



The Croxley Green RESIDENT

Published by
CROXLEY GREEN RESIDENTS'
ASSOCIATION

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No. 189
Autumn 2004

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Hazel Seeley

Material published in this newsletter does not necessarily represent the views of the Association nor its committee.

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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.

IT IS WITH SADNESS THAT WE HAVE TO TELL YOU THAT JOHN HEDGES THE EDITOR OF THE RESIDENT, PASSED AWAY PEACEFULLY IN THE EARLY HOURS OF MONDAY 27TH SEPTEMBER.

JOHN WILL BE MISSED NOT ONLY BY HIS FAMILY, BUT ALSO BY THE MANY PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY WITH WHOM HE WAS ASSOCIATED.

Our advertisers make the publication of this Newsletter possible and we would urge you to support them.

EDITORIAL

This edition of the Resident is the largest to date. Rosemary, our Advertising Manager, has recruited more advertisers to make this possible. I thought that I would have difficulty filling the extra space but, in the event, it was a tight squeeze. Everyone that I approached came up with something and so we have a wide sphere of articles with something, I hope, to interest everyone.

As usual, there are things seeking your support but there are also things that are just there for your interest. I get a lot of feedback from people I meet and I know that the articles from the Doctor, the Vet, the Bird-watcher and John Perry's stories are always well received.

History and archaeology appear to fascinate us all and where it is local it makes it so much more personal.

Gardening is a universal hobby, even if some of us are not very good at it. We can all benefit from tips from those who know how to do it.

It is not easy in a newsletter of this type to bring you news but, as far as we are able, we are up-to-date on Long Valley Tip. I am sure that those campaigning will welcome your interest.

One of the problems in finding volunteers is that they don't - volunteer that is - so one is left finding pressed men instead. When a plea is made, please think carefully about the request and offer your services if at all possible. Most of the things that you enjoy in the community are run by volunteers. Just think of them - Scouts, Guides, Youth Clubs, Art Clubs, Gardening Clubs, Revels on the Green. Life in Croxley Green would be the poorer without them and so many more.

Don't delay - do it now.

LONG VALLEY TIP

Some of you will be aware of recent proposals by London Underground Ltd (LUL) to build a railtrack replacement depot on greenbelt land in Croxley Green. The contract for the replacement of the rail track throughout the London Underground system is for 15 years. If you live near Common Moor (at the back of Frankland Road) you may well know the stretch of land proposed for this development quite well. The site was previously known as the Croxley

Tip, but over the last 20 years or so, the site has evolved, with the help of the adjoining Long Valley Woods, and is now a tranquil amenity enjoyed by all. Local residents have renamed this site the Buddleia Walk and if you visit in July or August you will understand why!

The residents living closest to the site were advised by Three Rivers District Council of the proposed development, but we have not sat back quietly. There has been tremendous pressure placed on the Planning Office and on 16th September the application was unanimously rejected by the Planning Committee, who paid great attention to the concerns of the residents, and rejected the application on the grounds of unsuitable development on green-belt. You may think that this is the end of it - well, we're afraid not! LUL have the right to appeal, in which case the application will be reviewed at a public enquiry.

The residents, who have formed themselves into an action group called The *Keep Croxley 'Green' Group*, will not give up fighting. We have applied for 'Village Green Status'. This legislation allows residents of a localised area to apply for any piece of land (that has been used for not less than 20 years, as of right, without secrecy, force or permission, for lawful sports and pastimes) to be protected for continued use by the community. If we succeed in our application, LUL will be prevented from building on the land.

It may concern you to know, that should LUL's development go ahead, trains will be shunting up and down the Metropolitan line from Croxley to Watford in order for the trains to change rails before entering the site or continuing their journey. This will happen during the night to prevent disruption to commuter services. If you live near the railway, you will be affected. They also intend to use public footpath 11, at the end of Harvey Road, for vehicular access to the site (including hgv's), despite serious concerns about public safety.

If you would like to know more or feel you could help, please do not hesitate to contact the *Keep Croxley 'Green' Group* - telephone 01923 778660. You may also like to sign our petition, which you will find in public areas around Croxley Green.

Barry & Mandy Grant

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

The Baptist Church, Baldwins Lane

9.15 am Morning Worship
11.00 am Family Service
6.30 pm Evening Worship
Rev'd Steve Moody - 231403

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 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
Rev'd Luke Lee - 772109



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

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10.00 am Family Service (1st Sunday in month)
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WHY VOLUNTEER?

DID YOU KNOW YOU COULD?

DO YOU KNOW WHERE TO VOLUNTEER LOCALLY?

WHAT SORT OF THINGS CAN YOU DO/OFFER?

HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU HAVE TO GIVE?

The Volunteer Bureau in 3 Rivers is there to open the door to a host of opportunities for you to help the local community in as many different ways as you can think of offering. It is a great way to improve your own skills and make a positive contribution to people on your doorstep. The Volunteer Bureau will match your needs and skills to the tasks that are available.

