

# Hitcham and Taplow Society

Newsletter 106: Autumn 2016  
£3.50 to non-members

[www.taplowsociety.org.uk](http://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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Vice Presidents: Tony Hickman, Fred Russell, Professor Bernard Trevallion OBE  
Chairman: Karl Lawrence  
Treasurer: Robert Hanbury  
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Cover picture: In Old Priory Garden, Remembering Malcolm (Nigel Smales)

## Editorial

Although most of the Committee did so individually, the Society did not object to the closure of Mill Lane at earlier opportunities for two reasons. Firstly, whilst accepting the area would never be rescued from blight unless a developer could profit, the priority was to protect Taplow's rural nature as far as possible by limiting the number of new dwellings. Barratt Homes was the prospective developer at the SPD stage. Its stated aim was to build "300-plus homes". Rumour suggested nearer 400. The focus was on bringing this number down. Perhaps that's why Barratt lost interest; 211 Berkeley homes is a reasonable compromise. Secondly, there was no means to gauge consensus among members. Now there are two. Those at the 2015 AGM voted overwhelmingly against closure and over 500 people who live or work locally – many of them members, three also Parish Councillors – have signed a petition against it. Consequently, with closure imminent, it was decided that the Society must submit an objection (see Page 5).

Three members (one anonymously) have made it known they do not support this stance. Unanimity is impossible, of course – and few issues would be of interest to everyone – but consideration is being given to how better to communicate to and from the membership. However, if you wish to influence the Society's thinking and operation, perhaps the simplest and most effective way would be to join the Committee. We are always keen to recruit new volunteers and to welcome back the experienced counsel of such as Robert Hanbury. Having previously served on the Committee for 12 years (including seven as Chairman and two as Secretary), we are delighted he has now returned as Treasurer with 17 of 18 missing Newsletters. Now our historic archive begins with Number 1 (May 1960) and excludes only Number 11 (Spring 1965).

*Nigel Smales*

## Acronyms

This Newsletter uses acronyms for Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC), Old Priory Garden (OPG), Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), Taplow Parish Council (TPC), Transport for Buckinghamshire (TfB) and Village Green Party (VGP).

# Green Jubilee

On 25th June, the Society celebrated the Golden Jubilee of Taplow's village green with its 31st annual Village Green Party. Sincere thanks are due to everyone who turned out in force to make it happen and clear up afterwards.

Nigel Smales



Claire & Anna, Burgers & Bangers

At 6am, Andrew Findlay and Jane Curry impaled an ox leg on a spit and began to roast it over burning logs provided by SGI-UK of Taplow Court. At 9am, a team led by Alastair Hill and Miv Wayland-Smith began erecting marquees, bunting and cables as gazebos sprouted around the Green to claim plots for people to picnic. At 6pm, Mike Sanderson and

Victoria Wayland-Smith



Sally & Anton, Promenading

his band began to play, the ox was ready to be carved, burgers and bangers were browning on barbeques and it was time for Taplow to party. Enough tickets were sold to achieve our goal of breaking even for the third year running, in contrast to the previous three years when the weather wasn't kind. Our President Eva Lipman was delighted to see all the smiling faces, especially those of children who will grow up treasuring fond memories of the event.



Nigel Smales

Mia & Scarlett, Dancing in the Dark

Almost five hours later, a cake stall had raised £217 for cancer research in memory of Iris Midlane and a raffle £536 for Thames Valley Adventure Playground as over 300 people aged from a few months to more years than many enjoyed a sip or three while munching, mingling, dancing reels, promenading and wondering: is that Sally Sharp keeping Anton du Beke strictly in step? As folks drifted away from the dying embers, some for residual festivities nearby, Mike confided that our VGP is unique, a lovely tradition of which Taplow can be proud. Little does he know that it is at risk because an increasing number – this year, possibly 50 people – seem to think they can enjoy the fun for free. Consequently, we must remind everyone that the very modest price of £5 – not a lot more than the price of a pint in The Oak & Saw – covers not only the food but also the band, licence, insurance, St John's Ambulance and other expenses. The VGP is about community spirit. How valuable is that? Surely it isn't too much to hope that everyone will buy in next year?

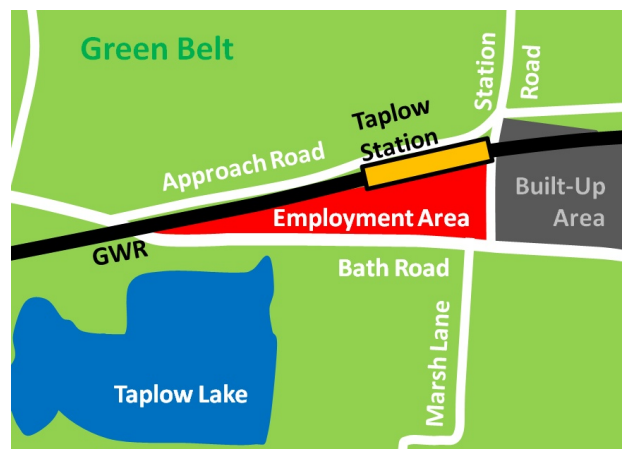


# Plans Local and Neighbourly

The next stage in Local Plan progress is a "Preferred Options Consultation", better known as the 'Green Belt Grab'. This is due for public consultation for six weeks from 31st October followed by exhibitions, with our nearest being at Burnham Park Hall from 6 to 9pm on Thursday 17th November. The concern for Taplow had been a large 'Employment Area' area south of the A4 opposite the station. Our strong objections to this enormous encroachment have borne fruit and it appears that this area has been withdrawn from the proposals. Success! With new PM Theresa May declaring the Green Belt "absolutely sacrosanct", perhaps the grab will be limited to a smaller triangle north of the A4.

