

Hitcham and Taplow Society

Newsletter 112: Autumn 2019
£3.50 to non-members

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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.

President: Eva Lipman
Vice President: Fred Russell
Chairman: Vacant
Treasurer: Robert Hanbury
Secretary: Roger Worthington
Committee: Andrew Findlay, Charlie Greeves, Robert Harrap, Rupert Sellers, Nigel Smales, Jonathan Specktor, Louise Symons, Jacqueline Turner
Newsletter Editor (and photos and maps unless noted): Nigel Smales
Newsletter Production: Andrew Findlay

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Cover picture: Sixty years of Newsletters

The Society's Executive Officers 1959/2019

Presidents – 1960/65 Lord Astor (Bill, 3rd Viscount Astor); 1972/74 MAT Rogers; 1975/91 Leonard Miall; 1992/96 John Kennedy; 1997/2000 Tony Hickman; 2001/04 Lincoln Lee; thereafter Eva Lipman.

Chairmen – 1959/70 MAT Rogers; 1971 Bruce Durham; 1972/79 Ivan Snow; 1980/83 Tony Hickman; 1984/91 Robert Hanbury; 1992 David Aldridge; 1992/95 Bill Ball; 1996/98 Eva Lipman; 1999/2001 Heather Fenn; 2001 Valerie Boakes; 2002 Eva Lipman; 2003/06 Anne Hanford; 2007/10 Euan Felton; 2011/16 Karl Lawrence; thereafter Eva Lipman as Acting Chairman.

Secretaries – 1959/60 JM Taylor; 1961/62 Lorna Miall; 1963/70 NW Hanson; 1971/72 Richard Sneyd; 1973/75 Eileen Huddart; 1976/91 Dick Nutt; 1992/95 Robert Hanbury; 1996/98 Sally Sandy; 1999/2001 Maureen Dennis; 2002/06 Jeremy Vanstone; 2007/12 Neil Blundell; thereafter Roger Worthington.

Treasurers – 1959/61 RCF Besch; 1962/67 WJ Garrard; 1968/72 R Lines; 1973/74 Michael Stewart Fry; 1975 John Lewis; 1976/78 J Lance; 1979/81 Eileen Huddart; 1982/83 Philip Cooley; 1984/90 Eva Ricketts; 1991/2001 Hugh Nixon; 2002 Simon Fox; 2003/04 Alan Senior; 2004/07 John Hanford; 2008/15 Peter Mole; 2015/16 Myra Drinkwater; thereafter Robert Hanbury.

Newsletter Editors – 1960/86 Chairmen & Secretaries (Numbers 1-50) delegated to Tony Meats (37-38 in 1979); 1986/87 Sydney Dagg (51-52); 1987/89 Alleyn Grellier (53-56); 1990/91 Danita Pierce (57-60); 1992/93 Dick Nutt 'Not the Editor' (61-65); 1996/97 Leonard Miall (66-69); 1998/2012 Fred Russell (70-98); thereafter Nigel Smales (99-112). Newsletter production by Andrew Findlay since 2004 (82-112).

Sixty Years On

This Newsletter celebrates our Diamond Jubilee. The Society was founded one dark December evening sixty years ago at Lea Rig, the home of MAT Rogers at Poplar Farm, where gravel extraction had begun some eight weeks earlier. He advocated community action to prevent further infringements to the agreed working methods, and to ensure landscape restoration as agreed. A meeting at the Women's Institute in January 1960 appointed Rogers as Chairman and Lord Astor as President of the Hitcham & Taplow Preservation Society.

By the time it circulated its first Newsletter in May 1960 to 90 member households each paying an annual subscription of two shillings "or whatever larger sum members feel they can pay", the Society's horizon had already extended beyond the single issue of gravel extraction. Rogers later recalled its ambition as being to have "a significant influence in maintaining the surroundings of our homes at least as attractive as we found them" by remaining independent and apolitical in its efforts to hold decision-makers to account. It quickly evolved to a fully-fledged civic society striving to exert influence by providing a representative platform for public-spirited individuals and by informing public opinion and giving it a voice.

These original principles still ring true today in the 1996 revision of our primary aim – "to protect Hitcham, Taplow and the surrounding countryside from being spoiled by bad development or neglect" – and in the 2007 simplification of our name to the Hitcham & Taplow Society, thereby reflecting the broader focus already long-established in two supplementary aims: to celebrate local heritage and to promote community spirit.

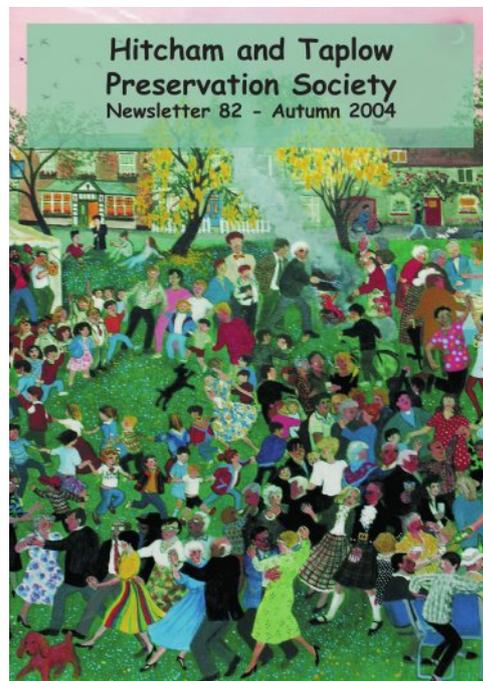
Andrew Findlay

Now, with over 250 member households each paying a minimum annual subscription of £7, we can look back on the many positive contributions the Society has made to

protect and enhance our rural Green Belt setting. Either independently or working in tandem with others, we have succeeded in shaping for the better proposals for changes great and small ranging from gravel extraction, flightpaths, traffic and trains to the Jubilee River and Taplow Bridge, and from individual buildings to significant redevelopments and the rescue of blighted sites. In addition, our community efforts range from clearing rubbish to preserving or restoring landscapes, memorials and other treasures. We welcome everyone of all ages to our midsummer Village Green Party (VGP) and our Easter Egg Hunt, and we keep members in touch by e-mail, through our website and our biannual Newsletters which aim to inform on 'hot topics' and entertain by telling tales of past and present.

