



The Croxley Green RESIDENT

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CROXLEY GREEN RESIDENTS'
ASSOCIATION

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Assisted by: Molly Hedges

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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 its voice heard and can bring back valuable information .

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and letters and contributions to:-

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by January 1st 2004 if possible.

Articles from local groups and societies are especially welcome but remember next publishing date is March.

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EDITORIAL

Sadly, in this edition, we have to report the death of a former contributor who always had something interesting to say about the history of Croxley Green. Norman, until recently, was very with it and our conversations were wide-ranging giving useful insights to the village which we both loved. I have been able, with a small space left, to reprint an article he wrote for us some time ago. Please do not act on his requests unless you do it direct to Three Rivers Museum. Norman will be a hard act to follow but nothing would please him more than that someone will come forward to take over his role as Church Archivist and local amateur historian.

At the mention of Three Rivers Museum, we must remember the devastating fire which closed them down last year but, hopefully, by the time you read this they will once more be open for business. We need these facilities as much as we need our local services.

John Britten has kindly consented to continue with his series of articles on birds, despite having retired as Leader of the Watford RSPB group. I am sure that most of our readers will be pleased about that as his articles are always of great interest.

We have a new vet this time, Robert Bird having returned to New Zealand. Andrew has started well and I hope that he will continue to interest our pet lovers.

Nigel Corp's article included a footnote, for which I had no space, so here it is now:-

P.S. A seasonal reminder - if you're eligible for a flu vaccination, don't miss out. It's at your surgery now!

So, the year draws on and we enter another Autumn season when so many activities take place. I don't really need that many contributions as we already have our standard contributors but I will always try to find space for anything of interest about your group or society and if anyone takes up the cause of local history they will be most welcome.

Finally, we cannot attract enough collectors of subscription so, to help us, please see the form on P.6 of this edition. Either bite the bullet and pay a life subscription or send a contribution (£1 pa or 25p OAPs) to Vera Goulder.

CHURCH ARCHIVES

(Reprinted as a tribute from Spring 1990).

In the Autumn 1989 issue of the *Resident*, we printed a poem written by G. Revell. Soon after publication, I was contacted by John Wright of Wright Motors and, in an interview with him and his brother Mick, learnt a great deal about Geoff Revell. It must be remembered that they too are Croxley boys, so it would not be fair to report what they got up to as boys except to say they enjoyed life to the full.

During the Second World War, Geoff was in the Royal Tank Corps and had an adventurous time but his health began to fail so, towards the end of the war, he was stationed at Chenies Manor.

I also spent some time with Frank Jackson, a life-long friend, and was able to listen to a recording he had made, in the early fifties, of Geoff reading his poem. He had a most expressive voice and his poem came alive. He was blind and in the recording he made the following comment, and I quote:- "Poetry, provided it is read properly, gives to the blind a picture they can appreciate".

Through these conversations, I consider it a privilege that I have come to know this man who was so content. His poem has given us a picture of Croxley Green to treasure and appreciate.

So far I have had no response to my request for any information about the gravel washing equipment which stood near Common Moor Lock or on the Metropolitan Railway, I still hope to find something about the opening of the line in November 1925. Should you do so, then please contact me, I should add that I am connected with the Three Rivers Museum. At present, December 1989, we are staging a small exhibition on Croxley Green and I hope that some of you may have seen it.

Recently, Mr Nicholson, Headmaster of Harvey Road School, loaned to me a number of school registers, the earliest one is dated 1894, many names are familiar but you can rest easy they do not give any details of standard reached.

Finally, may I repeat my appeal for anything of interest about Croxley Green for it is only by these means can we try to preserve our heritage.

Norman Spring.

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

The Baptist Church, Baldwins Lane

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11.00 am Family Service
6.30 pm Evening Worship
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St Bede's (RC), Baldwins Lane

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 Service
Revd César A Guidi - 774011
Bookings John Rowe - 234920

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



St Oswald's (C of E), Malvern Way

8.00 am Holy Communion
10.00 am Family Service (1st Sunday in month)
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SAVE OUR SPIRE