At a hopefully less contentious level, the Neighbourhood Plan for Taplow is gathering pace. The Working Party (chaired by yours truly) is building on the existing Parish Plan to develop an initial consultation questionnaire to go to all in the Parish. Information will be shared on the TPC website. The Plan will be supplemented by a local Heritage Asset List recognised by the main planning legislation, the National Planning Policy Framework. Presently, our target is to have a first draft of the Plan ready for the Annual Parish Meeting in May 2017.

BCC's proposal to extend Slough's planned cycleway along the north side of the A4 to Maidenhead Bridge has little benefit for Taplow and at least two substantial detriments. Firstly, vehicles



will be banned from turning right from the A4 into Berry Hill. This will help a handful of cyclists but hinder hundreds who live in Taplow village or are heading to Taplow House Hotel, Taplow Court, Cliveden or Hedsor. The two ill-conceived and very inconvenient alternatives will be to turn right further eastwards or continue west to the new roundabout then circle back. Secondly, since this narrow-minded notion somehow enjoys blissful ignorance of the Mill Lane closure (see Page 5), we can expect untold difficulties. The Society and many individuals registered their concerns during the consultation period which ended on 24th October. Perhaps you did too. If not, it may still be possible to view the scheme or share your opinion with the project manager (see e-mail address and web link below).

*Roger Worthington*

Consultation: <https://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?ID=2190>  
Project Manager: Tayo Akinyosade <aakinyosade@buckscc.gov.uk>

## Lights, Cameras, Actions

BCC can't afford the proposed one-way system on Station and Institute Roads (illustrated in Newsletter 104) or a 20mph speed limit on Rectory Road and the High Street. TPC invested in new street lights along Station Road, which BCC resurfaced, and decided to install another at Cliveden Gages and paint double-yellows at the top of Marsh Lane but not to spend almost £60,000 on speed cameras for Berry Hill. It will press for 40mph limits there and on Cliveden Road and has recruited five potential Police Support Volunteers to assist Thames Valley Police to identify and penalise persistent speedsters.

'Austerity' isn't slowing Transport Secretary Chris Grayling. As a warm-up for HS2 (£56b), he dismissed the Transport Select Committee's safety concerns and committed £862m to make the M4 'smart'. Amerden faces five years of disruption from March when work begins to introduce 'all-lane running' between Junctions 3 (Hayes) and 12 (Theale). Hard shoulders will become new lanes and emergency rescue areas (lay-bys) will be added every 1.85km (1.15 miles). With the AA having "significant reservations" and the RAC fearing "a major tragedy", drivers will be well advised not to break down.



# Mill Lane Closure: So Many Questions

SBDC decided in July 2013 that Mill Lane must be closed just west of where it crosses the Jubilee River. Recently, Berkeley Homes applied to implement this closure. Many registered objections during a public consultation which ended on 7th October. Perhaps by the time this Newsletter is published we will know whether BCC and SBDC have been persuaded to think again about severing this ancient sinew which for centuries has connected Taplow to its mill and the river, its backbone.



## How did it come to this?

SBDC claims closure is a popular decision suggested by local residents and supported by a survey carried out privately for Barratt Homes. Neither assertion has ever been supported by documentary evidence available for public scrutiny. And how come a private survey is a plank for a public highways policy decision? Some locals favour closure but evidence indicates the majority are against it (see petition link below).

There are too many questions for comfort. How come the drafting of the SPD was led by a consultant claiming to be engaged by SBDC while being paid by Barratt? How could the SPD claim to support employment along Mill Lane when its closure will make commuting there significantly more difficult? Why did just six councillors on the SBDC Cabinet adopt the SPD in private when that for Wilton Park, Beaconsfield, was debated in a public meeting of the full council? Why at every stage of the planning process did TfB comment

arrive too late for public examination? What evidence justifies closure as the only option? Why did TPC say it is necessary "for health and safety reasons" when BCC advised there are no significant risks hereabouts and (see Crashmap link below) Mill Lane has had only four slight accidents in 17 years, none east of the Jubilee.. Why require massive spending on a new southerly junction and not modest investment to reduce perceived risks elsewhere? And why isn't the closure shown on the model and drawings in Berkeley's sales office?