Many individuals deserve credit for the Society's achievements. There is space on Page 2 to mention only a few of the 132 Committee members. And that's the point – the Society is all of us, a vital element of our community, of our social cohesion. If it didn't exist, you'd be daft not to invent it.

Our constant objective is to be as widely representative as possible of all areas and interests in our little corner of the world and of a broad range of relevant knowledge and expertise. If you're not a member, perhaps you'd consider joining the Society? And if you are, why not join the Committee? Our Secretary Roger Worthington would be delighted for you to get in touch. His contact details are on Page 2.



Sheila Horton and Andrew Findlay

Our first full-bleed cover



VGP 2019 – Alastair, Leroy & Rupert

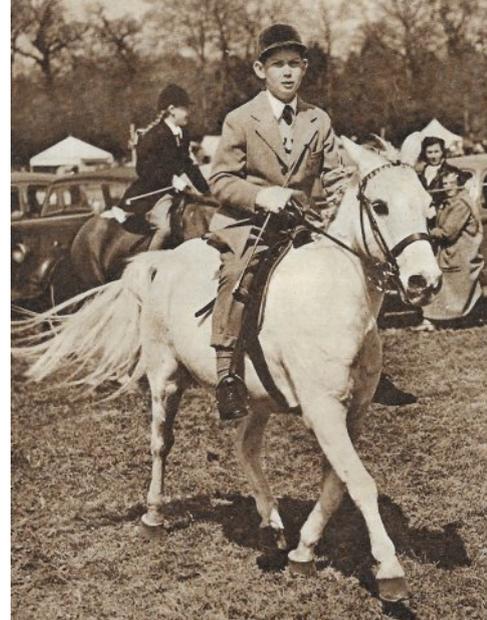
Come on, Eileen (Part One)

Local lore says Eileen Law (when she was Miss Matthews) founded Taplow Horse Show & Gymkhana (THS) and was its Chairman for 50 years. However, a dusty archive discovered in the barn on the Green reveals legend and history don't quite coincide. Eileen was "Hon Organiser" for the first Show at Cleare's Farm (now Taplow Lake) not in 1945, as is often said, but on 2nd September 1944 when her mother Flossie presented a cup for Children's Open Jumping and Count Robert Orssich (co-founder of the Royal Windsor Horse Show in 1943) was one of the judges. It was a great success but may well have been a one-off if Florence & Maurice Rance (The Porches, High Street) hadn't organised the second, at Taplow Court on 7th September 1946, with two rings in which 124 horses competed in 14 classes.

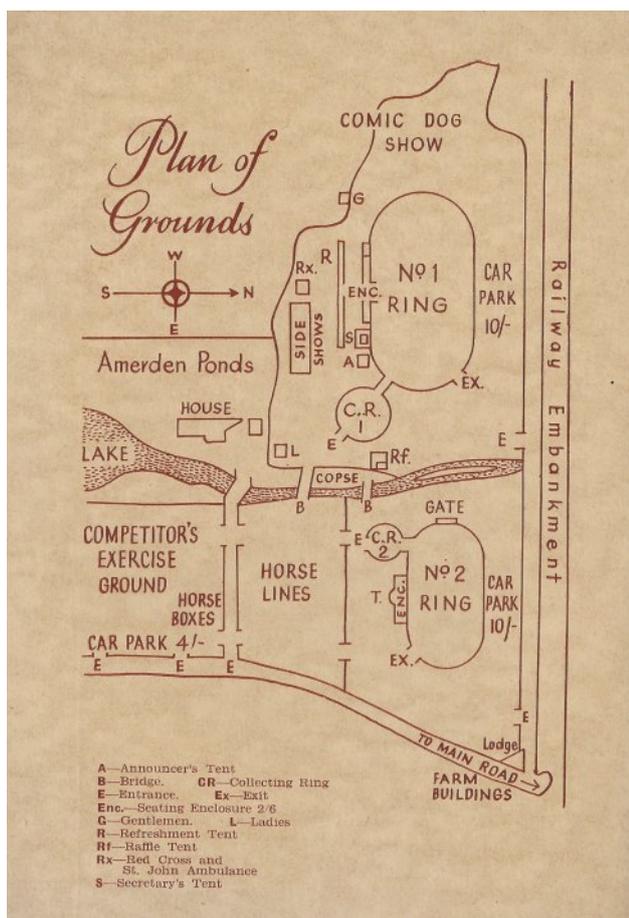
who was anyone hereabouts. Lord Kemsley (Dropmore) and Michael Gold (Hedsor Park Farm) accepted his invitations to be Show President and Chairman. Colonel Lionel Hanbury (Hitcham House) and Lords Waldorf Astor (Cliveden) and Courtauld-Thomson (Dorneywood) were among the Vice-Presidents.

The local focus of the 1946 Show evolved with four two-ring Shows held at Amerden Ponds (1947/50). Kemsley and various companies including Moss Bros and New Taplow Paper Mill presented challenge cups. James Allan (Ray Mead Road, Maidenhead) succeeded as Chairman in 1948. Taplow Horse Show Club (THSC) was formed in 1949 to better manage the Show which was switched to Spring 1950 for a better fit in the national equestrian calendar. This didn't look a good decision when Amerden was waterlogged a fortnight before the 1951 Show. Arthur Mewton of Hill Farm saved the day by offering Buffins where the Duchess of Kent came to see her children Princess Alexandra and Prince Michael compete. With space for three rings, it was home to THS until 1972.

Lord Bill Astor succeeded as President in 1952. Viscountess Imogen Gage (daughter of



Prince Michael on Pearl 1951



Amerden Ponds 1948

Like his father and granddad – both William Rance, farmers and butchers at The Hollies (now Mulberry House, High Street) – Maurice was a pillar of the community. He knew everyone



Lady Beatrice Pole-Carew, Daphne Williams & Eileen Matthews 1951

Lord Desborough) and Marye Pole-Carew (for whom The Knowle had become Maryfield, High Street) added to the trophy cabinet. The increasingly high-quality competition attracted attention and the BBC televised the 1956 Show. Who could keep Taplow on track and trotting? Come on, Eileen...



