Hitcham and Taplow Society

Newsletter 102: Autumn 2014
£2.50 to non-members

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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Cover Photo: Liz Forsyth marked the centenary of the outbreak of the Great War by planting poppy seeds along the edge of the Village Green. Hopefully these poppies will bloom every summer in colourful Remembrance. *Photo by Nigel Smales*

Editorial

Paul Cheshire is Professor of Economic Geography at the London School of Economics. On 9th July 2014 his post on the LSE's Spatial Economics Research Centre blog began "Almost every reasonable person must now accept the case that we need to build on some parts of currently designated Greenbelt land. Not everyone is, of course, reasonable". He places Taplow in the 'Not everyone' camp and casts himself as the epitome of reason by saying "There is land around Taplow which looks to have environmental or scenic value but plenty which does not" and concluding his long blog by observing "Maybe if the 1,584 citizens of Taplow are unwilling to accommodate more housing they should be taxed the increased value of their houses".

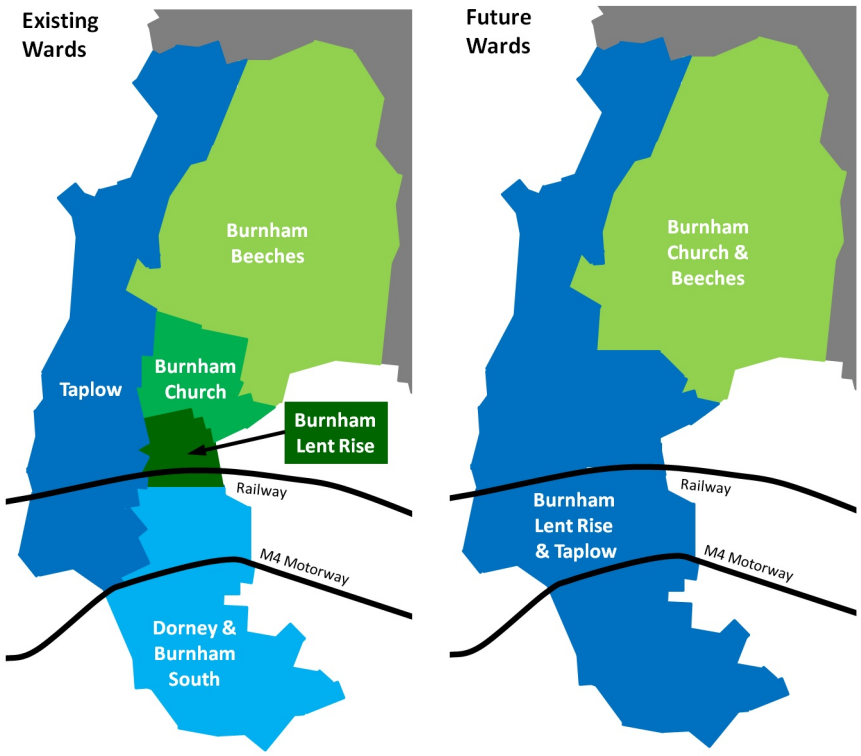
So are we citizens of Taplow unreasonable NIMBYs? The facts say not. There were 1,584 people living here in 2001, 1,669 in 2011 and – when current and prospective developments are taken into account – the population will soon rise to between 2,100 and 2,500. Even the lower of these projections represents an increase of one-third on Prof Cheshire's out-dated benchmark.

South Bucks District Council seems to believe it reasonable to protect the Green Belt by, for example, refusing the second recent planning application to redevelop Silchester Manor because (as the officer's report on that application confirmed) SBDC can fulfil local housing needs for the foreseeable future without building on Green Belt.

Who is being unreasonable here? Is it Taplow for not wanting to be concreted over when it is just not necessary? Is it SBDC for seeking a balance between the need for places to live and for green spaces that add a little quality to life? Or is it an influential academic who has glanced from his ivory tower at Google Earth, taken offence at patches of green that surround us, put his favourite bit between the teeth of his hobbyhorse and ridden rough-shod across inconvenient truths? Let's hope the day will come when powers-that-be look at real numbers and decide it is reasonable and right to say 'Enough'.

Nigel Smales

Electoral Review



South Bucks currently has 40 electoral wards with their democratically elected representatives serving as councillors. Their political mix is 39 Conservative and one Independent.

In 2010 the Government set itself the priority of reducing the national deficit. The public sector was one area where savings were targeted. A combination of government edicts and reduced Treasury funding put pressure upon councils across the country to reduce their costs and charges to the taxpayer by becoming more efficient.

Reacting to this initiative with a willing spirit and aiming to achieve savings for council tax-payers, SBDC members voted in favour of a proposal to achieve some savings by reducing the number of wards from 40 to 28 and informed the Boundaries Commission (BC) accordingly. This decision also served as an example to council workers many of whom were faced with redundancy as duties were merged. An analysis of the Electoral Roll and the 2011 National Census revealed the number of present electors in each parish and then these figures enabled the BC to draw the proposed new ward boundaries with the aim of ensuring there will be approximately the same number of electors in each of the new wards that it then proposed.

