

# Hitcham and Taplow Society

Newsletter 98: Autumn 2012  
£2.50 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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Cover picture: Diamond Jubilee celebration on Tæppa's Mound 4th June 2012 (Nigel Smales)

Back cover: Torchlight Procession and Beacon on Tæppa's Mound 4th June 2012

## Editorial

I've lost count of how many editorials I have contributed to these newsletters, it may not be all that many in real terms I suppose, but it feels a lot and I have decided it's time to park my pen in a quiet place and get on with a few things such as doing a bit more painting. Been an interesting few years, though. However, around Taplow things have been rather quiet of late and this leaves an old pessimist like me wondering what is brewing in the minds of our planners and developers. It is sometimes said that the only constant thing in life is change and I think we are in for a period of it over the next few years. The Bishop Centre proposals which your Chairman, Karl Lawrence, will be updating you on in this issue is still coming up to the boil, especially since there are the odd rumours that Tesco, with their first year of reduced profit in twenty years, may be getting cold feet about building another major store so close to a competitor. We shall shortly see. That old perennial, The Mill Lane site, may see some activity in the next six months (this is reading like Old Moore's Almanac!) particularly since the design brief has been published by SBDC and it doesn't look too bad from our viewpoint. However, I doubt that Barratts will want to give up

their dream of 300 houses on that site. Interesting times lie ahead for your Society. In my own contribution in this issue I have a little bleat about the new signage at the Feathers pub. Hopefully your new editor will be a little more upbeat in future issues. The main upbeats in this issue however are the contributions Taplow volunteers have made to the Olympic games, the marvellous Jubilee torchlight procession, and the raft race, which by all accounts was tremendous fun, echoing last year's go-cart race in the village.

My grateful thanks to all the present and past members of your Committee who have been such a great support over the years; my special thanks to Andrew Findlay for his wonderful cover photographs and for the superb job of putting the whole thing together for printing. Extra-special thanks however are due to the many, many people who contributed their time and thoughts expressed in articles, which made the newsletter such an interesting job for the editor and, I hope, an interesting read for you all.

So, it's goodbye from the editor and goodbye from me.

*Fred Russell*

# Subscriptions

The HTS subscription year now matches the calendar year so subscriptions for 2013 will become due on January 1st. The new annual subscription rates are £7 per household, £6.50 per household for agreed block membership and £50 per corporate membership.

If you pay by standing order, please instruct your bank to pay the new subscription from January 1st.



Eva Lipman

Christmas on Taplow Village Green

# Diary

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>30th Nov at 8pm</b> | <b>HTS AGM in the Village Centre</b>                                  |
| 8th Dec at 5:30pm      | Carols on The Green with the Salvation Army band and the school choir |
| 15th Jan at 7:30pm     | Parish Council meeting  |
| 2nd April at 7:30pm    | Parish Council meeting  |
| 24th May at 8pm        | Annual Parish Meeting in the Village Centre                           |

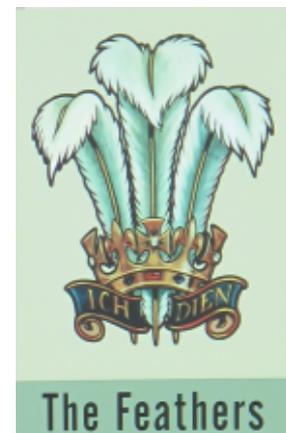
# The Four Feathers

No, I don't mean the book or the film. Back in '09 the Feathers pub opposite Cliveden passed into new hands who then proceeded to renovate the building, removing the big palm trees at the front and also taking away the ancient piece of farm machinery by the roadside. Your society made no objections to this makeover in principle since the building was protected by its Grade II listed status. However, the roadside sign has always represented



part of the coat of arms of the Prince of Wales; the three feathers. The new owners, in their enthusiasm to modernise, replaced the three feathers with a single peacock feather, which simply did not look right and was out of keeping with the ambience of the pub. We did object to this change.

