.hartbeeps.com

Sporting Success C.G.Y.F.A.

We are told by today's government that physical education is high on the political agenda but I expect that some of you, myself included, are slightly sceptical about their commitment to this, so here is a success story created by the efforts of the rank and file of Croxley Green.

Croxley Guild Youth F.C was started in its present form in 1999 largely due to the efforts of Simon Evans, our current Chairman, Mick Martin and Kevin Pizans with around 20 boys signed on and now some 6 years later this has grown to almost 200.

We have also been lucky enough to gain the services of many parents over these years in the various positions, which are essential to the running of a football club of this size. We have a network of team managers and qualified coaches in age groups from 6-13 and require ever more in order to perpetuate the club and most of all the kids that are keen to play football.

Several boys have attracted interest from some of the development schools attached to professional football clubs in the area but perhaps more importantly the club has provided both parents and kids with the opportunity to make close friendships, which can only enhance the feeling of the community in Croxley Green.

However, with so much good news there must also be bad so here goes, out with the 'begging bowl'.

Our rapid growth has caused a problem with playing area and in spite of great support from Croxley Guild of Sport we now find that we have out grown our allotted space and have branched out into local schools and recreation grounds, we even have a team using a facility in Maple Cross - certainly not ideal. So we are currently exploring the refurbishment and usage of the old Durrant's School playing field and would be grateful to anyone able to assist us in this direction or perhaps suggest alternatives, maybe there is even a generous benefactor out there who just happens to have a large area of ground made to measure for the job - unlikely perhaps but we can all dream.

Finally, we would like to take the opportunity to thank our many sponsors over the years for their generous donations of football kits and equipment because without you the club would not have blossomed as vigorously as it has.

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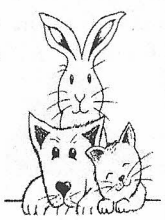

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Life in a small village had begun to pall for the young man, he had worked for the local farmer all his working life, he was still very young and the worry of his poor mother.

Then there came rumours that there were press gangs working in the locality, rumours abound in a small village and no one thought much of them until some of the men disappeared on their way to work for farmers farther afield, and the villagers soon realised that for once there was substance to these latest rumours.

The last thing that his Mother wanted for him was to be Press-ganged as his father had been and had never been seen again, so reluctantly Mother said that he had better make a run for it and try to re-start his life elsewhere.

She made him up some bread and cheese and some pennies which was all she had, the food was put into a bag which was slung over his shoulder for the very long journey.

After floods of tears from both the lad and his Mother, he set off early one morning hoping that the Press had done its dirty work the night before and would be delivering their prizes to the nearest port at this moment and so enabling him to get clear.

The young man had been walking for nearly a week lying and diving into ditches or hiding behind low hedges when he heard voices which he supposed might be Press gangs.

Then he spied a hostelry, it was summer and his throat was parched, he checked his purse to find just a few coppers left but enough for a flagon of ale.

The dust shimmered in the heat as he made for the door which was propped open and as his eyes became accustomed to the gloom after the bright sun he was aware that there was quite a decent crowd in the semi-darkness, which on further inspection seemed to be definitely anti--strangers.

All conversation had ceased abruptly and he became aware of the hostility that hung unspoken in the air, they looked a rough lot and he was poised for flight when a voice rang out, 'don't I know you?' He looked into a corner and was amazed to see a man from his own village back in Cornwall. Now his mother bless her heart had always told him to keep away from such persons as this one in the corner, She described him as a ne'er do well, he won't work but spends his time in taverns, his sort are to be avoided at all costs. 'Come Jack--- it is Jack ain't it? Take a drink with us we're regular chaps, we like a laugh but don't mean no harm.' Now why would he offer me free drink was the thought uppermost in his mind as he sat down at a roughly sawn table. As he drank the welcome ale he noticed that many nearby had pistols barely concealed about their persons, his drinking partner had two large pistols close to hand, seeing his interest in the weaponry he gave one to Jack who had hardly ever touched a pistol in his life. With a great show he showed Jack how to hold and cock the large pistol, then he said 'don't forget to keep it at half cock if its loaded then you won't blow you're foot off', this was greeted with much laughter as the other cut-throats realized that Jack was a novice in most things.

'What brings you here then?' and all eyes turned to watch as the question came at him, 'I nearly got pressed' he said and described how the Press gang had lain in wait for the farmers boys to go to their work in the morning and had taken some chaps from around the village. Now he was on common ground, most in the tavern had been some time or another at the mercy of the press--gangs and had escaped by the skin of their teeth, he described how he had lain all night in a ditch only emerging safely in the morning, he was clapped on the back for having escaped what to all present was a common enemy. 'Don't you fancy life on a Man – O-War then?' they jocularly asked him, then another drink was put in front of him and his new friends became old friends as the alcohol increased in his blood stream.