The BC's recommendations received in April were put out for consultation and it seemed across South Bucks that most councillors accepted the proposed changes. For Taplow, that was definitely not the case! Many residents wrote to contest the proposal to merge Taplow with Dorney and Lent Rise South. They made the case that Taplow is clearly identifiable geographically with all the features of a rural parish. We enjoy a strong sense of community. In addition to our special associations with Cliveden and with SGI at Taplow Court, we have own village green, St Nicolas' Church and School, three pubs – The Oak & Saw, The Feathers and The Royal Standard – and many sports and social facilities including our Cricket Club and choirs.

Regrettably these best endeavours were not successful. It was confirmed on 14th October that Taplow will be merged with Dorney, Lent Rise South plus a small area of Burnham Church Ward. This new ward of mixed rural and suburban domains will be represented by three councillors. My concern is that Taplow could be outvoted on Taplow priorities or, since all three could potentially be resident outside our parish, that Taplow has no representation at all resulting in the possibility of expenditure being prioritised elsewhere.

Taplow has always had active residents on the District Council. My predecessors Eileen Law, Ann Young, Pamela Bentley and John Kennedy made great efforts to represent the interests of both our parish and the district. I am trying to do the same. Please contact me at georgesallysandy@live.co.uk if you share my view that the tradition should continue.

George Sandy
SBDC Councillor for Taplow and
Chairman of Taplow Parish Council

A Pair of Micks

Michael Fletcher has been 'Young Mick' for 24 years. How strange it feels now to be just Mick, all alone in this 134-year-old boathouse on the Old Public Slipway next to Maidenhead Bridge. The boathouse and its neighbour in the upstream curl of the bridge evolved to serve Jonathan Bond and his successors in Bond's Boats from probably the 1870s until 1955. Richard Springfield continued the tradition until it all became too much for the old fellow in the late-1970s. It might have been used to store beds, probably for Skindle's, possibly for sale, until becoming an ivy-covered beer store for an open-air bar on Skindle's riverside terrace. That was how Mick Free found it in 1985 not long after its neighbour had been demolished.

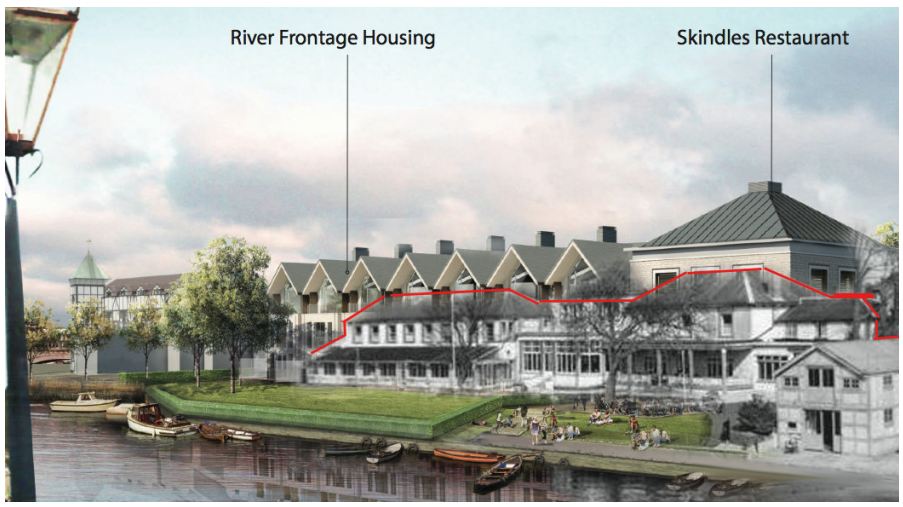
Mick had started out with Andrews Brothers and worked at Windsor Racecourse Marina and at John Turks in Cookham before going it alone by launching Marlow Boat Services, named after his home town. Alan Hockham joined him here and he also had a part-time painter when he took on Michael as an apprentice in 1989. The boys called him 'Old Mick' even though he was barely 54 but he grew into the nickname before passing away in June last year. Now Michael is the last of a kind. He has plenty of longstanding customers to keep him busy. Every winter the boathouse is packed upstairs and down with craft being maintained with tender loving care. Last April he had two dating from the 1930s – an electric canoe built by Buss at Watford and a slipper stern launch built by Andrews at Bourne End – and two from the 1920s: Piroska, a motor launch built by Bond's just beyond the bridge and the beautiful Arethusa, a 40-foot umpire's launch built at Henley in 1921 by Hobbs & Sons. She has served at many regattas including Henley Royal and has carried BBC Radio teams covering the Oxford & Cambridge Boat Race, most tragically in 1990 when commentator Peter Jones had a heart attack on board and died the next day.

He may be a one-man-band but Michael will take on an apprentice if he can secure his tenure here. Mick gave up trying to keep up during the long wrangle as ownership of the site passed from Maidenhead Corporation through two developers to South Bucks District Council in 1994. All four landlords were happy to take the rent but the local blight meant the Micks have lived in limbo for nearly 20 years. And with the redevelopment of Skindle's at last a possibility, Michael is concerned for the future of his business (the last of its kind hereabouts), the boathouse (a notable heritage asset) and the Old Public Slipway (a valued amenity: a right-of-way for walkers and the only public access to the river for miles used by perhaps 20 or 30 boat-owners most summer weekends). Currently we can enjoy all three, but for how much longer?