The Inn dates from around 1780, is first recorded as The Prince of Wales Feathers Inn in 1847 and was licensed as The Feathers Inn by 1851. There is a question however about which Prince of Wales it represented. Apparently Victoria's son and heir used to drop by for a pint, we know that, but it may also have referred to his predecessor, the ill-fated Frederick, son of King George II, who lived at Cliveden from 1739 until his death in 1751. SBDC agreed with our objection since this was a change too far and – eventually – the single peacock feather was replaced with the tri-feathered Prince of Wales sign you see today. Which sign do you prefer?



*Fred Russell*

# Revival of the Round Garden

The ongoing restoration of the magnificent National Trust gardens and woodlands at Cliveden has revealed many secrets, including a long-lost fruit garden which has been out of production since the 1950s.

Cliveden's Round Garden was laid out in the mid-19th century and is possibly the only surviving example of a circular fruit orchard in the UK from this period. It was highly ornamental, with apple, plum, cherry and pear trees growing up and over seven-foot-high iron hoops arranged around and across the 250ft diameter.

Over the past two years Cliveden's rangers and a dedicated volunteer team have spent many hours reclaiming the Round Garden's historic layout from the undergrowth that had enveloped it. Some of the original hoops were found in the garden and were individually assessed for restoration. The hoops were sent to a forge where they were able to straighten 40 of the originals and make a further 138 to the same design. All the hoops have now been installed to complete the unique layout. The team have also cleared the perimeter and cross paths, rotovated the soil and sown grass seed to create lush walkways through the arches.

"There would once have been at least 500 trees in this area, as well as soft fruits such as strawberries, redcurrants and blackberries, providing fruit for the whole Cliveden estate" says Cliveden's Senior Ranger, Tim Crauford, who is leading a project to restore this unusual feature. "We're in the process of identifying the many varieties of heritage apple and pear still growing in the orchard, most of which were planted over 150 years ago."

The older trees are now being looked after with a regular pruning regime which we hope will allow them to remain productive for many years to come. Meanwhile, plans are being made to plant new saplings this winter that will be trained up the archways to further help visitors imagine what this great fruit garden once looked like.

Whilst the garden has declined in terms of fruit production, wildlife has flourished and it is now a haven for many rare insects and fungi, as well as bats and birds. This wildlife is being encouraged by the creation of wild flower meadows around the perimeter of the garden.

The restoration project is going to take many years, but the Round Garden is only a short walk from the visitor car park via Green Drive and visitors are welcome to drop by to see how the project is getting on.

Cliveden is looking for volunteers to work on the Round Garden. If you enjoy being outdoors, are physically fit, and have a passion for nature conservation, you could help with ground clearance, opening up footpaths, inspecting, pruning and restoring existing trees, and planting new ones. The Rangers are also keen to hear from anyone with photographs or memories of the original fruit garden who might be able to help piece together what it once looked like.

For further information about this and other volunteering opportunities at Cliveden, please call 01628 605069 or email: [clivedenvolunteering@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:clivedenvolunteering@nationaltrust.org.uk)

*Hannah Purcell & Tim Crauford*

Photo: Tim Crauford / National Trust



## Gravel Extraction in Taplow

The next phase of gravel extraction from Taplow Quarry will start soon, so the Community Liaison Group met for an update and site visit on 25th September.

The site has been dormant for a couple of years following the first phase of extraction. The completed area is now about 5m lower than the original land level; soil has been re-laid and seeded with grass.

The next area to be dug has been marked out and the soil was cleared in August. Topsoil and subsoil are stored in separate heaps on the worked-out part of the site.

The gravel here forms one of the "Taplow Terraces". It is relatively clean (free of mud and clay) and has a good proportion of sand. The beds are deeper than most in the area – 5.5m on average with some areas up to 8m deep. The gravel sits on a thick layer of chalk, and the water table is some 30m down at this point so the workings will remain dry and the finished site will be well drained.