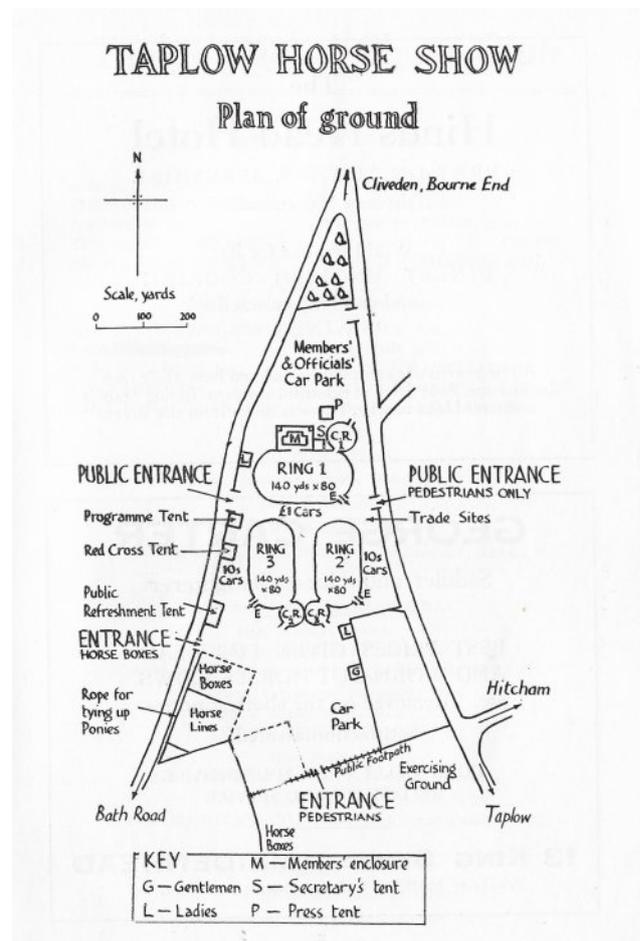
Eileen Matthews 1952

Eileen Matthews' personal background was a bit of a mystery. She was born in Hampstead where her father James was a House Steward. A 1988 news cutting says she "moved to Taplow with her parents before war broke out" but a 1939 directory notes only Flossie and Eileen at Marsh Mead at the top of Marsh Lane. Respectively, they were a "Dealer" and an "Asst Manageress" of a "Stationers & Newsagents" yet – with a stable and paddocks for their horses – they were clearly comfortably off. Perhaps Flossie was related to Constance Awdry (of Hitchambury until 1946) or her late husband Charles, a partner in WH Smith & Sons.

Eileen had joined the Show committee in 1946, served as its Treasurer (1947/48) and was a founder member of THSC (its Treasurer, 1949/52) and of its Riding Club, which soon had a full calendar of fixtures for those not aspiring to elite competition. When THS was cancelled in 1957 due to nationwide petrol shortages, she put on a more modest Taplow Riding Club Horse Show and, inevitably, passed the test with flying colours and in 1958 began 38 years as THSC Chairman. Her formidable organisational ability and unrelenting energy eclipsed the Rance renaissance as she exhausted four Presidents, nine Treasurers and ten Secretaries to take THS from strength to strength. By the time Princess Anne competed in 1969 – watched by her proud mother HRH Queen Elizabeth II – THS was "a

local tradition of national importance", a chance for novices to impress and for top riders such as David Broome, Liz & Ted Edgar, Marion Mould, Nick Skelton, Michael Whitaker and Harvey, Robert & Steven Smith to qualify for national championships including the Royal International Horse Show.

Horses were her heartbeat but not her only love. Protection of the Green Belt was her primary concern during 30 years as Chairman of Eton Rural District Council. She was also a longstanding Taplow Parish Councillor and vital to two legacies we still enjoy. In 1953, she and Catherine Martineau (Old Lodge, High Street) persuaded friends to make interest-free loans of £900 which enabled acquisition of Hitcham Field to prevent its development and, ultimately, create the Recreation Ground (see Page 6). Ten years later, she allied with Anne Young (née Whitlaw, later Milne) and Ernest Perkins to save from development part of Pater Noster – once a meadow, then a farmyard – to create the Village Green. In addition, she served the Society with enthusiasm as a founder committee member (1959/70) and Vice-President (1974/96). The final chapter of her story will feature in Newsletter 113.



Buffins 1959

Friends United

Page 5 recalls how friends made loans to acquire Hitcham Field 66 years ago. There was £100 from Jack Martineau (Old Lodge), Alexander Sim (Amerden Grove) and Russell Smith, £50 each from Eileen and Flossie Matthews, Audrey Skimming (Taplow House), Jack Page (Hitcham Lodge), Ernest Perkins (Hitcham Close), William Wood and Mrs Mawdsley-Harte plus £45 from Dr Sawyer. George Bancroft (Elibank), George Bond (Rhone Villa, Bath Road), Jack Hewens (Chun Gates, Ellington Road), Evelyn Irby (The Orchard, High Street), Lady Editha Franckenstein (Queen Anne House), Robinson Peter Rigg and Lady Robson all loaned £25 while Lionel Hanbury, Victor Williams (Rectory Farmhouse) and the Women's Institute each added £10. In 1956, Martineau, Eileen Matthews, Page, Perkins, Rigg, Sim and Skimming became the first directors of the Taplow & Hitcham Recreation Grounds Association (THRGA). Gravel extraction raised



Taplow Dog Show at the Rec 2018

further funds and, in 1961, all loans were converted to donations. By then, fifteen of these friends were founder members of the Society.

The spirit of these pioneers lives on. In early-July, THRGA moved quickly when travellers descended upon the Rec. Thames Valley Police were called. Legal notices were served to evict the convoy of caravans. The ground was damaged – no cricket could be played the following weekend – but the reaction of the community was heartening. The Phoenix Club, Claire's Court School, residents of Institute Road and dog-walkers all came together to clear the detritus.

