

THE CROXLEY RESIDENT

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF CROXLEY GREEN RESIDENTS' AND RATEPAYERS' ASSOCIATION

No. 58

Editor—Mrs. D. HARWOOD 47 Owens Way

No. 1—1957

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Appeals against the new rating valuations have been widely reported in the local press, reflecting the considerable public interest therein. Some ratepayers who had not appealed beforehand have probably been sufficiently encouraged to do so, and when the last day for the admission of appeals has passed, there will no doubt be many more wondering whether if they had appealed, they might have met with some success.

The number of appeals has naturally meant a lot of work—not least for the Valuation Officer, whom many regard as a personal enemy and with whom they find it difficult to sympathise. But he has no vested interest in anyone's rateable value and stands to gain nothing but a tremendous headache by bringing about his ears a flood of appeals, so that it is to his own benefit to assess properties at values which are fair and acceptable to all.

Moreover the amount of money required by the local authorities is not governed by rateable values, and changes in particular values only mean that the burden is distributed differently. When it comes to the point it is not so much the rateable value as the amount of money to be paid over which causes irritation.

Local authorities it is true, do handle very large sums of money, but they still have insufficient to do everything that needs doing. We are aware, for instance, in our own locality of roads and footpaths that stand in need of repair, but cannot receive attention because of the cost involved. An interesting and perhaps timely sidelight is thrown on this question of local government finance in a recent bulletin of information published by the National Union of Ratepayers' Associations, in which are recalled comments made on 10th October, 1956, by the Minister of Housing and Local Government (Mr. Duncan Sandys) to the effect that in 1913

of every £ received by local authorities 15/2d. came from rates and 4/10d. from the Exchequer. By 1938 the figures were 11/7d. and 8/5d.; by 1948 10/-d. each, and by 1956 9/1d. and 10/11d. Local bodies might appear from this to have lost some of their independence to the central authority and unless the trend is halted might well cease to be effective or responsible.

A review of local government finance was expected to have been undertaken by the Government by the end of 1956, but there is no news of anything having been done at the time of writing, and what the outcome will be eventually is quite unpredictable. Some interesting and novel ideas are, however, examined in a report recently published of the work of a study group set up by the Royal Institute of Public Opinion.

One such idea is a local income tax on the lines of that understood to be operated in Sweden. It may be an effective means of raising money, but I cannot envisage the British public accepting readily any proposal which would involve disclosing their incomes to local officials. Evidence of this may be found in the opposition which was displayed towards the idea of graduating the rents of Council houses according to the circumstances of the tenants.

Whatever the present rating system may lack in merit or equity it does provide firm figures to which to work and obviates disputes over liabilities once property values are settled. The same cannot be said for Income Tax. In addition a great many people find nothing inherently wrong in avoiding payment of their fair share of Income Tax if they can get away with it. If the same attitude of mind were displayed towards a local income tax the existing state of affairs would probably deteriorate rather than improve.

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The Green is soon to pass to its new owners, the R.U.D.C., and there will no doubt be many and varied suggestions on its future. One can only hope that a simple and constructive idea will emerge at a minimum expense to the ratepayers and that the costly legal process involved over the lights will be not be repeated.

* * * * *

Street Lights. Whilst on this subject of lights it would be of interest to know the reason for the spare lamp-post now lying in Watford Road: can it be that after all the careful planning a light was missed? To bring the Contractors back a second time is usually a costly business—has someone blundered?

* * * * *

Caravans.—This Association has recently tried to obtain clarification on the legal position of Caravan dwellers, but unfortunately this is so hedged with pitfalls that it would require a Q.C. to avoid them. At the time of writing, however, the L.M.S. Caravans seem to have gone with the wind!

* * * * *

Baldwins Lane Shops.—A request by the Grocer for an additional shop and storage accommodation has been refused. An attempt to get this matter "referred back" failed and it seems the preference was "bricks before butter," as garages plus two small windows was the recommendation!