In the last ice age the glaciers came as far south as Beaconsfield, and when they melted the runoff water carved deep channels and caves in the chalk. Rivers deposited moraine in the form of gravel beds in these depressions, and later carved down into the layers, leading to the land-form that we see today.

Extraction work will begin on 9th October. Demand is currently low so the site will only

operate Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday to start with. Working hours will be 07:30 to about 16:00 There will be one digger and one water bowser on-site, with one employee to operate them. 5 lorries will be used, with each making 10 round-trips per day to the Monkey Island Lane processing plant. Around 1000 tonnes per day will be extracted. Summerleaze expect this phase to run for about 18 months and to yield around 230,000 tonnes.

Most of the gravel goes to customers within 5 miles of the processing plant, with small amounts travelling up to 10 miles.

Claire's Court Schools have expressed interest in taking over the site for playing fields when extraction ends. Their current fields near the station are on a yearly lease from the Licensed Victuallers Association.

Residents of Boundary Road were concerned about noise and dust. The worst of that should be over for now, as topsoil clearance generates far more of both than gravel extraction does. Summerleaze will install a monitoring station between the work-site and the houses so that any problems can be investigated properly.

Any concerns should be reported to the planning department at Buckinghamshire County Council.

*Andrew Findlay*

## It's Only Words...

We tend to take books for granted in the UK; they are a luxury in Lesotho. Jenny Dobson and the children of St Nicolas' School are delighted to have been able to answer the prayers of Mrs Florence Mangeni, the Ugandan founder and head teacher of the Tree of Life School in Maseru, the capital of this mountainous kingdom in southern Africa.

Jenny has done much more at St Nicolas' School than teach music for the past twelve years. She makes a significant difference by instilling in her pupils a love of and appreciation for music in particular and for performance in general that will never leave them. Recently she has applied her immense goodwill and creativity in Lesotho through a different medium – the written word. She first visited Lesotho in 2007 with a colleague, Craig Atkinson. While helping at the Beautiful Gate orphanage and care centre for abandoned children in Maseru, she learned that Lesotho is no bigger than Wales, it is one of the poorest countries in the world, a quarter of its two million people are HIV positive and AIDS has made orphans of some 360,000 children. She also discovered a cultural disconnection – many British people liked to give 'things' to help but what the Beautiful Gate needs most is money to pay its staff, to erect and repair its buildings and to pay for (very expensive) electricity, water and food. All Jenny and Craig could give at the time was their time and effort. She has since become the UK Ambassador and Fundraiser for Beautiful Gate and in February this year she returned there as a volunteer for a month.

Naturally, Jenny couldn't resist visiting the Tree of Life Primary School and Pre-School across the road. She discovered that, in Lesotho, education is a privilege nobody takes lightly and, while the state schools are free, they teach an English-style curriculum to very large classes of over 50 children. The Tree of Life is about the same size as St Nicolas' – about 200 children – but by charging parents a small fee to cover its costs it can keep classes to between 30 and 40 children. When Jenny asked



Jenny Dobson at the Tree of Life School

Mrs Mangeni what 'things' she needed most, without hesitation she said "books". Although her pupils are taught to read they have no storybooks to spark their imagination. Later their lives will be about working every daylight hour to survive and most homes have no electricity to give them light to read at night, so the only chance children have to practise their reading and widen their eyes is at school.

When she got home, Jenny went into action. St Nicolas' School needed no persuasion to donate some old books and she encouraged children to bring in many more. She selected those which were culturally-suited to Lesotho and sold the others to raise funds to buy pencils, crayons, rubbers and sharpeners. And in August she set off south again armed with letters from St Nicolas' children and three large suitcases crammed with books and stationery. Mrs Mangeni was close to tears when she opened the cases. She had never seen so many books in the whole time she had been teaching in Lesotho. And there was a pack of stationery for each of her seven classes. Jenny says it was a real privilege to have been able to bless this lady and her pupils in this way, but she won't rest on her laurels. She intends to raise enough money to buy a printer when she goes back to Maseru next year. Watch this space...