Nigel Smales

Nigel Smales

Mill Lane: Your Last Chance



Montage by Fred Russell

Berkeley Homes (Three Valleys) Ltd has responded to the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) adopted by South Bucks District Council (SBDC) last year by submitting four associated planning applications, the essence of which is summarised here.

Skindle's will be reinvented as a restaurant and a footbridge to Ray Mill Island will enable a pleasant circular walk. Traffic remains an issue, in part because departures from the SPD do not yet have County blessing. A one-way left-turn off Maidenhead Bridge would allow the new Mill Lane junction further east to be smaller scale and free of traffic lights. There are sharp differences of opinion about the closure of Mill Lane (dire implications for Berry Hill?) but it will be possible to drive down to the Jubilee River car park.

The SPD calls for "exceptional design": always a subjective issue. Some might like the proposed 'boathouse' theme. Fred Russell's montage illustrates his lament at "the appallingly big-city appearance [of the] over-scaled houses". Maidonians have expressed dismay at the "elaborate housing estate" which – with its "privatised waterfronts" and "poor parody" of Skindle's – amounts to "a massive missed opportunity" to enhance the Thames. And there is widespread disappointment that the footbridge is not Martin Knight's graceful span but an unsightly "industrial truss".

The nitty-gritty is in the numbers, if you can find them sprinkled in hard-to-read pale grey text in the Design & Access Statement. They add up to 257 dwellings: 167 houses and flats, 60 apartments for 'seniors' (20 in 'shared ownership'), 18 in refurbished or replicated buildings and 12 'future phase' houses. These will be home to maybe 580 people (an extra one-third on top of the 2011 population of Taplow) in what has the feel of an exclusive gated community.

SBDC commissioned a study in 2010 which valued the land at around £15m and concluded that 110 dwellings (for say 250 people) built at a cost of £22m and sold for £47m would give a profit of £10m. Berkeley paid £23.5m for the site in 2014. Applying the same uplift of 56% to 257 homes, costs would be around £80m, sale £171m and profit £67m. These very raw figures suggest a decent profit could be had by building fewer homes, and fewer people would have less detrimental impact on the locality.

The 'future phase' is a worry. The SPD's call for comprehensive development is at risk. Piecemeal is a possibility because Berkeley still has no agreement with National Grid, owner of the two former gasworks. The idea is to build 12 houses on the triangular one with commercial offices and associated parking on the other (which would be perfect for a riverside café or a marina). Parking is a worry too. No provision has been made for the 50 cars of commercial tenants in the existing boathouse offices and only 15 spaces are allowed for the restaurant. Could the hope be that the new Skindle's fails so it can be converted to flats?

So is this over-development? Is it a gated ghetto which will be apart from Taplow not a part of it? Or is it the best rescue of the blighted site we can hope for? If you haven't already done so, now is the time to have your say. The applications may be viewed at SBDC's offices, online at www.southbucks.gov.uk/milllane2014 or by arrangement with Taplow Parish Council. Written comments must be submitted to SBDC by post or online by 19th November.

Nigel Smales

Counting Cars

What was that about dire implications for Berry Hill?

The Glanville Group of Didcot prepared a Traffic Assessment supporting the Berkeley applications. Its survey in the morning peak hour on 11th March 2014 counted 454 vehicles heading down Berry Hill of which 231 turned right into Mill Lane and 199 of those went on to turn right into Maidenhead. It is reasonable to suppose that the closure of Mill Lane would result in all 454 continuing down Berry Hill to double the number of vehicles queuing at the traffic lights. But worry not: despite dismissing the dream that some commuting 'rats' would run elsewhere, Glanville forecast that five years from now there will be only 402 an hour scurrying down Berry Hill each morning, just 75% more than now. No logical justification for this reduction was apparent. Was wishful thinking at work?

Institute Road poses another commuting question: should parking here be allowed or prohibited? At 10.30am on 24th September 103 cars were parked in the vicinity of Taplow Station: 17 in the two station car parks (with 22 spaces vacant), 13 in Approach Road, 43 in Station Road and 30 in Institute Road which is to be subjected to a 'trial' of double yellow lines. Instead of a blanket prohibition, wouldn't it make more sense to trial a scheme that alternates double-yellows with passing places? Might this improve traffic flow without ignoring the reality that many locals take the train to London?

Nigel Smales

That Windfall

Why was it given? George Sandy, Chairman of Taplow Parish Council, asked for it after becoming aware of the largesse the developer Land Securities were promising to Burnham if permission was granted for a development in Taplow Parish.

How much is it? £100,000 out of a total of £865,000 payments promised to various local organisations for various purposes.

What is it for? The original condition open to public view said it was "to be used towards environmental improvements in Taplow". A later legal agreement not made public said it was "to be used towards environmental improvements in Taplow including the Old Priory Gardens restoration project, traffic calming measures, biodiversity and other community projects"

What happened next? The Parish Council invited suggestions for its use to be measured against criteria it had set giving pre-eminence to permanent or longstanding value or 'legacy' and benefit to the community as a whole. The Council received 56 suggestions and decided, against strong and widespread objections from residents, to consider the proposals at a meeting closed to the public. It presented a short list of eight projects to the Annual Parish meeting and asked the residents present to nominate their top three preferences.

