

WOT !

About Ratby

PUBLISHED BY RATBY SCOUT GROUP

THE END OF AN ERA

A shop which has been a feature of local Ratby life for nigh on 100 years closed its doors for the final time in November last year. Freeman's, the family owned butcher's business, had been trading since 1904 at the corner of Church Lane. Before then the firm had operated from where it was first started in the 1896, by John Henry Freeman, in a wooden hut which stood alongside the Primary School and was adjacent to Orchard House which is the property that is currently being renovated.

John Freeman, the grandson of the founder, has recently given WOT an interview during which he was able to describe quite a vivid and interesting picture with his recollections of life at the family butcher's.

Prior to starting up in Ratby, John Henry had learnt his trade through another long established butcher, Chaplin's of Groby. He then set up his new venture in the wooden hut and built up a delivery round using a horse and cart as transport. After only a short time he was able to have the purpose built model butcher's premises constructed and it is from here that the family carried out all of the aspects of the butchery trade for 97 years. If you look at the name plate on the wall of the premises, you will see that the property is called 'Chaplin House'. So strong was the link with Chaplin's in those days.

They did not just sell meat in the earlier times. All of the slaughtering and preparation work was done on the premises, the very buildings used for this are still there today, even down to the iron tethering ring set in the floor. They also processed their own sausages, pies and cooked meats. A truly self contained operation and one which required a lot of tender care as far as the animals were concerned.

Continued on PAGE 2 and 3



Freeman and Sons.

EURONICS CENTRES

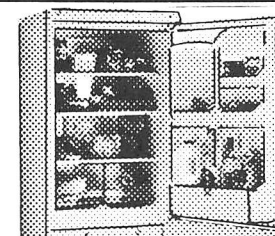
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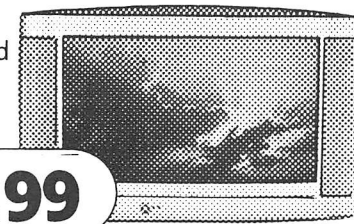


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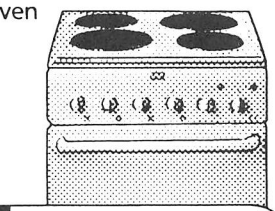


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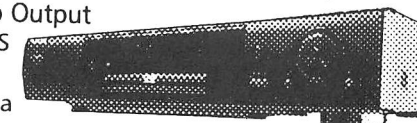


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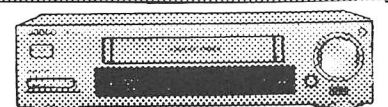


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THE END OF AN ERA CONTINUED

In the very early days, the larger animals used to be walked to Ratby from Leicester Market. The drovers would drop them off at different butchers on the way, Groby being the last stop before Ratby. After such a journey the animals would be rested and coaxed to ensure that they were not unduly stressed.

The Freemans used to own some fields behind the Bulls Head pub and they would often buy any number of animals at the Leicester Cattle Fair, these would then be grazed in these fields until required for the shop and eventual table. Sometimes, they would travel out as far as Sleaford to buy a lorry load of animals and bring these back to Ratby. Sleaford was a good place to buy from in the wintertime.

John Freeman's father was Henry and it was he who continued to run the firm until around 1960. It was then that John himself, having worked with his father for 10 years, came to be in charge. John and his wife, Pearl, then continued to run the business for the next 40 years. The great-grandsons of the founder, Nigel and David Freeman, were the last two members of the family in the business.

Over all of these years, they have had the help of many loyal employees, Tom Goodger and Margaret Green, (John's sister) being just two of these. Tom started in the business when it was run by Henry, he was just thirteen at that time and he worked for the Freemans for 60 years. He really was a right hand man! As a lad he lived in one of two cottages which now form the house known as Sanderlings on Main Street.

At the height of the business, the Freemans had two shops one at Ratby and the other at Newbold Verdon, plus they had three mobile sales round and delivery vans and a good old reliable butcher's bicycle. The van rounds used to cover all of the villages in the Desford and Newbold Verdon area. Henry Freeman always used to run Jowett and Bradford vehicles, which he purchased from a firm named Sibsons who were based in Leicester. John well remembers the times when a van would break down whilst out on a round and Sibsons would provide a towing service to tow the defunct vehicle around the villages in order to complete the round, such was the customer service provisions in those days.