Multiplication Tables

Plessey inherited some large trestle tables when it took over Taplow Court in 1961. These were loaned to the Society in 1986 for its very first Village Green Party and donated to the community when Plessey departed Taplow in 1988. St Nicolas' Church kindly stores them in its crypt from which

they are exhumed as and when required – for VGPs, church fetes and other events – with little thought to their vintage. It is likely that they were made for William Grenfell in the 1880s, almost certainly used at the village party in the High Street to celebrate Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1897, and possibly in Cliveden's tennis court when Nancy & Waldorf Astor entertained hundreds for dinner to celebrate their 1906 marriage.

The need to replace two trestles incinerated by vandals after the 2017 VGP focused attention on the increasingly deteriorating condition of the tables themselves. With Andrew Findlay kindly volunteering his creativity, the Society funded the construction of five new tables which made their debut at this year's VGP, complete with clip-on plastic trestles and tablecloth clips. We hope they too will last over 100 years. They are available for the community



Wear and Tear

Andrew Findlay

to loan for free: see www.taplowsociety.org.uk/tables

Many thanks to Andrew for his ingenious joinery, to him and Jane Curry for getting up at the crack of dawn before every VGP to start roasting the meat, to SGI for the bonfire logs, and to everyone on the team led by Alastair Hill and Rupert Sellers which made possible our midsummer fun.



Jane Striking a Light

Andrew Findlay



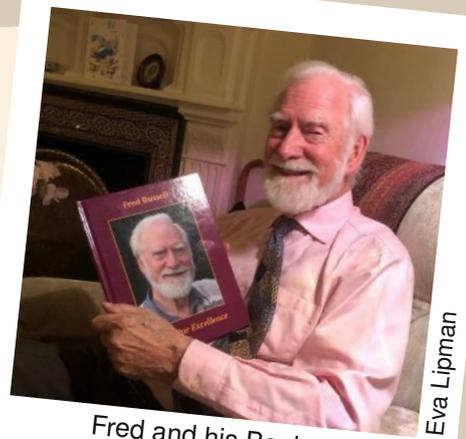
Andrew Striking a Pose

Jane Curry

Snapshots



Joy Marshall and Fred Russell celebrated their 90th birthdays in September. She was a Parish Councillor, he is a Vice President of the Society, but titles don't tell the half of it. Few have made greater contributions to our community for so long with such passion and dedication. He presented her with a certificate of our appreciation, and our President Eva Lipman presented him with a book of extracts from the 29 Newsletters he edited over 14 years.



Fred and his Book

Eva Lipman

Great Western Railway will cease services to Taplow Station on 14th December. The following day, MTR Crossrail will begin seven-days-a-week Elizabeth Line services to Reading and Paddington (High Level). Underground services to the City and Canary Wharf should begin in Winter 2020/21 with connection to the Essex branch six months afterwards. Other headlines are: four trains an hour during peak times, two an hour off-peak (but trains will have no toilets); waiting rooms refurbished; ticket office staffed all day every day; ticket hall to be refurbished during 2020, possibly with automatic gates; and thanks to lobbying by the Society and Taplow PC, the new bridge spans to the south car park and has three lifts not two.



Di Mills

Habib Khan & Rob Court

The Julian Cup is the world's oldest limited-overs cricket competition. Local teams play for the trophy donated by Lord Desborough to commemorate his eldest son Julian Grenfell, who fell in the Great War. Nowadays, the Cup is awarded to the winners of a top division and teams in the lower division play for the Julian Cup Plate - won this summer by Taplow Cricket Club. Congratulations!



Elizabeth Line Class 345 Train

The Society allied with Taplow PC to press for Taplow Weir car park on Mill Lane to be re-opened for public use. The Environment Agency agreed to do so subject to maintenance needs and until the installation of a new gantry over the weir. Meanwhile, it will test the condition of the Thames (and its mussel beds) and apply but not publish increased flood risk assessments. It revealed "some embarrassment" at sale of the west bank of the Jubilee to Berkeley Homes. How embarrassed will it be if the promised car park is never restored?



Jacqueline Turner

No room for cars

Sunil Prasanna / Wikimedia Commons

What does the Church mean to you?



I've never considered myself a religious person. Membership of the Brownies resulted in an obligatory monthly attendance at Church Parade. Ironed uniform, polished shoes and a shiny threepenny bit in my top pocket. Occasionally at Christmas I was pulled reluctantly from my bed to attend Midnight Mass. Every year there was a tearful family attendance on Armistice Sunday.

My grandmother died. My sister married. My nieces and nephews were baptised.

I studied, built a career, travelled the world, raised a family. The church was still there, largely ignored. However, I took opportunities to visit and enjoy religious buildings wherever I went, along with many other visitors. Places built to be noticed: imposing, uplifting, spectacularly both beautiful and awe inspiring, filled with artistic treasures. Places that make you pause a while and reflect. Places that appear in all civilisations across the globe, in all their different guises.

Who can imagine an English village without a pub and a church? Both places of hospitality and welcome. Places to interact with other

people, to take time out of a hectic schedule. The church unites all ages, from toddler groups and Sunday School to the elderly who enjoy the assistance of other members of the congregation. Major services at Easter,

Christmas and Remembrance Day attract large congregations. During the last four years, St Nicolas' Church has hosted 49 weddings and 24 funerals and welcomed 72 new lives in baptism. The church is also a community space used for concerts, meetings and a large variety of social events.

St Augustine's mission to England in 597AD is often taken as a starting point of Christian worship in this country. Only 38 years later, in 635, Birinus, first Bishop of Dorchester, was preaching Christianity and baptising converts in Bapsey Pool in the grounds of what is now Taplow Court.

After the Romans left in about 410, the area was claimed by warring Saxon leaders. There remains a 7th Century burial mound believed to be where the Anglo-Saxon warrior chieftain Taepa was buried ca 620. The mound was excavated in 1883 and the Taplow Hoard displayed in the British Museum. A Saxon church was built in sight of the mound, which was succeeded by a Norman one in use until the 18th Century.