What now? The Council has put the money into an interest-bearing account for use in due course on seven projects with any amount remaining being ring-fenced for use on any future proposals meeting the criteria.

Any Concerns? Across the spectrum of residents there is considerable unease about such large amounts of monies being dispensed to facilitate the approval of a planning application and there is doubt about the process of managing the monies received and the lack of openness in the decision process.

The Seven Projects? £10,000 has been allocated towards the repair of St Nicolas' Church roof, £5,000 to Old Priory Garden and £2,500 to provide disabled toilets at the Women's Institute. Support in principle was given to protecting the Reading Room mural and improving the Village Green (quotations are being sought) and to developing a Neighbourhood Plan and a new Parish Footpaths map (working parties are required).

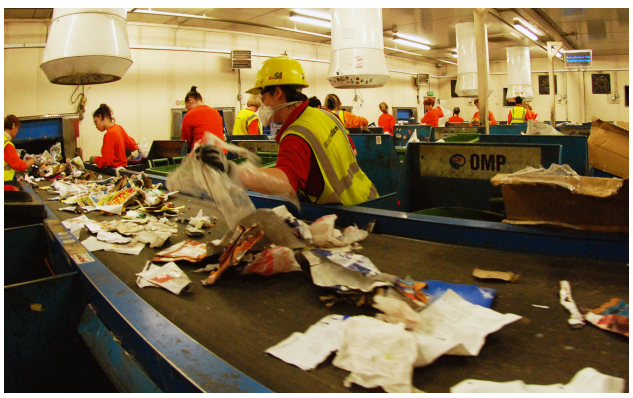
Karl Lawrence

The End of the Line for Landfill?

If you have found that you have been spending more time sorting your recycling into separate bins nowadays, then here are the reasons why.

In a nutshell, the EU and the UK government have laid down directives on waste management and all local councils now have to meet targets for rubbish reduction and recycling. The new South Bucks District Council scheme, which began this spring, has already almost halved the rubbish going to landfill from 268 to 145 tonnes a week.

Emptying lorry loads into landfill was simple but the modern waste collection sorting and recycling programme is a sophisticated triumph of logistics. SBDC's waste contractor Biffa collects from 28,000 local households every week.



Women working in one of the sorting rooms. They have to concentrate on the fast-moving lines and pick off anything that cannot be recycled.

Anything recyclable goes into the blue-topped bin or a black box for paper. The rest goes into the black bin destined for landfill. Those who want their garden rubbish collected put it into a green bin and pay for the service. Food waste is now collected weekly from residents' brown caddies by the drivers of four special white trucks. Over 500 tonnes of this is collected every year and goes to an anaerobic digestion plant near Oxford. This produces enough electricity to power 17,000 homes!

Trucks come to Biffa's Dropmore depot to collect the paper for recycling into newsprint at Shotton in Cheshire. The rest goes to their huge recycling centre in Edmonton which takes in waste from all over Southern England. Here it is processed through a network of conveyor belts and sorting rooms, which eventually turn a mountain of detritus into neat bundles of recycled material.

The sorting is part done by machines and partly by people. In the mechanised sections, paper is flung off by a giant threshing machine because it is lighter than metal or plastic. Aluminium and tin cans are in turn sucked off the conveyor belt by extremely powerful magnets. However, you can't beat the human eye to spot a renegade item so it is the human 'pickers' who have the tough job of further sorting the rubbish on the conveyor belts. The plant employs 400 people who split into two ten-hour shifts a day. They are mainly from Eastern Europe and work two days on, two nights on and then four days off.

Gradually all the material is sorted into different types of recyclables. Plastics are separated into clear, coloured or HDPE (mainly milk bottles), likewise card and paper have to be split. Eventually it is all ready to be pressed into one tonne bales of plastics, paper or metals or tipped into bins of glass. These will then go on to specialist recycling and manufacturing plants to be turned back into newsprint, bottles, plastic items or packaging.

Each shift turns around an average of 200 tonnes of paper, 30 tonnes of card, 10 tonnes of aluminium, 10 tonnes of steel, about 45 tonnes of plastics and 50 to 100 tonnes of glass. That's around 40,000 tonnes a year – quite a load of rubbish!

Caroline Gillies

A more detailed version of this article is on the HTS website.

What do members think of the new rubbish regime? – Ed

Caroline Gillies

Leonard Baker is pleased with some examples of the end product – one tonne bales of aluminium and mixed plastic.

The weather has been kind this year to the Society's two social events. It was glorious on Easter Monday when over 100 children and adults enjoyed the Easter Egg Hunt courtesy of the consummately hospitable Charlie & Toby Greeves and Sheila & Barrie Peroni.

And it was even better on 21st June when the Village Green Party went with a wonderful swing. New event captain Alastair Hill credits Euan Felton and his blueprint for Midsummer revelry. Absolutely right, but let's not forget Alastair and his team of volunteers did a brilliant job – not least by being lucky with the sunshine – and a coincident 'sleepover' in the school field meant that even more children than usual could be there to enjoy the barmy, balmy evening. The raffle raised a magnificent £691 for Maidenhead Sea Cadets and the innovative Tim Browning flew his drone on high to record the frolics from a very unusual angle. The spectacular result can be enjoyed online at http://www.taplowsociety.org.uk/VGP (click on 'Hitcham and Taplow Roast').