*Jenny Dobson and Nigel Smales*

# The Mill Lane Saga

Six months into its second year, the story of the development brief for the Mill Lane Opportunity Site required by South Bucks District Council (SBDC) in its Core Strategy statement continues.

The council officers are working to achieve the Council's agreement on the content of the brief with a steering group comprising prospective developers Barratts Homes and the several Mill Lane landowners, and a working party comprising the Taplow Parish Council (TPC), the Hitcham and Taplow Society (HTS) and the Ellington Road and District Association (ERDA).

A draft version of the brief was presented to the Council's Policy Advisory Group (PAG) on 2 July. It was decided that further work was needed and a revised draft version will be presented at a meeting of PAG on 26 October.

If this draft is accepted it will be published for a six weeks public consultation.

Amendments will be made to the brief by the council officers and the PAG after consideration of the comments, required by law, from various statutory bodies, and the responses to the consultation made by local authorities and organisations and by members of the general public.

Then the final version of the brief will be presented for approval to a meeting of all SBDC councillors in April next year and if it is accepted it will be published as an appendix to the Core Strategy.

At that point developers will be invited to submit planning applications which conform to the specifications of the development brief.

*Karl Lawrence*

# The Village Green Party 2012

Again a success... in its 27th year our annual Village Green Party continues to be a prime event in the Taplow Village calendar... attendance continues to represent all ages from all parts of the Parish... the Ox-Roast and the Barbecue met the high standards of previous years... Mike Sanderson and his musicians with the caller Tom Brown had young and old dancing until dark... and the proceeds of the raffle in aid of St Nicolas' Church Roof Restoration Fund are set to be a record. Thank you to all the people who contributed to its success... most especially to Euan Felton: once again responsible for the complex arrangements before and the hands-on supervision on the day... to the 28 strong team

who formed the roster of fire minders and spit turners, roast carvers, barbecue cooks, ox, hamburger and sausage servers, setting up on Saturday and taking down on Sunday, and ticket sellers.... to SGI at Taplow Court for supplying the logs for the fire and the two barbecues.... to Taplow Parish Council for the use of the Parish Centre.... to South Bucks District Council for supplying the recycle bins.... to St Nicolas' Church for lending the serving tables.... to the Saint John's Ambulance team for standing-by all evening.... to you all for being there.

*Karl Lawrence*

*Chairman, Hitcham and Taplow Society*



Nigel Smates



# Olympic Torch

The Olympic Torch Relay came to Taplow on 10th July 2012. The torchbearer was Dominic John, a sports coach who lives in Bourne End. Rowers lined Maidenhead Bridge with their oars to welcome the flame. Having crossed the river, the flame quickly disappeared into a vehicle and sped off to Eton Dorney Rowing Lake.

Photos: LOCOG, Andrew Findlay

On the same day, Phillip Wells – the first child to be baptised in St Nicolas Church in the new millennium – became the first and only Taplovia to carry the torch. He took the flame from Maidenhead netball coach Gina Macgregor MBE on the southern terrace of Windsor Castle and carried it to the Long Walk gates where he passed it to Ian Rostance of Leeds.

# All in the Games

Six Taplovians are proud to have done their bit to make the Games special.

Jenny Edmonds, Chris Little and Mike Sharp had very different roles as LOCOG Games Makers. Chris was interviewed on Radio 5 Live by Richard Bacon about her task of meeting-and-greeting VIPs arriving at Heathrow. Some may have been driven from there to their destination by Mike in a very swish BMW. He recalls that transporting the 'Olympic Family' involved long periods of waiting punctuated by moments of madness when one of them needed to be elsewhere in a hurry. Jenny was 'on venue' too – meeting-and-greeting, ticket-checking and generally being a charming Paralympics hostess.