## What does the future hold?

Employment opportunity is already eroding. One existing office stands empty. Another may soon be vacated by its longstanding tenant. Both are up for sale. Will Berkeley ever let its new offices? Traffic volumes on Berry Hill will double. Hope that drivers will detour founders on the few alternatives. New residents will be cut off from the village, severely hampered from becoming part of the Taplow community. When they learned of the closure, three families had second thoughts about buying one of the new homes. One worried how they would save their children from rising flood waters. Every single journey they make in their 400-odd cars – including popping up to the village on the school run – will add to congestion and pollution on the busy Bath Road, wasting time and fuel. If this isn't bad enough, another nightmare looms (see Page 4).

Heels are dug deep, defying the logic of leaving Mill Lane open then taking remedial action if necessary. But if it is closed, minds must not be. All consequences must be kept under close scrutiny and, if evidence confirms widespread fears, this poorly informed, poorly made decision must be reversed.

*Eva Lipman*



Nigel Smales

Post Code Lottery

Crashmap: <http://crashmap.co.uk> (Search for Taplow)

Mill Lane Petition: <http://www.petitionbuzz.com/petitions/stop-the-closure-of-mill-lane-taplow>



# Heathrow: Bigger and Better?

With Leonard Miall, Robert Hanbury and Derek Walker in the vanguard, the Society has for over 40 years challenged Heathrow operations, claims and ambitions with objectivity. In 1972, the Lake End beacon created the "minimum noise route" – a narrow take-off flight path funnel which subjected Taplow to maximum noise. Society pressure contributed to the decisions to install the Burnham beacon and implement a flight path fan which reduced noise concentration from 1979. Terminal 5 was first proposed in 1996 with reassurances that it would enable Heathrow to increase its capacity to 80m passengers a year by 2016 without the need for a third runway. When Derek represented the Society at the 1999 T5 inquiry, he demonstrated that the Taplow funnel had returned. It was duly dissipated. In 2002, he dissected a report seven inches thick that gave no hint of a third runway. Within a year, it was being mooted. In 2007, Heathrow claimed it was operating at 98.5% of capacity while its competitors were at less than 75%.

Fast forward to 2016. Size matters, they say. Unless Heathrow expands, bigger airports will steal its business. Why hasn't this happened already? Paris (Charles de Gaulle) and Frankfurt each have four runways and Amsterdam (Schiphol) has six. In the five years to 2014, these main rivals grew respectively by 6% to 64m passengers, by 6% to 59m and by 22% to 55m. With just two runways, Heathrow kept comfortably ahead of the lot, growing by 12% to 73m and retaining its 29% market share. Growth continued in 2015 – up, up and away to 75m passengers, 5m fewer than the third runway threshold drawn 20 years ago but still by far Europe's busiest airport with annual pre-tax profits of £223m. Isn't it amazing how far it has stretched that 1.5% margin claimed nine years ago? Add Gatwick into the mix – with 38m passengers in 2014, eighth in Europe and the busiest one-runway airport in the world – and it is clear that efficiency matters most. There are valid arguments to expand airport capacity, of course, but the evidence demonstrates it is wise to ensure supposed facts, figures and forecasts are not fibs.

## Crossings: Past and Future

Here are glimpses of the past and future of the iconic Sounding Arch, which got steamed up by The Flying Scotsman in June and will soon be electrified for Crossrail. At least Brunel's masterpiece will survive, if with an ungainly crown. What about Taplow station's Victorian footbridge? Can we believe "current thinking" that it will be removed, repaired and restored in position before the temporary bridge is replaced by a new one with lifts in 2019? The worry is that this historic structure will never come home, that its best hope is as a museum piece.



Below: Amazing Grace, Ungainly Crown





# The Passing of Gas

The gasholder is gone. National Grid completed its removal in August, bringing 183 years of history to a close.

Gas was once the new big thing. It is 200 years since Preston's streets were first bathed in gaslight. Maidenhead fancied some of that, especially if it could secrete all the dirty industrial activity and odours across the river in Taplow. The fifth Earl of Orkney was too strapped for cash to fuss about the inconvenience. In 1833, he leased a parcel of riverside land and, within a year, a stream of barges was delivering coal to the Maidenhead Gas, Light and Coke Company. Pyrolysis released gas from the coal and leftover coke was loaded back onto the barges or sold to locals. A telescopic gasometer forced gas under pressure into a network of underground distribution pipes. The 1893 expansion of the gasworks gave Mill Lane its kink and the forbidding brick wall just recently demolished.

Annual gas production of 60 million cubic feet in 1900 (the earliest recorded figure) grew to 250m ft<sup>3</sup> by 1949 when the then owner, the South Eastern Gas Corporation, was nationalised and the site became a holding station. It was decommissioned after five years and demolished in the mid-1960s when a new gasholder was built on a triangle of land across the road. This gasholder was 'mothballed' in 2002 and now there is nothing left but a big hole. Berkeley Homes will build 12 houses on the triangle and offices with riverside parking and picnic areas on the original gasworks site.



