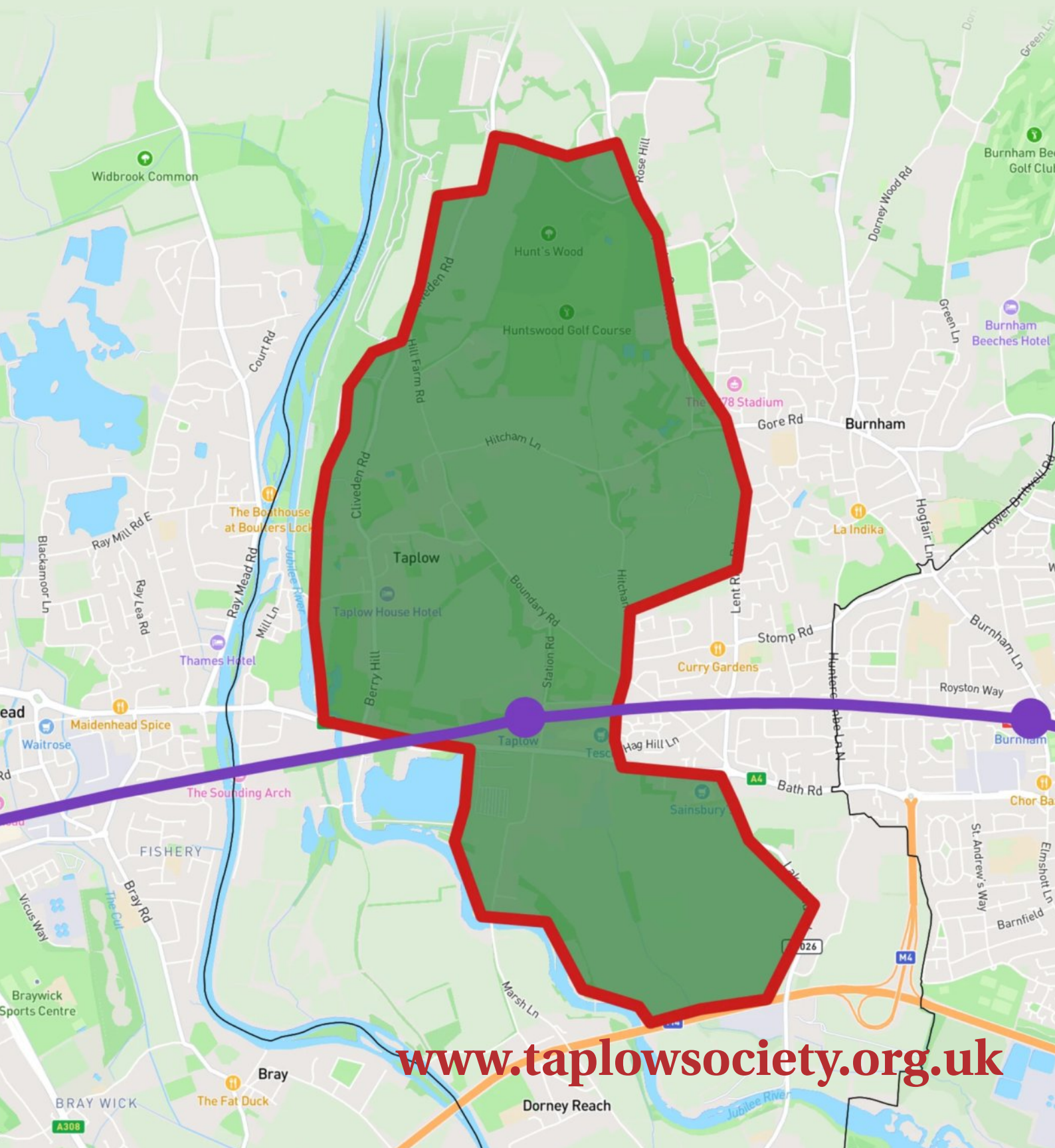


# Hitcham and Taplow Society

Newsletter 123: Spring 2025  
£3.50 to non-members



[www.taplowsociety.org.uk](http://www.taplowsociety.org.uk)

# Hitcham and Taplow Society

*Protecting and enhancing Hitcham, Taplow, and the surrounding countryside for the local community*