* * * * *

Cassio Bridge Improvements.—The opening of the new Public House following so close on the erection of the street lights is giving Watford Road a somewhat strange look and the demolishing of the cottages at Cassio Bridge is also adding to the changes that are in the air. Perhaps now something will be done to widen and remove the humps of the two bridges—particularly in view of the suggested Fire Station at the Rickmansworth/Whippendell Road junction. However, the Timber merchants have been granted conditional planning permission until December 1976, but use of the Halfway House P.H. as a store for electrical units and offices has been refused.

* * * * *

Road Resurfacing.—The factory in Croxley Woods have resurfaced their entrance road. Council negotiations are proceeding for resurfacing the through road from Harvey Road to the Woods.

* * * * *

Condition of Roads.—Petrol shortage is the reason given for restricted visits to ascertain the state of the roads in the Croxley area. A journey round the district by an appropriate official on the Council's disused motor cycle would not only conserve fuel but would give him a different impression to that gleaned from the driving seat of a car!

* * * * *

Maple Cross.—A tender for 70 new houses and flats at a cost of approximately £127,000 has been accepted from a Croxley builder, but the Housing Minister has requested this be pruned by £5,500 by deleting picture and curtain rails, cupboards, quarry tiles and certain other items. The Council agreed to a £5,000 cut and the debate revealed that several Councillors are living quite happily without picture rails and are adept home-craftsmen, using plugging tools and plasterer's floats with dexterity! It appears that 24 of the 70 qualify for a subsidy.

* * * * *

Liaison between Council Departments caused concern recently: information passed late to the Council solicitor nearly changed a debtor into a prisoner.

Bus Shelters.—Residents will by now have formed some opinion regarding the Shelter fixed at New Road. We understand it is hoped to widen the pavement at this point to relieve inconvenience to passers by, but the question of glazing has not yet been decided: one point expressed is that this particular type of shelter is left unglazed in certain positions. The siting of this shelter gives residents cause for concern as the "Stop" sign adds to the restricted pavement and the three bolts which project at eye level appear to be a possible danger. A second shelter is to be erected in Watford Road opposite the lay-by near the L.M.S. Station, and this, with two others, is expected to be in position by the end of the year.

* * * * *

The Footpath from Owens Way to the Recreation Ground is causing trouble to users and damage to adjacent fences. The laying of a tarmacadam footpath is being considered.

* * * * *

Prefab Bungalows.—Renewals of gutters and fittings to 80 Prefab Bungalows at Croxley will cost £1,300 for materials and tenders are to be invited for fixing, etc. The R.U.D.C. appear to be handicapped as these gutters can only be obtained from the manufacturers.

* * * * *

Highways.—The widening of Baldwins Lane from the Green to the Recreation Ground, including a footpath, is a major improvement in the 1957/8 estimate. Two minor improvements are the provision of a kerb and footpath along that part of the Green from Baldwins Lane to New Road and the raising of the road level from the foot of Scots Hill to the By-pass.

* * * * *

Road Signs.—A "sentry" has now been fixed in Dickinson Square (Watford Road end) as Major Road is ahead. A second is expected to be erected in New Road near the Green to establish who is "Major" at this point!

* * * * *

Road Adoption.—In the new priority list for the adoption of Private Roads, Winton Drive and Winton Crescent tie for second place, with Old Barn Lane third.

* * * * *

Lay-by for Buses.—Consideration is being given to a lay-by for buses in front of "The Limes": many people will agree that traffic congestion at this point makes the present lawn almost an indecent luxury.

* * * * *

Collection of Rubbish.—The suggested special collection of outside rubbish has developed almost to "any old iron." The R.U.D.C. seem to be unaware of what members of this Association first suggested, i.e. rubbish or material which by virtue of its bulk could not be taken away by the usual collecting lorry. It might be of interest to them to learn that in Croxley Hall Woods there are several old cisterns, storage tanks, boilers, etc., and a beech tree which was, it is believed, blown down in a gale some years ago, lays there to-day—it was sawn through in lengths and contains approximately 120 cubic feet of timber—but is now showing signs of decay, due, no doubt, to having matured "in the wood" so long! On the Green, too, the nameboard of a contractor lies in the grass, whilst in the nearby hedge reposes a brazier which was used when the road was surfaced.