I was doing my usual afternoon round, visiting people in the parish. I met a young man who does not normally come to church but we had a nice conversation about the church and the faith of youngsters. He asked me why do we have to spend large sums of money for the spire of All Saints' Church. He said there are so many poor people homeless, short of food, and medical attention and lonely people. Do we have to spend money on the spire? I appreciated his question and then I realised that I have to say a few words about the value of this spire as we launch an appeal on the 14th September. When it was built 131 years ago it was perhaps the only clock in Croxley Green, which reminded everyday, the time of the day and the time of the service. It gave a variety of service to the community. I think the reason why we had a belfry was to remind everybody that the service is being held in this house of prayer for everybody in Croxley Green. I said to the young man, whether he came to church or not, we prayed for him and others in the service. He said he did not know this and he was very impressed. If you look at the belfry you will see the weathervane and the cock on the top, the cock is the bird that gets up early and cries to tell other people perhaps

it is time to get up and pray. And some people ask me why we have a cock on the bell tower? The worship of God the source of our life and joy and peace, is the priority for Christians and perhaps others. I met a number of people, who were members of our worshipping congregation, when they were not well and suffering in bed not able to come to church but could hear the church bell. Appreciated especially is the ringing three times during the consecration of the sacraments. They could take part in the service by making the sign of the cross. They said it was a great comfort to hear the bell before the service. So we ring the bell before the service 55 strokes representing 55 areas of our parish, we remember everybody before we start our service. Someone else asked me why do we really need our tower, bell tower and spire, as nowadays so many people have a watch? Instead of spending large sums of money for the repair, wouldn't it be cheaper to pull it down? The fact of the matter is that the All Saints' church is not only a Grade 2 listed building but also a landmark of Croxley Green and a symbol that Croxley Green has been influenced by Christian faith for more than a century. I personally love to see the beautiful spire rising up high in heaven reminding everybody of our love of God and what he has done for us and still does. Our Parish Church Council has decided that this appeal for the spire and restoration fund should go to everybody in Croxley Green, because All Saints' church stands for every one of us in Croxley Green. You will be getting a letter and I hope many of you will respond positively with a loving heart.

Luke Lee - Vicar of All Saints'

PETS HAVE TEETH TOO!

Firstly let me say a warm farewell to Robert Bird as he leaves us to return to the Southern Hemisphere - we wish him all the best. For my part, I've enjoyed my first 2 months here and have been struck by the friendly sense of community within the area the practice serves. I look forward to my future here.

So, **pets have teeth too.** And like us, some seem blessed with the ability to eat 'junk' food their entire lives and maintain a gleaming row of white shiny teeth, while others eat well and look after their teeth... and still have teeth problems. But the reality is most animals over 3 years have a degree of dental disease.

Teeth are covered in enamel - the toughest substance in the body, built to withstand the huge forces needed in chewing and breaking up food. Teeth are then anchored firmly into the jaws by unseen attachments called periodontal ligaments, under the gum line. Unfortunately, without proper dental hygiene, a thin layer of *plaque* (a slimy mix of bacteria and saliva proteins) can build up on teeth, and this can mineralise to form a hard brown substance called tartar which covers the teeth. With plaque also comes *gingivitis* which is redness and inflammation of the gums. This if caught early enough is reversible. If ignored, inflammation and infection spreads down beneath the gums, and attacks the periodontal ligaments. As this progresses, the gums recede, teeth loosen, and can become rotten. These stages of 'Periodontal disease' are not reversible. This is not simply a cosmetic issue. It can cause discomfort and pain for our pets.

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There is strong circumstantial evidence linking infections in the mouth with disease of other body organs.

So, what can we do? Well, the good news is that teeth problems are preventable with some simple steps at home. The first thing is the diet. Dry food requires more chewing than wet food and this reduces plaque and tartar. New research by Hills, among others, has also recently produced some extremely good diets especially to help keep teeth clean. Some chews also are helpful for the same reason.

The best way of removing plaque however is the same as for us - toothbrushing. "Oh no", I hear you groan! But special toothpastes are available from vets which taste good for pets (eg chicken flavour) and don't froth up. Even rubbing them on with a finger can still help as they work on an enzyme basis. But, if even this is impossible, then chews are available for cats and dogs which work on the same enzyme basis - so are better than nothing.

Once it gets to the stage where brown tartar has formed, unfortunately nothing we can do at home will remove it. Removal of this at the vets under an anesthetic is required. Specialist equipment is used (much the same as when we go to the dentist) including ultrasonic scalers to remove the tartar, and air driven drills and polishing equipment.

So, to keep your pets white shiny smile and fresh breath - and keep the vet away - try toothbrushing! And keep on trying it! Because teeth problems are preventable and even reversible early on.

I am the new full time resident vet at Croxley Green Veterinary Surgery (now part of the Medivet group).

Matthew Murdoch
BVSc (Bristol) MRCVS.

Croxley Green Flower Group

What's that? I hear you ask. What's the population of Croxley Green? I ask. I wonder how many of you have ever heard of us. Very few I suspect.