National Grid

Barges taking on Coke (c1890)



Aerofilms / Adam Smith

The Gasworks, Redundant  
The Gasholder, Awaited (c1962)



Andrew Findlay  
2009



# Lincoln's Cent

*Remembering Li*



## Elibank Court's Cracked Wall

Vigil Smales

legacy is vital visually to Taplow's streetscapes. However, unlike Brunel's bricks, which were fired for longer to make them harder, those used for walls tended to be softer and therefore less long lived. Part of Elibank's wall collapsed in 1990 – Alan Senior had to fight off thieves making away with a lorryload, hence the title of Lincoln's piece: "Unburied Treasure" – and Elibank Court suffered a similar fate in July. Taplow's natural springs may have weakened both these walls but crumbling continues elsewhere. More tumbling might be imminent. Let's hope remedial works are done soon and sensitively, using lime mortar with bricks of the right colour and texture, or Taplow just won't seem itself.



Hitcham and Taplow Society



## Disappearing Pubs

The Dumb Bell opened in the 1780s, edged east in the 1960s and later became a Harvester restaurant, still with a nod to its past. Now even that last vestige has gone with reincarnation as a Miller & Carter steak house. Lent Rise lost The Pheasant a few years back, now The Brickmakers' Arms is no more – both replaced by houses. The Waggon & Horses stood on the corner of what is now Nashdom Lane until closing in the 1860s. Hitcham wasn't thirsty for long. Soon One Mile Mill began a new career as The Horse & Groom.

First noted in 1761 as One Mile House and as Mile House in 1790, was it so-called for being a mile from Maidenhead Bridge? Local historian Michael Bayley thought not. For him, 'mile' meant 'mill' and its stream was powerful enough to drive just one waterwheel. It survived until the 1860s when George Hanbury (of brewers Truman, Hanbury & Buxton) dammed this stream to create a pond in the garden of his new home: Blythewood, now Hitcham House. The mill may already have been brewing ale so its reinvention as a pub was natural progression. It quickly became an important enough landmark to feature on late-19th Century Ordnance Survey maps, was rebuilt before World War Two and slaked thirsts for many years before being revived as the day nursery next to Sainsbury's.



The Brickmakers' Arms



No Longer the Horse & Groom



Nigel Smales

## A Fuller Tale

*Taplow Moments* tells that Thomas Bell of Ray Mill paid £610 in 1852 to acquire two cottages (now The Cottage and Farm View) and a "House, Shop and Bakehouse" (now The Old Manor House). By 1867, the easternmost three of the four cottages adjoining the Bakehouse had been converted to become The Oak & Saw in the care of tenant landlord John Pusey of Renfrewshire via Chalfont St Peter and Burnham. Now, courtesy of Maidenhead Heritage Centre's Keith Parry, a fuller tale can be told...

Bell's full name was Joseph Thomas Bell. His father-in-law John Fuller (originally of Aston Tirrold, Oxfordshire) had begun brewing at Ray Mill in the 1820s. Bell inherited the business and was successful enough by the 1840s to build a brewery on Maidenhead's Bell Street (no doubt named so he wouldn't forget where he'd put it). On his death in 1885, his properties – including the brewery (now the site of an office block) – passed to his partner: his wife Jane's nephew John, son of John Fuller's son John. These Fullers have no connection with Fuller, Smith & Turner of the Griffin Brewery in Brentford, but John the Youngest might well have created The Oak & Saw for his Uncle Tom. What a fine pair.

Nigel Smales



The Oak and Saw



# A Little Dribbling

In revealing Professor Paul Cheshire of the London School of Economics and his scathingly critical views of the Green Belt and those who cherish it, Newsletters 102 and 103 find themselves in eminent company. None other than famed author Bill Bryson declares incredulously in his latest book – *The Road to Little Dribbling* (Transworld, 2015) – that the Green Belt is "the most intelligent, far-sighted, thrillingly and self-evidently successful land management policy any nation has ever devised [and yet, he laments] now many people want to take it away".

Bryson first targets *The Economist*, which he quotes as saying "green belts should go [because they] increase journey times without adding to human happiness" and retaliates "Well, they add a great deal to my happiness, you pompous over-educated twit". Next in line is Prof Cheshire for his articles in *The Guardian*. In one, our familiar villain claimed that more of Surrey is golf courses than houses, which occupy just 2.5% of the land. This is accurate only as the sum of the total footprints of dwellings not the properties in which they sit, which actually amount to 14% of the county. There is "nothing to support the suggestion that [Surrey's] land has been profligately misused. But you can find wildly inaccurate interpretations of Prof Cheshire's claim all over the Internet. That's unfortunate, to put it mildly". In another article, the professor accused the Green Belt of being "a very British form of discrimination zoning, keeping the urban unwashed out of the Home Counties". Bryson expresses sarcastic admiration – "I have uttered huge amounts of tosh in my time, but I take my hat off to Prof Cheshire" – then moves on to excoriate Colin Wiles, a planning consultant rated by *24 Housing* magazine in April 2015 as "the 18th most influential person in housing" whose ideas (the author opines) "are so

