

THE HITCHAM & TAPLOW SOCIETY

Newsletter 92: Autumn 2009
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TAPLOW HERITAGE ART & ARTISTS



TAPLOW HERITAGE TAPLOW FUTURE



TAPLOW HERITAGE ALL OUR YESTERDAYS



TAPLOW HERITAGE MILITARY & AVIATION



www.taplowsociety.org.uk

Hitcham and Taplow Society

Formed in 1959 to protect Hitcham, Taplow and the surrounding countryside from being spoilt by bad development and neglect.

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Website Adviser & Newsletter Production: Andrew Findlay

Contact Address: HTS, 21 Byways, Burnham, SL1 7EB

Cover picture: A selection of images from the Taplow Heritage Day

Editorial – Fifty Years in Action

Our Society was founded with the name Hitcham and Taplow Preservation Society in December 1959 with the aim 'to protect Hitcham, Taplow and the surrounding countryside from being spoilt by bad development and neglect'. When our founder and first chairman Dr Maurice Rogers retired to live in a distant village in a farewell letter he expressed his belief that the Society had been 'a significant influence in maintaining the surroundings to our homes at least as attractive as we found them' Across the years and especially in recent years, although removing 'Preservation' from its title, the Society has continued to be in action endeavouring to be 'a significant influence' in protecting the integrity of our built environment and its surrounding green belt.

The next edition of our Newsletter in Spring 2010 will celebrate our 50th anniversary. It will include a survey of our activities and achievements through the years brought into perspective by the reminiscences of the 'old days' from past Presidents, Chairmen, Secretaries and Newsletter Editors.

AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Hitcham and Taplow Society will take place on Friday 30th October at The Village Centre, High Street, Taplow, starting at 8pm. A detailed agenda has been circulated to members.

Website

Register on the Society website and have your say in our Forum:

www.taplowsociety.org.uk

Congratulations Gillian Dibden, MBE



Gillian Dibden was awarded the MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for services to youth choral music in Berkshire.

Gillian and her husband the Reverend Alan Dibden have been a vibrant force in the Taplow Community since Alan was appointed Rector in 1991. In addition to nourishing the spiritual soul of the village and its visitors, St Nicolas' Church has been the host for many community activities, most especially the Taplow Choirs under Gillian's leadership.

During her early career as music teacher at St Bernard's Convent School in Slough, her Chamber Choir won both National and International prizes in the European Broadcasting Union sponsored competition 'Let The People Sing'. Next Gillian became Head of Voice and Choral Music for the Berkshire Young Musicians' Trust, winning many times in the Youth and Junior Choir sections of the Sainsbury's Choir of the Year competition and

once beating all the adult choirs to take the Choir of the Year award. Her Berkshire Youth Choir won numerous prizes at the National Festival of Music for Youth and performed at the School Proms in the Royal Albert Hall.

In 2002 Gillian was named National Choir Director of the Year.

In September 2004 with Philip Viveash, a distinguished singer, choral teacher and conductor, Gillian set up the Taplow Choirs, now comprising Children's, Boys', Girls' and Youth Choirs. Weekly practice and regular performances are held in the Village Centre and St Nicolas' Church. The choirs are invited to perform at venues throughout the country and abroad, gaining an international reputation for choral excellence.

In 2008 the Taplow Youth Choir won the BBC Youth Choir of the Year award.

Karl Lawrence

Taplow Heritage Day

Several hundred people visited the Village Centre on July 4th to view the Taplow Heritage Day Exhibition. Throughout the day there were many long-stay and repeat visitors browsing through the wealth of information and admiring the pictures exhibited by the 12 local artists.

With the enthusiastic permission of Duncan and Jo Estley, the bomb shelter in the garden of Priory Cottage was the venue for several World War Two-based talks. At the Exhibition there were queues to join the guided tours of the Shelter, which was built to protect the staff of Fairey Aviation engaged on top secret work at The Priory – the large house which was demolished to make way for Wellbank.

On the Heritage Trail

Towards the end of the summer term, the whole of St Nicolas' School participated in the Taplow Heritage Week. The week was organised by Miv Wayland Smith and gave the children (and staff) an opportunity to learn about the history of our local area.

The week was an overwhelming success with activities such as:

- A guided tour of the inside of Taplow Court and a walk through the grounds
- A guided walk around the village of Taplow and a talk by the former headteacher of St Nicolas' School, Helen Grellier, about life in the old school
- Brass-rubbing in St Nicolas' Church and learning about its history
- A visit to a World War Two bunker and a talk by someone who lived in the area during the War
- Researching on the internet to learn more about the history of Taplow and producing a group poster showing their findings.

Many parents gave up their time to assist the staff during these activities and found the tours and talk extremely educational – even if they had been living in the village for a number of years!

During Heritage week we also had a number of special assemblies that included:

The Drinks and Nibbles event at The Village Centre in the evening was a sell-out with all attending offering lavish praise for the Exhibition. Proceeds after expenses amounted to £260, which was donated to the Alexander Divine Cancer Trust.

Extracts from the exhibits are published in this edition of the Newsletter along with an account of the talks given for pupils at St Nicolas' School.