The Group was formed in 1965 by Miss Kay Ragget (a few of the older residents of Croxley Green will remember her) to entertain and encourage ladies who love flowers and to enlighten them on flower arranging. She started off with 21 members and as grew, at one time, over 100 members.

We are affiliated to NAFAS (National Association of Flower Arrangers' Society) our area covering the Home Counties.

An annual competition and flower show was held at All Saints' Church Hall for a number of years. The cups were mislaid for about twenty years but I found them, eventually, in a black sack. They have been re-polished and given into the care of Three Rivers Museum in Rickmansworth.

About this time, the Chairman wished to retire and, as nobody on the committee would step forward, the club was within a week of folding. Fortunately, some brave soul came forward and, for a few years, the club prospered again. In 2002 the club was once again in crisis when, after five years, the chairman wished to retire and I was asked to step in. I didn't know the committee but they worked well together and made me welcome. We are now, once again, a successful club with 49 members and approximately 10 visitors at each meeting.

We meet every second Tuesday of each month (with the exception of August) when we have demonstrations and, on average, two National Demonstrators a year. You don't need to be an arranger, just come along to enjoy the flowers,

have a cup of tea, or coffee, and relax, meet friends and make new ones.

Gentlemen are also welcome, with or without their ladies. It might be of interest to some of our allotment holders.

December meeting is Party Time, when we share a meal and entertainment, looking forward to the spirit of Christmas. It is surprising how many ideas you can pick up for Christmas gifts, just by sitting and watching.

All flower arrangements are raffled after each meeting. As the prizes are drawn the excitement can be magic. We would be delighted to welcome you as a visitor and, if you enjoy the evening, perhaps you may consider joining as a member.

We meet, as I said, on the second Tuesday of each month at the Red Cross Centre, Barton Way. Doors open at 7.15 pm, demonstration begins at 7.45 pm, the evening closes at approx. 10.00 pm.

If you would like more information please contact:-

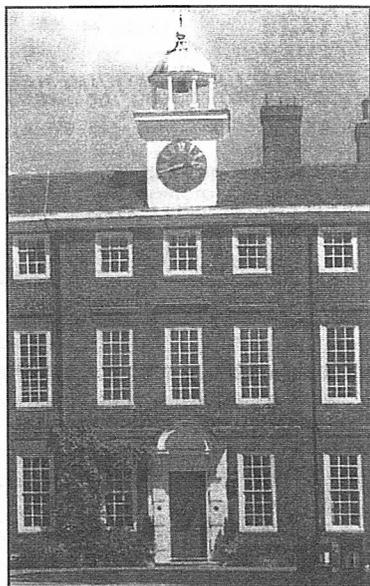
Vera Diment - Chairman - 771716 or
Muriel Hellery - Secretary - 442458

REVELS ON THE GREEN

21 June 2003

What a glorious day! Once again the annual celebrations on the Green were a howling success and the people of Croxley Green enjoyed a superb afternoon in one of the prettiest places in Hertfordshire. Our thanks go to all those who organised, participated and just came along for the fun. It's hard to judge but there were probably more than ever. Put the date for next year in your diary now. It's never too early and why not offer to help:-

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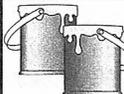
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A Glimpse into the Future

We all know you can't believe everything you read in the press, with the possible exception of the *Resident* of course. Yet news stories do have a way of worming their way into our heads. And surprisingly often what starts out as rumour or speculation turns out to become real in the end. In June this year the British Medical Journal ran a headline about an idea for a new pill to prevent 80% of heart attacks. The journal's editor, with his tongue stuffed more or less firmly into his cheek, suggested his readers might like to keep that particular edition of the BMJ as it was likely to become a collector's item. The media then got hold of the story and you probably read about it yourself, or heard it on the news. The new "polypill" was born. During the following month several patients enquired about the pill in a way that suggested it might be on the market any day, and that soon after that I might well be out of a job.

Behind all the hype was an interesting article by two medical professors in London. Starting from the grim statistic that heart disease, strokes and cardiovascular disease in general kill or seriously affect half the population of Britain, they set out to create a radical preventative. It is known that reducing high blood pressure levels reduces the likelihood of strokes and heart disease. The same is true of lowering cholesterol levels. Aspirin has been shown to be highly effective in "thinning the blood" by making platelets less sticky. And many people believe that lowering high levels of the amino acid homocysteine by taking folic acid also reduces the risk of these devastating diseases. Research has shown these drug treatments are effective individually. The professors' idea was to make a cocktail of three types of blood pressure drug together with a statin to lower cholesterol, some aspirin and a bit of folic acid, and make a single dose pill for anyone with cardiovascular disease and everyone over the age of 55. They calculated the side effects would be low because only low doses of the ingredients would be needed, but that the plan would prevent 88% of heart attacks and 80% of strokes. They even suggested there would be no need to check blood pressure or cholesterol before treatment – whatever levels you start at, their pill should lower them and that was bound to be good.