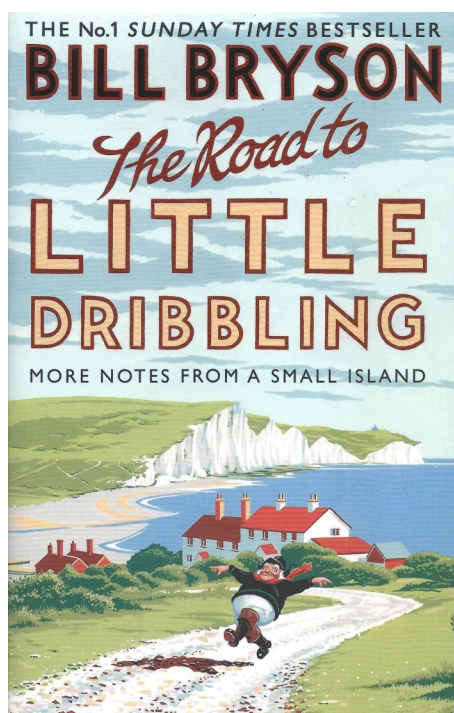
recklessly wrong and so close to becoming received wisdom. The first and most dangerous is that the green belt isn't all that special, that much of the land is scrubby and degraded. Well, you decide... In England, [green belts] contain 30,000 kilometres of footpaths and other rights of way, 22,000 hectares of woodland, 250,000 hectares of top quality farmland and 89,000 hectares of Sites of Special Scientific Interest. That sounds to me like worth keeping. If any land is degraded, the answer is surely not to build on it but to make the owner improve it or sell it to someone who will.

Allowing owners to cash in on poorly managed land is the quickest way to get lots more poorly managed land".

Bryson's Yankee dander is up because Wiles provides no evidence to support his assertion that the green belt "forces people to move further and further away from cities to find affordable housing" and fails to explain "why Americans, who have no green belts and never have had them, have for over 100 years been moving further and further out from their cities. It isn't house prices which drive them out; the outer suburbs usually have the most expensive housing.

People are looking for the thing England has already: the countryside". Mr B concedes that the Green Belt keeps a lot of land off the market but points out "That is actually the idea. But the land isn't doing nothing. It shelters wildlife, transpires oxygen, sequesters carbon and pollutants, grows food, provides quiet lanes for cycling and footpaths for walking [and] adds grace and tranquillity to the landscape. South-east England is already densely populated yet, thanks to the softening influence of the Green Belt, large expanses of it remain verdant and attractive and seemingly timeless – the England that most of us appreciate and love". So says the Society. Come and enjoy our bit, Bill.

Nigel Smales

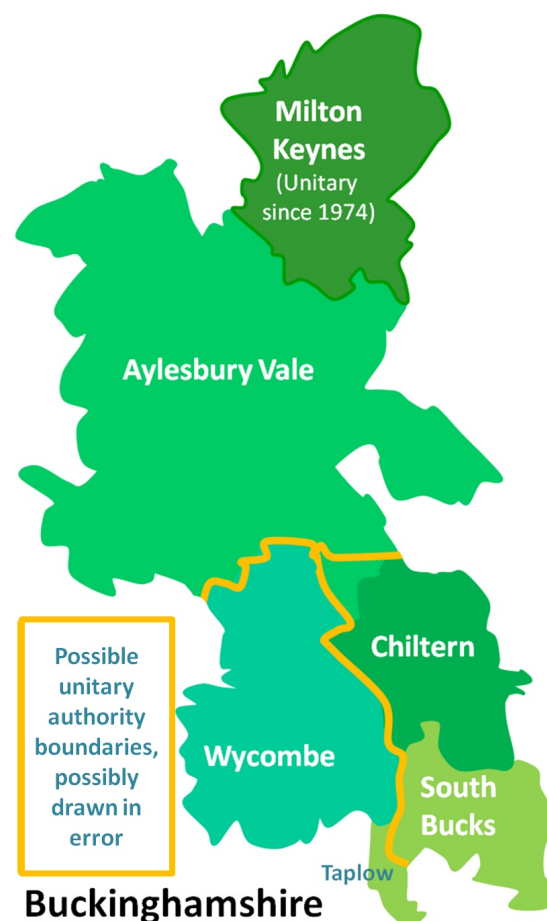




# Ever Closer Union?

Buckinghamshire has three layers of local government: one County Council over four District Councils (with a combined total of 238 Councillors) over 168 Parish or Town Councils. A new study identifies three options for economy and concludes that millions can be saved by dispensing with Districts, creating a County-wide unitary authority of just 98 Councillors – a "community hub" with "a single strategic voice" – and enabling "greater empowerment at a local level" through 19 Community Boards, five local planning committees and delegated powers to Parishes. This aim for 'ever closer union' doesn't impress George Sandy. Having been "Stronger in Partnership" since 2013, when talks about uniting with Wycombe foundered, South Bucks and Chiltern Districts have initiated a study to become a "mini-unitary". Does this sound like a new name for the same old?