President: Eva Lipman  
Chairman: Roger Worthington  
Treasurer: Mike Turner  
Secretary: Jane Curry  
Committee: Andrew Findlay, Charlie Greeves, Robert Hanbury, Robert Harrap, Cat Howard, Rupert Sellers, Jonathan Spektor, Sue Thornton, Jacqueline Turner  
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Cover picture: Map of the 'Taplow New Town' proposal from the paper  
*New Towns for a New Generation (UK Day One)*

## Editorial

This Newsletter is obviously parochial in its focus but I have never felt so conscious of the wider world pressing in on us. A government with a reforming zeal, most particularly in the planning arena, may well have direct impact on us and above that the entire world has destabilised with unknown but potentially very disturbing consequences. Ostrich behavior is very tempting but at least for some of the planning matters we must not do that and this issue explores things we may be able to influence.

Happily there do seem to be people in Taplow with energies to achieve things. Some of that energy gets channelled formally through our Society but Taplow is also remarkable for the ease with which groups come together to achieve individual projects such as the Screen on the Green. Taplow has a great bush telegraph system, largely Whatsapp based.

I am very pleased to welcome Jane Curry to our committee and as our new secretary. I am also aware of my formal responsibilities now as your chairman and I will do my best to ensure we make the best possible arguments to the government New Town Task Force.

*Roger Worthington*

### Village Green Party

**18:00 – 22:30**

**21st June 2025**

**[www.taplowsociety.org.uk/vgp](http://www.taplowsociety.org.uk/vgp)**

There will be a raffle in support  
of the Thames Valley  
Adventure Playground

**Back-issues of this Newsletter  
can be found on our website:**

**[www.taplowsociety.org.uk](http://www.taplowsociety.org.uk)**



# Parking

We must thank our Parish Council for their efforts (and money) to get Approach Road finally under some better yellow line control. For two years the road has been either impassable or the scene of confrontations and aggression. The new system is temporary with a maximum life of eighteen months but hopefully will last until the full solution is implemented by Buckinghamshire Council. The progress has been made possible by the discovery of a most helpful team at BC led by John Pateman: Commissioning and Contracts Lead Officer. The yellow lines and passing bays will need some revision for the final layout but this work has made major improvements to traffic flow.



More parking space?

This is as far as station area parking can be improved for the foreseeable future (Taplow New Town being the unseeable future?) except for the still unreleased land at the eastern end of the south car park. Pressure on Network Rail is needed for that. Station parking was not made any easier by the blockage pictured below which took a couple of days to clear.



The other parking problem is on Mill Lane due to overflows from the pub. It was always the plan that the Berkeley Homes car park would be

publicly available out of office hours but signage had never made this clear enough. Despite several representations to them this has not yet been rectified.

Another area under pressure is the free parking in Ellington and River Roads. It remains to be seen if residents want to introduce some controls.

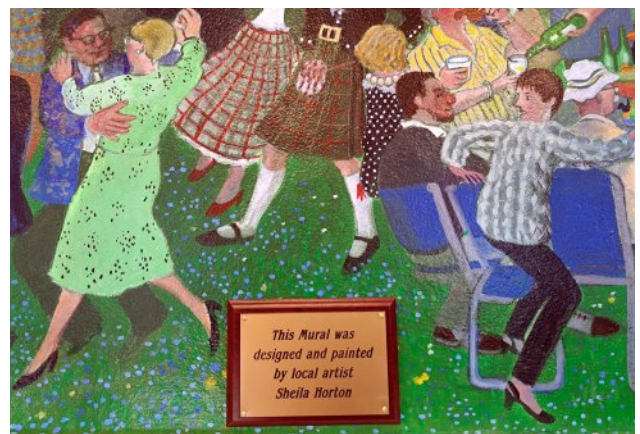
Not quite a parking matter but BC have announced that they are implementing a Lane Rental scheme for road works that should help shorten road closures. We have put in a request for the scheme to include our stretch of the A4 which is far too often reduced to a complete standstill by just about anything more serious than a dropped crisp packet.