Meanwhile, Taplow Cricket Club is doing its bit for the social scene. Families gather on Friday evenings to watch the Colts, have a go at the game or just wind down for the weekend. Our young correspondents take up the story....

Hannan Irwin says "My favourite thing in Taplow is the cricket club. Everybody is always chatting and laughing. There's a barbecue and sometimes we eat popcorn." Alice Snoxell "It's a kind and joyful place to come on a Friday night to chill out." Imogen Wallis adds "This is a special part of Taplow. You can get anything you want – litterally – like crisps and nuts, orange and blackcurrant J2Os and fizzy pop blackcurrant squash. And you are aloud to rome the field for as long as you want."

Anyone interested in joining the Club to play or just enjoy the atmosphere should contact Di & Gerry Mills on gedimills@yahoo.co.uk.

Tim Browning, Andrew Findlay, Nigel Smales

Rosie at River Dart

St Nicolas' School has established a fine tradition of taking children in Year 6 for a week of adventure on Dartmoor. Our 11-year-old correspondent takes up the story of her trip last March...

We had to be at school at 6.45am to climb onto the coach. We were soo excited! It took four hours to get to the River Dart Country Park where the boys had two dormitories and so did the girls. It was a bit of a struggle making our beds as some of them were three bunks high! Then we met our instructors in the boot room and got ready for our first activity, called Round Robin. This is a great way to get to know the area but we all ended up wet and cold after climbing through drain pipes.

Every day we did an activity in the morning and another in the afternoon. Then after supper, we went out in the dark for an activity with our torches. Caving was an amazing experience. Some were scared about the narrow parts and some about the dark but we did have head torches. At one point we switched them all off and it was pitch black. Some of the class also went through the cheese press, a narrow gap where you had to crawl with your head on one side. Kayaking and canoeing were great fun, everyone got wet whether you wanted to or not. In the end people just jumped in even though the water was freezing!

Raft building was best! We made our rafts out of wooden poles, barrels and rope. The instructor said we could only ask three questions for help to build it, and asking to go to the toilet counted as one of them! Once built, we climbed on the rafts and paddled out onto the lake for a splashing fight. We had a lovely sunny day to go rock climbing at Leigh Tor

Rosie Sellers and Ella Davies in the cave
Photo by Rebecca Holmes

three miles away. We had to get into harnesses and were taught how to ding-dong, as well as to climb and walk down. Some went there by bus so they could climb first. Others walked and on the way through a field were told a bit of a story about Mongolian Earthworms. I don't want to spoil it for anyone else but, if you get the chance to go to River Dart, remember to pack some long socks so you don't get bitten!

Our meals were yummy: fry-ups for breakfast, lunch was pizza or egg, ham and chips and one night we had this huge ice cream sundae; we didn't go hungry! Friday came too soon. We packed our bags and hopped back on the coach for the journey home. We were all so excited to tell our families about our amazing trip but we were also sad because we had to leave. River Dart was an amazing experience. If I could, I would definitely go again. Everyone else would say the same. It was the best St Nicolas trip ever.

Rosie Sellers (now studying at Luckley House School in Wokingham)

Thomas Knight on the water
Photo by Caroline Sellers

Lord of Tartary

For 14 years from 1925 Hill House was home to the poet and novelist Walter de la Mare, known to friends and family as Jack. On 23rd May his grandson Giles unveiled a blue plaque commemorating Jack's residence. The ceremony took seconds. His speech was short and sincere. He read two poems – *Incomputable* and *All That's Past* – and the assembled company retired for refreshment in Flat No 5, then the home of Penny & Tony Reid.

Nigel Smales

The event was as brief as it had been long in the making but no less pleasant for that. Gavin Gordon thinks it was 11 years ago that he first had the idea. Hill House was converted to seven flats in the 1970s. He acquired No 2 in 1989 and joined with other residents to create a freehold management company now run by Brian Millin, the admirable fellow who has realised Gavin's dream by having the plaque produced and installed. Tartary Management Ltd takes its name from one of Jack's famous poems.

Jack's wife Elfrida (Elfie) shared with Selina Whitlaw of Amerden House the maiden name Ingpen. Were they sisters or more likely cousins? Could this familial link be how Elfie and Jack discovered Taplow? Or was it through mutual friends of their landlords the Desboroughs? Her ladyship loved having "a resident genius" at her gates. She implored him to join the Saturday-to-Monday parties at Taplow Court, at least for Sunday breakfast. Jack much preferred entertaining at home where it wasn't unusual for there to be 20 unexpected guests for dinner. Siegfried Sassoon, Edith Sitwell and Henry Newbolt were regular visitors and JB Priestley, WB Yeats, Max Beerbohm, Thomas Hardy, JM Barrie and GK Chesterton almost certainly came to call. On one occasion, Jack told Joyce Grenfell what she described as "an earthy joke". A lady who was suffering from constipation went to see her doctor and said "I just sit there, but nothing happens". The doctor asked if she was taking anything. "Only my knitting", she replied.

Gavin can't confirm that Hill House is haunted but he has heard that Jack enjoyed sitting in his dining room, now Flat No 3, thrilling children with tales of two ghosts who haunted the place. One of those fascinated youngsters was Selina's granddaughter Anne Whitlaw (later Milne) who cherished fond memories of Sunday afternoons sitting on Uncle Jack's knee to hear him spin his yarns.