What of the grass roots? Not so long ago, some inane number-cruncher proposed carving Taplow in two. Now, despite the recent packaging together of Taplow, Dorney and part of Lent Rise as an SBDC ward, illustrations for other options seem to assume Taplow and Dorney might be transferred from South Bucks to Wycombe. Meanwhile, rumours rumble that Slough and Maidenhead eye our greenery greedily. Who knows where it will all end?



## The Woad Less Travelled

As our local authorities search for economy, how about a little light-hearted, tongue-in-cheek imagining of might happen if our urban Berkshire neighbours try to take Taplow? Any whiff of reality is of course purely coincidental...

Sandy Beach rises before assembled Taplovians and their allies, the Hitchamights. Darkness gathers all around, she begins. We face dire fates: to the east, the Slough of despond; to the west, the dream of Deadly Dud – for us a nightmare. But we shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall defend our beloved rural peace, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight in the Beeches, on the bridges and from Odds Farm to Amerden. We shall fight in the fields and in the lanes. We shall fight in the Hanging Woods, on the Green and at Itchy Bottom. We shall never surrender.

Hitcham Bottom, mumbles Bob Blythewood. It's not the first time, splutters Knowitall Nig. Thirty years ago, the Berks tried to take all of South Bucks up to the M40. We showed 'em what for then, we'll do it again, promises Bazzurro.

Here, here, chimes Barny Jam, his voice aquiver, his misspelling forgiven in the excitement. We shall fight them in the pubs, calls Clarkie the Clip. Go easy, pleads Oakensaw. The cacophony grows. We shall defend Taplow Court (Rob Harrumph), the Green Belt (Maxeva), Cliveden and Dropmore (Stoneliving), Hedsor (Alsheepy), The Hermitage (Rosfred), Ellingtonia (Martmax), OPG (Antharding), our church (Nicki the Jeff), our school (Rebeccath), our woodlands (Trevaliant), our footpaths (Marshjoy), our river (Lindseyfenn), our heritage (Rosakar!) and our future (one and all). Think what success will feel like, imagines MIBode. Wait, warns Worthy Wodge, let's do this right. A referendum, says Smivvy. Like the Scots, asks MacLaird. No, cries Carosell – like the UK, we shall be Leavers. Freeeeedom! Where's the blue woad?

The UTIP campaign needs a name. Project Beer: that nails it. Our objective: not Brexit but Tapgo. No plan in our pockets but let's leap into the unknown with hope in our hearts. Are we hard, soft, mad or magnificent?



# Calling Any Angels

Have you seen on TV a heart attack victim being shocked back to life with a defibrillator? No, you haven't. Heart attacks (actually, myocardial infarctions) are caused by blood flow blockages while cardiac arrests are essentially electrical malfunctions. And there's the clue: a shock can't unblock but it might get a ticker back ticking. Could you do that? You might now. TPC plans to install a number of automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in the Parish. The first is on the outside wall of The Oak & Saw. Some Taplovians have been trained to use it but maybe you could too in an emergency.

The victim of a heart attack will usually be awake, in pain and possibly panting, coughing, sweating or nauseous, or all of the above. Forget the AED. Call an ambulance. Maybe give them an aspirin to thin the blood.

In contrast, someone in cardiac arrest will be unconscious – not moving, breathing or responding to any stimulation, not even being pinched. It's too late for an ambulance. If you're on your own, forget the AED. Get them on their back and apply chest compressions, otherwise known as CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation).



Nigel Smates

Keep going. If they regain consciousness, put them in the recovery position. Now call an ambulance, but be ready to resume CPR at any moment. If there are two of you, one should do CPR while the other goes to the AED and calls the number on its box. The person who answers will give you a code to open the box. Take the AED out, listen carefully and do exactly what they tell you – precautions, procedures and such – to administer the shock safely. They will not ring off. And together, you might save a life. For more information, refer to the websites below.

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/heart-health/how-to-save-a-life/about-defibrillators>

<https://www.sja.org.uk/sja/training-courses/training-news/guide-to-defibrillators.aspx>

## HTS AGM

**8pm, Friday 2nd December  
in the Village Centre**  
Followed by a talk by Keith Parry,  
Maidenhead Heritage Centre:  
**'Millionaires and their  
Thameside Mansions'**

## Before Buffins

Michael Bayley believed the name Buffins derives from Bughfan, meaning "the place of the cow" in the local dialect still used 120 years ago. It was here that Taplow Horse Show began in 1946 but, after Arthur Mewton of Hill Farm died in 1959, the southern portion was sold to a builder, Cotton's of Iver, which secured planning permission to build 38 homes before going bust. Eton Rural District Council acquired the site to re-house tenants from "condemned properties". Newsletters 1 to 4 (1960/61) reported a "barrage of protest" only for the Ministry of Housing to turn a deaf ear "for no better reason than reluctance to see Local Authorities lose face". (Does this echo on Page 5?) Then it was a matter of 'ready, steady, wait' until Taplow was connected to the mains drainage.