He sang for his new friends and this brought forth more free ale, he had a fine singing voice and his love songs brought forth many a tear in the tavern among his new friends, what a chap I am he thought--- seemingly friendless and now they all love me. When asked of his plans he replied that he would like to see London, "have you got any money?' was the next question, when he said no they all fell about laughing, 'how are you going to live, it costs a lot to live there' this he could not believe, surely it cost the same to live anywhere? 'I'll get a job' he ventured this was also considered to be funny, when he asked why he was told that there are no fields to plough in London, he began to think that he must look like a farm labourer, on looking round he realized that he did indeed look like a lad from the land.

'Maybe we could set you up' said his friend from the village, 'it might be risky work but it's well rewarded, that's if you are not afraid to do anything', he did not want to lose face so he said that he would do anything to earn some money. 'Are you afraid of horses?' 'What me a country lad' he said—'I was born and raised with horses', 'well you might be our man' they said, this aroused his curiosity. Now they were whispering conspiratorially as he was let into their plan to rob the Royal Mail coach as it climbed a nearby hill and was slowed to near walking pace, 'but that's a hanging job' he said, 'not if we frighten them enough, they will give up anything to us and we will be gone before they know what's hit them'.

Bravery came with another flagon, and on asking when the Royal Mail coach will be coming he was told to keep his voice down, there are always informers in here he was told, then conspiratorially they told him that the Royal Mail was expected in the morning. After sleeping in the straw in the barn he awoke feeling like death warmed up, no wonder his poor mother had warned him to steer clear of drink, he stuck his head in a bucket of water and felt a bit better although very hung over.

His newly found friend of yesterday was about early but unlike him seemingly not to feel the effects of strong drink, he tried to smile as his friend tried to imagine what it was he looked like, with suggestions from a pig's breakfast to a dog's dinner.

'Come on Jack I'll put you right' said his friend, and they re-entered the tavern, there his friend got him to drink brandy, to take a hair of the dog, 'what dog?' he asked but this brought forth gales of laughter again all around the hostelry.

'Be you still up for it'? He was asked and thought perhaps not, but only to himself, then after a couple of brandies his bravado began to surface again, 'come outside' said his friend from his home village 'and I'll put you right, we'll soon be rich Jack you mark my words.' He tried to imagine just what rich would be like, he had seen rich men riding through the village where he had lived until recently, they wore clothes of wondrous finery, just think said the friend all the girls will come running when they see you have a full purse. 'Now what we do is this, when you hear the horn blowing as the coach comes through yonder village we will take our places by those trees, I will give you the signal and you stand in the road and shout to the coachman to stop, when he sees your pistols he will stop and then all the lads will come and help you to take the strongbox, we have a friend who can open it and then we will share out the spoils, I have told them that you should get a bit more co's your in the road. None of us could do it, as we're known around these parts'. The other men stood around him and slapped his back, then they retired to the hostelry again to wet their whistles, and he was the toast of his newly found friends, all his doubts evaporated as the alcohol gave him false courage, he really liked to be the centre of things.

Eventually they staggered out to the road where the place of ambush was finally selected, well away from the hostelry where they could not be seen when getting ready to carry out the robbery.

From a distance they could hear the postillion blowing his horn to clear the way for the Royal mail, then almost imperceptibly but getting louder all the time, they heard the steel rims of the coach wheels on the gravel. The horses had slowed to a trot and were really blowing as they came gamely up the long hill; Jack thought to himself that the ambush had been planned very well.

His knuckles were white as he gripped the pistols tightly and prepared to step into the roadway, then '**Coachman Hold'** he shouted at the top of his voice, but the coach did not even look like stopping, he brandished the pistols and tried to fire in the air but then he realized that the pistols were not loaded. Turning to run he suddenly heard a sound of an explosion and a shot took him in the shoulder and spun him round to see that he was alone in the roadway, he fell to the ground with blood pouring from a gaping wound. The shot that took him came from behind and now he realized that his so-called friend from the village had not only betrayed him but had shot him as well.

He came to as rough hands carried him to the Inn where he was put into the stable with a guard who had jumped from the coach on the run; the coach would stop for no one and had gone on to London to deliver the mail.