Congratulations to the organisers, Marc Boden and Miv Wayland Smith and their team.

Karl Lawrence

- Nigel Smales giving a fascinating presentation on the history of Taplow
- Talks from three local residents who have excelled in particular sporting disciplines
- A talk from the author, and writer of *Dr Who*, Tony Read
- A presentation from Tim Browning, a special effects artist at Pinewood studios.

The children thoroughly enjoyed the week and produced two murals that were displayed in the village hall at the Heritage event, one of pictures showing what they had learnt over the course of the week and the other of the brass rubbings that they had done in the church. The posters of the internet findings were also displayed. All the children, regardless of age, gained an understanding that our local area is one that has a long and important history. Hopefully this will become a regular event as it is very important for the children to understand the heritage of this area.

Many thanks to all the parents, residents and members of the community who helped organise the events – the children and staff of St Nicolas' really appreciated it!

Richard Daniels



The Women's Institute

The first WI was formed in Stoney Creek, Canada in 1897. A farmer's wife, Mrs Adele Hodless, saw the need to help country women to improve their lives. The founding ideals of friendship, truth, justice and tolerance are as strong now as they were then. Women from all walks of life and faiths are members.

The first WI in the UK was formed in 1915 in Llanfair PG Anglesey. WIs began to appear in towns and villages across the country and in 1917 it was decided to form a National Federation.

In 1926 Nancy Lady Astor, MP, then President of Cliveden and Dropmore WI (now closed), wrote to her friend Mrs Audrey Skimming of Taplow House suggesting she form a WI in Taplow. This she did in March of that year. A group of ladies living in Hitcham decided to join them, hence the name Taplow and Hitcham WI.

Meetings were held in the Dumb Bell and the Drill Hall (now used by the police). In 1927 there were 90 members and neither venue being large enough, the members decided to build their own hall. Donations were received from many Taplow residents, and the present hall was built on land rented from the GWR.

Nancy Lady Astor, accompanied by the then Minister of Agriculture, opened the hall in 1930. It has been used by many different organisations and was an Evacuation Centre in the Second World War. The hall has been used for inside shots in the television version of *White Mischief* and as the catering centre for the cast of *Chariots of Fire*. Every weekday it is used by members. It has a caretaker living on the site. The hall was designed by local architect Mr Salter who also designed our banner.

The Institute is very proud of its banner. One half represents Taplow with a swan and a galleon and the other half Hitcham, which depicts the arms of the Clark family and the Prince of Wales' feathers, referring to a visit made by the Black Prince to Hitcham Manor.

In the hall are some ballet bars used by early members for Greek dancing, a form of 'Keep Fit' – not, I hasten to say, by our team of Country Dancers who today are led by Mrs J Eden.

During the 1950s the craft section made and embroidered kneelers for a side chapel in Westminster Abbey. The countryside and its environment have always been a concern of the WI. A member, Mrs B Pollard, was concerned about the state of the corner of Hill Farm Road with Cliveden Road, so with the support of all

the Taplow and Hitcham members it was cleared to the way it looks today. For many years the Institute has invited St Jude's over-50s club in Westminster to tea and entertainment. Supper is given to the local Hospice and this year also to the Air Ambulance.

We cover a wide variety of activities ranging from the traditional crafts and art to sport, including badminton, bowls and table tennis, and we have a drama group. The craft group have recently made blankets for care homes and outfits for premature babies. During the summer months members visited Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Club, and also Pinewood Studios, where we met our neighbour Sir Terry Wogan recording his game show. Following the national concern over the demise of bees, we have written to all the local councils and their replies have been favourable.

The WI has its own Educational College in Oxfordshire, which opened in 1948. Today it offers 500 different courses, annually attended by over 5,000 members. Taplow and Hitcham, as do many WIs, give a bursary to a member attending.

The WI exists to educate women to enable them to fulfil an effective role in the community, to expand their horizons, and to develop and pass on important skills. It has an unrivalled reputation as a voice of reason, integrity and intelligence on issues that matter to women everywhere. It is the largest women's organisation in the UK and is associated with Country Women of the World.

The WI campaigns on a wide range of social, justice and environmental issues both here and abroad. Keep Britain Tidy was started by the WI and more recently violence and trafficking of women, the cost of food production and farming have been addressed.

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday at 2.30pm when there is always a speaker or demonstrator who does not leave the hall without deep questioning.

Yes, we do sing *Jerusalem* and make jam, but we trust we are maintaining the aims and objects of our founder, so why not come and join us? All visitors are very welcome.

Muriel King



Taplow Lancers

This is an adaptation by Laird Mackay from his exhibit Military and Aviation at the Taplow Heritage Day.

1794

Units of mounted volunteers known as yeomanry were formed throughout the country. Six troops of Bucks Yeomanry were originally raised in May 1794 but by 1803 there were sufficient yeoman to form three regiments, the 1st Southern Cavalry including a troop at Taplow.

1830

The Yeomanry was reduced and the 1st Regiment was disbanded but in December 1830 Buckinghamshire, like other southern counties, saw an outbreak of widespread machine breaking during the so-called Swing Riots. As a result, Viscount Kirkwall, later Earl of Orkney, decided to raise a new yeomanry troop at Taplow, which was authorised on 27 December 1830. Almost immediately the new troop was called out on duty at Princes Risborough, helping to protect the King's Commission sitting at Aylesbury to try those arrested during the riots.