When I first heard this story I thought it was a spoof. But the professors are very serious and have patented their pill recipe and filed a trademark application for the name "Polypill". I can't decide whether this concept is the ultimate in western cynicism or a potential advance. It seems to be saying: stop worrying about healthy lifestyle factors (that GPs keep banging on about) – the answer to our fears about mortality lies not in the

choices we make about what sort of life we lead, but in feeding a pill to the over-55s. It sounds a little too Orwellian. Of course it doesn't exist (yet). The whole idea is unproven and based on extrapolating from data on the treatment of individual risk factors. But many *Resident* readers will already be taking several different pills for blood pressure, plus a statin for their cholesterol and 75mg of aspirin – virtually all the "Polypill" ingredients. And as readers of this column already know, there is a lot to be said for each of us knowing what our blood pressure and cholesterol levels are. And if they're above target, do something about it. This is crucial for anyone who has already had a brush with heart disease or stroke, but also matters to all of us.

If there is a learning point to be extracted from the designer panacea pill idea, it's this. Don't wait until you're 55 and hope the pill will do all the work. Lay the framework for a healthy cardiovascular system a lot earlier. The key figures to aim at are a blood pressure under 150/90 (even lower if you already have heart trouble or diabetes), a total cholesterol under 5 and an LDL cholesterol under 3. We should also be exercising regularly, eating our five portions of fruit and vegetables a day with one hand and tossing our cigarettes in the bin with the other. A very good trick if you can do it and well worth practising! That way I might be out of a job even before the patented panacea hits the streets.

Which reminds me of a more urgent threat to my livelihood. I won't go on for long about the idiosyncrasies of the new contract for family doctors, but a word of warning for patients might be in order. The contract negotiated between HM Government and the GPs' trade union seems to be based on the old TV programme *The Price is Right*. GPs will be awarded quality points based principally on their computer records of the services they provide for their patients. And surprise, surprise, points mean prizes. A lot of patient data will need to be collected and GPs' workload will be driven even more by targets, guidelines and protocols. The aim is a noble one - to keep pushing the quality of patient care upwards. The danger is that your friendly neighbourhood GPs may be so seduced by the demands of their new contract that they don't stop playing with their computers long enough to listen to your concerns.

So if you ever catch me with that expression of puzzled desperation, locked in combat with the keyboard when you're trying to tell me something important, do give me a poke. Bring me back to reality and proper patient-doctor communication. After all, it's patients who really matter, not the points and the prizes.

© Nigel Corp, general practitioner

Norman Frank Spring

Norman was born on 1st July 1920 in Marylebone, London to the sound of Bow-Bells - this made him a cockney.

His parents moved to Bushey when he was very young, his father was the local police officer. He recalled delivering milk as a boy, using milk churns and a pony and trap for delivery. He also recalled getting into trouble when he fell into the Bushey village pond outside St James Church; his father had to fish him out!

He ran errands for local artists to make some pocket money. He sang in both St James's and St Peter's church choirs. He served with the RAF during the Second World War, working as an instrument maker and spent most of the war in India. It is ironic that he joined the RAF, as he had no head for heights. Married Beryl Couch in 1945 and settled in Croxley Green in 1952 and began his association with All Saints'. Norman joined Scammell Lorries at this time for over 25 years. They had two children Paula and Colin who both married their partners at All Saints', Paula to David, and Colin to Mandy, and now grandchildren Christopher, Louise, Alexandra and Elizabeth. Norman enjoyed sport, following Watford football club, and played some cricket - the highlight was hitting a six at Baldwins Lane ground. He attended many test matches at Lords and the Oval. He also enjoyed gardening mostly growing vegetables, but his passion was growing dahlias. Active in the local community, especially the Croxley Camera Club of which indeed he became president going on to be a respected photographic judge throughout Hertfordshire. He was an active member of the St Albans model engineering club, and all the family have examples of his work, from boats 4ft long to windmills in the garden. After the sad loss of Beryl in 1984, Norman filled his life with his hobbies and the church. During 1987 All Saints organised a barn dance and Norman met Iris for the first time, both were widowed. They married in 1988 and they set up a new home together in Rickmansworth. Norman gains another daughter and son-in-law, Glynis, Mark, and then another granddaughter Amy.