Ratby was very much a mining village, even though the nearest colliery was at Desford, the majority of the men in the village worked at a colliery somewhere. These folk ate lots of red meat in some form or another, it was their main source of protein. Pasta and pizzas were not around in those days and the only take-away was a fish and chip shop. Chicken and the like was usually reserved for Christmas.

The Christmas period has always been the busiest time in any butcher's year. At Freeman's, they used to handle up to 300 head of poultry together with all of the other fresh and cooked meats and the like. There was a time when all of these birds were killed, plucked and cleaned on the premises. Many of the local lads and lassies would work all hours helping out at this time. John jokes about all of the resulting feathers and says that what they needed was a strong wind on Christmas Eve to blow them all away.

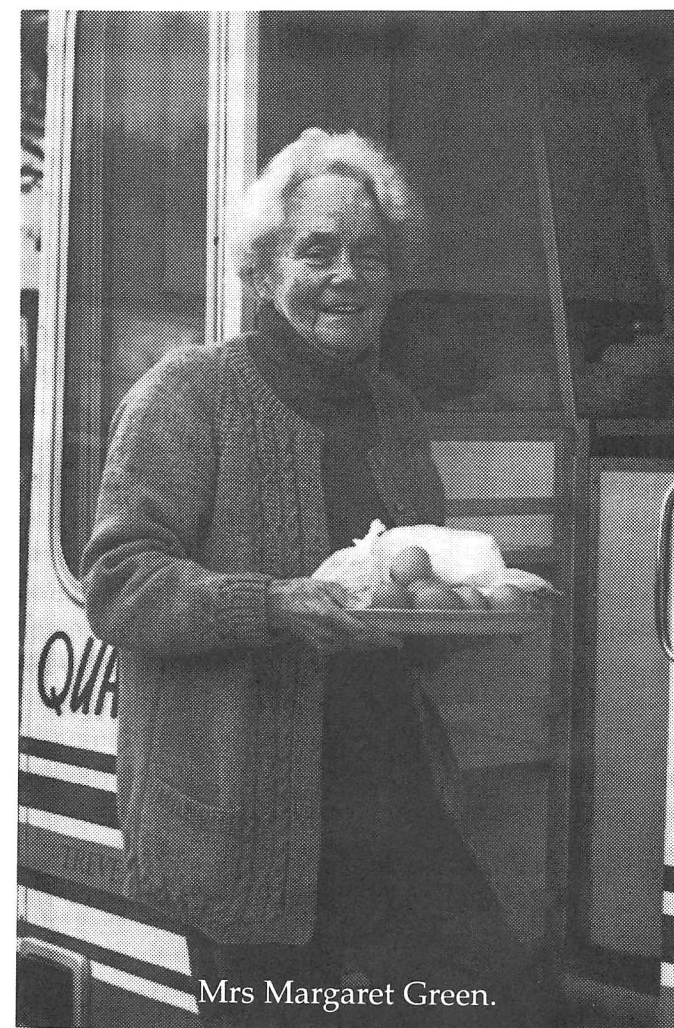
The slaughtering side was very hard and demanding work and it ceased to be a function of the business in 1970. Staff were hard to come by and this difficulty, together with having to cope with the changing needs brought about by food hygiene regulations, caused John to decide to go the way of many other butchers at that time and buy his meat in from reliable wholesalers. They did however continue to process the larger proportion of cooked meats right up to the recent closure. In fact the writer of this article believes that their ham, roast pork and haslet were the best that he has ever tasted; as for the faggots, wonderful stuff! Two van rounds were also still in operation up to the time of the closure. We are told that more meat was sold from the vans than through the shop.

John tells us that he entered the family business in 1950. He had had two ambitions as a lad, one was to be a long distance lorry driver, the other to follow in his father's and grandfather's footsteps and become a butcher.

He was guided towards the butchery route and went off to learn the trade as an apprentice at a butcher's in Kettering. He stayed in lodgings at Kettering and it seems that he would often cycle there from Ratby on a Monday morning, he was always there by 8-00 am. Come Saturday morning he would cycle back to Ratby, and as if that wasn't enough, he would then turn out and play football for Ratby Athletic. After his time at Kettering, he went to learn the pork butchery side of the business by working at Folwells, the then well-known Leicester pork butchers.

National Service followed for two years. Because of his experience in the food trade, he expected to be sent into the Catering Corps, instead he finished up as a tank driver at Catterick and then in Germany. At least he got to drive a large vehicle, albeit not a long distance lorry.