1838

With the dangers of domestic unrest seemingly subsiding, the War Office decided once more to cease funding the troop in March 1838 but the troop decided to continue to serve without any government pay or allowances. The troop offered its services in anticipation of Chartist disturbances



at Slough in 1848 but was not needed. The annual training – usually just eight days – was held at various locations including Beaconsfield, Marlow, Burnham and Slough. In May 1863 the

Earl of Orkney resigned his command and was succeeded as Captain Commandant by Nathaniel Grace Lambert of Denham Court, who was later Liberal MP for Buckinghamshire from 1868 to 1880. Under his command, the annual training was switched to Windsor. From 1867 onwards, Lambert's second in command was Orkney's son, Lieutenant the Hon. Alexander Fitzmaurice, and the Cornet (Second Lieutenant) was Roger Eykyn, a stockbroker who served as Liberal MP for Windsor from 1866 to 1874. The most notable event at this time was the troop's participation in the great volunteer review at Windsor in July 1869.

1863

For much of its existence the troop's uniform was that of a light dragoon regiment but at about the time of Orkney's resignation in 1863, the uniform was changed to that of a lancer regiment modelled on that of the 12th Lancers. The official title remained the South Buckinghamshire Yeomanry Cavalry but the unofficial title became the Taplow Lancers and Lambert himself began signing orders as commander of the Taplow Troop (Lancers) in 1869.

1867

Increasingly, there were problems in finding sufficient recruits within the county and in any case the War Office decided in 1871 to disband independent yeomanry units with less than four troops. In the event, it was decided to accept the inevitable and the Taplow Lancers ceased to exist in June 1871.

Just five Taplow men were serving in the unit at this time, Sergeant W Rance (a butcher), Corporal R Cleare (a victualler), and Troopers J Cleare (presumably the son of the former), H Davis, and C Cross (a farmer's son).

Laird McKay



Art Exhibition on Taplow Heritage Day



It's not often that artists have the freedom to organise their own exhibition free of the constraints of a gallery and its demands for commission but this year a group of Taplow artists had just that opportunity come their way.

July 4th was Taplow Heritage Day and the whole of the Village Centre was taken over for the day to provide an exhibition outlining the key events in Taplow's history. It was not just confined to history however, today's history in the making was included. The art exhibition was a reprise of a seminal meeting and exhibition of Taplow artists that took place in October 2001 and this time about 17 artists gathered together to mount an exhibition of their work.

There was little need for a formal organisation. We simply turned up with our pictures and agreed where they could best be hung in the limited space available. We have to thank Alison Adcock for her generous loan of the screens. Susie Lipman (of Oberon Art in

Burnham) was a staunch supporter and not only provided the artists' labels but also, at her own expense, the scans and printouts of the Taplow Artists of the Past display. Tony Meats was the overall inspiration for the exhibition and wisely left it to the artists, including himself of course, to handle the tricky problems of space allocation.

I was not present at the evening session but I am told the art exhibition was a great success with those attending. I hope that we can mount such an exhibition every year from now on.

Fred Russell

List of artists: Alison Adcock, Tim Anderson, Glyn Davies, Andrew Findlay, Aleya Grellier, Brian Horton, Sheila Horton, Clemency Horton, Muriel King, Freda Lane, Susie Lipman, Juliette Lecchini, Tony Meats, Rupert Meats, Annick McKenzie, Pippa Nixon, the late Sir John Page, Fred Russell

Bless This House

An adaptation by Nigel Smales from his exhibit All Our Yesterdays at the Taplow Heritage Day. Nigel will be expanding the contents of his exhibit in an illustrated talk at the Society's AGM on 30th October at the Village Centre.

Taplow used to be a much thirstier place. In the late 1800s, its 1,000 souls could find refreshment in any of seven hostleries without staggering from the parish. Our village predecessors enjoyed this wealth of liquid opportunity until well into the 20th century, but then they started to multiply. Strangely, the more they multiplied, the less thirsty they became. Now there are some 1,700 of us, and we are down to just three pubs, two of them really restaurants. What can we do but drown our sorrows on a Taplow pub crawl, circa 1880...?

We start outside the gates of Cliveden, the country seat of Hugh Grosvenor, Duke of Westminster. The Feathers Inn dates from around 1780 but was first licensed in the 1870s. Its name recalls the coat of arms of the Prince of Wales, but which one? We've heard that Queen Victoria's son and heir, Edward, often pops in for a pint with his friend Hugh. If we see Bertie (as the Prince's pals call him), we'll ask whether his patronage inspired the pub's name or if the link goes way back to his predecessor, the ill-fated Frederick, son of King George II, who lived at Cliveden from 1739 until his untimely death in 1751.



Queen Anne's House

Fortified by our first bevy, we wend our way south to our next port of call, The Queen's Head, built around 1710 on the foundations of a 15th-century cottage. The name recalls the royal retinue's residence during Queen Anne's

stay at Taplow Court with George Hamilton, Duke of Orkney, who in 1705 had fought so courageously at the Battle of Blenheim alongside his friend John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough. We hear about the Maidenhead brewers John & Henry Langton, who took over the pub in 1825 when Bath Road coaches would climb Berry Hill (then Town Lane) to stop overnight.