During his later years he assisted All Saints as server and sideman while undertaking the role of church archivist, writing the history of All Saints church and many articles for the parish and *Resident* magazines. Norman and Iris loved to come to All Saints' church and wanted to take a full part in the service. Not being able to hear what went on, they have kindly donated an induction loop system to the church, which has given a great service to many who are hard of hearing.

Norman and Iris have been so good together and, approaching fifteen years of marriage, they cared deeply for each other, which was a joy for all to see.

Rev. Luc Lee

Taking Stock Of The Doves

I am often asked "What is the difference between pigeons and doves?" They are both members of the same broad family of birds, and there is no real distinction between the group that we call doves and the group that we call pigeons. But in general, through common usage, the pigeons are the larger and heavier members of the family, whilst doves are smaller and more delicate.

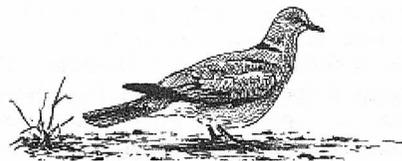
This size difference is very clear when we consider the two main species that occur in our gardens here in South West Hertfordshire. The heavy bird with white patches on the sides of its neck and broad white bands on its wings is the common *wood pigeon*; whilst the small buff-grey dove, with a black ring around its neck is the *collared dove*. The *wood pigeon* is a native bird, found throughout Britain and Europe, and it would have been known for hundreds of years by people living in this area. Today it can be seen in woods and gardens (where it has a voracious appetite for bird food) and also in large flocks in farmland and fields.



Wood pigeon

Woodpigeons can be quite noisy birds - not just from their insistent "coo COO coo coo-coo" call, but also from the clatter of their wings as they rush through the branches or a shrubbery.

But the *collared dove* is a newcomer - an immigrant from India and near Asia - which was not seen in England until 1953. It is not an artificially introduced species, but came here as part of a world wide expansion of its natural range. In the past fifty years it has bred prolifically (with sometimes as many as six broods a year!) and spread widely, and is now very common throughout the whole of Britain. It is a delightful little bird, very attractive to look at, but not so attractive in its call - particularly early in the morning. The call is a somewhat monotonous "coo coo cuk" which is often mistaken for the sound of a cuckoo in early summer. Both the *collared dove* and the *woodpigeon* like corn and seed and will feed from bird tables, but they find it more difficult to balance on the short perches of tube feeders. (That is not to say that they cannot use feeders - I have even known of *collared doves* taking the very fine Nyjer seed from the specialised feeders which are designed for *goldfinches*.)



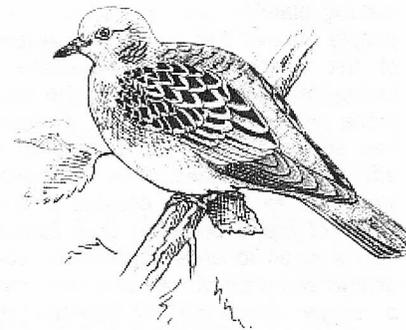
Collared dove

Two other pigeons may be seen in the area. *Feral pigeons* (often called *town pigeons*) are the descendants of birds which escaped from pigeon coops in the middle ages, when they were kept as an important source of food. They are essentially the same species as the wild *rock dove* which can still be found in a few remote coastal areas, nesting on rocky cliff ledges. There are numerous variations of plumage amongst *feral pigeons* but they are generally much smaller than *wood pigeons* and have a 'scruffier' appearance. These pigeons are of course common everywhere in Britain, including Trafalgar Square and Watford High Street.

The fourth bird - much less common but an occasional visitor to gardens near to wooded areas - is the *stock dove*. Although called a dove it is actually much more like a pigeon. It is about the same size as a *feral pigeon*, but resembles a *wood pigeon* more in its general appearance. However, it does not have any of the *wood pigeon's* white patches, and it often shows a beautiful glossy green area on the side of its neck. (Interestingly, the word "Stock" has nothing to do with the soup pot, but means tree-trunk, and refers to its nesting place in tree holes or cavities). The *stock dove* usually occurs in ones and twos, rather than in flocks, and is not so prominent and visible as the *wood pigeon*, but it is well worth looking out for amongst the other pigeons and doves which visit our gardens. In flight it is faster, and has a quicker wing action, than a *woodpigeon*.