So as John mentioned earlier, he started at the Freemans shop in 1950 after he came out of the army and was there right up to the closure. When asked why they closed? - He said that it was purely the pressures of red tape and bureaucracy that had forced the situation on to the family. Their loyal customers had still wanted high quality fresh and cooked meats. Even though trends had changed, trade had been as busy as ever.



Mrs Margaret Green.

THE PLOUGH INN

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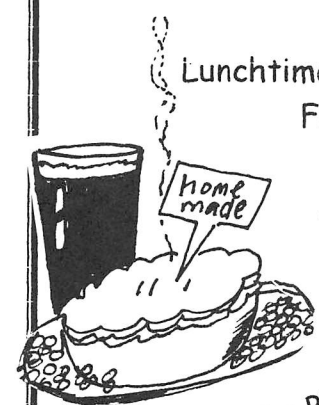
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A POD for Ratby

Have you wondered what was all the fuss about the **Internet** or the **World Wide Web**? Have you heard a company advertise its **Web Site** and wanted to find out more? You might like to **E-Mail** a friend! If access to a computer is all that has been stopping you from finding out about these things then a new opportunity awaits you - right here in Ratby Library.

A POD is a multi-media computer with access to the Internet plus a black and white printer. It is a Government backed initiative to promote learning in the community and the project is being set up by Leicestershire Training and Enterprise Council.

The Parish Council has been advised that its application for a POD has been accepted and we are grateful to Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service for allowing us to site it in the Library where it will be accessible to all residents of the village. Full details of how the service will operate will be posted around the village... so keep a watch out..... THE POD IS COMING!!

Ratby Local History Study Group

A new group has just been formed to study Ratby's social history and natural heritage. The objective of the group is to create archive evidence of 20th Century Ratby for future generations. Ratby has a rich source of information held by people living in the village and it is important that this is recorded now while it is still available. Ratby is fortunate also to have three special historical sites in the village - The Church, Bury Camp and Old Hayes and in addition there is strong association with the Grey family. These would form the basis of much of the future study.

Other interesting areas that could be explored are:

Natural History - a study of local habitats such as ancient trees, hedgerows or field ponds would provide valuable natural history information;

Geological heritage - Geology shapes the local landscape and also provides many building materials.


Built heritage - Buildings, walls and roads all provide valuable information about the development of a village.

Industrial heritage - In the past most villages were self-sufficient with their own blacksmith, builders and bakers. Industries may have grown up around local natural resources.

Archaeological heritage - Discover the secrets of the parish through field walking old maps and other historical records.


Local folklore and customs - local stories, games and traditions can be recorded and celebrated. Recording events and traditions will help to make sure that they are not forgotten and lost forever.

Anyone interested in helping can contact the group organiser, Doug Harwood, on tel. 239 4168 or the Clerk to the Council 239 0167

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Office Opening Hours

From 8th January the new office opening hours will be as follows:

Monday 9.30a.m to 12.30 p.m

Tuesday 9.30a.m to 12.30 p.m

“ 7.00p.m to 9.00 p.m (by appointment)

Wednesday Closed all day

Thursday 9.30a.m to 12.30 p.m

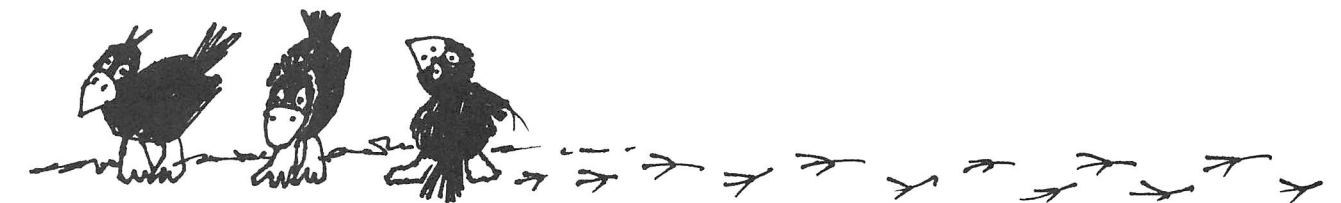
Friday 9.30a.m to 12.30 p.m

Stamford Street - Notice of Road Closure

Leicestershire County Council have advised that Stamford Street will be closed for 5 days for laying of foul and storm sewers. The anticipated starting date is Monday 26th February 2001 but this may change due to contractual reasons or weather conditions. The work will only affect the part of the street between No 45 and No. 67 but access to other parts is likely to be severely restricted.