The offices of the Volunteer Bureau in Three Rivers are currently at:

Basing House, 46 High St,
Rickmansworth
tel: 01923 711174

e-mail: threerivers.vb@virgin.net

There are many exciting opportunities, it is up to you to choose from a broad spectrum in order to discover what best suits you.

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You can give as little or as much time as you wish to spare; we have needs for all offers of help.

The rewards are many; make new friends, improve your own people skills, build your own confidence, have fun, feel fulfilled by discovering new strengths & skills and developing personally. You will be able to see the results instantly and will be able to derive enormous satisfaction from knowing that your time and effort is always valued.

Please feel free to call in or phone me for an informal chat about what we can do together for the community.

News for the autumn

We are hoping to start a new gardening project (subject to funding). It is the Three Rivers Community Garden Project and aims to enable and support residents to become more involved in gardening, support the development and regeneration of the local environment by supporting community groups to develop local public places and the take up of allotments; and support people into more healthy lifestyles through gardening activity linked to courses on nutrition.

The project will be open to all residents of the district and will deliver a range of courses including taster courses, gardening qualifications, nutrition and Skills for Life.

At the moment we have an allotment site in South Oxhey, where the project will start, hopefully to grow throughout Three Rivers.

We want to recruit volunteer gardeners to help guide those who want to get involved but know nothing about gardening.

For this aim we are actively recruiting anyone who wants to get involved to come along on **National "Make a Difference Day"** - **October 30th** to the Oxhey allotment and help clear it, ready for "Lift off" when we get the funding! The day should be good fun. The *Rickmansworth Gateway Club* will be there lending a hand along with *Groundwork Herts* and *Friends of the Earth* (The allotment will be an organic site). All levels of expertise are welcome, including those like me who are floundering around hopelessly enthusiastically but would like to learn more.

On my first trip to the allotment I learnt all about slow worms (lizards without legs) and how they unwittingly volunteer as pest control agents for us by keeping the slug and snail population under control. We have to keep a small area uncultivated for them as they are a protected species and like long grass, compost heaps etc.

We would love to see lots of the human variety of volunteers on **Make a Difference Day** mucking in with the slow worms et al, please contact me on 01923 711174 if you want to **Make a Difference** and help get this project of the ground.

Lynn Green

Volunteer Bureau in Three Rivers
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LIFE'S A BEACH

I have just returned from a week's summer break on the coast in Italy where even in the start of September, there were unbroken blue skies for the duration. What a pleasant country, however I am happy to be back as really the quality of care for pets (and hence my job satisfaction) is far greater in the UK than in much of continental Europe, in my estimation only I admit.

Quite what makes the British a nation of pet lovers I don't know, but certainly only a few other countries (eg the US and Holland) appear to be as mad on animals as we are, and prepared to let the pets into the home and treat them as part of the family. It is important to remember and even be proud of our relationships with our pets as it is a sign of a civilised caring society.

I did a fortnight's voluntary neutering work for stray cats in Greece last year, which like Italy has a beautiful climate and scenery. Unfortunately there is a superabundance of stray unneutered dogs and cats, which are not cared for and are disease ridden. The Greek solution is often poisoning them, to eradicate them. There are a few Charities working in Greece (and other countries in the world) which neuter these strays, the object being that it controls the numbers humanely by stopping unwanted breeding, and keeps the females in better condition (they become very emaciated if they are having litters every year or more frequently even) and stops the males from fighting and roaming. Hence you get a smaller stable number, of healthier animals.

Now, as pretty as southern continental Europe is, the level of pet care is on the whole higher here in the UK, and this is fortunate for our pets. The reason for pet care being often better here is, not better trained vets and better equipped

veterinary hospitals (although this may be a factor), but much more importantly the caring and responsible mindsets of the pet owners here.

Vets are constantly striving in the UK to keep up with advances in human medicine, and so we try to provide more advanced services such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) for looking at the brain and spinal cord, hydrotherapy in small swimming pools to help animals regain strength in their legs after certain operations or illnesses, and referrals to specialists who are skilled in certain small fields.

It is private veterinary practice which most people go to with their pets so, like private medicine, each practice tries to provide a better service than their competitors, which also helps to drive advances in animal care.

But it is not any of these things above which I believe make the UK a better place to be a pet in, but more the general attitude of the people and what is accepted as normal and acceptable.

Instead of there being lots of stray animals on the streets, we have private ownership of pets, which on the whole are given a good quality food by their owners, are neutered or bred with in a responsible controlled manner, and are vaccinated against the most common life threatening infectious diseases.

For the animals without homes, and for those on very low or no income, these animals are supported by the hard work of charities such as the RSPCA.