## Village News

Our press date is such that by the time you are reading this the results of the elections for BC and our own parish council may be known. Hopefully TPC will be largely unchanged but we should record the arrival earlier this year of two new councillors, Lunel van Zijl and Saty Joshi and from 1st May Hugo Page.

At last! An issue that is not reporting problems at the Village Hall! We are hopeful that Ruth's office will now have a more stable existence than the last three renovations provided! Just to be on the safe side a fire precautions inspection is planned.

Issue NL121 recorded the sad passing of Sheila Horton but we are pleased to report that after a family gathering in the Village Hall a plaque has been installed to commemorate her creation of our amazing murals.



Roger Worthington

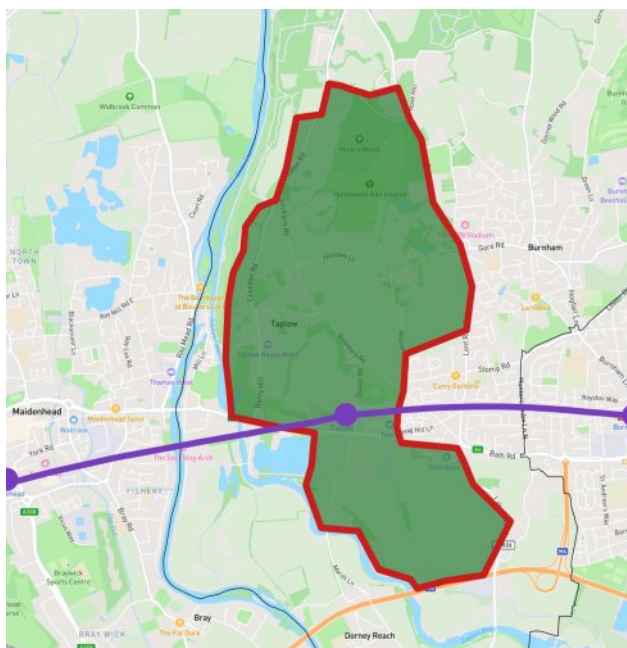
# A 'New Town' for Taplow

Amongst a flurry of planning systems initiatives the government has stated a need for a series of New Towns to be in addition to the sharply raised overall housing build targets set for each local government area.

It has set up a New Towns Task Force (NTTF) charged with producing a short list of suitable locations for these New Towns. NTTF says that it has received over 100 suggested sites and is due to report later this year.

In particular a think tank well connected with the government has published a paper on the need for new towns that includes a specific suggestion for a New Town at Taplow and we assume that it has been submitted to the Task Force. <https://ukdayone.org/briefings/new-towns-for-a-new-generation>

The site in the proposal starts in the south at the M4. It then takes in all the available farmland to the east of the Jubilee River and west of Lake End Road up to the A4. On the other side of the A4 the proposed western boundary is initially the Jubilee River, then the Thames, and then up Cliveden Road. The northern boundary appears to be just north of Huntswood Golf Course joining Cliveden Road and Taplow Common Road. The eastern boundary follows Taplow Common Road to Lent Rise Road and then goes southwest back to the A4 at the Bishop Centre. From here it goes to the south of Sainsbury's and down Lake End Road to the M4 bridge.



It is not appropriate for the Society to argue the need for New Towns in general but we can assess whether Taplow fully meets the declared criteria for a New Town. The area involved would affect both Burnham and Dorney as well as Taplow and all three parish councils are as concerned as we are. To avoid clashes and miscommunications we have agreed to set up a joint working party to develop our case and I have been appointed to it. The intention is to submit our case to the NTTF before it publishes its short list. Although there may well be further work by the government to refine the list after it is published, an earlier submission should avoid Taplow being on the list in the first place.

There are three main areas to consider and develop arguments for.

- *It would be a gross violation of core Green Belt criteria.*

Many new town locations will have green belt restrictions but Taplow's are extreme, bringing Slough and Maidenhead together.

- *It does not actually meet the published criteria of the NTTF for eligibility as a New Town.*

The government places importance on New Towns having an identity, not just being a large housing estate. New Taplow would be invisibly sandwiched between Slough and Maidenhead with no realistic chance of a separate identity. Most new town locations are thought to be on the edge of conurbations, meaning they will have clear boundaries on three sides.