Local Police - New Contact Telephone Number

The Parish Council has issued the Ratby Beat Officer, PC Varney, with a mobile phone so that he can be easily contacted. The number is **07752 632266**. However, please note that he will only be available on this number when he is on duty.



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“Ravishing Ratby”

Don't forget that we are still looking for volunteers to help with maintenance of the large floral displays at the entrances to the village and the hanging baskets throughout the village during this coming Summer. The project is completely dependant on volunteers and if enough people come forward then each person will have very little to do. Just think - a very little of your time could make a whole lot of difference to how our village looks this summer.

Notices on lamp-posts and telegraph poles

Many people post notices to advise of birthday celebrations, etc. or to report items lost and asking for help with finding them. They are an excellent way of notifying people within the community of what is going on. However if they are not removed after a suitable time they become soggy, faded and torn and blow about in the wind. This gives a very untidy appearance to the village. If you are putting up a poster please consider how long it needs to be up in order to get its message across and then arrange to have it removed. Our village will look the better for it.

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COME IN AND SEE FOR YOURSELF



The following details covering planned events due to take place during 2001 have now been made known to us. These events are all in addition to the regular meetings held within individual Groups.

Look out for further details in future Wot! And Church Magazine. There will also be notices in shops, the library and on notice boards at venues and around the village. **DON'T MISS OUT! BE THERE!**



RATBY EVENTS DIARY

DATE & TIME	EVENT	ORGANISERS	VENUE
FEBRUARY			
Wed 14 th - 7.45pm	Antiques Valuation Evening	Women's Institute	Village Hall
Sat 17 th - 10.00am	Coffee Morning & Nearly New Sale	Methodist Church	Chapel Hall
Sat 17 th - 7.30pm	Barn Dance	Parish Church	Church Rooms
Tue 20 th - 8.00pm	AGM and Supper	Village Society	Village Hall
Wed 21 st - 2.00pm	Indoor Carpet Bowls	Senior Citizens	Village Hall
NB:- Then each Wed to Easter			
Sat 24 th - 10.00am	Coffee Morning	Parish Church	Church Rooms
MARCH			
Sat 3 rd - 10.00am	Coffee Morning	Methodist Church	Chapel Hall
Sat 10 th - 10.00am	Coffee Morning	Parish Church	Church Rooms
NB:- Coffee Mornings then on most alternate Saturdays as per above details.			
Wed 14 th - 7.45pm	Talk - Helping Hedgehogs	Women's Institute	Village Hall
Sat 17 th - 7.00pm	Auctions of Promises	Parish Church	Brookvale School
Tue 20 th - 8.00pm	Talk - The Best of China	Village Society	Village Hall
APRIL			
Sat 7 th - 12.00am	Craft Fair	Methodist Church	Chapel Hall
Wed 11 th - 7.45pm	Talk -Skin Care & Make Up	Women's Institute	Village Hall
Tue 17 th - 8.00pm	Talk - Falkland Islands	Village Society	Village Hall
Tue 24 th - 7.30pm	Annual Parish Meeting	Parish Council	tba
Sat 28 th - 7.30pm	Band Birthday Concert	Ratby Band	Broby College
MAY			
Wed 9 th - 7.45pm	Resolutons	Women's Institute	Village Hall
Sat 12 th - 10.00am	Spring Fair	Methodist Church	Chapel Rooms
Sat 12 th - 7.30pm	Musik Fest	Ratby Band	Broby College
Sun 13 th - 7.30pm	Musik Fest	Ratby Band	Broby College
Tues 15 th - 8.00pm	Talk - Siege of Leicester	Village Society	Village Hall