Although during his time in Taplow Jack published two substantial collections of poetry – *The Fleeting and Other Poems* and *Memory and Other Poems* – his muse for verse was temporarily mislaid. He concentrated on writing short stories – including *The Connoisseur, On the Edge* and *The Wind Blows Over* – and on compiling three of his most famous anthologies: *Desert Islands, Early One Morning* and *Behold, This Dreamer!* Unfortunately his creativity was interrupted all too often by his own and Elfie's bouts of illness which resulted in their departure for Twickenham in 1939. As they were packing, Jack found forgotten verses he had scribbled in his youth, a serendipity that evolved two years later into *Bells and Grass*. He went on to be awarded the Carnegie Medal in 1947 for the 17 fantasy and fairy tales in *Collected Stories for Children*.

Nigel Smales

From Seed to Blossom

Melissa Henry (C&G)

Jill Harden receiving her award from Helen Skelton (TV presenter) and Chris Jones (CEO & Director-General, City & Guilds)

It all started one rainy Easter about five years ago...

Having lived in and around Taplow since 1996, I was asked to help with the flowers at St Nicolas' Church. I expected to be sweeping up or making tea. How wrong could I be? I was handed a bunch of flowers, some foliage and florist foam and asked to arrange something for one of the windows. Let me say I could have done better so I signed up for some classes in the hope I would be asked to help again. After a term of evening classes and a couple of courses at the Women's Institute's Denman College, I was hooked! I wanted something more challenging and decided to try for a City & Guilds qualification. Luckily Missenden Abbey offered weekend courses. I enrolled in a Level 2 course and had such fun that when it was all over I continued onto Level 3. This was serious stuff requiring lots of focus and a great deal of research and homework, but it was enormously satisfying.

At the final Assessment, it was daunting to discover that my Assessor was in charge of Westminster Abbey Flower arrangements for the National Association of Flower Arrangement Societies and had arranged the Altar flowers for Prince William's wedding to Kate Middleton. I was surprised to be nominated for a City & Guilds Medal of Excellence and astonished several weeks later when, after another presentation of work and a portfolio review, I received a call to say I was to be awarded the Medal – one of a maximum 114 awarded each year. And then, incredibly, life got even better....

In June, I was enjoying the annual ceremony and celebration dinner in London at which 14 of the Medallists are selected for Lion Awards. To my amazement, my name was announced as a finalist in the category of Creative Craftsperson of the Year. I couldn't believe it when I was declared the winner. I later learnt that not only had there been over two million City & Guilds certificates awarded during 2014 but also that Floristry had never before been selected for a Lion Award.

I will be forever thankful for the opportunity to arrange the flowers that Easter weekend. It led not only to these awards but to my starting a small flower business and decorating weddings and events. Although I moved from Taplow two years ago, I still regularly arrange flowers at the Church and, having completed a Certificate in Teaching for Adults, I am in the process of planning some workshops to be held there for anyone who like me fancies fiddling with flowers. Thanks so much to St Nicolas, Muriel King and Judy Norbron for the opportunity and encouragement.

Jill Harden

HTS AGM

8pm

Friday 28th November 2014

in the Village Centre

Forty Years in Sandals

Three remarkable things happened in Hull in 1970. The Who recorded the first live rock album (only for Live at Leeds to be released instead); Hull City became the first English team ever to lose a penalty shoot-out (to Manchester United); and Alan Dibden began to study for a law degree only to think again.

Alan had a rather appropriate birthplace for a man of the cloth. His family had long been farmers at Christchurch (then in Hampshire, now Dorset) where their surname meant 'the people who live in the hollow'. His upbringing was church-every-Sunday but it wasn't until Hull that his heart was set on a career as a cleric. He says "it seemed a good idea, the next logical step spiritually and emotionally". After theological college in Cambridge – and studying in Washington DC while the Watergate scandal exploded – his first post was in Peckham, initially as deacon until he was elevated to the priesthood in 1974 under David Shepherd, the former England batsman by then Bishop of Woolwich. The new reverend's flock weren't exactly Del Boy, Rodney and Trigger: Alan counted his blessings if he got home with nothing nastier ringing in his ears than a sneering chorus of Jesus Christ Superstar.

Nigel Smales

In 1977 he began two stimulating and impossibly busy years as warden and missioner of Pembroke House in Lambeth before his ability not to send his interviewer to sleep secured him the post of Team Vicar at St Francis' Church in Langley. Gillian was just up the road at St Mary's. They quickly became firm friends, slowly realised there was more to it, married in 1982 and two years later moved to All Saints' Church in Chalfont St Peter. Their first experience of Taplow was to attend the 1990 Remembrance Service, the last conducted by his predecessor at St Nicolas' Church. Thereafter Alan's open-toed sandals followed in the footsteps of Jonathan Meyrick. He smiles to recall coming to Taplow for the variety. His congregation ranged from the better-off to retired agricultural workers on state pensions. The Taplow Parish Charity was still active; it had originally been founded as a coal fund in 1867 but was still giving support to those in need. The socio-economic balance has shifted, especially in recent years as younger families have come to Taplow, and this fund is long defunct.