- *There are particular infrastructure problems with the identified area that will make it infeasible or prohibitively expensive.*

This is probably our strongest area in which to identify difficulties. Objections here are not political in nature but deeply practical. The Society and the parish councils have already received many useful inputs from residents, often based on local knowledge of Taplow's geography and geology. It is interesting to note that the author of the paper had never visited Taplow before writing his paper!

- The A4 and the railway bisect the site, creating multiple obstructions, with great expense to overcome, as well as emotionally dividing the New Town in two.



- Total inadequacy of the A4 as the only east-west corridor, restricted by Maidenhead Bridge
- Flood plain areas in the south, springs and freshwater extraction further north.
- There is already extensive housing in the area outlined, including the whole of Taplow Village (a Conservation Area) and the Marsh Lane houses.

- Taplow has a very strongly identified Heritage which will be very hard to protect from such a development.

There are many more items on the list and our Task Force will be working to frame these in the clearest and most positive form to make an impact on the NTTF. Wish them well.

*Roger Worthington*

# Planning

## The English Devolution White Paper

This paper addresses the country-wide structures of local government. It proposes the abolition across England of district councils, making the whole country a set of Unitary Authorities. We went through this already in Buckinghamshire in 2020 and are large enough not to be affected by mergers of smaller Unitaries. However, above the level of Unitaries there is an intention to combine numbers of Unitaries into Mayoralities and Foundations as part of a plan to devolve some powers from Whitehall, as has already happened in Greater Manchester and Tees Valley, with mixed results. Areas devolved might be transport, housing and economic development. Devolving powers sounds good but it carries an implication that our current Buckinghamshire Unitary Authority will lose powers. Whether the final outcomes will be better or not will take quite some time to discover but the ride is sure to be rocky.

## Taplow impact

We try to illustrate articles with relevant pictures but all I could find here was this:



The above may seem rather remote and abstract at Taplow level but there are also a host of planning rule changes coming that we really will notice. They are mostly presented as necessary to speed up planning application approvals which they may well do but at the cost of loss of democratic accountability to residents. Local councillors will be unable to refer any but the very largest development applications to a Planning Committee – in other words all normal applications will be decided by

officers. Presently Taplow Parish Council is a consultee on all Taplow applications but this is likely to be removed. So when your next door neighbour applies to put two extra stories on his house there will be nobody to ring.

Another coming change is the revision of the Green Belt to change some of it to 'Grey Belt' with the obvious connotation that it can then be built on. Under government duress BC is now undertaking such a review of our Green Belt and doing so – perforce – without consulting affected parishes. This is to accommodate the ~90,000 new homes target that the government has imposed on BC. Another aspect of this is that we are being informed that there is a plan to re-define greenbelt land that separates villages as being available for development. You have to be a large town to keep your Green Belt.

## 50 Years Ago

The Newsletter carried a report of a planning appeal. I doubt we will ever see these grounds quoted again!

The Society had opposed the Appeal relating to the application for residential development with a cul-de-sac from Hill Farm Road, land west side of Hill Farm Road on various grounds including:

- Dangerous access from Hill Farm Road.
- The skyline as seen from Cliveden Road would be further spoilt.
- Adjacent to proposed conservation area.
- Possible precedent for adjoining land.
- Statistics indicate sufficient houses available in South Bucks.**
- Large number of unsold houses in district.**

*Roger Worthington*

# Jubilee River

Andrew Findlay



Last November we were reminded of the tremendous power of water. Storms and heavy rain required the Environment Agency to open the sluices on the Jubilee to relieve the Thames main flow. Flow rates reached 120 cubic metres a second – 120 metric

tonnes! This huge weight of water collapsed part of the bank of the Jubilee just south of Taplow weir. Diver surveys showed this was due to strong eddy currents.

First emergency repair work was quite dramatic – a helicopter dropping 120 tonnes

of rock into the gap with another 150 tonnes and 50 tonnes of sand to follow. We will watch for full repairs as the winter rains recede.

Dramatic as this was it reminds us what a good job the Jubilee is doing to protect our area from heavy flooding.