The Oak and Saw

It's a short walk along Church Lane (now Rectory Road) to The Oak & Saw, where we ponder why this is the only pub in the country of that name. The pub's sign hints at the secret. The oak tree, ship and saw reflect devices in the Orkney coat of arms which themselves are a reminder that the enterprising Earl arranged for damaged ships to be towed upriver to be broken up for salvage. This little patch of Taplow is evidence that his heirs carried on the tradition. Salvaged ships' timbers were used to build The Cottage and Farm View in 1756, and a row of five cottages nearby around 1770. In 1852, James Bell of Ray Mill paid the princely sum of £610 for this group of timber-framed cottages. Soon afterwards, three of the five cottages were converted to become The Oak & Saw, and the others became The Old Manor House next door. As we sup our pints of porter, we look up at the wooden beams around us and imagine them seeing service in the 1704 capture of Gibraltar, the 1739 War of Jenkin's Ear, or some other thrilling maritime adventure.

It's not far to our next watering hole. The Old Friend awaits us just a few paces to the east.

Its 18th-century timber outbuilding reminds us of the old cottage that was replaced in the 1840s by a beer shop, The Oak. With a pewter mug of frothy ale in hand, we ask about Henry Darvill of Windsor paying £610 for the shop and its land in 1852. We chuckle at the thought of The Oak and The Oak & Saw almost side-by-side in the 1860s, and see why The Oak became The Old Friend as it grew up to be a proper pub.

With half a gallon of refreshment inside us, we make our merry way down the footpath across the fields to the bottom end of Town Lane and a tricky decision. Should we first sample the delights of Cleare's Hotel, or those of The Old Station Inn across the Bath Road? The latter was built in 1838 as Maidenhead Riverside Station, briefly the western terminus of the Great Western Railway. As we sip our pale ale, we hear how it was converted to a pub in 1871 when the new Taplow Station opened half a mile up the line. Then we nip over to its grander neighbour, a 1780s coaching inn owned and run since 1842 by the local farmer, Richard Cleare. As we listen to his tales of the days when horse-drawn carriages would meet trains to take passengers on to Maidenhead, we close our eyes and somehow sense that, on his death in 1888, his hotel will be renamed The Dumb Bell in recollection of the silent bell in the disused station. We marvel at the insight in that sixth ale.

Tempting as it is to linger longer, we stagger valiantly onwards towards Maidenhead Bridge and our final destination, The Orkney Arms. Taplow's original Bath Road coaching inn, built in 1743, has been in the hands of the



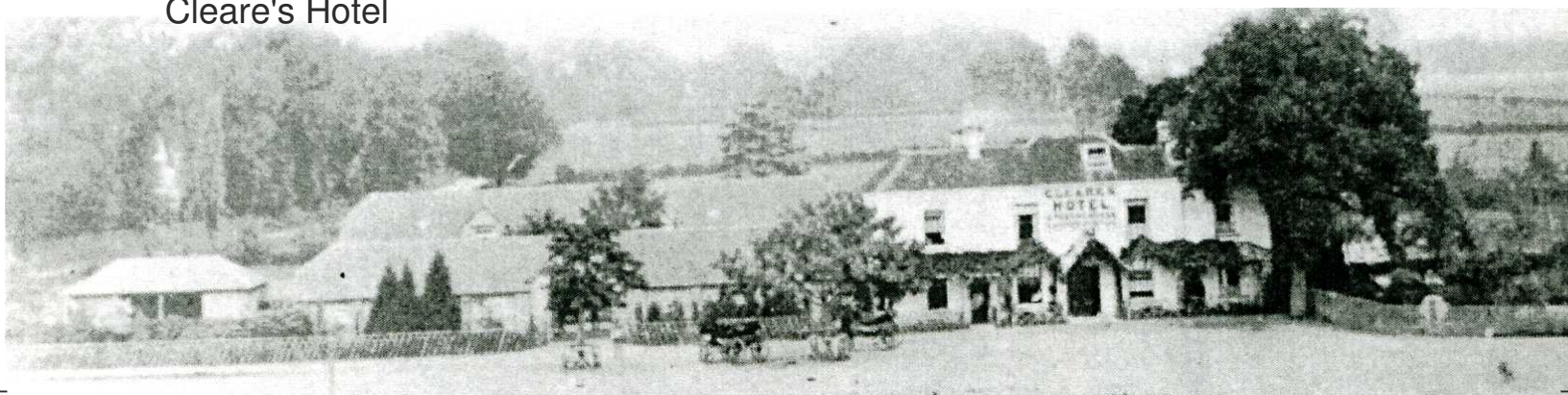
The Old Station Inn

enterprising William Skindle since 1873. He regales us with his ambitious plans to build a hotel on the adjacent riverfront, a fashionable rendezvous for royalty, the aristocracy, the successful, those who want to see and be seen, and those who should know better, any and all of whom will enjoy naughty escapades such as champagne luncheons on the Thames and sleeping them off together afterwards. In our slightly confused but happy state, we smile knowingly at Skindle's impossible ideas and doze off wondering absently if someone has laced our seventh pint.