# Buffins Beginners



The Happy Couple (1960)

Frank and I met at a dance in Slough. He was a merchant seaman from Gosport retraining as a mechanic. I didn't like him at first. When he asked me out, I said only if we could take my new dog for a walk. He agreed and that was it: he and me, ever since. I was a Pinkney's Green girl and an ICI audio typist for seven years. We married in 1960 and spent £1,000 on a house in Dropmore Road, Burnham, with an outside loo and no bathroom. When that was declared unfit for human habitation, we moved to a council house in Wyndham Crescent, Burnham. Our daughter Carolyn came along, then Jonathan. We needed somewhere bigger.

We came to see our house – Number 6 – before it was finished, before we could be sure it would be ours. Carolyn, then three, looked out onto the reduced Horse Show field and declared "I want this bedroom". Luckily, her dream came true. Soon our row of six was ready and, on 20th January 1967, we were the third family to move in. The Judges were first, at Number 12. They had been in Little Coldgrove Cottages, which stood behind Church Cottages. Ted was a gardener at Taplow Court. His daughter Teresa Foreman is still here, at 2. Next door at 4 is another original: Fay Austin, daughter of Joan and Wally Poole. We were surrounded by building sites: a great playground for the kids. Soon, more families moved in, like the Hardings, now at 33, and the Clarkes, still at Number 1, the last to be finished. Some said Buffins was out in the sticks despite the village having Budgen's, a butcher's, a post office and regular buses. The children all played together and went to school together. Helen Grellier was the Headmistress, very strict but very

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Nigel Smales

good. Everyone was pals but it was always Mr This and Mrs That. Everyone had garages but few had cars. Now a housing association owns some houses but most are privately owned. How things have changed. I don't think Buffins will have a party for its Golden Jubilee.

Some thought those in Cedar Chase were snobs. Not me. Being on the School PTA meant I made lots of friends there, and Carolyn was very fond of Jane Lomax and Charlotte Hickman. I can still picture the Rectory Garden Party fancy dress parade: Charlotte a fisherman and Carolyn a fish. Their seahorse picture hung in the school lobby for years. Carolyn loved watching the Horse Show from her bedroom and went to Dorothy Lemon's riding school down Berry Hill when she was eight. We thought she'd soon get it out of her system. How wrong we were. She became 'right-hand girl' to Miss Lemon – who gave her a horse when she retired – and is still riding in her 50s. On Sheila Horton's mural, she's trotting along Rectory Road on a white pony.



Sheila Horton

Frank spent 37 years with Slough Corporation while I had three jobs which each lasted seven years until I was made redundant. Talk about a seven-year itch. Not mine! Oh well, although we're not so mobile now, with our children and their families not far away, friends all around us, trees out front and fields behind, our house is still the best in Buffins and we're very happy here.

Jill Wrapson



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# An Old Boy Recalls

I was eight in 1943 when my father, a widower, installed me as a boarder for three years at Taplow Grammar School, then and since 1863 on the corner of what are now Boundary and Station Roads. One of my most vivid memories is of being on the school bus when a doodlebug flew low overhead to explode in the field up the hill. Good job it wasn't a double-decker bus or the top floor would've been blown off. And good job it landed short of the Fairey Aviation boffins in The Priory, where Wellbank is now.

The headmaster was William D Williams, a Welshman, as you'd guess with a name like that. He was fearsome and quick with the cane but, what with his initials, the boys coped by calling him 'War Department Willie'. There was a very old master, Walter Leyster, who was also the parish clerk. He lived in the High Street at The Nest, now Victoria Cottage. He was still mourning his son Gordon who had been killed in the Great War. Other masters walked to and from to their houses by the station

along Masters' Walk, a footpath through the edge of a wood west of Station Road. Being out-of-bounds made it all the more fun to explore.

One of my schoolfellows, Tony Bateman, had already appeared in a film and grew up to a long career as a TV actor. Two others had Mill Lane connections: Barry Pettern's father was caretaker of the gasworks next to where Charlie Wood later partnered John Fenn in building Meteors and other stylish boats.

The school closed in 1950 and Maria Henderson converted it into 14 flats. The old Georgian building lasted until 1974. It was succeeded in the 1980s by Hillmead Court. Jonathan Willmore's father converted the coach-house into The Lodge, still home to Jon's widow Esther. The masters' houses also survive. Masters' Walk is overgrown but traces can still be seen wandering through the trees.

*William Nickson, now of South Africa*

Sarah O'Donnell



The Winning Team with Will: Alan O'Donnell, Ed Pettman, Will Midlane, Andy Mills, Alistair Ideson, Charlie Sheldon, Charlie Mulford & Gerry Mills

Victoria Wayland-Smith



Duncan, Run Taking



Anna & Sarah, Thirst Slaking

## We Don't Like Cricket

We love it. There was a time when John Midlane arranged for Taplow Cricket Club to celebrate its President's Day with a match against celebrities or another local team. His son Will had other ideas: more of a social whirl. On 28th August, young and not-so-young Taplovians and their guests enjoyed day-long festivities beginning with bacon rolls for breakfast and ending with a magnificent hog roast. In between was a barbecue for spectators, a fabulous lunch for the players at Wickenden, prepared by Sarah Meats, never-ending ice cream from a nostalgic van and a six-a-side tournament presided over by umpires Simon Christy and Dave Wigmore, a member for over 60 years. Each team included an oldie, a novice and an under-16 colt. Everybody had to bowl. Runs came quickly, laughter even faster. Everything went like clockwork. The hog was ready for carving precisely as the presentation ceremony finished at seven o'clock. Everyone agreed that Will's planning, passion and generosity made for another Taplow memory to cherish.