* * * * *

Road Safety.—The fuel shortage has caused a noticeable decline in traffic, but has brought a new menace, and road users will find growing carelessness by pedestrians and drivers alike. It is easy to see that if this habit grows tragedies will follow should the fuel position ease.

YOUR LOCAL BRANCH OF THE BRITISH LEGION

Here in Croxley Green, your local branch of the British Legion now has a membership of 400, and this figure could easily be doubled, so perhaps a few facts will help you to decide if you will join us.

Our aim is to safeguard and improve the interests of those who served their country—to sustain the British way of life for which they fought; and this objective is being achieved in many ways, which can be summed up under four headings—work, homes, health, security.

We have our own Service Committee, who in many cases have helped the war disabled to better pensions, assisted to find jobs, and given a helping hand in times of sickness. This is the side of the Legion's work about which little is known, because, of course, publicity is not desirable for the sake of the individual who is helped.

We have not got a headquarters of our own, although a start was made last year on our site in Watford Road; lack of funds has compelled us to hold up for the time being, but we are hoping that with the aid of loans and various functions being held in connection with the building, to be able to make a bit more headway this year.

There are millions of ex-Servicemen in this country, but only about a tenth are members of the British Legion.

We extend our help to all, whether they are members of the Legion or not. If all joined our ranks, our hands would be greatly strengthened to carry on the good work we are doing, and our voice would be a power in the land when demanding justice for the ex-Serviceman.

The great work of watching over the welfare of all ex-Servicemen and women and their dependants, and keeping alive the memory of those who never returned, is the main purpose and endeavour of the British Legion so well expressed in our motto: "Service not Self."

We hope these few facts have impressed you, and whatever it was you had to do in uniform, the British Legion will welcome you as an ex-Serviceman, and hope you will join us. M. C. PAICE, Chairman.

If you are interested in joining the local branch of British Legion, contact Mr. P. Abbott, 83 Barton Way, Croxley Green.

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor,
"The Croxley Resident."

30.1.57.

Dear Sir,

I am rather perturbed at the news in the local papers recently of the expected increase in the County rate, and can foresee a further increase in the Local rates, and we, the ratepayers in this area, will have to dig deeper into our pockets.

When the new rating scheme was discussed in the Local Press prior to its implementation, it was hinted that Councils would not take advantage of the new scheme to increase their revenue from rates, but would reduce the rate in the pound in proportion to the increased valuation.

Ratepayers in neighbouring localities were fortunate in that although their rateable values were alarmingly increased, the poundage was reduced so that their amount of rates payable was similar to previous years under the old scheme—some were even more fortunate and had less to pay under the new scheme.

The ratepayers of Croxley were hard hit under the new scheme, not only was the Rateable Value of private property increased, but the rate in the pound was not reduced in proportion, as expected. Whilst on the subject of the new valuations, there is a general feeling, arising from the number of successful appeals in the locality, that the new valuations were a little on the high side.

As nearly everyone in Croxley has paid more rates since 1/4/56, it was naturally expected that we should see some return for the money, so let's have a look round.

The junction of Baldwins Lane and Watford Road has been widened and a bus shelter at Croxley Met. erected. This bus shelter, by the way, occupies all the pavement to the curb—all very well for folk waiting for a bus, but any pedestrian passing the queue for the bus has to walk in the road. Is this in the interests of Road Safety?

The roads of Croxley are in most cases badly lit and the surfaces in a shocking condition, and the pavements are no better. In particular a mention should be made of Winton Drive where after darkness you descend into a well of blackness by the school.

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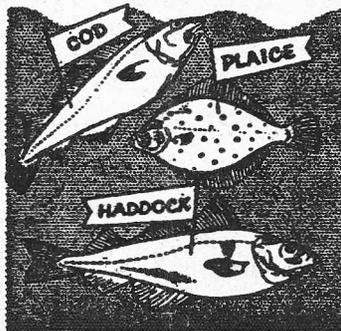
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If, as it seems, the rates are to be increased, and I shall be very much amazed and delighted if they do not, especially as I have mentioned before, appeals have been successful and there is talk of shops being reduced by 20 per cent, let us hope that 1957 will see a marked improvement in Croxley so that local ratepayers can see value for their money, and to mark the occasion perhaps the lamps on the Green could be "lit up" at night.