The first church on the present site was constructed in 1828. In 1865, Rev Charles

Whately (Rector 1850/90) personally funded the addition of a chancel, designed by the renowned architect Sir George Gilbert Scott. Elizabeth & Charles Seymour Grenfell of Elibank were the driving force when the church was substantially rebuilt in 1912. They provided approximately half the cost of over £9,000, Waldorf Astor of Cliveden donated £1,000 and the balance was subscribed by over 200 parishioners.

The architect was George Fellowes Prynne. Scott's chancel was retained but extended, and the original tower was topped by the distinctive timber and copper spire. The altar was raised seven steps above the nave floor level, and the floor of the chancel and sanctuary laid with at least 16 shades and styles of marble. Of particular note is the delicate stonework in the screen, the fine oak roof, the stained glass, and the beauty of the Lady Chapel with its marble altar and mosaic floor. No expense was spared to create a very special building. Indeed, the new building even possessed under floor heating and electric light!

At the dedication service on 6th December 1912, the church was full to overflowing with many people obliged to stand, and a large assembly formed outside. Maidenhead Advertiser reported: "Strings of bunting were hung across the streets; flags were hung out from the windows of residences.... As the clock chimed six o'clock the doors of the church were unlocked and thrown open. A flood of light, intensified by the

darkness without, came from the interior of the church, which was brightly illuminated, and fell full upon the Bishop and his attendants as they entered the church."

Many of the treasures in the church pre-date the current building. In the floor of the Lady Chapel is the earliest surviving civilian commemoration in brass. In 1350, Nicholas of Amerden was Lord of the Manor and travelled to London by barge to sell fish. Other important brasses include those commemorating the Manfield family which date back to the 15th Century.



Tony Bridge

The 14th Century Brass Cross

St Nicolas' Church manages frequent requests for information. This month we have welcomed Danish artist Troels Andersen doing research into the stained-glass windows by Baron Arild Rosenkrantz. There are four very fine examples in St Nicolas. Troels studied the windows over two days, observing them in changing light conditions. His research follows the discovery of a roll of cartoons for the windows, in the attic at Rosenholm Castle, family home

Hilary Monaghan



Hilary Monaghan

Troels Andersen flanked by Churchwardens Tony Bridge & Phil Taylor

of one of the oldest and most famous families in Denmark. The following week, we were excited to meet John Rutland of New Zealand, a direct descendant of James Rutland, organist for 50 years at St Nicholas (as it was until the 1920s), parish clerk and excavator of Taepa's mound.

The church of St Nicolas in Taplow is a legacy bequeathed to all of us by our predecessors. They organised it, paid for it, ran it and many of their sons are named on the war memorial in the churchyard. All residents of the village and its surroundings are stewards of their church. Our vicar Jane Cresswell is dedicated to serving the parish. As in Victorian times, she is supported by a large team of

volunteers who are committed to serving the ever-changing needs of our community now and in the future. There is no financial help from the Diocese of Oxford. In fact, St Nicolas' contribution to the diocese to enable them to support the work of the churches in the area was over £48,000 last year. The current congregation of 80 struggles to provide enough income to cover all the running costs of the church. In addition, extensive repairs have recently been done on the roof and the south wall. Now, another substantial sum of money is required to replace the failed heating system.

The easy way to secure a steady income to enable the volunteers to maintain the church for everyone to enjoy now and in the future is to spread the cost between many people. If you would like to help by pledging a regular subscription, however small, please ask for an application form for the Parish Giving Scheme by emailing the treasurer:

snoxelljames@gmail.com. Alternatively, visit the website st-nicolas-taplow.org to see how to make a one-off donation, or consider leaving a legacy www.churchlegacy.org.uk/leaving-a-legacy



John Rutland

Hilary Monaghan

Brenda Burns 1923-2019



Many will remember Brenda simply as that little old lady from the Thatched Cottage. Her neighbours on Berry Hill, friends at St Nicolas Church and especially Colin, Lynn and Jan all knew there was much more to her.

To her family, Brenda was B. Of Scots heritage brought up in Yorkshire, she had an indomitable spirit and a 'can do' attitude – the perfect recipe for the Women's Institute to bottle and label 'Something Special'. And how special the WI was to her. In 2007, she scribbled a note: "What the WI means to me, an aging member of 83: every year we learn or relearn new skills so wonderful they cure all ills. Caring friends with smiling eyes, dedicated committee, patient and wise". Typically, she glossed over both her role as a leading light of the Taplow & Hitcham WI for more than 25 years and her own 'ills' – incurable rheumatoid arthritis.

B was born in Hull, daughter of Mary and Dr Ian Innes, younger sister to Ian. She recovered from childhood rheumatic fever to shine at hockey, lacrosse, swimming and gymnastics at boarding school on the bracing Yorkshire coast. Later in life, she would boast: "I'm a gymnast, you know. I can touch my toes". And she could. At 17, B was accepted for teacher training at Dunfermline College of Hygiene and Physical Education, which had relocated to Aberdeen because of the war. She studied sport, anatomy and physiology, qualified in teaching and physiotherapy and – when not driving to Spain in her Morris 1000 or sailing round the Hebrides – went on to teach in primary schools in West Hartlepool, Saffron Walden and Kensington.

Forever courageous in the face of life's misfortunes, not least her disabilities, B found renewal after the premature death of her husband Jimmy Greenland by marrying his friend Michael Burns. They renovated a farm cottage in Wantage – where she joined the WI – and around 40 years ago came to Taplow to begin his dream project: renovating the Thatched Cottage. Naturally, when he too passed away, she finished the job and settled to enjoy its garden in which (her diary ecstatically reports, with many exclamation marks) she watched the flowering of a blue Himalaya poppy. She delighted in driving into the Chelsea Flower Show as a member of the Royal Horticultural Society, in her membership of the National Trust and the National Association of Decorative Fine Arts Societies, and in her love of birds, dogs and dispensing the family dram as often and for as long as she could.

Locally, B combined her dedication to the WI and the church with being a St Nicolas School governor and, ever ready to socialise, she enjoyed events like Taplow Horse Show and the Village Green Party. She flew to Scotland for the Highland Games and college reunions until well into her eighties and – memorably, at 88 years old – revealed her dry wit to newer Taplovians by thanking them for organising the Burns Supper especially for her. No doubt the spirit of Rabbie Burns will have whispered "Fare thee weel, thou best and dearest" as she was laid to rest with her family on a hillside by the River Don upstream from Aberdeen.