*Miv Wayland-Smith*



# Creature Feature: Malcolm Tait 1962-2016

Walk into the tranquil, green sanctuary of Old Priory Garden. Stand still. Breathe gently. Red Admirals and Brimstones flutter by silently. Red Kites soar above and Ring-necked Parakeets screech. Could a vole, a fox or maybe a Muntjac be watching, wondering when you will leave it in peace? Perhaps the Long-haired Wordsmith (*Hirsutus scriptum faber*) is watching too, pleased that you are sharing his treasure.

Find refreshment in The Oak & Saw. On the patio: more memories. How the Wordsmith enjoyed his Guinness, his fags and the chat. Oh, the chat. He could rabbit about anything and everything from ducks to dolphins, comic books to cricket and convoluted theories about *Doctor Who* plots. He was larger-than-life, enormously convivial, unforgettable – that voice, those twinkling eyes, that sparkling smile, that laugh, that explosion of hair, that hat – brimming with wit and wordplay, charisma and genuine kindness. Always unfailingly both interesting and interested, he educated without teaching and listened as if what you had to say was the most fascinating thing he'd ever heard: true signs of greatness.

Now down the alleyway. In 2006, the Wordsmith migrated from Maidenhead to this hidden nest with Claire, his cherished Irish Warbler (*Hibernicis canticum*) to be joined by Beryl, their much-loved canine companion. Here midnight oil burned as he honed or penned yet another piece. How he lived and breathed the words he wrote, how prolific he was, how talented, credible, quick, committed, precise, passionate and proud. Having started out crafting copy for retail catalogues, he rejected selling his soul to the devil of marketing to write about what he loved. "The natural world is changing," he'd say. "This is the first time mankind has played a role. We need to be aware of the consequences of what we're doing, so wildlife publishing is more important than ever". His opportunity came to revive *The Ecologist*. Over the next 17 years, he edited and mostly wrote 12 books and more than 200 editions of ten magazines: an astonishing output of amazing quality, acknowledged by ten prestigious awards.

Material things mattered not to this weaver of words. Readers were willingly spun into his



Claire Ashton Tait

web, drawn to his conclusions. The catch he took for Maidenhead Cricket Club didn't make the 20th Century's Top 100 Sporting Moments in The Sunday Times, but it got an honourable mention for his cheeky self-nomination. He brought wildlife and ecological crises to attention movingly and, typically in just five frantic days, his magic turned a one-page synopsis into a 288-page volume with 120 photographs. *Birds in Your Garden* has been a best-seller ever since, reprinted four times. That and *Wildlife Walks* have each sold over 250,000 copies. Other creations included guides for Whipsnade and London Zoos and for London's Royal Parks plus numerous companions for birdwatchers, walkers and wildlife enthusiasts – one co-authored with his mum, others with the likes of David Bellamy or Chris Packham, some designed by his beloved sister Lou.

The Wordsmith had a name. What an impact Malcolm made in his ten years in Taplow, most of all as a leading light in OPG. Many treasure the image of him, coat akimbo, walking with Beryl down Old Friend Lane, or the pleasure of reading his 25 *Creature Features* on OPG's Facebook page every week last winter. This truly remarkable creature, so sadly lost to a black dog, is already much missed and will always be.

Nigel Smales



## Oh, What a Night...

Late September back in 2016, what a very special time it was. Alright, the Four Seasons lyrics don't quite work, but the spirit of '63 was alive and dancing at the Taplow Rainbow Ball on 24th September. Around 300 of us got a funny feeling as we walked into the cricket club's marquee. Sweet surrender, now we're never gonna be the same. Grateful thanks to the six Rainbow Makers and their myriad helpers, to Junior Guevara – such a brilliant band – and to the generous donors of prizes for auctions which raised £8,600 to benefit Taplow Cricket Club, Old Priory Garden (for Malcolm's Meadow), St Nicolas' Church (roof repair), St Nicolas' School (flood recovery) and The Special Yoga Foundation.

Why the Rainbow? Not just a good reason to deck the tent with coloured balloons. For ancient Greeks, Iris was the goddess of the rainbow, the messenger of the gods linking them to humanity. For Will Midlane, she was his much-loved mum. For Taplow, she was iridescent. And so was her Ball. Oh my, as I recall it ended much too soon. Just two years until the next one.



Rainbow Makers – Marianne Boden, Miv Wayland-Smith, Paul-Ant Viollet, Victoria Wayland-Smith, Will Midlane & Claire Price



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