Maureen Dennis, Heather Piper and Nigel Smales were among 221 Eton Dorney Ambassadors who spent over 10,000 hours during the Olympics and Paralympics as 'walking, smiling signposts'. This 'off venue' team aged from 16 to 78 was trained and directed by the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead on behalf of four local authorities. Maureen, Heather and Nigel each have lots of tales to tell about royalty, celebrities and everyday folk gathered not only during the Games but also as they learned the ropes at various events including the Royal Windsor Horse Show and Diamond Jubilee Pageant, Royal Ascot and the Olympic Torch Relay. When it came to the big one, it was no easy task to keep up to 30,000 people happy as they were shuttled from one of three railway stations or four park-and-rides to Dorney Lake and back again every day, but an adept sprinkling of 'fairy dust' worked wonders.



Jenny Edmonds



Chris Little



Mike Sharp

*Nigel Smales*



Nigel Smales and Heather Piper



Maureen Dennis

Geoff Lavers, Nikolas Kominis, Nigel Smales

# Oarsome Jubilee



Crusaders



Crusaders



Crown Jewels



Blackbeard's Revenge



Crown Jewels

Photos: Nigel Smales

Last summer Taplow celebrated the royal wedding with a race to the church. It seemed the right thing to do – wedding, church and all. If Queen Elizabeth II thought a raft race on Taplow Lake was a funny way for us to mark her Diamond Jubilee she was too polite to say so.

It was all Juliet Lecchini's idea. Her goal was of course to replenish the Royal Navy on the cheap. The result was a state-of-the-art flotilla created on 5th June by each of five teams from a ready supply of plastic jerry-cans, lengths of 3-by-2 timber and yards of colourful rope. The water reflected the steel grey sky but – as one team would soon discover – it was warmer in the drink than out of it.

Each team nominated a crew of two adults and two children for the first leg. Rafts were launched and lined up for the start. And then off they went on a splash course to circumnavigate the Leftley family (who were doing a fine impression of a marker buoy) and paddle madly back again. Points were earned by collecting yellow plastic ducks along the way. Teams rotated crews for the second and third legs, if they survived that long. Team Silver didn't: they sank on the home run. By that time Oarsome Nuggets were enjoying a leisurely barbecue lunch having left everyone else in their wake with such furious paddling it was like watching Redgrave and Pinsent after sprinkling bran on their breakfast porridge. The real race was for the runner-up spot: Crusaders narrowly edged out Crown Jewels while Bluebeard's Revenge went forth and came fourth in inimitable style.

And then the rain came. We laughed it off (it stopped when it got to the skin) and warmed ourselves with the thought that £935 had been raised for the Thames Valley Adventure Playground. And we applauded heartily as the victors and duck-collectors were presented with prizes kindly donated by Simon Fox of HMV and by Duncan Leftley of Autotech Group, which also sponsored the event.

When somebody asked Juliet how she'd follow up next year, she suggested they should see a psychiatrist and (ever smiling) even offered to recommend a good one.

*Nigel Smales*



Crusaders



Oarsome Nuggets



Blackbeard's Revenge



Team Silver



Blackbeard's Revenge



Admiral Leftley and Jack



Finn and Janette Mackay

## The Teams

- Oarsome Nuggets – The Bainbridge, Fox and Stowe families
- Crusaders – The Ashford, Edmonds, Sharp and Wayland-Smith families
- Crown Jewels – The Barnard, Boden, Browning and Lecchini / Cherry families
- Blackbeard's Revenge – The Edmondson / Dunleavy, Knight, Mackay and Webb families
- Team Silver – The Bullock, Lawson and Rollinson families



Hitcham and Taplow Society

# The Monkey Run



The Monkey Run began in 2003 as a challenge between a 1973 Hillman Imp and a 1982 Jaguar XJ6 to see who would triumph in a return trip to Monaco. When the tortoise improbably beat the hare, a tradition was begun and 2012 saw the ninth and final running of what might be termed an endurance rally, rather than a race.