Many years ago we might also have seen the *turtle dove* in this area. Unlike the other doves, it is not a resident bird, but occurs as a summer visitor to Britain. Small slim birds, with attractive plumage and a deep purring song, *turtle doves* have been a symbol of love for thousands of years, but they are rapidly disappearing from Britain because modern intensive farming has killed off the crop field weeds on which they feed. But even when these birds were more common, they were unlikely to be found in local gardens, preferring farmland or the edge of a sunny wood. Although there are still some areas in East Anglia and the South East where *turtle doves* can still be seen each year, there have been none in Watford for a long time. Although these doves and pigeons are the only ones to be found in Britain, there are almost 400 different species around the world. Many of them are restricted to remote islands, but some

are abundant and reach pest proportions. The *feral pigeon* is of course ubiquitous and can be found in big cities almost anywhere. But only about eight or nine pigeons and doves occur regularly in Europe and some of them are quite difficult to find. Amazingly, the rarest of Europe's pigeons occur in the very popular holiday destinations of the Macronesian islands (Madeira and the Canaries) but you need to get away from the concrete and the beaches in order to have a chance of seeing them. Two occur only in the unique laurisilva woodlands high up in the cloud forests of the Canary Islands (particularly La Gomera) and the third is restricted to the similar forests of Madeira. Many of these ancient woodlands have been chopped down in recent years, but fortunately they are now preserved as UNESCO world heritage sites and so there is hope for the survival of the threatened pigeons. Birdwatchers are seldom "off-duty", and are never unaware of the birdlife that surrounds them, and so even when holidaying in such sunny pleasure centres as the Canaries the keen birders will be looking at all the doves and pigeons in the hope of seeing something new. But, even if the endemic pigeons are elusive, there is still the likelihood of seeing *turtle doves*. They are much more widespread in southern Europe than in Britain and on a recent holiday to the Canary Islands I was able to see - and hear - many of these beautiful birds.



Turtle dove

They were a reminder of how things used to be in Southern Britain when "the voice of the turtle was heard in our land".

John Britten

Summer 2003

John has just retired as Group Leader of the RSPB Watford Members' Group. Unfortunately, he has done the job so well for the past five years that no-one has yet been found to take over his task. If no-one is found in the next few months, then the group will not be able to continue in 2004. If you are keen on birds, and have some free time, perhaps you would like to consider the task. If so, please contact the General Secretary:-

Janet Reynolds, on 01923 249647.

THE OTHER SIDE

The following piece was written after a visit to my dentist in Croxley Green; who after some conversation, thought it was Strange that a great big chap like me could be afraid of dentists.

Being a modern dentist with all the nearly painless dentistry now practised, I expected any tales that I told him would be taken with a pinch of salt, so I wrote this article for him. He requested a copy so I must have got some of it right - or dare I say hit a nerve!

My first instincts tell me to run away even if it is just for a check-up, he is however, very kind and I am sure was taught in the new thinking of building up a good image for dentists in general - where once they seemed a necessary evil.

When trapped in the Dentist's chair I often wonder just what they or Her or He think of a great big chap like me being afraid of them. These days I suspect the thinking is to keep the teeth that nature provides, but those of us who are of a more mature age have probably spent some really horrific times in **the chair!** Which when I think is a bit like the American term for the electric type of chair in which there is only the one trip to be made. At least we will eventually, we hope, escape to safety - incidentally the electric chair was invented by a Dentist!

Our first perception of dentists when young was listening to the tales of Auntie Ida who apparently had all her teeth pulled out without anaesthetic. This was probably untrue but who do you believe if the story is good? When at school (In my case Beechen Grove Watford) we were taken by our teachers to the school dentist who usually practised in the Medical Centre, in Queens Road, Watford. There would be about fifty of us, to be in the chair for a quick look round and out again with a return trip for those unlucky enough to have a problem necessitating another trip for treatment. Those chosen to attend again probably never informed their parents of this and so the first signs of decay were ignored, it could then have been said that it was their own fault but such was the terror held in that word *dentist*, that a lot did not tell their parents of the problem until toothache raised its ugly head.

Then, it always seemed to us, that the only remedy was to go for an extraction. This meant having a full anaesthetic with the mask over the face and the thought that we were being suffocated by a complete stranger. Then, afterwards, a wobbly walk home and the rapidly growing conviction that all dentists were sadists!

As we got older there was the threat of the dreaded needles, all of which were at least a foot long! Then the approach with those horrible extractors, we always got a good look at them as they approached our trembling lips.

Then there are those of us that had to visit the Army dentists. In Egypt, one such chap tore out the side of my gum as he extracted a tooth. Hardly conducive to making us want to go again - ever!