Adapted from a eulogy by Brenda's niece Eleanor Marsden

HTS AGM

**Friday 6th December
8pm**

Taplow Village Hall

Thirty Years On

On 19th May, SGI-UK members, guests and friends came to Taplow Court to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of its official opening as a Buddhist centre by its leader SGI President Daisaku Ikeda on 21st May 1989.



Guests celebrating 30 years

Among the guests at this event was Dominic Benoist of Symm & Company, who was responsible for the refurbishment of the house in 1988/89, along with his son who was then about to be born. This was the first of many investments to preserve the fabric and overall feeling of this historic former manor house, its furnishings and grounds. SGI-UK has continued this focus by maintaining a close connection with the Grenfell family, which has donated various items that are on display throughout the year, and through other projects such as the extensive renovation of the brickwork on the west elevation by Cliveden Conservation.

From the start, it was the vision of Daisaku Ikeda that Taplow Court would be a centre for activities relating to peace, culture and education. This year's exhibition in the main house illuminates his life and the impact he has on the world. He also wanted to make sure that Taplow Court maintained a close connection with the surrounding community, which is illustrated by our long-standing motto: 'Peace through trust, trust through friendship.'

Therefore, as well as being much loved and well-used by people practising or interested in Nichiren Buddhism, we have organised numerous events and activities for other groups to come and enjoy the house and gardens. This has included the annual

reception, the Summer Open Days, regular visits from schools and other children's groups (such as Scouts), art and horticultural groups. There have also been a variety of interfaith meetings and conferences. Local charity events such as 'Maidenhead's Got Talent' and Rotary Club concerts have been held in the Ikeda New Century Hall, which was added in 2001, and for the last few years, the main house has hosted the Bucks Council Citizenship ceremony.

Looking towards the future, SGI is a proud advocate of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are a set of 17 interconnected and interrelated goals focused on ending poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. For more information see: www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/. Amongst other things, we are creating an outreach programme to promote an awareness of the SDGs among school children.

We are trying to make Taplow Court and our other Buddhist centres as carbon neutral as possible. This has led to the introduction of reusable and recyclable plastic water bottles plus plastic and paper cups made from compostable material.

Phil Rollinson, who previously worked in National Trust properties, was appointed as Head Gardener in 2011. Through his desire to reduce wastage and protect the environment, he created a vision of a garden that is not only beautiful to look at but also designed to sustain a variety of wildlife. A nursery has been created and 360 trees have been planted over the last six months.

In the next thirty years and beyond, Taplow Court will continue doing much more of the same kind of things, hopefully becoming a model of environmental sustainability.

Jessica Squier



Bucks in Flux

An eye-catching headline? Good. It signals this Newsletter's swerve into 'hot topics'. Complexity and uncertainty lurk in the next four pages. It will be tough to take in. Focus. Sip a strong coffee if that helps your concentration.

This is a tale of two hierarchies – one the structure and operation of local government in Buckinghamshire, the other of planning aims and policies cascading erratically from Her Majesty's Government (HMG) down to local authorities and, ultimately, to neighbourhoods. Mind the rash of acronyms. Break a leg...

The Powers That Be

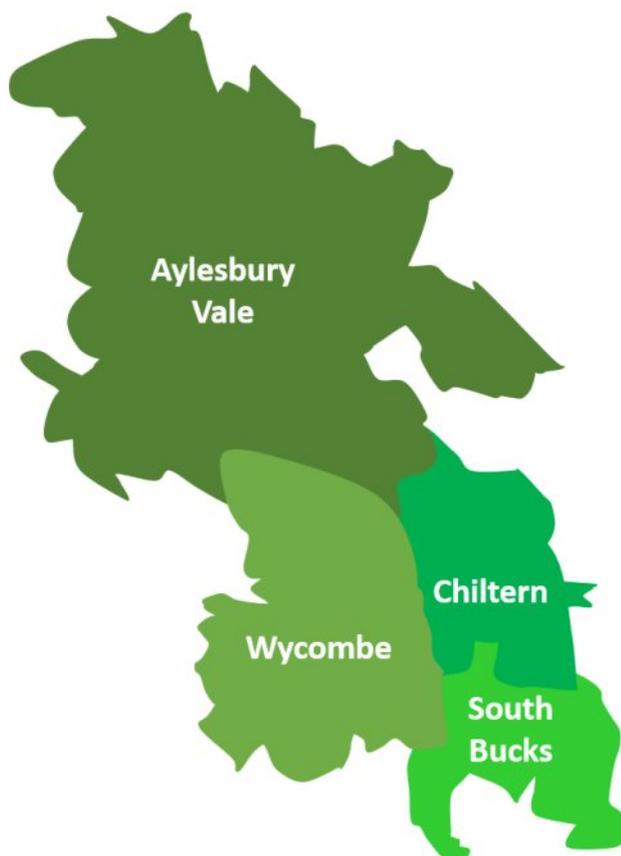
Currently, power descends from Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) to four District Councils (DCs) and down to 170 town and parish councils (PCs), representatives of which gather in Local Area Forums (LAFs) to agree local priorities and invest their very limited funds. The rather strange rural and urban mix of Taplow, Dorney and Lent Rise – concocted to balance constituency sizes – comprises a ward which

elects three councillors to South Bucks DC (SBDC) and, as Cliveden Ward, one to BCC. Hitcham is a rural outpost in the relatively urban SBDC ward of Burnham Church & Beeches and in the larger BCC ward of Farnham Common & Burnham Beeches. Taplow and Hitcham join Dorney, Burnham, Farnham Royal and Stoke Poges PCs in the Beeches LAF.

This landscape is about to change. Elections will be held in May 2020 for the new Buckinghamshire Council (BC). Cliveden Ward will elect three councillors to this unitary authority which will replace BCC and the four DCs.