DATE & TIME	EVENT	ORGANISERS	VENUE
JUNE			
Sat 2 nd & Sun 3 rd	Gifts and Talents Weekend	Parish Church	Parish Church
Wed 13 th - 7.45pm	Poetry and Prose Reading	Women's Institute	Village Hall
Tue 19 th - 8.00pm	Talk - Gardening	Village Society	Village Hall
Sat 30 th - 2.00pm	Garden Fete	Parish Church	Vicarage
JULY			
Sat 7 th - 7.30pm	Jazz in the Garden	Parish Church	Vicarage
Sun 15 th - tba	Melbourne Hall Gardens	Village Society	Outing /Visit
Mon 23 rd (to Fri)	Front Garden Competition	Parish Council	Whole Village
AUGUST			
Wed 8 th - 7.45pm	Egyptian Dancing	Women's Institute	Village Hall
Tue 21 st - 8.00pm	Tracing Family History	Village Society	Village Hall
SEPTEMBER			
Wed 12 th - 7.45pm	Memories in a Photograph	Women's Institute	Village Hall
Tue 18 th - 8.00pm	Hearing Dogs for the Deaf	Village Society	Village Hall
OCTOBER			
Sun 7 th - tba	Harvest Festival	Parish Church	Parish Church
Wed 10 th - 7.45pm	AGM & Games	Women's Institute	Village Hall
Tues 16 th - 8.00pm	Arctic Fellowship Work	Village Society	Village Hall
NOVEMBER			
Sun 11 th - tba	Remembrance Day Service	Joint Churches	Parish Church
Wed 14 th - 7.45pm	Talk/Demo - Gift Wrapping	Women's Institute	Village Hall
Tues 20 th - 8.00pm	Social Evening	Village Society	Village Hall
DECEMBER			
Wed 12 th - 7.45pm	Christmas Party	Women's Institute	Village Hall
Mon 17 th (to Fri)	Christmas Festive Window Competition	Parish Council	Whole Village



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Ratby Village Society

A HUNDRED YEARS OF CINEMA

The first meeting of the real Millennium, addressed by Mr Michael Roberts, took us back, not a thousand years, but one hundred years of cinema. Not that any of us could remember seeing the very first (silent) moving pictures which were shown to a paying audience of only thirty patrons in a Paris café basement by the Lumiere brothers in December 1895. By March 1896 films were being shown in The Empire Theatre, in London's Leicester Square. This new wonder arrived in Leicester a year or two later at the Tivoli Theatre in Belgrave Gate. In 1909 the first purpose built cinema, The Cameo was opened in High Street.

Synchronised speech and music was first heard in 1930 when Al Jolson starred in the film 'The Jazz Singer'. Shortly afterwards colour photography was introduced gradually.

Following the advent of television after the war, first rural, then suburban cinemas began to close, the buildings demolished or converted into BINGO Halls.

HG

Editors note:
We have featured Ratby's own cinema in a previous issue of Wot! but more memories are welcomed.

2001- A SPACE ODDITY

I've often wondered, all these years,
just what can be between my ears!

Here, I say, hang on a minute,
do you think there's nothing in it?

I guess you're right, I do declare,
now I know it's void in there.

HOZ

RATBY CHURCH UPDATE

Despite the violent autumn storms and gales we can report that the roof and tower repairs are still scheduled for completion early in February. However, this still leaves much to be done to the interior before the church can be reopened, such as replacement flooring and renewed heating system

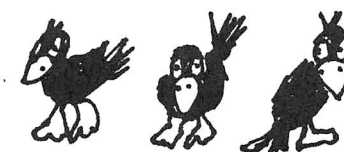
The church's closure has given the opportunity to think creatively about its interior layout. The church council is, for example, proposing to switch the main entrance/exit to the South door (which opens out onto the churchyard). This would make the main entrance accessible to wheelchairs and pushchairs. It would also allow for a better welcoming area, as people would come into the side aisle rather than the main worship area. An interior porch would be installed to prevent draughts.

A smaller side chapel in the side aisle is also proposed as a place where people can go to be quiet or to pray. Consideration is also being given to how best to arrange pews (and chairs) so as to ensure improved visibility and comfort during services and other events.

Plans of these layouts will be displayed at the church rooms and hopefully in the library in due course. We are hoping to be able to reopen the church in June or early summer, but time will tell!

We are very grateful for all the support and interest that has been shown. Fund-raising is still very important and one of the main events this Spring is a promise auction on the evening of Saturday 17th March at Brookvale High School. See posters in the village for details or contact David Willis (239 0010)

Revd Richard Worsfold



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ORCHARD GROUP GO BATTY

Ratby Community Orchard Group recently enjoyed a fascinating insight into the lives of bats. Jenny Harris of the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust was the guest speaker at the group's AGM on November 13th. There was a chance to meet some live 'rescue' bats face to face.

Bats are the only true flying mammal, and one of the oldest animal species on Earth. Contrary to popular opinion, they are harmless to people, and certainly never get caught in our hair!