If a filling was needed there was another torture called the drill. This was in a lot of cases still treadle operated. Can you see a dentist having a steady hand when he is operating a treadle at the same time? This equipment meant that fillings seemed to take about twelve hours each and we did not then know then that the fillings contained mercury, hardly the thing to put in a poor wretch's mouth. A fitting for a denture was another head pulling experience. The stuff that was used to get an impression seemed to set like concrete and it nearly broke one's jaw as it was pulled away from the teeth.

Descaling took what seemed an eternity as the instruments were forced between the teeth, then the inevitable polish with what felt like brick dust. The thought then, was to get it done (whatever was needed) and then get out quickly. If nothing was needed we walked out of the surgery on cloud nine, even the other people in the waiting room could sense one's relief.

Today's dentists really do seem to care. The cult of 'whip it out' seems to have gone. However, the damage has been done - it is in our psyche like the fear of spiders and the dark at the top of the stairs! Our fears still suddenly return now when we smell our teeth burning with the advent of the multi speed drill; the supersonic sound inside our heads probably doesn't help either. Then, of course, we have been brought up not to ask what is going on.

This is our fault but it is ingrained, by past experiences, if you ask too many questions then you are going to be there in the chair even longer!!

My biggest scare re modern dentistry was being lowered down in one of the new chairs, (to save the dentists back I believe) I wondered just where the hell I was going - also it is quite alarming to be suddenly upright after laying on one's back for a long time. We more mature persons can feel quite dizzy sometimes. The idea of saving the dentists back is a good one, (especially if it keeps him in a good mood!) I always feel during de-scaling that an attempt has been made to drown me, lying right back seems to keep the water just at the top of the throat, making breathing quite an experience, almost needing a lifeguards assistance!

Thank goodness for modern dentistry. I am sure that if I were to have started all over again now then all my "Choppers" would still be intact. I am not now as scared as I used to be, so some good must be coming out of the modern approach.

If we seem to be cowards, please give us the benefit of the doubt because we've been there - done that - and got the scars or, in a lot of cases, gaps in our teeth!! The only question to which I did not get an answer is this; why do dentists fill our mouth during treatment with large cotton wool sausages and then ask us a question? My theory is that they cannot get a word in edgeways at home and so fill our mouths so we cannot speak and thus get a captive audience!

My dentist once was a lovely lady from South Africa. Her assistant was a blonde also quite lovely. There I was, laying on my back, with my head almost in the dentist's bosom, her assistant sitting by my side, gazing at me with blue eyes. Heaven was here or so I might have thought, in any other place but **the chair!** Normally, there might be some thoughts going around my head that I could have got arrested for, had I spoken them out loud, but I was petrified as usual!

I also found out, quite late in life, that that there is another canal that is not in Cassiobury Park but is connected with teeth and, having been on a trip there, it is not a place that I'd wish to visit again.

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It did not hurt but it meant a stay in the chair for what seemed like a fortnight.

Why do temporary fillings seem only to last for ten minutes or at most until we get home and it's the weekend?

Does all this make me a dentophobe or perhaps dentophobic? I expect there is a name for it-- after all some of us have been this way for years.

Added to getting long in the tooth, which makes time go quickly anyway, there is the thought that check-ups come around at a seemingly fast rate but there is nothing more pleasurable in the world than that spring in the step caused by having a quick de-scale and out on the street again, Yippee!

These are the thoughts of just one patient, prompted by my visit to the dentist when I literally did not feel a thing. This visit involved a lot of drill work, which I knew was going to hurt-- but had to admit that it did not.

Just recently, I was reading about a couple who had decided to move to America permanently. They live in the desert near to the Mexican border. They told of not having electricity but only a couple of solar panels. There were descriptions of desert sunrises and sunsets, of having humming birds nearby, snakes and lizards, which I must say made it sound really nice if one's aim in life was to get completely away from urban constraints.

As I read on there came into my head a picture of myself sitting watching those sunsets and really getting away from everything in the least bit stressful. Just as I had got myself beginning to wonder what it could be like, I read something that stopped my reverie in mid rev as it were. Apparently the nearest thing to a dentist is a chap who uses a pool table as his dentist's chair and a pair of pliers as his only tool, so that is another dream shot down in flames!

I once worked with a chap who had been to India; he regaled me with descriptions of Calcutta with its one million people sleeping in the streets every night. He said that people waited for trains at the stations sometimes for days. While there you can have everything done - from a massage to haircutting and a chap will whip out a troublesome tooth if needed. The thought of sitting there while a crowd gathers to watch is one that I do not want to participate in; perhaps he gets applause if there is an expression of pain.

Suddenly my good old Croxley Green dentist's chair seemed a much safer place and I have decided to look on my dentist with even more favour than before.