Drivers for change include HMG's requirement for 46,100 new homes in Buckinghamshire by 2033, an objective achievable only if anticipated shortfalls in Wycombe DC and in SBDC / Chiltern DC are 'exported' to Aylesbury Vale DC. Numbers vary almost daily but this means space must be found up there for some 4,000 of the 15,260 homes targeted for SBDC / Chiltern DC. It is also believed that a single authority will be more economical than five, not least because BC will have 147 councillors, a reduction from 236 councillor posts held by 187 councillors (all 49 BCC councillors are also DC councillors).

Economy is welcome but at what cost to the breadth and quality of services, and especially to local focus? Although there is a recent exception – our County Councillor Dev Dhillon secured funds for new surface water drains in Rectory Road – BCC in its Aylesbury ivory tower is usually either ignorant or dismissive of knowledge and needs in our very distant corner. The Society sees no reason why BC will be any better. With the removal of DCs, we are unconvinced that replacing LAFs with either 14 or 19 Community Boards (CBs) will bridge the increased gap between the grass roots and the heads in clouds. Our response to the Shadow BC consultation advocated that CBs should have delegated authority within a more clearly defined remit, and that the '19 Option' would better reflect our local communities because our local CB would cover the same area as the Beeches LAF and not be extended to include "the Ivers" where priorities relate more strongly to Heathrow and other London-centric issues.





New drain for the springs beneath Rectory Farmhouse

Dorney Dreaming

The Society's frustration with BCC is shared by friends in Dorney who have floated the idea of secession from Bucks to join the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead (RBWM). Lower council tax. Proximity to the administrative centre and rubbish dump (sorry, recycling centre). What's not to like? Hmm. Best not to forget that, in the 1980s, RBWM tried to grab all of Bucks up to the M40 with the aim of building all over it, and pressure for housing has since increased. Besides, Dorney couldn't leave alone. It would have to take Cliveden Ward with it, including Taplow. Three old adages spring to mind: 'be careful what you wish for', 'better the devil you know' and 'from the frying pan into the fire'.

The Making of Plans

Centralisation might bring economies in subcontracted services, such as refuse collection, but the Society believes strongly that planning decisions should be informed by intimate understanding of local matters. SBDC has often been remiss in this respect, but Capswood is a lot closer than Aylesbury – more convenient for councillors to make site visits in difficult cases and for personal representation at planning committee meetings. A vague BCC statement in 2016 that there will be "five local planning committees" appeared to recognise such concerns yet there has since been no indication of how Planning will work once DCs disappear. We have advised the Shadow BC that its silence on matter and lack of public dialogue is of real concern and unwise.

This uncertainty is exacerbated by legislative turmoil at national and local levels. It all began

in 2012 with HMG's new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and targets for housing and commercial development. SBDC and Chiltern DC decided to work together to prepare a joint Local Plan (LP) but it wasn't until 2016 that their draft LP (dLP) was published for consultation. With its 2005 Parish Plan out-of-date, Taplow PC secured SBDC permission to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) but put this on hold as things went haywire. Debates about the shape of local government were a distraction. The NPPF has been revised twice in the past 16 months to require local planning authorities to "approach decisions on proposed developments in a positive and creative way" and generally give greater freedom to developers and reduce oversight and control by elected councillors. Meanwhile, SBDC's Local Plan (1999, revised 2011) has become formally out-of-date, which gives developers a big advantage when appealing against planning refusals and could expose SBDC to Slough's ambitions to 'export' housing development into Stoke Poges.

With the advent of BC ever closer, and the assumption (but not certainty) that BC will have no option but to accept an agreed SBDC / Chiltern LP, a new dLP was published for consultation during July and August 2019. It is minimalist, error prone and pays no regard to Conservation Areas. It offers little evidence that required housing numbers and types are based on real need and tends to favour the housing stock developers like to construct, especially on Green Belt land. Other than the required residential and commercial land allocations, it contains very little not directly mandated by the NPPF. Just about every section – even one headed "Protected Places" – begins "Planning permission will be granted unless....". In addition to the Green Belt removals proposed in the 2016 dLP, further areas of Green Belt are also identified for removal on ill-defined grounds of "tidying up" boundaries. These changes have not been publicly consulted on, appear based on poor procedures and are not justified for residential or commercial need but by internal planning team decisions.

As we go to press, we don't know how the DCs will respond to the high level of criticism its 2019 dLP has received from all quarters, or when that might go to HMG Inspection. It is difficult to see how the many strong objections can be resolved satisfactorily before the BC takes over.

Making Plans for Taplow

With apologies to Hitcham, marooned in Burnham with little weight to press its case, we now turn to Taplow's efforts to preserve its valued feel in this maelstrom. As reported in recent Newsletters, a Taplow Neighbourhood Plan Working Party (WP) was formed to represent Taplow PC, the Society and the Ellington & District Residents Association (EDRA). Once more, the WP shelved its embryonic efforts on the NP to focus on the 2019 dLP and the stipulation that it could only be challenged for being "not justified [by] proportionate or adequate evidence [or] not effective because it is not deliverable for some reason associated with its evidence". If that wasn't a difficult enough hurdle for amateurs to jump, there were conflicting statements about if and how the evidence in the weighty supporting documents, such as the draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), could be questioned. Could such obstacles have been designed to prevent any effective response?

The WP needed professional help. Taplow PC agreed to fund the appointment of Peter Edwards, a planning consultant specialising in LPs. Two-thirds of the WP sat back in admiration as Martin Maund and Roger Worthington worked diligently with Peter to pick through intricacies and tiptoe around obstacles to challenge the soundness of the dLP. The WP's objections were formally submitted in the name of Taplow PC (and are accessible on the PC website) but it was very much a joint effort.

The WP objected to the encouragement given to residential infill in Taplow Village despite it being wholly in the Green Belt and



Roger and Martin

mostly within the Village Conservation Area. It did not dispute the removal from the Green Belt of the triangle immediately south of Taplow Station – a proposal carried forward from the 2016 dLP – but objected to its allocation for office redevelopment since, by generating significant traffic growth on the A4 without providing intended employment opportunity for SBDC residents, this would not meet strategic intent. As anticipated by Newsletter 111, without public consultation, the 2019 dLP also proposed to 'tidy boundaries' by removing from the Green Belt the triangle bounded by the Thames, the Jubilee and the railway, much of which falls into the Riverside Conservation Area. The WP objected that the associated process was procedurally deficient and made false comparisons with other sites. If implemented, it will leave the whole of Ellingtonia exposed to development and there would be nothing except its promise to new residents to prevent Berkeley Homes developing its "beautiful meadows and parkland".