So, instead of writing about some new advancement in the field of Veterinary medicine, I would like to remind us of how far advanced the UK is already with its standard of animal care. The mainstay of this, as I have already said, is nutrition through decent quality food (and perhaps also being careful not to give too much of it!), neutering of pets,

and an annual health check and vaccination. The low incidence of life-threatening diseases in animals in the UK is principally due to pet owners having their animals routinely vaccinated, against diseases such as distemper, hepatitis, parvo, and leptospirosis, for which there is no cure. The annual health check also helps pick up medical problems before they become advanced.

There are other basic things which we do with our animals, perhaps without even considering it. We train them to respond to commands, and we teach them to go to the toilet in certain areas (then we clean up after their mess).

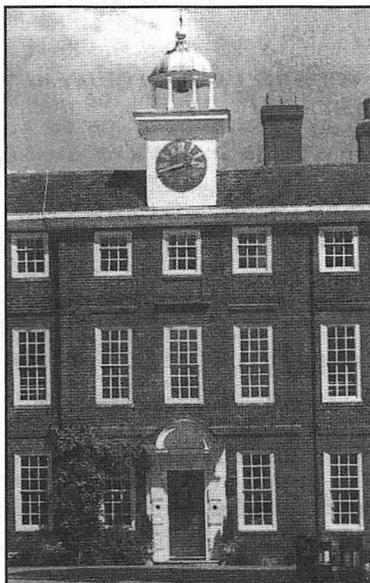
So, while vets can obviously provide a lot more than these basic neutering and vaccination services alone, and are available 24hrs a day to deal with sickness and accidents, I feel that what makes veterinary medicine special in the UK is not the services which are available but more what is demanded of vets. It is fantastic that people here expect to treat pets as individual living creatures, and strays are given shelter and attempted to be rehomed.

So, as the Summer draws to a close and while we long to be back on a beach somewhere in a hot far-flung country, we should be proud of our culture of being a nation of animal lovers! We have a very high standard of veterinary care in the UK and long may it continue.

Matthew Murdoch
Veterinary Surgeon,
Croxley Green Veterinary Surgery

REVELS ON THE GREEN

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A Cynic's Tale

Many, many years ago the father of a soon-to-be ex-girlfriend of mine branded me as a cynic. I don't think he can have liked me very much! My dictionary defines cynical as "distrustful or contemptuous of virtue, believing the worst in others and that all acts are selfish". It's a sad definition of a gloomy outlook on life that corrodes trust and undermines everything it touches. The label must have stung at the time and ever since I have tried, and no doubt usually failed, to resist the obvious cynical thought, and just wait and see. Perhaps motives and actions would turn out to be honourable and straightforward after all.

Well, if I was cynical then, I was ahead of my time. Now we are all fully trained-up cynics, and particularly where our political leaders are concerned. Let's face it, they do not always inspire overwhelming trust in their citizens. I imagine many people were suspicious that we were led into war against a middle-eastern dictator for reasons other than removing a direct threat to the United Kingdom. Nor did we believe that bombing Saddam Hussein into a hole in the ground would cleanse the world of acts of terrorism. We are not surprised now that the notorious weapons of mass destruction remain elusive and that the world feels more frightening and unstable than it did before. These are indeed distrustful and cynical thoughts, and just the latest of many that governments earn for themselves by their actions.

No doubt it was ever thus, but the trouble is that it rubs off. Distrust of government leads to distrust of the departments of government, and that in turn filters down. Did you believe John Gummer's assertion in 1990 that the beef burger he fed to his daughter Cordelia was BSE-free and that humans could not be infected? Do you believe what the Department of Health says on matters affecting the health of you and your family? Do you believe the health visitors, nurses and doctors who recommend immunising your children with MMR, or are they too part of a government-led conspiracy of misinformation? I hope you don't think so - but in a cynical world, who knows. The cynic believes the worst and trusts in no one. At this point I would like to tell you a story.

The story is about a virus thought to have originated in Egypt or India 3000 years ago, which swept around the world and slaughtered thousands upon thousands of people, especially children. It killed 30% of those it infected, and many who survived were blinded and scarred. Even in the 18th century, this virus killed every 7th child born in Russia, every 10th child born in France and Sweden. The virus is called variola and of course the incurable disease it causes is smallpox.

As long ago as 429BC a Greek historian, Thucydides, noticed that people who survived having smallpox never got it again. The Chinese in the 10th century started trying to protect people against smallpox by exposing them to infected matter from the sores of sufferers, but it was a risky business. The first real breakthrough was made in the 18th century by a doctor in rural Gloucestershire. He was Edward Jenner, and you probably know the story of how he noticed that farm workers, who had been previously exposed to the milder disease of cowpox, seemed to be protected against catching the much more deadly smallpox.