The rules of entry are simple: a car is eligible if it cost less than £500 (a "Monkey" in Cockney parlance); it had at least three seats when leaving the factory; the car, or one of exactly the same specification, was made no later than 1980, and its engine capacity is less than 3 litres. The fifth rule invokes a lack of political correctness whose vintage perfectly suits the cars taking part: *no girls*.

The team from Hitcham and Taplow (Jamie Barnard, Tim Browning and Martin Knight) combined skills in law, film-making and bridge design but our collective knowledge of the internal combustion engine was (and remains) nil. Consequently, finding a reliable car was of paramount importance. It also had to reflect our nostalgic memories of school runs, endless holiday traffic jams and backseat battles with siblings. These were the cars of our parents.

Although trawling eBay was huge fun, by September 2011 we had to focus:

- It's a race. *Win*. (N.B. For the benefit of our insurer, it was not a race.)
- Style is essential. Inverse style is twice as cool.
- Reliability makes mechanical knowledge obsolete.
- Preferably built in Britain, large, inefficient, ever-so-slightly stylish, erratic at speed, pulls to the left (or right) and held together by duct tape.

We immediately agreed that "British made" was an unnecessary handicap.

Days later, we bought a silver Volvo 245GLT on eBay for the princely sum of £387. What a coup: only 120k miles and enough space for a whole troupe of monkeys. Needless to say, the autumnal purchase triggered a period of intense laziness and almost nothing was done until the last minute in June 2012. A modest service and four new tyres were purchased, followed by repairs to the overdrive and both electric front windows. This last item was considered a luxury until we realised that, without operable windows, paying for

Autoroute tolls would have to be done from the rear seat with the bonnet pressed against the péage barrier. *Pas bon*.

## Buckinghamshire to Le Mans (657km)

*Jamie recalls...* And so it was at 5:45am on 7 July 2012 that Number 53, sporting the team moniker "Swede As", headed for the start at Beaconsfield. The line-up comprised the original Hillman Imp, a 1980 Vauxhall Cavalier, a Lancia Beta, a Volkswagen Beetle, two MGB GTs, a Saab 99 and the Audi 80 "Safety Car".

With characteristic over-enthusiasm I sped to Folkestone, arriving nearly two hours before *Le Shuttle* departed. This was our first schoolboy error: we sat and watched our lead evaporate as older, slower cars arrived and boarded significantly earlier trains. So the pressure was on as we arrived on French soil and made our way to Le Mans, via the Road to Rouen.

We swiftly found our rhythm, spending two hours driving, two hours navigating and two hours lounging in squashy, padded comfort on the back seat. Arriving in fourth place, the campsite at Le Chateau de Chanteloup was a peculiarly English thing to behold. Vintage cars of unimaginable worth proudly parked next to shabby tents and clapped-out caravans. Our rally cars were quite at home, arriving one after the other in a cloud of noise and smoke, to join the Le Mans Classics.

## Le Mans – Clermont Ferrand (487km)

*Jamie continues...* Stage 2 was the shortest leg and our best hope of a Stage Win. However, we got off to a bad start: too much adrenaline, too much throttle, a 30ft skid mark across the campsite and a point deducted for bad behaviour. Nevertheless, as the miles clocked up and the petrol gauge plummeted, we overtook the cars which had started ahead of us. Finding Clermont-Ferrand was easy. Finding the campsite wasn't and in the final 500 yards we went the wrong way. As chaos descended and civil war erupted, Tim turned the Volvo on a French franc, wrenching the long nose around and back down the hill. We screeched into the campsite and stopped at the barrier. *First!* Thirty seconds later, the MGB





pulled up and the sight of their fatigued faces, wracked with pain and disappointment, sugar-coated our wondrous victory.