By the way, it is some years since I saw a person with a face mask because of toothache, maybe it was to stop the cold air getting into the mouth, with a bad

tooth the last thing that is needed is a mouth full of cold air.

I had thought to ask the question, were there any of those old dentists in heaven, but on reflection I suppose they did not know any different and were only practising the latest thinking of those times. It probably was then the cutting edge of technology, it is only now that we know better. There is my old friend hindsight again! He or She knows absolutely everything---afterwards!

© John Perry

LIBRARY COLUMN

We've just completed our most successful Summer Reading Challenge ever! Around 200 children entered the *Reading Maze* at the start of the school holidays and over 120 finished, more than twice as many as last year. The children's ages ranged from 3 to 12 and every child who finished had to read or listen to 6 books and come to the library to talk to us about what they'd read. The Reading Challenge gets more popular every year as lots of children have taken part over several years and whole families join in with the older children encouraging their younger brothers or sisters. Several children read the latest Harry Potter novel, **Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix**, as one of their six books, which at 766 pages long was no mean feat! I read my copy on holiday which didn't leave time to read much else. However I just about found time to read **The Murder Room**, the latest Adam Dalgleish novel by P D James and **The Accusers**, Lindsey Davis's new novel set in ancient Rome, featuring Marcus Didius Falco.

All our libraries are continuing to promote the BBC's *Big Read*, following the announcement of the nation's 100 favourite books. In April nearly 140,000 people voted for their favourite work of fiction as part of the *Big Read Top 100* on BBC 2. Charles Dickens and Terry Pratchett each have 5 titles in the Top 100 and children's books are also well represented, with J K Rowling, Jacqueline Wilson and Philip Pullman alongside Anna Sewell's classic **Black Beauty**.

The Big Read will return to BBC 2 in the autumn when the order of the Top 100 novels will be revealed and various celebrities will try to persuade viewers to vote for their own particular favourite from among the Top 20 to decide which book is the nation's favourite. During the summer most libraries have had displays featuring titles from the Top 100, with not only books but also videos and story tapes.

Our library bookgroup have read and discussed lots of interesting and enjoyable books so far this year, including **The Girl with a Pearl Earring**, **Atonement**, **The Siege** and **All Quiet on the Western Front**, which was my

choice. We're now deciding on our books for next year!

I mentioned in a previous column that if you are a library member with a valid membership card and PIN, you can check your library card online on the county website, www.hertsdirect.org. You can see what items you have on loan and check your account. You can also request library items, look at any reservations you have made and renew items which you have on loan. These services are available every day from 03.00 hours to 23.45 hours. It's a useful facility as it's available outside our usual opening hours.

You can get your PIN by presenting your library membership card at this library or any other Hertfordshire public library.

If you haven't got access to the Internet but have got a touch-tone phone you can renew items via our automated telephone renewal service by dialling 01923 471373 and following the instructions. This service is also available from 03.00 hours to 23.45 hours every day.

Sue Durham

OBITUARY - KEN HARRIS

Many of you have already heard that Ken Harris, formerly landlord of the Fox and Hounds in New Road, died earlier this year. Ken was a wonderful character, liked and respected throughout the village and, in his capacity as landlord of the Fox and Hounds for over twenty years, he was the guardian of many confidences and secrets from many customers who regarded him as a friend.

He was, in many ways, the archetypal English pub landlord. After a career in the Royal Air Force, he entered the licensed trade and brought to it a humour, respect and diligence which shone through his dealings with the public. He was always cheerful, a joke a day, and always up to date with all the local gossip. Many Croxley Green people felt that the Fox and Hounds was the "hub" pub in the village. Whilst others changed landlords regularly, Ken was a permanent presence and many people returning or re-visiting the village would call in at the Fox and Hounds to be brought up to date with all the news, to find out where their friends were now staying and to enjoy the hospitality of a traditional village pub.

Ken's outgoing and caring personality made him many friends in the village and there was a large representation at his funeral service held at Watford Crematorium. It was typical of the man that as the service ended and the curtains closed, the sounds of Eric Idle singing: "Always look on the bright side of life" boomed out. Everyone smiled and everyone remembered Ken.

Those who knew him will never forget him.
Bill McGregor.



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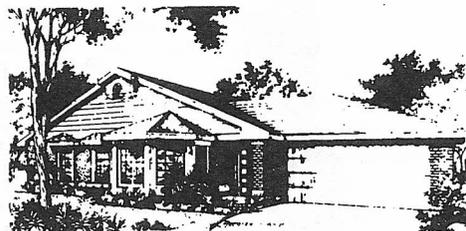
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