In 1796 he collected liquid from the sores on the hands of Sarah Nelmes, a milkmaid who had caught cowpox. He then asked a local farmer, named Phipps, if he could inoculate his son James against smallpox by putting the liquid into tiny cuts on his arm. The farmer agreed (it isn't recorded whether his son did) and James duly caught cowpox. When he recovered, Jenner then repeated the process, but this time with liquid from the sores of a smallpox victim. Fortunately, James did not catch smallpox and Jenner coined the term *vaccination* for his new process. Jenner's idea was greeted with much opposition and ridicule, both from the medical profession and the public. But he persevered with his research, won government grants, and worked to spread the word about vaccination around the world.

Fast-forward to the 1950s, a decade which saw me transformed from a paternal twinkle into an infant schoolboy, and is therefore only a short lifetime away. Even then, smallpox was still infecting an estimated 50 million people every year. By 1967 the number of cases had fallen to 10 to 15 million,

but it was still killing a quarter of its victims. It was at this point that the World Health Organisation launched a global campaign of vaccination to eradicate the disease from the face of the earth. The last naturally occurring case of smallpox was identified in Somalia in 1977, and a laboratory worker in Birmingham died of smallpox in 1978. And that was that. Smallpox was confirmed as totally eradicated by a World Health Assembly in 1980.

This is very old news I hear you cry. What is the point of the story? The point is unutterably simple. The killing off of this ghastly disease is a good thing. No room for cynicism here. Yes, it took too long, but it showed what international cooperation at government health department level could achieve. And it demonstrated what could be achieved by ordinary health workers, working in their local communities throughout the world. Immunisation programmes can achieve stunning results, and although the diseases that the current UK programme immunises our children against are not as deadly as smallpox, they are still nasty and occasionally devastating. The aim of the programme is two-fold. To protect every child, but also to wipe these diseases off the face of the earth.

Every parent reading a newspaper article about MMR will agonize about the decision to immunise or not. It requires trust, courage and a degree of faith. But if you are such a parent, do your research well and look beyond the popular press. The WHO website at www.who.int/en is a fascinating mine of information and the NHS immunisation website at www.immunisation.org.uk is excellent. Health professionals should never put you under pressure to agree to something you do not want. Only you can decide. But in your reading and discussions, try to squeeze the genie of cynicism back into the box. Not everything boils down to saving money or making it. Vaccination protects the people of the world against infections that harm or kill them, and that's why governments invest as much as they can in it. Polio can be eradicated, and so can measles, mumps, rubella and the rest. A brave Gloucestershire father, and his son James, in 1796 showed us the way. Now that's not cynical is it?

Nigel Corp, general practitioner

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OLD ?

Recently, when in the barber's chair, the subject of age reared its ugly head, when I vouchsafed that while it was all right for youngsters (My barber is extremely young when compared to me) to take the mickey out of us ancient beings, it does hurt nevertheless. Right, came the challenge, you are a writer tell us what it's like to be where you are looking at us; he looked about twenty to me and nearly fifty years my junior. If you think our only crime was to be born way back then, we were not given a choice in the matter so really it's not our fault anyway, if we always seem to be old to much younger eyes. We have been there and thought that our grandparents were going to die at any moment, at least that's how I remember it seemed to me at the time. When, however, I subsequently took the time to sit and listen to them I found that there was a great store of wisdom to be passed on.

One of my pet hates is to hear children offering as an excuse for anything that they cannot be bothered to do, that phrase - "I am bored." God, how I wish that I had their start in life, and yes I am jealous. When we say it was better when we were small, what we actually mean is that back then we knew where we were, we shut up and listened, believe me youngsters it really is the best way to learn. Remember, we had no money, no do not play the violins! It was a fact - ergo, if there is no money then it is possible to learn to live with that situation and get on with life or, as we did, get a job. This encourages self-reliance and meant that we were bringing money into the home at an early age and it all contributed to the family good. This really does sound like a lecture, doesn't it?

Recently, I asked a chap how he was; now he was a lot older than me (yes there are a few people older than me!) He replied: "Well I looked in the obituary columns this morning and I wasn't there, so I got up." This is how we face up to the fact that the grim reaper is coming sooner than we think. Another friend told me that every morning on waking he puts his arms out to the side; if he cannot feel wood then he gets up!

We often get nasty reminders of our own mortality when we read that one of the people that we went to school with is dead, it is inevitable I suppose but it makes for a quiet moment or two I can tell you. I do not feel old, there is however a noticeable slowing down when there is a job to be done, but then I have always thought that nature slows us down to stop us wearing out even faster than we already are.

Most of us have some sort of bone deterioration, if we did a sport as a youngster then we will have accelerated that wear to a greater degree. I do not

know many footballers who do not hobble in their later years; cricketers have rheumatism in their backs and so on. I was a swimmer; even so my knees are suffering from osteoarthritis. Perhaps I should have taken up tiddly-winks, mind you I bet that is hard on the finger that tiddles - or is it winks?