When we awake back in the 21st century, Skindles is sad and silent. Car showrooms have replaced The Orkney Arms and The Old Station Inn, and nudged The Dumb Bell eastwards to life as a Harvester restaurant. The Old Friend has long gone, replaced by Priory Cottage. The Queen's Head is a private residence, Queen Anne's House. The Feathers Inn and The Oak and Saw have survived intact, the former reborn as a restaurant, the latter Taplow's last true pub. Where did it all go wrong? Anyone fancy one for the road?

Nigel Smales

Cleare's Hotel



Anna and the King of Siam

The Taplow Link

Most people know the fictionalised film version of this true story, but how many know about the Taplow connection, I wonder? Earlier this year Taplow Court was the venue for a marvellous event which many locals attended and the story unfolded... In 1897, King Rama V of Thailand (who was taught by the English Governess Anna Leon-Owens, whose story was told in *Anna and the King of Siam*), brought his family to Taplow Court, home of Lord and Lady Desborough, for an extended stay to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. This Royal link between Taplow and Thailand was celebrated on 29 April this year, when the present occupants of Taplow Court, SGI-UK, an international Buddhist organisation for culture, education and peace, hosted its annual reception.

The Guests of Honour were His Excellency Mr Kittti Wasinondh, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Thailand, and Princesses Khunying Narisa Chakrabhongse, together with Khunying Saisvadi Thomson of the Thai Royal Family. Robert Samuels (Chairman, Soka Gakki Int.) welcomed the Ambassador and Chairman of the South Bucks District Council, the Mayor of Slough and the past Mayor of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, together with many of SGI-UK's friends and neighbours. The Royal connection was highlighted through an exhibition of photographs arranged by the Vice Chairman, Dr Orapin Dawson of the Anglo-Thai Friendship Society, who is a local Maidenhead resident. The Ambassador also brought some precious historical pictures normally housed in the Embassy in London. Each guest received an orchid corsage, while enjoying Thai music played on traditional instruments. A local Thai restaurant provided special delicacies.

King Mongkut (Rama IV) was the king who hired Anna and it was his son King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) who sent the first



batch of Thai scholars to study in Britain – two of them were Kings Vajiravudh (Rama VI) and King Prejadhipok (Rama VII). King Chulalongkorn came to Britain 112 years ago and Taplow Court became his country residence for two months; he ruled Thailand for 42 years and is revered even to this day as one of its greatest kings whose reign was characterised by the modernisation of Siam and immense government and social reforms. He opened up the country and though he yielded concessions to the West he never sacrificed sovereignty; in fact, Siam is the only country in the region that has not been colonised by Western Powers. The present king, King Bhumibol, is a grandson of King Chulalongkorn and has reigned for over 60 years, contributing greatly to his country's international standing, and his reforms have touched the lives of many Thais, particularly farmers. He was also recognised by the UN Development Programme with the award of the first-ever Human Development Lifetime Achievement Award in 2006.

The Ambassador brought an impressive collection of photographs of King Rama V for us to see. He assured us all that despite all the political unrest, Thailand remains a safe place to visit. 'The sun, sea and sand remain in place and Thai hospitality to visitors never changes.'

Fred Russell

Photograph: Simon Addinsell

Our Gasometer

There used to be a gas works on the river side of Mill Lane. The old boundary wall is all that remains, together with the few buildings which today comprise the Maidenhead Sea Cadets' training ship Iron Duke.

The first town lit by gas was Preston, in 1816. In 1834, WB Stears built the Maidenhead works, becoming the Maidenhead Gas Light & Coke Company in 1835. The works were built on the river because the coal from which the gas was extracted came by barge. Barge delivery continued until 1940, replaced by lorries shuttling from Taplow railway station.

The 1875 OS map shows Mill Road running straight and parallel to the river. (It became Mill Lane some time between 1948 and 1952.) The original gasworks were squeezed between the road and the river. In 1898 the company added new plant to make carburetted water gas (CWG), an 1875 invention which improved quality by injecting light petroleum oils into the gas given off by the incandescent coking bed. In 1903 a new retort house was built, doubling the works' output. One or both of these expansions put the bend in Mill Lane, its new course first mapped in the OS map of 1910.

The earliest known output figure is 63 million cubic feet, in 1900. This rose to 100m in 1910, 169m in 1922, and finally 250m in 1949, the last year of regular gas production at Mill Lane, though the CWG plant was kept mothballed, ready for winter emergencies, until 1954.

The works were connected to Slough in 1947, and the present gas holder on the east side of Mill Lane was built some time between 1957 and 1967. Natural (North Sea) gas started coming ashore in 1967, and the country was wholly converted from town gas by 1977.