Alan is a governor of St Nicolas' School and an elder statesman of five vicars spanning eight churches. In 2008, St Nicolas, St Mary (Hitcham) and St Anne (Dropmore) were joined by St Peter (Burnham), St James the Less (Dorney), St John the Baptist (Eton), St John the Evangelist (Eton Wick) and St Andrew (Cippenham) in the Jubilee River Group Ministry. It is only 20 years since the Church of England ordained its first female priests yet Alan is entirely at ease that he and Reverend Bill Jackson of St Peter's are outnumbered by three female colleagues.

A special service in St Nicolas' Church on 29th June 2014 marked the 40th anniversary of Alan's ordination. Next year St Nicolas will celebrate another milestone: the silver jubilee of hearing his stentorian tones echoing from its pulpit.

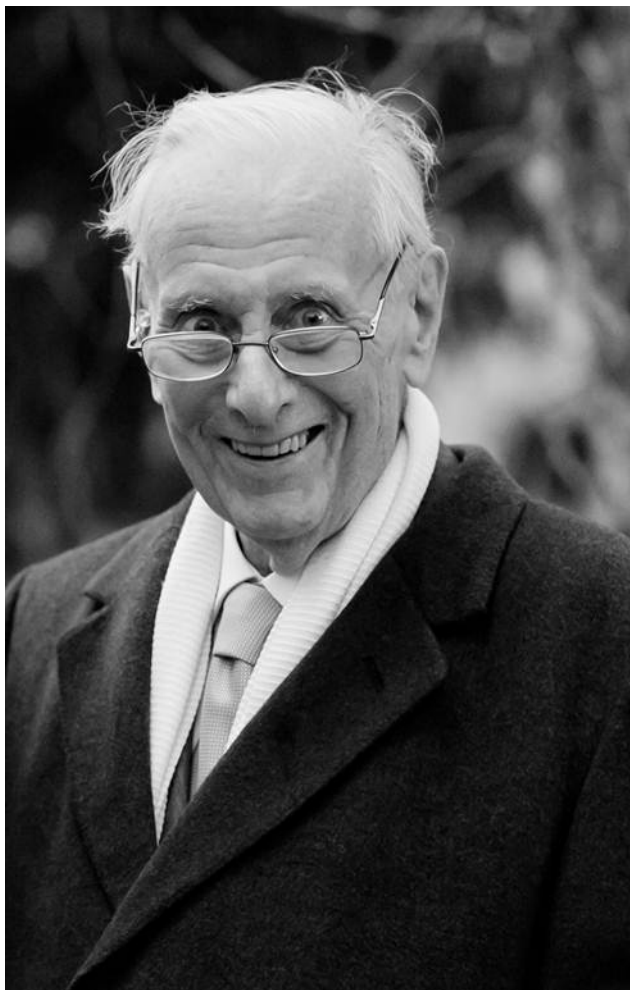
Nigel Smales

George Lawson Milne 1925-2014

Few in living memory have served Taplow with greater grace, perception and diligence than George Milne. He retired from the Royal Navy in 1965 having settled the previous year with his widowed mother in Ellington Road. He was soon invited to join the Parochial Church Council, the Conservative Association and the Parish Council, which he served for many years. He was also active in the Royal British Legion, serving as branch chairman from 1969 until 1986, and in all quarters won admiration for his meticulousness and dedication, qualities that had their root in his family and his Navy career. He and I were Churchwardens together for some years during which he was a great support; I learnt a great deal from him.

George was born on 15th May 1925 in Warrington, Lancashire, at the home of his maternal grandmother. His father Charles, son of an Aberdonian minister in the Presbyterian Church, was an industrial chemist with St Helen's Cable & Rubber Company which relocated in the late-1920s to the new Slough Trading Estate. George was educated at the new Slough Grammar School – he developed a great respect for its headmaster ER Clark and his staff – but was deeply affected by the loss of his father in a road accident. As a loving, kind and considerate son, George was conscious that he was now the 'man' of the family at 13. Fortunately help was at hand. He was forever thankful for the kindness of HF Allen, father of one of his best friends, who took a great interest in him, included him in his family activities and, when George matriculated in 1941, offered him an appointment with his company as a commercial trainee.

George knew he would soon be conscripted. Despite being a 16-year-old 'landlubber', he volunteered for the Royal Navy in search of adventure. After two years experience with Slough Sea Cadets Corps he joined the Navy and served during WW2 on Atlantic convoys and on minesweepers in the Channel. Later his career took him to the Mediterranean, the West Indies, the Far East, Australia and the Pacific where he witnessed the UK's first atom bomb test. In 1955 he was promoted to Lieutenant Commander and began six years with the new entry training division at HMS Victory before



Emily Coe (née Young)

being stationed on Clydeside as a military adviser to a team planning how the UK might survive a nuclear attack.

His next chapter had many new strands. One involved commuting to civilian executive positions at the British Institute of Management and, from 1972 until 1990, the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants. Another began at his very first Parish Council meeting when he met Anne Young, a widow with a deep local heritage through her Whitlaw ancestry. They grew together in their various public duties, eventually married in 1976 and moved into Priory Cottage in Rectory Road in the late-1980s. Anne's sons Allan and John were delighted to have George joining the family. His marriage gave him the happiest years of his life. She passed away in 2005 and he lived his last six years in Eton still in touch with his many friends in Taplow.