#### **Clermont Ferrand – Monaco (760km)**

*Tim recalls...* Stage three was a day of glory, a foreshadowing of the great triumphant British Olympic summer. Relaxing on our hard-won laurels we settled into a leisurely sun-drenched pilgrimage of discovery, sharing the wide-eyed excitement of our bridge architect team mate as we sought out two marvels of European engineering, spanning vast gorges and the full breadth of modern history: the Pont du Gard and the Millau Viaduct. Happy for the other teams to battle out the day of racing, we spent our time bathing in rivers, eating elegantly, discussing ancient philosophical truths and broadening our minds.

This louche behaviour was the perfect precursor to an evening of sartorial glamour in the heart of Monte Carlo, dressed in black tie and dinner jacket to enjoy the city as Ian Fleming would have prescribed. A gourmet meal near the F1 starting grid on the marina was followed by martinis, supercars, megayachts, lavish gambling and extravagant fireworks.

#### **Monaco – Mâcon via Mont Blanc (686km)**

*Martin recalls...* While everyone else followed the longer but better-trod autoroute east to Italy we, Hannibalesque, followed a B-road north favoured by goats and tractors. Endless hairpin bends negotiated by Tim to the sound of squealing tyres and the smell of fading brakes led, at last, to Cuneo and fast, open Italian highways where I engaged Overdrive and we cruised.

Jamie took over for the hypnotic monotony of the 7-mile Mont Blanc tunnel, and then promptly over-compensated with a ridiculously rapid, snaking descent to Geneva. On to Bourgen-Bresse where – in picking up Celeste, the only hitch-hiker of the trip – we broke Rule 5, and then to Mâcon, home for the evening to the Monkey Run and the Tour de France.

Hitcham and Taplow Society

#### **Mâcon – Nürburgring – Brussels – Taplow (1407km)**

*Jamie recalls...* Despite pounding the German autobahns, a bizarre last-second lane-change from Martin introduced an unplanned and charmless detour through Luxembourg and the MGB pipped us to the Nürburgring, final destination on the final Monkey Run. Spirits briefly crushed, the uplifting roar of supercars rapidly restored my happiness quotient and we entered the 20km Nordschleife race-track for the single most exciting experience of my otherwise quiet life.

We swapped €26 for the right to drive our now much-loved Volvo as fast as it would go around the world-famous German race-track. I kept the pedal hard to the metal for 12 unrelenting minutes and 57 pant-wetting seconds, before crossing the finish line in hysterical disbelief that we were still alive. The elation was so tangible that you could have eaten it with a spoon. And then it was Tim's turn to do it all again...

*Martin adds...* Under Tim's command, the second lap brought more drama as a hard downpour and wet track took its toll on less expert drivers in flightier vehicles. We passed more than one entrant crumpled against the barriers before enjoying our own sudden, thrilling excursion across the grass, simultaneously flirting with disaster and revelling in our openly fragile mortality. A mudguard and some minor bodywork remains on the track, evidence of the heroic endeavours of team Swede As. With daylight fading, the track temporarily closed, and my nerves shot to pieces, we spurned a third fateful lap and turned towards home. Another hopelessly unintended detour, this time through the heart of a dark Brussels, merely brought crazed laughter from a shattered but jubilant crew and Taplow was finally reached at 5am, twenty-two unbroken hours after that day's start.

*Martin concludes...* All of which is by way of explanation, and perhaps apology, to the good villagers of Hitcham and Taplow who have suffered our glorious vehicle in various parking spaces over the past few months. Thank you.

*Jamie Barnard, Tim Browning and Martin Knight*



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# The Great Thames Long Swim

Rachel Dixon



June 30th saw the re-emergence of the historic Boulter's Lock to Bray swim. A huge amount of rain meant that it was touch and go all week as to whether the event would actually go ahead because of the high river level. It was an early start with well over 100 competitors. We entered the cold muddy water after a quick safety briefing from the organisers and drifted downstream 100m or so to the start. The water was extremely fast flowing, but while the current would make for a fast swim it made it very hard not to get swept past the start line as we waited for the gun.