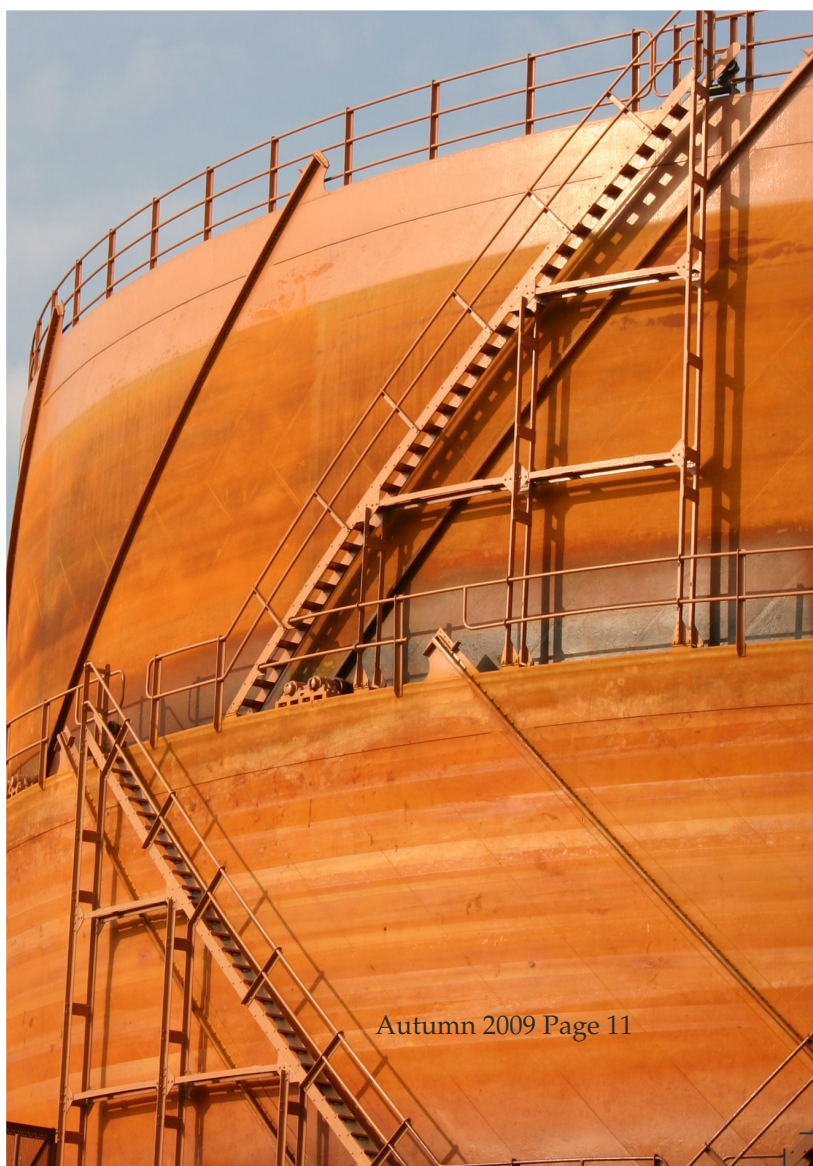
The Maidenhead Gas Light & Coke Company's name survived until 1876, when it became the Maidenhead Gas Co. by statute, probably conferring monopoly privileges: the early gas industry was fragmented and inefficient, addressed if not remedied first by mid-Victorian regulation and then by twentieth-century consolidation. Indeed, the original Maidenhead company survived what one unidentified source described as a 'strong threat from Consumers Organisation in 1863 to secure the act of parliament required to set up a rival company', almost certainly a revolt to

do with gas quality or metering, though it evidently failed.

Maidenhead Gas Co. took over the failed Burnham United Gas Lighting & Coke Co. in 1904, and in 1925 was itself taken over by the Uxbridge, Wycombe & District Gas Co. The South Eastern Gas Corporation was formed in 1932 specifically to acquire concerns across the region, and swallowed the Uxbridge in 1936. The whole industry in England, Scotland and Wales was nationalised by the 1948 Gas Act. Maidenhead came under the North Thames Gas Board in 1949, which promptly stood the works down but for the CWG mothballing.

Today, there is talk that the gas holder might disappear with the redevelopment of Mill Lane, but the boundary wall which dates from around 1900 may yet see us all out. South Bucks District Council's Taplow Riverside Conservation Area Character Appraisal of 2007 describes it as 'a positive feature' and its restoration as 'highly desirable'.

Adam Smith



Salmon in the Thames

Back in 1998 your Newsletter published an article by a River Thames expert, Mr G Armstrong, entitled The Thames Rehabilitation Scheme. This described the early attempt to clean up the Thames and repopulate it with fish stocks, including salmon. A later article by Peter Lane described tracking salmon in the Thames and in the autumn of 2000 Mr Darryl Clifton-Day contributed an article on the Thames Salmon Trust. In August of this year I wrote to the Environment Agency requesting an update on how successful the scheme had been in re-introducing salmon to our river, particularly since we had contributed towards the construction of one of the fish ladders.

A 2007 article for the BBC was not particularly encouraging. Darryl Clifton-Dey, of the Environment Agency (EA) said, 'People do fish for salmon in the Thames but the population is so small at the moment that there's not a great deal of chance of catching one. Hopefully if these come back, and if they breed and if the young from these come back, then in a few years time there'll be quite a few salmon around.'