A surgeon eventually came to pull out the musket ball from his shoulder, he came to and fainted a dozen times while this was being accomplished, with of course a good audience who had come to see the desperate man who thought that he could rob the Royal mail. A man arrived to take charge and he got his first look at Captain Roche, chief thief taker for the district, who said to the surgeon 'do a good job now we don't want him to cheat the hangman', Hangman he thought as he struggled but fainted again as another wave of pain overcame him. A cart was brought from a nearby farm and he was transported to the nearest jail, people came from miles away to see the thief who though he could take the Royal Mail alone, a lot were surprised to see how young he was. The gaoler made a lot of pennies by letting people in to see him in his cell, his wound was on fire for most of the time, food was at the discretion of the gaoler, and this is where he made more money by feeding him slops and pocketing the cash for himself.

A circuit Judge eventually arrived, his trial which took place in the corn exchange was over in a very short time when it was said that he had been seen with two pistols and the coach passengers had heard his cries to the coachman to stop, when asked if he had anything to say his protestations that he had been led astray were turned aside, none of the coach passengers had seen anyone else accompanying him.

After the trial he lay in his cell and his mother's words came to him, 'do not consort with folk who do no work, the devil makes work for idle hands', he recalled that she had even warned him about his so called friend who had coerced him into becoming a robber. Tears coursed down his cheeks as he recalled his mother, a widow and now soon to be without her only child, a sound caught his ear and he saw an eye at the peephole, later the warder informed him gleefully that the hangman had been to assess his weight for the job next day.

The hardest part was to think that she was right; his so-called friend had not only set him up but had actually shot him! That friend was a hero now in the town and had been given a substantial reward for his work from Captain Roche.

Early the next day the town was crowded as he was led to the centre of town where there stood a gibbet at the crossroads where bodies would hang for days to deter other would be highwaymen. As the black bag was slipped over his head he heard the priest intoning his final prayer, asking that this lawbreakers sins be forgiven, his last thought was--- all this for a drink on a hot day.

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Revels 2004

Well, yet again we were blessed with a wonderfully warm summer afternoon and the crowds thronged to the Green to join in with the fun. It is such a delightful event to be a part of as everybody pulls in the same direction to ensure its success. And the secret of that success is the fact that practically everyone in Croxley contributes in some way.

Community participation starts at school. It seems as if all of the kids from our junior schools take part in the procession; there is the Schools Pushball competition; children and youth groups participate in the arena events and the adults man the stalls where almost all of the local clubs and societies have some input. Our local business sponsors provide so much valuable help. Last year, we even had a proud WW11 veteran participating in the Procession. Goodness knows how many people turned up on the day (we've had Police estimates of 10,000 + !!).

The Revels is a dynamic event and a true measure of the depth of community spirit and togetherness that thrives in Croxley Green. There is such a friendly atmosphere on the Green. Cheesy as it sounds, I actually witnessed an encounter that embodies the ability of the Revels to unite people. I was directing a lorry, festooned with ribbons and balloons, full of folk in fancy dress – music blaring - from the Procession start point so that it could join up with the remainder of the Procession. Two gentlemen, I guess in their seventies, were locked in animated conversation and barring the way. Rather strange I thought, I'd better ask to move to prevent them being crushed. They were completely oblivious to my approach and to the noise of the Procession. When I did tap one on the shoulder he was full of apologies, "I'm so sorry, blimey a truck!" and as he moved he said "This is my best mate! I haven't seen him for over 25 years and we've just bumped into each other". I left them as they happily waded off to the main site.

If your cheered up by reading this, feel free to contact me if: you want to join our happy band in the organising committee; can offer sponsorship or if you have any ideas for the forthcoming Revels on Saturday, 18th June 2005.

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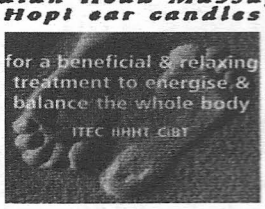

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We're expecting more visitors to Croxley Green

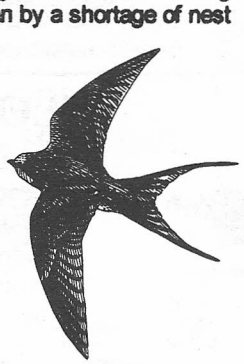
In my previous article (Autumn 2004) I wrote about some of the birds that visit Croxley Green and Stockers' Lake during the winter months. And as we move from Winter into Spring, so our winter visitors move away and we can look forward to the arrival of new groups of birds - the summer migrants. We are all familiar with the principle of summer migrants - as children we learned about the arrival and departure of the ***swallows,*** and for many years the correspondence pages of The Times newspaper was the place to record the arrival of the first ***cuckoo.***

There are many other birds that come here just for the summer. Warblers are perhaps the largest group, but many other species are worth looking out for - including birds such as the ***ring ouzel*** that only occur here "on passage" as they head north for their breeding areas.