Sheila Peroni

Iris Midlane 1945-2014

Jo Cowley

Iris Midlane first came to Taplow to watch her future husband John play cricket. Her life came to revolve around all three as she served the community with generosity, care and friendliness.

Iris was born one of nine children on 4th December 1945 in Limavady, a small town in Northern Ireland, and raised on a farm in nearby Ballykelly. She first met John while working for Hertz at Belfast Airport. A year or so later she transferred to Heathrow and they met again and married in 1979. Their son William was born in 1981 and he was six when John jumped at the chance to buy the original Wickenden "for the cricket". By 1991 the house had been rebuilt in the style of Edwin Lutyens complete with myriad cricket features and an iris carved above the front door. The vineyard began as a bonus – George Clark was vital to Iris's white wine winning an English Vineyards Association bronze medal in 1994 – but the vines were getting old; their last vintage was 1997.

Iris's hospitality is legendary. She hosted or organised so many social and fund-raising events for the local Conservative Party, of which she was Chairman for many years, and for Thames Valley Adventure Playground. During her second spell as a Parish Councillor, she joined Josie Corio and Liz Forsyth to organise Carols on the Green. She will be warmly remembered at Taplow Cricket Club where she helped John stage August Bank Holiday celebrity matches involving famous West Indian cricketers and, after he died, succeeded him as Club President during a golden era which for her ended with Peter Casey taking her to see Taplow win the 2014 Chilterns League.

Iris had a wonderful sense of humour and was a kind and loyal friend. We shall miss her.

Sheila Peroni

Romans at the Cricket Club

It isn't possible to put all our archaeological exhibits on public display at Bucks County Museum in Aylesbury but anyone can make an appointment to see our reserve collection at Halton (near Wendover). The most important finds we have from Taplow are some excellent flint tools including the very earliest flint handaxes made by early humans (before Homo Sapiens), probably over 200,000 years ago.

Occasionally a little archaeological mystery crops up. Can Taplow help us with the latest? Excavations in the 1950s by the Middle Thames Archaeological & Historical Society revealed evidence of Roman activity at Ten Acre Field, better known as Taplow Cricket Club. Last year we received a donation of a small Roman brooch, a number of Roman pot sherds, some more modern pottery found in 1955/56 and a notebook suggesting further finds were made in 1957/58 by RF Denington, FE Adams and the Misses Michelson and Parry. Are these finds hiding in your attic? If anyone has any information or recollections about these excavations, or other more recent finds, then please get in touch. We would love to understand more about what appears to be a small Roman site beneath your cricket field!

Brett Thorn
Keeper of Archaeology, Bucks County Museum
01296 624519
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Lincoln's End

Remembering Lincoln Lee

Milestone in the Making

St Nicolas' School has a new head teacher. Paul Adams of Farnham Royal took up his post at Easter and quickly started planning something special: a Golden Jubilee. Next year will mark the 50th anniversary of the current school which in 1965 welcomed its first children, many of whom had transferred from the old school that had stood for 117 years on the site now occupied by the Village Centre car park.

The school will be open to visitors at points during the week commencing 13th April 2015. Mr Adams would love to have volunteers talk to today's pupils about their time at school, what and how they learnt, how the school was different and what it meant to them to be part of the school during its history.

Details of the celebrations will be posted at www.stnicolastaplow.com as they become available. In the meantime, former pupils, staff and parents are invited to contact memories@stnicolastaplow.com to share their memories of the school and to register their interest in attending events or in offering to speak to or with current pupils. Those uncomfortable with the internet and e-mail can get in touch with the school in person, by telephone on 01628 603759 or by writing to St Nicolas' CE Combined School, Rectory Road, Taplow, Buckinghamshire SL6 0ET.

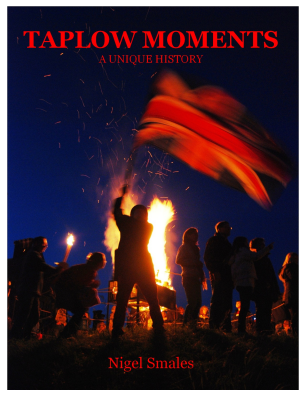
Questions & Answers

Two responses have been received to questions posed in the last Newsletter. Thanks to Morag & Mike Scarlett who advised that the bulges on the eastern wall of their home, Stable Cottage on Berry Hill, are internal recesses that once held hay feeders for hungry horses. And thanks to Arthur Grout who (unless you know different) must be our longest continuous local resident: 91 years and counting, 14 more than young Anthony Harding of Buffins. Arthur was six weeks old in 1923 when his father Alfred settled at Hitchambury as Constance Awdry's resident chauffeur. He moved to Milner Road in 1935 and to his current home in Bayley Crescent in 1950.

Nigel Smales

This edition's poser is more esoteric: as the new Bishop Centre emerges complete with just what the Bath Road needed – another set of traffic lights – how come it has been infiltrated by an apostrophe? S'ome mi'stake, s'urely?

And Finally....



The moment is coming: *Taplow Moments*, a unique history of Taplow, will be published in the New Year. Actual and virtual letterboxes will be bombarded...

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