Our worse nightmare is to succumb to Alzheimer's or some similar disease, when the brain stops us recognising even the person we have been married to for nearly fifty years or more. I have had to watch a couple of friends trying to cope with this situation. Getting old is not nice - all right for wisdom and maturity but please could I have back a bit of the flexibility of youth when I could kneel down to do a job and walk about with some certainty that I would get to where I wanted without having to stop now and then to give my knees a rest.

Take what I am doing now - writing via a computer - if you had told me, even ten years ago, that we would have a means of communication in the house even faster than a telephone, I would have said that you were barking mad, but, here I am writing on a computer with the means to communicate down the phone line via E mails.

Mobile phones are a mystery to me. I do own one but cannot put the phone numbers in the memory and I have to dial every time. As for text messages, that leaves me totally mystified. I cannot see what there is to talk about for hours on the phone, I think that the ordinary phone is an invasion of privacy at times and I certainly do not want to be contacted while in the toilet.

They say you are as old as you feel. Now, I have met some real miseries among the population of both young and old, some of the youngsters do not know that they are even born, living with their parents at thirty plus years of age, but then that is the parents fault I suppose. Do not forget that we have, over many years, seen a lot of our friends succumb to various ailments; we know that some of these ailments could affect us. When we are born we are all on a death sentence, the one major difference between young and old is that we are a damn sight nearer to the end than you are kiddies! An Aunt of mine recently went to a reunion of her previous employers for their old employees, she could not get over the fact that most of them had to use a stick to walk and she was appalled at the deterioration of some of them who were in a lot of cases younger than her.

I have heard many youngsters say: "Oh well! The old have had their time and now it's our turn." When I was younger I believed this too; it is passed down from one generation to another. The realisation that such talk is selfish comes later in life when you realise that you have gone past the date that you had in mind, for the putting down of all

the old fogies. Children can play better with grandparents because we had to make our own amusements and so are able to amuse the children with some of our games - if we can remember. We had freedom then to do or go nearly where we liked within reason, people with cars were very rare so we - dare I say it - walked? This enabled us to know people in the neighbourhood because we saw them often as we passed through different places. We also belonged to clubs or associations like the scouts, army cadets, youth clubs, sports were available or we played our own games in the local park which was safe. We feel sorry for the youngsters now because they will never have our freedom, sad to say, but it's not their fault.

If someone had been to prison then he or she was, to a certain degree, shunned by people - now there is a great deal of street 'cred' if they have been detained at Her Majesty's pleasure. We find this hard to understand, it's a fact to say that how you are brought up will colour your way of life and indeed how you think, so when we say that people should get longer sentences it's because they always did, and that's how we thought that it would always be. Our grandparents must have thought that they were in a crazy world when you consider that they saw horse and carts replaced by motorcars on the streets where they lived and that is only three generations ago!

As for flying, the journey to Australia took six weeks or more, now in twenty four hours or so it is possible to be there, half way round the world!

Our experiences have seen a man on the moon; which, by the way we thought, was made of cheese! Thinking of the speeds attained by the rockets, we never thought that they would make it alive; we were disappointed to find out that there were no monsters living there as we had learned from our comics.

Fast jet travel came into being commercially in the fifties, then unattainable for reasons of cost - it is there and affordable for nearly everyone now. The jumbo jet only came into being in the sixties, hundreds of people going on holiday in an aeroplane, even now seems wonderful to us, as do trips to Spain as if it was just next door, while the places some people visit on holiday are amazing.

We are constantly bewildered to find that the countries that we learned about are no more, or even worse have been re-named. Africa is not the Africa that I learned about, most of it having been renamed. If it was reported that some countries had been moved I think I would believe it! I do not think that any of you youngsters can remember transport that ran on time, but we were

raised to know that most trains ran to cost, as did the buses, and it did not cost an arm and a leg to get to the next town.

These are facts that I put down here; it is not a plea to go back then, because life moves inexorably on and we are all taken along for the ride as willing participants - or otherwise. We cannot get our heads around the fact that there are youngsters out there that would do us harm. There are constant references to older people that have been attacked for their money, some of them worked fifty years or more to acquire this nest egg. I am constantly amazed at the serenity shown by the very old, I have always supposed this to be one of nature's ploys to accept the end without care, as part of the continual slowing down process. Perhaps it will be possible for young people on reading this to see that we have our ghosts and monsters as you do, that are waiting in the dark to claim us, we are the same as you, just a damned sight older.

I can remember my Father-in-law thinking that he might sell up and go to the coast, it was then much cheaper to do so, the thing that stopped him was the fact that some of his friends had taken this route. They reported that at times all the population around was old and the main interest was to peruse the obituary columns to see who had died that week. A sharp reminder of how people see themselves was when he was in his seventies and in hospital complaining that all the people in his ward were old! So it must be a lot to do with one's appraisal of oneself, it's that - you are as old as you feel syndrome raising its head - again!