These matters are vital, but not so frightening at first sight as the 2019 dLP's requirement for 431 new dwellings to be built in the Taplow NP area by 2036. The WP demonstrated that the entire basis of this number and its associated calculations are riddled with errors, and it includes new homes built since the 2016 baseline (primarily in Mill Lane and Institute Road) and some approved but not yet built (such as those which will replace Silchester House on the A4). If the WP's objections are fully upheld, the required number of truly new starts in the next 17 years will be reduced to 12.

Heartened by HMG's aim for NPs to become a much stronger component of planning regulations and better equipped by its dLP analysis, the WP will now resume focus on the Taplow NP. Although the numbers aren't entirely comparable (they are counted differently for different purposes), Taplow has a projected 2020 tax-base of 1,464 dwellings (the number paying council tax), a massive increase of 673 dwellings (85%) since the 791 counted in the 2011 census. It would be wishful to hope that the number of new dwellings can be restricted to the 12 required to meet the HMG target, but surely it would be reasonable to argue that little Taplow has more than done its bit.

Cycle Clips

The recently completed A4 Cycleway is indicative of BCC disconnection with local needs. Its attitude seemed to be that waving the banner of sustainability was answer enough to questions about who would benefit or even how the overall impact could be described as sustainable. No benefit in revisiting that discussion just now but other observations are pertinent. We pointed out that there wasn't room for the original design of a 3.5m wide two-way cycleway shared with pedestrians. What do we have? A nicely tarmacked pavement clipped to no more than 1.9m wide (and less than a metre at one point) with lampposts, telegraph poles, access covers to telecommunications and other services unmoved. This will have saved money and reduce other concerns such as driveway sightlines but at the expense of compressing cyclists and pedestrians into a narrower path. This increases risk along its whole length but especially at the unsighted and sharp deviation under the railway at Dumb Bell Bridge – the only place where the cycleway encroached into the main carriageway, reducing it to just 7.2m through which two lanes of heavy traffic must swerve dangerously. Let us pray.



Tight under Dumb Bell Bridge

The strength and logic of local objections prevented the implementation of the proposed additional eastbound lane and the banning of right turns at the Berry Hill junction. It is worrying that BCC claims to have "proven" these changes make sense (not to the public, it hasn't) and that the IDP declares them "desirable". BCC's intention of keeping the junction "under review" may be a face-saver since it conflates "cyclist safety" with having two eastbound lanes to "increase capacity". The problem here is not capacity but throughput, which is limited by two-lane constrictions at Maidenhead and Dumb Bell Bridges. All an additional lane would do is

to increase the number of cars standing still in Taplow in peak-hour traffic jams instead of in Maidenhead where they come from. What good is that to Bucks council-tax payers? Indeed, the only people who might benefit are off-peak drivers travelling on this 1.5 mile stretch of trunk road through Buckinghamshire from one bit of Berkshire to another while locals are forced to drive an extra 500 miles a day to U-turn at the new Jubilee Lane roundabout.



Access covers avoided

And in Other News

Congratulations on making it through to this cryptic postscript planning update. Approved: riverside pub. Refused: conversion of The Hermitage (Ellingtonia) from offices to ten apartments and replacement of Stonecrop (3 Saxon Gardens). No decision: Boathouses site (Mill Lane). No action yet to enforce removal of sheds built without permission in Great Coldgrove (north-east of Hill Farm Road's junction with Hitcham Lane). Revised application: Marsh Lane quail farm. New applications: extensions at St Nicolas School and Amerden Cottages, swimming pool at Lea Rig (Poplar Farm). Huntswood Golf Club clubhouse doesn't have planning permission. Marsh Lane's bridge over the M4 will be closed for reconstruction for a year from mid-November.

Lincoln's End

Remembering Lincoln Lee

Maidenhead has a distinction. Yes, really. Lincoln liked quirky but in his 54 articles in 26 Newsletters over 22 years he never remarked on



The dragon at Cherry House

our neighbour's distinctive terracotta whimsies. Or that they eventually crept into Taplow – witness the dragon sitting astride a gable in River Road. Various Victorian and Edwardian buildings in Maidenhead are adorned with ornate mouldings and scrolls, gargoyles, pinnacles and finials designed as fleur-de-lys, swans or wyverns (two-footed dragons), and a bear (now painted black) graces the Bear Hotel in the High Street. The trend can be traced to Charles

Cooper (Mayor of Maidenhead 1851/52) whose father John had worked on the construction of Maidenhead Bridge in the 1770s before building the original Maidenhead Town Hall. In 1825, John founded Cooper's Brick & Tile Works at Pinkney's Green, where red Reading clay was abundant and – Charles realised – perfect not only for baking into bricks and tiles but also for hand-sculpting into whimsical shapes. He was succeeded by three generations of Coopers: John

the Younger, Henry and Norman, who sold the business in 1955 to Maidenhead Brick & Tile Works, which ceased to be in 1968.

Even when he knew the answers, Lincoln also liked to tell tales that posed questions. A sad story came to light recently when an Air Transport Auxiliary pilot's logbook was sold at auction for £2,800. Having flown Spitfires, Hurricanes and Fairey Swordfish, Scotswoman Lesley Cairns Murray was experienced and well-regarded when she took off from White Waltham Airfield in a twin-engine Hudson trainer aircraft piloted by Geoffrey Regan, a 16-year-old cadet. Both were killed when their plane crashed "near the BMW dealership" in Taplow on 20th April 1945. But where exactly was this crash? The photo of their mangled plane provides a cryptic clue. Can any forensic genius identify the chimney peeking over trees in the background? Could that be the long-lost Berry Hill House, the longer-lost Dumb Bell Hotel or maybe the still here Railway Cottages?



Lesley Murray



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