This project to re-stock the Thames was set up 30 years ago, not for the benefit of anglers but as a means of demonstrating that the capital's river, for a century and a half a running sewer, was more or less clean again. The idea of restocking a new, cleaner, river with salmon was to demonstrate the success of this policy. Today, the project is not dead but its future is in the balance. Unusual rain patterns are thought to be to blame. Britain's sewers are unable to cope with intense downpours, causing them to overflow into the river. The worst culprit – London – is also the closest to the river's entrance, making the prospect for salmon even less enticing. 'The difference between the Seine and the Thames is that all the industry on the Seine is far inland, near Paris. While the lower reaches of the Seine have mainly less problematic agricultural pollutants, the Thames carries domestic and industrial wastes' said Darryl Clifton-Dey.

The project involves releasing juvenile salmon to areas of the River Kennet where the EA expect them to spawn, then monitoring the return of adults and using the presence of salmon in the river to encourage further

improvements in the river environment for the benefit of all river species. Adult salmon have returned to the Thames in almost every year since 1979, although numbers have declined in recent years.

To reach the breeding areas of the River Kennet adult salmon must negotiate 20 weirs on the River Thames and then a further 17 weirs on the Kennet. With the help of the Thames Salmon Trust and the National Lottery funding of good causes, fish ladders were completed on all of these weirs in the year 2000. Most of these passes have been designed to allow as many fish species as possible to migrate upstream, not just salmon. The fishpass at Boulter's Weir in Maidenhead on the River Thames was one of the last of the chain to be constructed, but it has been in place for about eight years now and the EA believe that it is working well. A report was received not long ago from an angler who saw three salmon jumping at the fishpass one evening. This report also appeared in the local Maidenhead paper. It cannot be confirmed that the fish were salmon, but it is possible that they were.



Now that the chain of fish ladders is complete and allows access to salmon breeding areas, EA expect adult fish to start using them. A few years ago they fitted small radio transmitters to some salmon and tracked them upstream. This information, and catches by anglers, have demonstrated that some salmon are swimming up through Maidenhead and reaching the River Kennet. Unfortunately this

is likely to be very low numbers of fish at the moment: returns of adult salmon to the Thames have been low for the last decade. There are a number of reasons why this might be, including climate change and generally higher mortality rates in the river and at sea. The EA are currently investigating these and trying to produce more fish in the river. In the meantime they are continuing to build fish ladders so that all of the fish species in the Thames can benefit. In fact Richard Oates of the Thames Rivers Restoration Trust says that the Thames is still not in good enough condition to support the return of significant numbers of salmon. This is a great pity, particularly since the fish are apparently

returning in good numbers of their own volition to the river Seine. All Europe's great Atlantic-facing rivers once ran thick with salmon, and all lost them when they became choked by sewage and other pollution. But unlike the Thames, the Rhine and other rivers, no efforts have been made to restock the Seine with salmon. Before salmon begin to run beneath Tower Bridge in London in any number, it seems that the capital's new sewer system must be completed. That is not expected to happen until 2020 at the earliest. 'We won't see salmon returning to the Thames until then' said Richard Oates.

Eva Lipman



Tom Knepp / USFWS

TIM KNEPP ©01

The Beatles at Cliveden

An item selected by Miv Wayland Smith from his exhibit Film, TV and Music at the Taplow Heritage Exhibition.

At a time when the Beatles are once again top of the album chart it is worth noting that almost 45 years ago on May 10th and 11th of 1965, the Beatles were on location at Cliveden House, shooting the 'Buckingham Palace' scenes for their second film, *Help!* To pass the time in between waiting around on set, the crew organised a relay race on the front lawn. The Beatles decided to join in against three other teams made up of electricians, carpenters and camera operators. The Beatles' team included the four Beatles, Neil Aspinall and chauffeur Alf Bicknell. The film crew were confident they would win – all the Beatles smoked and took little exercise. However to everyone's astonishment, the Beatles' team won – Ringo's speed was particularly commented upon. People had forgotten how

adept the Beatles were at escaping from fans and how necessary that extra burst of speed was in potentially life-threatening situations. Lord and Lady Astor presented the winning team with a bottle of vintage champagne.

In a recent interview Sir Paul McCartney spoke about how he and his wife Linda would escape the pressures of the Beatles splitting up by visiting Cliveden – 'I knew Cliveden from making the film *Help!* – we shot a sequence where we'd used the house, pretending it was Buckingham Palace. I'm not sure the Queen would have allowed that. I'd been out there with the Beatles and we met Lord Astor and he was on his last legs. I remember him offering us all oxygen. He was saying: "Do you want a bit?" I think we did have a quick whiff.'

John Lennon returned to Taplow with Yoko Ono in 1971 when the Rolling Stones threw a farewell party for 250 people at Skindles Hotel.

Sportsperson of the Year

The competition for the Taplow Sports Person of the Year was announced at the Taplow Heritage Day. It is an annual event open to men and women aged 18 and over with handicaps for certain of the eligible events according to age and gender. Entrants were required to register to complete three events in their own time and to email their results to the judges by the October 5th deadline. The events are to be chosen from:

- 3-mile run
- 9 holes of golf
- 200-metre swim
- 101 in lowest number of darts

This year there are 35 competitors – 28 men and 7 women. The name of the winner will be engraved on the Taplow Sports Person of the Year silver cup. At a ceremony to be held in the Oak and Saw on Saturday October 24th, the winner will be presented with the cup to hold for a year.