But first let's think about the ***hirundines***, the group which includes the ***swallow.*** One of the first birds to arrive - and one which can often be seen in the valley and the areas by Stockers' Lake - is the ***sand martin.*** This is very similar in size and appearance to the more familiar ***house martin,*** but whereas the ***house martin*** is blue-black with a striking white rump, so the ***sand martin*** is drabber brown - dark sandy coloured in fact - and not so obvious to spot. Their nests are also less obvious, because whilst the ***house martin*** typically constructs its nest (of mud and grass) under the eaves of our houses, yet the ***sand martin*** digs a burrow up to two meters long in a sandy bank. Many such banks are now constructed artificially on bird reserves in order to help the survival of these increasingly threatened birds., although much of their decline has been caused by severe droughts in their wintering areas, rather than by a shortage of nest sites

House Martin

Whilst the ***sand martin*** is often the first ***hirundine*** to arrive in Croxley Green (some time between late March and early May depending upon weather conditions) it is followed within a few days by the ***swallows.*** These familiar birds, with their relaxed yet purposeful flight, have spent the winter in the far south of Africa.. They can be identified by their long tails, which help them to manoeuvre when feeding, as they hunt for insects on the wing. The ***swallow*** is a surprisingly colourful bird when seen in a good light, with a deep red throat, pinkish underparts, and delicate white patches on the tail.



Swallow

The ***swift*** is often confused with the swallow, although it is from a completely different family. It is approximately the same size as a ***swallow,*** but has very long, narrow, almost crescent shaped wings, i and an all dark plumage. The ***swift's*** loud shrill screaming call is one reason why it was once called the "devil bird".

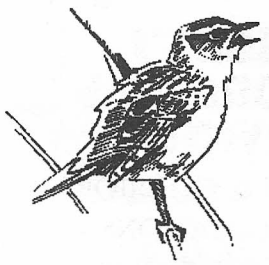
Swift

Not all our summer visitors are so obvious as the *hirundines* , and the *warblers* are often heard before they are seen. The first to return is often the ***chiffchaff*** which can be heard calling its name from high in a tall tree. Even experienced birdwatchers can confuse the ***chiffchaff*** with its close relative the ***willow warbler***, and it was not until the work of Gilbert White (the famous rector of Selborne) in the 18th century that the two species were first separated.

Chiffchaff

Like the *hirundines* , the *warblers* are all insectivorous, and this is the reason that they visit us during the summer months when our woods and fields are teeming with flies, midges and other insects. Or at least they used to be. Unfortunately the greater use of insecticides throughout the countryside has led to a severe reduction in the number of flying insects (as can be seen by looking at the smaller number squashed on your car's radiator these days, compared with twenty years ago), and so the birds have to work much harder to feed their young.

Although the ***chiffchaff*** and ***willow warbler*** (and ***wood warbler*** too) are quite similar in appearance, some of our warblers are much easier to identify. The ***whitethroat*** and the ***blackcap*** both do "exactly what it says on the tin", and the ***grasshopper warbler*** sounds just like its name sake. But away from the woods, and back nearer the water, the novice birdwatcher may find it difficult to distinguish the ***sedge warbler*** from the ***reed warbler*** . Their songs are very similar, and both birds are often hidden low down in the reeds, but a glimpse of the stripy head of the ***sedge warbler*** is all that is needed to tell the two apart.



Sedge Warbler

Warblers have some of the most delightful songs of many of our birds. Their arrival in late spring is both a signal that summer is on its way, and a reminder that we in Britain share "our" birds with people in other parts of the world. We rightly condemn the "sportsmen" in Mediterranean areas who shoot so many of these little birds on migration, but by adopting farming practices which reduce the food supply and nesting places for summer visitors we may be unwittingly playing a part in the decline of many species. At present we are able to see most of these birds within Croxley Green and nearby areas; let us hope that we always will.

This is my final item for the Resident. I hope that my articles over the last seven years have been of interest, and have helped to tell readers something about the birds that can be seen both in Croxley Green and further afield. The Watford RSPB Group continues to meet on the second Wednesday of each month, when new members and visitors are always welcome. The new leaders of the group (Philip and Marilyn McGovern) will be happy to give details about the group's activities. (Telephone Watford 243761)