A NEW CROXLEY RATEPAYER
(Name and address provided)

The Re-Assessment of Rating Values has caused much concern in many quarters and, as a result, we have been challenged by Beechcroft/Oakleigh Rating Syndicate to publish certain correspondence sent by them to the Residents' Association. We accept this challenge and reproduce letters sent to us and our replies thereto.

—EDITOR.

To the Editor,

"The Croxley Resident."

Dear Sir,

8th September, 1956.

We have been disquieted to note the defeatist attitude exhibited towards appeals against new rating assessments in your Comment, "Croxley Resident," No. 56.

You wrote, "It has been asked whether or not the new ratings are likely to alter as a result of many successful appeals. In our opinion the answer is 'No.' Authorities anticipate the new rating figures will be upheld."

There are enough optimists in these four streets—Beechcroft Avenue, Oakleigh Drive, Valley Walk and Hazelwood Road—to band together to get expert help in fighting the increases.

They think this is a job your Association should have done and they ask us to send you the enclosed circulars and copy of a letter to our M.P. showing what action is possible by citizens determined to defend their rights.

(Signed) D. S. E. TILLEY,

Beechcroft/Oakleigh Rating Syndicate.

D. S. E. Tilley, Esq.,

Beechcroft/Oakleigh Rating Syndicate.

Dear Sir,

29th September, 1956.

Your letter of the 8th instant has been laid before the Committee of this Association.

I have to inform you that it is considered that we did all in our power in calling an Open Meeting on the 26th April last, at which the majority of the Croxley members of the Rickmansworth Council and also the local Valuation Officer were on the platform to answer questions regarding the new valuations. Many questions were asked from the body of the hall and were answered in clear, concise terms by the Valuation Officer, who also gave expert advice as to how the appeal forms should be filled in.

The funds of this Association are not sufficient for fighting individual appeals and I may mention that the hire of the hall for the Open Meeting cost more than £4.

As you are aware a block appeal in general terms would not be admitted.

I should like to draw your attention to the fact that members of this Committee devoted a great deal of time to giving advice to residents who called upon them asking how their appeal form should be filled up, and that we have definite information that individual members of the Association have been successful in obtaining reductions in their rateable values.

If an increase of 130/150 per cent brings your rateable values up to £35/37 as stated by you, then it is probable that your old rateable values for such property were lower than they should have been.

(Signed) Mrs. N. E. HOEY,

For the Residents' Association.

The Secretary,

Croxley Green Residents' & Ratepayers' Asscn.

Dear Madam,

6th January, 1957.

I refer to my letter of September 8th, 1956, and your reply of September 29th.

Our rating appeals, conducted by an expert, have now resulted in reduction of £3-£5 being obtained in our rateable values.

We acted; and we got results.

This, we feel, shows clearly that your Association did not—as you claimed in paragraph 2 of your letter of September 29th—do "all in your power" to help your members.

The reductions were obtained largely because increases were out of proportion to increases on other similar local properties.

This makes nonsense of the assertion, so often made (and particularly at the meeting on April 26th), that "percentages would not be a reason for reduction."

I now refer to your paragraph 3, in which you state that your Association has no funds for fighting individual appeals.

Nor have we.

The appeals were paid for by the 80 individuals concerned, many of whom feared to act until they learned from us that expert help was available very cheaply.

All they needed was the lead we provided, and a little elementary organisation.

It is still our opinion that this job should have been done by the Residents' and Ratepayers' Association—otherwise, what is it for?

It is our opinion that your Association has been guilty of neglecting the interests of its members on a matter that was perfectly within its scope and abilities.

As for your paragraph 4, there was no question of a block appeal, and we never raised it. These were individual appeals, handled for convenience and economy by a single expert.

We are glad to note that members of your committee gave individual advice. Nevertheless, it is evident that much more could have been done by joint action.

(Signed) D. S. E. TILLEY.

D. S. E. Tilley, Esq.,

Beechcroft/Oakleigh Rating Syndicate.