Another thing that we cannot get our heads around are the groups of people that have been divorced or separated. We got on with things, if it turned out bad and if it needed work to sort things out, we did it, without counselling! Recently I asked someone why people have stupid hyphenated names, quick as a flash my grand daughter said it's because they are not married. This is not intended to be a moralising piece either. People separated back then just as they do now; it's just that living together seemed to be wrong to us with our so-called moral upbringing. I do not expect any young people reading this to understand it - just see how it was for us and try to get into your head that the only difference between us is time.

This piece was written long before the BBC started to broadcast *Grumpy Old Men*, so I did not crib it from them.

©JOHN PERRY

LIBRARY COLUMN

As winter approaches, and the evenings are longer, why not turn off the TV and pick up a book instead? I thought I'd

use my column this time to recommend some good reads plus a few ways of using the Internet to track down more books worth reading.

Among the books discussed by the Croxley Green Library bookgroup so far this year are Donna Tartt's **The Secret History** - a bestseller from over 10 years ago which I enjoyed rereading, **To Kill a Mockingbird** by Harper Lee which was voted number 6 in the BBC's Big Read, **The Lovely Bones** by Alice Sebold and Michael Frayn's **Spies** which is one of the books included in the recently launched Daily Mail Book Club.

Some of you may have seen the recent library displays highlighting books from "Richard & Judy's Summer Read". The first book featured, **A Gathering Light**, by Jennifer Donnelly, was obviously popular with both adults and children as it also won the Carnegie Medal which is awarded annually to the writer of an outstanding book for children. The Carnegie Medal was established in 1936 and past winners include Anne Fine's **Flour Babies** and **Watership Down** by Richard Adams, another novel which appealed to both adults and children. My own favourite from this year's shortlist was **Private Peaceful** by Michael Morpurgo, a very moving story about 2 brothers who leave their village to fight in the First World War.

There now seem to be a huge number of book prizes awarded every year, especially for fiction. As I'm writing, the *Man Booker Prize* (previously known as the Booker Prize) shortlist is about to be announced on 21st September and the winner will be revealed on October 19th.

Recent bestselling non-fiction books stocked in local libraries include **You are what you eat** by Gillian McKeith from the TV series, **Being Jordan** by Katie Price, **My Life** by Bill Clinton and **Eats, Shoots and Leaves** by Lynne Truss. This guide to punctuation was a surprise bestseller last Christmas and has maintained its popularity for several months.

If you're still stuck for ideas for what to read and you have access to the Internet there are a number of websites to help you choose including www.whichbook.net which gives you the option of choosing books by themes, and www.bookbrowser.com. Sites for children include www.rif.org.uk which has information about authors plus activities and word games, Mrs Mad's Book-a-Rama www.mrsmad.com and www.cool-reads.co.uk which is aimed at the 10-15 age group.

I hope some of the above suggestions prove useful during the long evenings ahead.

I mentioned in my last column that Croxley Green Library staff were hoping to start holding *Baby Rhyme Time*

sessions as they have proved so popular at Rickmansworth Library. The first session took place a few months ago and they are held on the 4th Tuesday of the month between 10.30 and 11.00. The next sessions will be on Tuesdays 26th October and 23rd November. There will be no session in December (Boxing Day!) and the January meeting will be on 25th. You don't have to be a member of the library to come along and enjoy the fun.

Sue Durham

THREE RIVERS MUSEUM ON THE MAP

In June Three Rivers Museum was contacted by an independent television company asking whether they could come and film in Basing House. They asked for maps and other information relating to Money Hill House to be available. Barbara Owen, the Chairman, and Ann Vernau, the Secretary, collected together the required items and welcomed members of the film crew when they arrived. Passers-by soon became interested when they realised there was a 'celebrity', Vic Reeves, in their midst. Barbara was filmed inside the Museum showing Vic the various artefacts and explaining the history of Money Hill. It is hoped some, at least, of the footage will have survived to feature in a new programme *Who Do You Think You Are?* to be shown on BBC2 this autumn.

In a somewhat more academic vein the Museum also welcomed three geologists and archaeologists employed on the Ancient Human Occupation of Britain (AHOB) project. In their quest to find out when the first humans reached Britain, Dr Danielle Schreve of the Royal Holloway College, Dr Mark White of Durham University and Professor John Catt of University College London visited Three Rivers Museum to examine the many bones, flint hand-axes and other tools in the Museum's collection. Funded by a £1 million grant from the Leverhulme Trust, they are researching sites and re-examining existing collections using modern scientific techniques. They were able to identify several locally-found artefacts of interest to the AHOB project and in the process helped the Museum to gain a better appreciation of the historical value of certain items in its collection.

The Museum, in Basing House between Watersmeet and Rickmansworth Library, is open to the public from 2 pm to 4 pm on Mondays to Fridays, and 10 am to 4 pm on Saturdays. It can also be opened for group visits by prior arrangement at other times.

Ann Vernau - Secretary

It is interesting that this visit should also be mentioned in Croxley Archaeology.