People, however, do harm bats. The use of insecticide and destruction of trees and hedgerows have caused a rapid fall in their population.

The good news is that we can all take simple steps that will make a big difference to bats. We can plant bat-friendly native shrubs, scented plants that flower in the evening, such as nicotiana, leave 'wild' areas in our garden, and create a pond. This will attract the insects bats like to eat. Bat boxes and dry rockeries will provide somewhere for bats to roost.

Jenny explained that bats are a protected species. It is an offence to disturb a bat roost or handle a bat other than to help it if in trouble. They are sensitive, intelligent creatures. Thanks to Jenny we have a better idea now on how to make bats lives easier.

If you need advice on an injured bat, or want information on attracting bats to your garden contact The Wildlife Trust on 270 2999.

This Orchard event was supported by a grant from The Action for Wildlife Grant Scheme, which is administered by the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership.

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CONSTABULARY

It is a sad fact of life that, in today's society, there are a small number of individuals who prey on the vulnerable.

I would like to raise resident's awareness of bogus callers. These people will prey on the elderly or infirm and will often pretend to be carrying out repairs or checks in the area. Bona Fide workers will always carry official identity cards and will be only too pleased to show them to you when asked.

Also keep an eye out for anybody leaving plastic charity sacks. If they are genuine sacks they will generally have the charity name printed on the sack. If there is no name, I would like any details of the people delivering them such as car or van description including, if possible, a registration number.

I have placed a number of advice sheets in the library in Ratby for anybody that wishes to read them.

If your neighbour is elderly or you feel that they may benefit from one of the leaflets and they can't get to the library themselves, please collect a leaflet for them.

On a slightly different note, I would ask that anybody that collects their children from Ratby Primary School to please consider where you park. You are putting lives at risk if you park on, or near to corners, junctions or double-park. It may be inconvenient to park a 100 metres further away, but not as inconvenient as having to pay a £40 fixed penalty notice.

You may contact me on:

(0116) 2222222

or, through the voice mail system on

(0116) 2485675

ID number 228#

Your co-operation in this matter is greatly appreciated.

PC228 'Reg' Varney
Beat Officer for Ratby

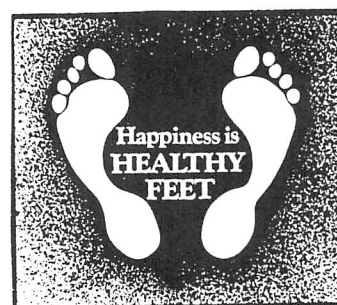
If you have information on any crime, you can call **Crimestoppers** anonymously on:

(0800) 555111

This call will not show up on your itemised phone bill and if your information leads to a conviction, you may be entitled to a cash reward.

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RATBY NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Theft of or from motor vehicles represents a high percentage of local crime. You can help in the fight against car crime by taking these precautions;

- Don't leave things on display... your vehicle is a shop window for thieves.
- Fit an immobiliser, electronic or mechanical, such as steering wheel lock.
- Buy a tamper proof tax disc holder for a couple of pounds from the post office. (160,000 are stolen each year)
- Fit a removable stereo or one with removable front. Stereos are highly prized by thieves.
- Keep your keys in a safe place. Remove your ignition key every time you leave your car. It takes only seconds to jump in and drive away.

Don't give criminals an easy ride!



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RECIPE

LEEK AND POTATO SOUP

Ingredients

- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3 good sized leeks
- 1 stick celery
- 2 large potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
- 1 pint chicken stock
- salt, pepper, herb cube or fresh herbs
- Chopped parsley or chives for garnish
- 1 oz butter or margarine
- 1 or 2 tablespoons cream

Method

1. Melt fat in a large saucepan and toss onion, leeks and celery for 5 minutes to absorb fat.
2. Stir in potatoes, add stock and seasoning, and simmer gently for 1 hour with well fitting lid.
3. Taste and adjust seasoning.
4. At this stage the soup may be served as chunky or sieved or liquidised to become thick and creamy.
5. Serve piping hot with a swirl of cream and herb garnish.

Croutons can be served separately in a small dish. Cut slices of bread into small cubes, brush with melted butter and cook under grill or in a warm oven until crisp and golden.

DEADLINE FOR THE
April /May ISSUE

March 15th

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or send to 10 Groby Road or 3 Ingle
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