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter of the 6th instant, which was considered by my Committee at their last meeting.

They regret that you should feel this Association has not done all that it might on behalf of the residents, but can add little to what was said in their letter of the 29th September last.

Your main complaint appears to be that the Association did not do the job which you have succeeded in doing, and your letter conveys the impression that the residents of the four roads, for whom you acted, were the only ones in Croxley whose rateable values were increased by 130 per cent. The Committee, however are aware of others where the percentage increase was higher—some considerably higher—also there are very many houses which were increased by approximately 100 per cent.

Clearly, if they had acted for one, it would have meant acting for hundreds, which was completely beyond the physical resources of this Association. From your own experience you are, no doubt, aware of the amount of work which was involved for the comparative few whom you represented.

The Committee realised that there was need for action, but were forced to deal with the situation on general terms, hence the Open Meeting which was called on the 26th April last. They would point out that this Meeting was the only one in the Rickmansworth area at which the Valuation Officer appeared on the platform and at which an invitation was extended to any of the ratepayers in Croxley to attend at his office for any advice and guidance which he was in a position to give.

The Committee refute the charges of apathy and defeatism as they do their best to look after the interests of the residents of the whole area in innumerable channels and accept the invitation to publish this corres-

(continued on back page column 1)

LOOKING BACK

It has been said that the history of a town or village begins with the foundation of its Parish Church; this is true of Croxley Green, for before 1872, Croxley was part of Rickmansworth and did not receive a separate identity till that date, when the Ecclesiastical Parish was formed.

In 1868 application was made to Caius College for half an acre of ground on which to build a Church, this was granted on the assurance that a sufficient sum of money would be forthcoming for its completion. The Church was to serve a Parish of 1,000 population and have a seating capacity for 200-300 people.

Subscriptions soon exceeded the £2,000 estimated, then because the site originally decided upon was no longer available, Caius College suggested that the Church should be built upon the south side of the Green, and that the College would contribute £100 towards the Building Fund. The site on which the Church now stands was selected, Mr. John Horten appointed as architect, the style to be Early English. Thirteen tenders were received, that of Clark of Bath accepted, the price to be £2,318. The foundation stone was laid by Lord Ebury in 1870 and Croxley Green became a Parish in its own right on 15th October, 1872.

The first Vicar was the Rev. Astley Roberts, M.A., who had been Curate in Rickmansworth. Gathering around him an enthusiastic band of workers, the Church soon became the centre of Parish life, with all classes of the population active for the social betterment of the village.

A description of the Green at this time is of thatched cottages nestling among cherry trees laden with blossom, with fine ponds, which even in the driest of summers contained water, the local names for these being: Stones, Streeters, Little Green, Coxhills and Robinson's; the only pond left to-day is Little Green, the others are just depressions in the surface.

The sons of the well-to-do citizens played with the sons of the less well-to-do, with the Green as their playground. Football, complete with goal posts, was the sport in the winter, with cricket in its season. In the evening the customers of the Artichoke and the Coach and Horses played quoits outside those houses on the Green and often against each other. On May Day, the school children gathered and danced around a Maypole set up there for the occasion, in fact the Green was the playground of the village.

The first school in the village was built in 1873, and was under Church of England management. The children entered it at 5 years of age. This was the old Boys' School in Watford Road. The administration of the school remained under C. of E. management for years, and ceased when a fire destroyed some classrooms built in the play-yard, and through lack of funds they were unable to rebuild. The County Council then accepted the responsibility for the education of the children. One of the school's most beloved headmasters was affectionately known to the whole village through his nickname "Megy" Wilson.

Croxley Mills opened in 1830, and by 1838 the mill was producing 14 tons of paper a week. In 1882 a new paper-making machine was installed and more workers engaged. In 1886 Dickinsons became a limited liability company and the mill was further enlarged until, by 1889, it became the most comprehensive self-contained pulp-paper mill in the world. By 1898 more than 300 workers were employed there. Because of lack of housing for some of the employees, the company erected 24 houses in what is now called Dickinson Square in 1887 and in 1890 built another 30 at the same site. The old name was Milestone Field.