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"They're not all Croxley Green Residents....."

..... some of them come here just for their holidays!

I'm referring to birds of course, and particularly to those species that visit Hertfordshire for just a few months of the year. There are probably more of these migrants than many people realise, for even some of our common birds move around the country during the year. For example we see more **pied wagtails** during the winter months, when our own breeding wagtails are joined by others that have moved here from Scotland and Northern England. The number of **blackbirds** , too, is often boosted by birds from Northern Europe moving south for the winter. Indeed of the 100 or so species that might be seen here by the casual observer during the space of a year, about a third of them could be birds that have come to Croxley Green for just a few months. And if you add to those the birds that don't stay here, but just move through on their way to somewhere warmer, or with more food, then the non-resident species make up a substantial proportion of the birds around us.

Most of us are familiar with the "summer visitors", those birds such as the **swallow** which come here to breed and then depart to spend their winters far to the south. But Hertfordshire also receives some very attractive "winter visitors" that are just as interesting, and in some cases much rarer.

Each winter, Stocker's lake and its neighbours along the valley are home to some specialised wintering ducks. They include three particularly distinctive black and white ducks, of which the male **smew** is probably the most striking.



In a "normal" winter only a hundred or so of these lovely birds visit this part of England, and so bird-watchers in Croxley Green are fortunate in having them so close by. The other ducks worth looking out for at Stocker's in the wintertime are the **goldeneye** (with its characteristic almost triangular head shape) and the **goosander** (the largest of the three, with a noticeable hook at the tip of its bill). Whereas the smew and goldeneye can be seen anywhere on the lake, the goosanders tend to congregate in the sheltered south-eastern corner where they often stay close to the trees at the water's edge. All of these birds breed in the far north - either in Scandinavia or in northern Russia. Earlier this year I was in that same area, well above the Arctic circle,

seeing birds that might very well spend the winter just a few miles from here. Travel is easy for bird watchers, but the journey must be daunting for the birds.

But the ducks are not our only winter visitors, and most people in Croxley Green will know two of the wintering thrushes. The **redwing** is about the same size as our **song thrush** , but has dull red "armpits" and noticeable pale stripes on the face, whilst the **fieldfare** is similar in size to our resident **mistle thrush** , but is much more elegant looking, with a very smart grey head and rump.



Unlike the ducks, these birds arrive in quite large numbers, and the two species frequently come together to form flocks of several hundred at a time. In hard winters they often visit parks and gardens, searching for fruits and berries, with wind fallen apples on the lawn being particularly sought after. Although they are most usually seen in Hertfordshire during the very coldest months (December, January and February) nonetheless these birds may begin their southward migration in September, and the **fieldfare** often stays around until April or May.

The **waxwing** is one other winter visitor to Hertfordshire which is worth a special mention. In recent years one or two individuals have been seen in Garston and North Watford, although I do not know of any records from the Croxley Green area. Waxwings spend their summers in Scandinavia, and normally they remain in Northern Europe throughout the winter. But some years, when food is short, they will migrate to Britain in reasonable numbers. Waxwings are very handsome birds, pinky-brown in colour, with a prominent crest, and strongly marked face and wings. Indeed it is the spots of red colouring at the end of their secondary wing feathers which give these birds their name. **Waxwings** are not common, even in "good" years, and although several birds have been seen in Stevenage in the past few winters, it is unusual for them to move across to this part of the county. Like the thrushes, they feed on berries - particularly on bushes such as cotoneasters - and so they often visit housing estates and supermarket car parks where large numbers of these shrubs are planted.



Waxwings , like **smew** , are both attractive and rare. Although they are eagerly sought after by keen bird-watchers they can also brighten up a cold winter's day for anyone who is lucky enough to see them, and I am sure that Croxley Green residents will give a warm welcome to these visitors from the North.

© John Britten Autumn 2004

The Watford local RSPB group meets at 8.00 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month at St. Thomas' Hall, Langley Road, Watford. The December meeting is an illustrated talk on "Summer in Iceland", which is likely to include photographs of several of the birds discussed in this article. For more details, please phone Watford 243761

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The 2003 Annual General Meeting of the Croxley Green Horticultural and Allotment Holders Society saw members voting to change the name to CROXLEY GREEN GARDENING CLUB. After existing for most of the twentieth century under the former name why change it? The persuasive reasons are largely twofold:

Firstly, the Society was, over recent years, suffering a drop in membership. In the 1970's and 1980's membership was at or around 1000 households; with this number being limited by committee decision so as to be able to cope with the numbers wishing to use our trading centre - The Hut on Barton Way Allotments. The Hut, opening on Sunday mornings and selling a range of things for the garden or allotment at discount prices, was a reason for many wanting to belong to the Society. However, the development of Garden Centres from the late 1980's, with wide opening hours and some 'loss-leaders' on basic items, began to change things. The limited opening of the Hut, even with discounted prices, ceased to hold the same attraction.