Marc Boden



Mill Lane: What Next?

The Royal Borough Council and the Taplow Parish Council voiced the view of the majority of their voters in asking the South Bucks District Council to refuse the outline planning application submitted by Hunter Page Planning Ltd on behalf of their client Watchword Ltd to build a complex comprising a seven-story hotel, high-rise apartment blocks and luxury houses with private marinas on the east bank of the Thames immediately adjacent to Maidenhead Bridge.

The District Council planning officers recommended the refusal of the application in a fluent and logical analysis of the issues involved in the rehabilitation of such an historic Conservation Area within such important Green Belt surroundings and the application has been withdrawn.

Now the way is clear for a developer to think through all the points that have been made by the official consultees and the general

public and to arrive at a master plan which will enrich our community and provide a satisfactory return on his investment.

A boutique hotel serving as the home base for tourists visiting the Thames Valley and incorporating a high-quality destination restaurant would be a viable enterprise for a Skindles building restored within its historic façade. Relocating the Bath Road end of Mill Lane on the existing car park without losing any of the magnificent trees would improve the traffic flow to the benefit of residents and businesses. The unique river environment along the island and river banks between Maidenhead Bridge and Boulters Lock Weir is much too precious to lose.

An imaginative planner would incorporate all of the Conservation and Green Belt features of this splendid location in a world-class new community.

Karl Lawrence

Aircraft Noise

The British Airports Authority (BAA) published a Noise Action Plan for Heathrow in May. The Society asked Taplow resident Geoff Holloway, a retired international and domestic routes pilot, to comment on the Plan. His comments have been incorporated within the Society's response to the consultation. He writes:

Noise is a subjective issue, with different sounds affecting people differently – a consensus on acceptable levels is an impossible dream. The Action Plan is long on jargon and aspirations, and for residents of the Taplow area much of its content can be disregarded.

Night movements

Arrivals are only an issue on easterly landings, when aircraft from Europe generally overfly Burnham Beeches heading west, before making a 180° turn to approach Heathrow. Two factors affect noise. First, air traffic control may route the aircraft too close to the M4 corridor and turn it early, thus requiring it to descend earlier and pass over our built-up area. Second, aircrews may fail to observe continuous descent procedures, which are designed to avoid periods of level flight and therefore use of higher power. Air Traffic Control should be more active in limiting descent clearances.

Departures are only an issue on westerly take-offs. Restrictions and fines for departures after 2300 hours do exist, but BAA have plenty of scope for granting exemptions (lack of terminal space/hotel accommodation for delayed passengers, etc.) Some other airports, such as Zurich, allow no such flexibility. BAA's own figures suggest the frequency of dispensations is high but even one a week can ruin 52 nights' sleep for local residents in one year. BAA should be more strict in enforcing the restrictions.

Round-the-clock operations

The current departure routes involve a turn north, either in the vicinity of Sainsbury's in Taplow or a little to the west, so as to avoid Maidenhead. These routes have been in place for decades and any change would involve inconvenience for other areas with concomitant howls of protest.

The ability of modern aircraft to navigate accurately is immense, which only severe weather conditions should mitigate. A stipulation should be made that speeds must be constrained to enable

the aircraft to follow the path accurately. This would have the benefit of increasing the altitude of planes over our area. BAA should insist on greater accuracy in flying the prescribed path.

The Action Plan

The plan comprises a list of 60 action points described as "reasonably practicable". The several sections cover quieter aircraft, balance against carbon emissions, noise mitigation schemes, consulting local communities, influencing planning policy, and research.

- Many proposals are subject to economic conditions. Operators currently have little scope to invest in newer, quieter aircraft.
- Compared with the total of emissions from all sources, the reduction in those from aircraft would be barely perceptible.
- A 4-year time scale to agree a system to penalise violators of noise regulations is hardly ambitious.
- Whether the control of noise violations is rigorous enough or the penalties severe enough is hard to judge from the data provided.
- Targeting through 'lobbying' and 'seeking to promote' with others in the airline industry to implement quieter practices and equipment is worthy but the greatest pressure will be public objections to unnecessary noise.
- Promises to make data available to interested parties and for regular consultations with local organisations have a simple PR context.
- Discovering that Heathrow is less noisy than Rome but louder than Schiphol is interesting but what actions will be taken as a consequence of such findings is more important.

Specific aims are lacking. The tone is inspirational rather than objective.

Conclusion

BAA have most of the powers they need to regulate noise. Their implementation is another matter. A more vigorous attitude towards accurate tracking and fining of transgressors is required.

Today, constraining the number of aircraft movements and keeping night operations to a minimum and the enforcement of current regulations are the most realistic actions to take.

Real reduction of noise disruption is likely to be gradual, coming only with the introduction of new technologies as airline finances permit.



Edited by the HTS committee
 21 Byways, Burnham SL1 7EB
 E-mail: editor@taplowsociety.org.uk
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