The Dickinson Institute was founded in 1895 at the suggestion of the manager at the Mills, Mr. Charles Barton-Smith. He thought that a club and reading room was a necessity for the employees, so in December of that year 32 Milestone Field was opened as a club; so successful was the venture that work was commenced on a permanent building. The present Institute was opened in November the following year, with a grand concert. The Institute now became the social centre of all cultural life in the village, with amateur theatricals, music festivals, industrial exhibitions, and flower shows among the attractions staged there.

The growth of the village over the years had been a gradual one. The first Council houses at Crowille Avenue being erected in 1920, then in the 1930's the fields of Croxley were divided up into building plots, only ceasing at the outbreak of war in 1939. The last few years have seen a further expansion, and very few plots are now vacant. Unless there can be an extension of the boundary to take in the old area of the one-time hamlet, the laying of bricks for more and still more houses will itself belong to history.

The outbreak of war saw Croxley well prepared to meet any exigency, with a well-trained Civil Defence Organisation; the Wardens Corps alone numbering more than 150 volunteers. In September, 1940, two parachute mines fell near the Church, 13 casualties being caused, of which 7 went to hospital, no one being killed. All Saints' Church and the Church Hall were extensively damaged, eight homes totally destroyed and 358 damaged. Later that month two H.E.'s exploded near the Met. Station. There were no casualties, but nine houses were damaged, of which seven were totally destroyed. In January, 1943, a parachute bomb fell at the top of Scots Hill, causing 25 casualties, of which seven were serious. As a result of this explosion, 210 houses were damaged and seven, including the Gospel Hall, demolished. There were other minor incidents when incendiary bombs were dropped, but these caused no damage. Not to be forgotten either, at this time, was the work of the street fire-watcher, who contributed so much to the safety of the village.

The future can look after itself, but if the same spirit activates the population, as it did in the past, a community spirit can be fostered which will be to the betterment of that community, of which we are members.

G. CORNWALL.

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Mr. E. S. Fordike, 2 Nuttfield Close.

*Mr. H. Clark, 3 Rose Lane, Grove Crescent.

*Mr. A. F. Hayward, 12 Owens Way.

* T/A (co-opted).

ATTENTION, CROXLEY TRADESMEN !

This Bulletin goes to every house in Croxley Green. If you are in business and would like to advertise in future issues of "The Croxley Resident," please get in touch with the Editor, who will be happy to discuss details with you.

(continued from page 6)

pendence in the "Resident" in the belief that their action will be completely vindicated.

The Committee congratulate you on the successful conclusion of your endeavour.

They would remind you that members are constantly being invited to serve on the Committee, and those who are prepared to participate actively are particularly welcome.

(Signed) D. A. CHITTY,
Croxley Residents' Association.

CROXLEY THEATRE CLUB

Ever had a holiday on a houseboat? You may be considering the idea for this year. Anyway CROXLEY THEATRE CLUB offers you a glimpse into the possibilities (but don't take them too seriously!). If at some time you have indeed ventured on such a holiday, it was unlikely to bear any resemblance to the appalling goings-on aboard "HAPPY LANDINGS," the houseboat featured in the hilarious comedy of that title, to be presented by Croxley Theatre Club on Thursday, 28th February, and Friday, 1st March, at 7.45 p.m. at Dickinson Guildhouse.

CROXLEY GREEN SOCIETY

A Social is being held on 13th April, 1957, in Dickinson's Guildhouse at 7.30 p.m. The Florians Orchestra will be in attendance, and entertainment will be provided by local organisations.

The Social was an outstanding success last year, and we hope you will join us again this year. Tickets 2/6 each, available from majority of local organisations or M. Watkins, 123 Winton Drive, Croxley Green.

CROXLEY GREEN

EVENING TOWNSWOMEN'S GUILD

A hearty welcome is extended to any lady who wishes to spend a pleasant evening on the third Friday of each month at 7.45 p.m. in the Co-operative Hall, Croxley Green.

Interesting Talks, Film Shows, Outings, etc., are arranged, and our Handicraft and Drama Sections are available to all.

Do come along, and see for yourself!
Next Meeting—March 15th.

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Chitty's address