The Hut is run by a core of volunteers and it was not practicable to consider wider opening hours (even dedicated volunteers have limits to the time they

are prepared to give up!). Equally, expanding the level of purchasing to compete with the bulk ordering of garden centres was not a possibility. So our level of trading declined and with it some of our membership. At its peak turn-over was some £15-16000 a year; in the last four years this has been nearer to £3500 a year. A more limited opening pattern was introduced (especially in the summer months) but it is still thought of as a worthwhile service by those who provide it and those who use it. Our membership decline seems to have steadied and it has stood around the 400 household mark since the turn of this century.

The second area of the need for a name change concerns changes which have taken place in wider society and between different age groups. When this society was formed in the early 1900's there was a strong presence of large house owners in the area, often employing professional gardeners. It is therefore understandable that 'Horticultural' would form part of the title. 'Allotment Holders' is a natural too, because not only was this the way that a less rural and more urban society could grow their own food, but 'dig for victory' campaigns in two World Wars emphasised the need to cultivate all available land. This ethos largely held through to the 1980's, but things were changing fast with convenience foods, ready made gardening from garden centres, and new interests or entertainment developing. Of course this does not mean everything changes, but it does mean that voluntary local organisations are often faced with fewer younger people coming through into membership. Yet it is clear that many people of all ages continue to enjoy having a garden around them, and indeed spend a good deal of money on it. So how do we make the link with these shared interests, and can we encourage anyone to join our local club and share in our activities?

This perspective led to thinking that our old name might be a barrier to potential members. After all, do people who like to have a garden around them think of themselves as 'horticulturalists'? Isn't that a specialist thing? And, do you have to be an 'allotment holder' to join? These kinds of questions were at the back of the name change to Croxley Green Gardening Club. It's a friendlier, less formal title; and we hope it may encourage some people to consider joining. This year will be the 85th consecutive Annual Flower & Vegetable Show - a highlight of the year (held in St Oswald's Church Hall on the second Saturday each September). There is also a winter programme of illustrated talks and a summer programme of coach outings. Membership is £2 a year. For more information:

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CROXLEY ARCHAEOLOGY.



Photograph of quarrymen at Long Valley 1904

Croxley Great Barn

In Issue 186 (Spring 03), the *Resident* carried a report of the foundation of an action group - "Friends of The Croxley Great Barn". Since then a booklet about the history and character of this ancient structure (1397/8) - a monastic 5 bay working barn with threshing floor not, as some old references claimed - a "tithe" barn, has been produced and sold over 200 copies.

The "Friends", in partnership with the Herts Building Preservation Trust (HBPT), have now achieved the first objective - a Feasibility Study at a cost of £12,000+, part funded by the Architectural Heritage Fund, is now underway. Led by Scurr and Partners (Architects), a team of professionals will examine all options for use which will preserve the integrity of the structure and provide a viable economic future after many years of neglect and deterioration. It is now on English Heritage "Buildings at Risk Register". A comprehensive Report is expected in early October.

Long Valley Wood

A major new 5-year study of "The ancient human occupation of Britain" (AHOB) has been commissioned, via a £1M Grant from the Leverhulme Trust, which will address many questions about the evidence of the earliest human occupation of the UK Palaeolithic (old stone age) sites by reinvestigating some of them and the flint tools, bones and artefacts found there: subjecting them to modern scientific techniques.

Long Valley Wood may feature in this work led by specialists from the British Museum, Natural History Museum, University College London, Royal Holloway College, Durham University, Queen Mary and Bradford Universities. A preliminary visit to the site was recently made by some members of the team: Dr's Danielle Schreve, Mark White, Chris Green and Prof John Catt.

In view of the renewed focus on Long Valley Wood (1/2 mile from the barn) in relation to the proposed Rail Repair Depot to be sited there, and the many ancient flint hand axes and other tools discovered in the quarry sites there in the early 20th century, some of which are now on display in the Three Rivers Museum, we would like to hear from anyone with knowledge of the people who worked in the quarries or old photo's of the quarry site workings.

For further information, or for enquiries, please contact The Secretary "Friends of the Croxley Great Barn." Telephone 01923 779284 or Email info@croxleygreatbarn.co.uk

David Harding.

We are grateful to David for this update on Archaeology in Croxley Green. It is well known that between Rickmansworth and Croxley Green there was ancient occupation but, unless one visits Three Rivers Museum, one will find it hard to evaluate.



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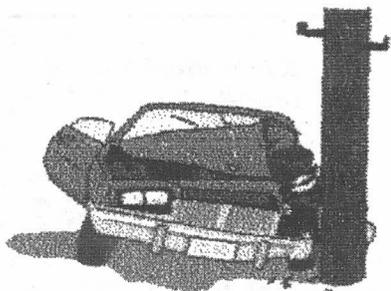
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