At 6:30am we were all off at an amazing pace, the landmarks on the way flying past. We had been warned to try and stay in the middle as we passed through the arches of Maidenhead Bridge to avoid getting caught in one of the eddies that form around the pillars. Everyone took heed of the warning and passed through unscathed. As we flew past the rowing club you could see and hear the support which added an extra boost. The river then opened out and it was a push to the finish, trying to stay central to make the most use of the current. At the finish opposite Waterside Inn at Bray there was a mad scramble up the muddy bank with tired arms and legs. The walk back along the river to meet friends and family was full of chatter; everyone had had a great swim and a very fast one at that.

*There were quite a few watchers and admirers this year, even at that time in the morning, including your editor.*

Chris Ashford



# Thames Punting Championships

A warm and sunny day by the river, home-made cakes, and a band of dedicated punters dashing up and down the river. What better entertainment could you have on a Sunday afternoon in August?

The Championships take place each year on the Sunday immediately after Maidenhead Regatta, just south of the railway bridge.



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Andrew Findlay

Hitcham and Taplow Society

# Death of an Unique Shopping Village

The thirty shops and the car wash which comprised the long established popular Bishop Centre Shopping Village have now closed down. The buildings stand empty awaiting demolition.

By a single vote, South Bucks District Council Planning Committee approved the planning application to demolish the Bishop Centre and in its place to build a row of large shops with a giant supermarket at the end.

Ignoring the large number and wide extent of objections, the Secretary of State for Communities endorsed the decision.

The many appeals to local MPs Dominic Grieve and Theresa May brought only formal acknowledgements.

The Council Planning Officers in a 35 page analysis of the more than 1000 pages of documents submitted by the applicant and the more than 500 pages of objections had recommended that the application be refused.

Objections had come from:

- Taplow Parish Council, Burnham Parish Council, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council, Slough Borough Council
- The Crown Estates, Slough Trading Estate, Nicholsons Centre Maidenhead, Kings Triangle Maidenhead
- Hitcham and Taplow Society, Burnham High Street Association, Maidenhead Civic Society, Burnham Fifty and Beyond Group
- More than 100 residents of Taplow, Burnham, Dorney and Maidenhead

Objectors had voiced concerns for future traffic problems, effect on nearby shopping areas, loss of specialist shops, addition of yet another supermarket, loss of local employment, noise, lighting and traffic impact on local residents, and inaccurate traffic assessments.

To address these concerns, the South Bucks District Council has set out a list of 49 conditions to be met by Land Securities. The list comprises 2 which must be met before any demolition is done, 11 which must be met before any other work starts, and 36 which must be met before the new shopping centre is allowed to open for business.

An important condition is that "prior to commencement and occupation of the development" Land Securities must make the payments of £865,000 it had offered if the Planning Application was approved:

Taplow Parish Council	£100,000
Burnham Parish Council	£240,000
Cycle Path	£185,000
Thames Valley Adventure Playground	£50,000
Hag Hill Rise Playground	£65,000
Road works	£50,000
Community Assistance Fund	£50,000
Public Art	£125,000

Perhaps a sculpture will be commissioned to dominate the Bath Road: "Satan of the South" to rival the Angel of the North?

*Karl Lawrence*

# Farewell, Thank You and Welcome

**Farewell** to Geoff and Gill Holloway who have moved to pastures new in Pangbourne. After a long spell at Rectory Farm House restoring the outside, renovating the inside, and transforming the garden, they are embarking on the same tasks at their new house in its six acre setting.

**Thank you** Gill for your sterling work founding the role of the Society Membership Secretary and in particular your ground-breaking work in

expanding the list of members to create an email group which enables instant communication to most of the membership.

**Welcome** to Pamela Viollet, new Membership Secretary, ex-Cedar Chase and now High Street resident, who takes over fully briefed to include new members in the email addressees group and to produce the circulation list for this Newsletter.

*Karl Lawrence*



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