## The Celtic Cross

Hopefully this will be the last mention of the Cross for some time! Cliveden Conservation has completed a fine restoration of the Cross. Our thanks to Taplow Parish Council and the Beeches Community Board for their generous funding of most of

the costs. The Cross is on a very exposed site and we will be monitoring its condition in the years to come. The restoration uncovered evidence of earlier work on the mounting of the cross, showing that someone has always taken care of it.



Roger Worthington



# Footpath 13, Rights of Way and the Chiltern Society

Roger Worthington

Public footpath 13 runs from the A4 near Maidenhead Bridge past the Hermitage into Ellington Road. Its width has been progressively reduced over the years by the neighbouring properties rebuilding their boundaries and encroaching onto the pathway. In particular the recent extensions to No 5 Ellington Gardens have included a new fence that has grossly reduced width to the point where the path is essentially blocked. This follows similar new fencing for the new house adjacent to No 5. You can see the extent of the restriction in the photos, showing the earlier width of the path by the old garages and the latest fencing.



The Society and the Parish Council have been concerned about this and wrote to the Rights of Way team (ROW) at Buckinghamshire Council. Our approach was then greatly strengthened by

Dawn Davies. Dawn is a member of the Society but is also an active member of the East Berkshire Ramblers (EBR), with whom she is a Path Monitor on the other side of the river, and she lives close by the entrance to the path. Her contacts with ROW, using supplied photographs of the earlier and present state of the path, led to an effective response and we are advised that the ROW team has written to the relevant landowner with this evidence. We await the outcome.



EBR carries out path monitoring activities and regular surveys on behalf of RBWM's Public Rights of Way Team. Buckinghamshire Council ROW team does not appear to support a path monitoring system on this side of the river but the Taplow Society is a subscribing member of the Chiltern Society ([chilternsociety.org.uk](http://chilternsociety.org.uk)), a charity that covers a wide range of volunteer led activities to protect the area of the Chilterns, and this does include Path Monitors who check the condition of our public rights of way. Although volunteers with the Chiltern Society take up these tasks, we should be reminded that it is a responsibility for all of us to observe our surroundings and support their maintenance – not doing this is the surest way to lose our amenities over time. The Chiltern Society path monitor for Taplow is Pauline Howes on 07929716205.

Rupert Sellers

**Chiltern**  
Society



# Tidy Up Taplow

What magnificent support this year. Participants went above and beyond to clear every last crisp packet, paper cup and bottle from their designated route. We had family groups, all ages and even a family from Maidenhead who had seen our poster and combined their favourite route with a generous tidy up. Hitcham and Taplow Society is now well supplied with litter picking equipment so gloves, bags, pick-up sticks were distributed along with hi-viz tabards and soon the whole area was awash with folks hard at work in yellow jackets. We heard that passing walkers and car drivers gave appreciative beeps and waves in response. In many cases, the bags were too heavy to carry back to base so Mike Turner drove around and collected from drop off spots. Obviously, we would all prefer that this annual exercise was not necessary but we feel quite proud that 40+ bags of waste have been removed from the wider Taplow area.

On their return to the village Hall, participants were treated to tea, coffee, juice and home-made cakes. A productive way to spend a Saturday morning and a great opportunity to meet new faces from the locality.

If you feel you could offer support on the organisational side next year, please get in touch. It makes sense to train new people to eventually take over and maybe this annual event could be held twice a year.

*Jacqueline Turner*



The Society is not alone in tidying Taplow. Here is the Taplow Scout Group doing their regular litter pick in the Pit for THRG (Taplow and Hitcham Recreation Grounds Association) The Taplow Scout Group has Beavers (6-8 yrs old), Cubs (8-10.5 yrs) and Scouts (10.5-14 yrs). If you would like any more information please contact Adrian at [lrd.troop@gmail.com](mailto:lrd.troop@gmail.com)

*Adrian Hodges*



Hitcham and Taplow Society



# Water Testing on the River Thames

As members of the Maidenhead Rowing Club, we care about the quality of the water in the River Thames, particularly around our clubhouse next to Maidenhead Bridge. Recently, we have been conducting regular water tests to monitor the levels of phosphates, nitrates, as well as the turbidity (clarity) of our water.

Phosphates in water bodies primarily originate from sewage outflows. High levels can lead to eutrophication\*, resulting in excessive growth of algae and aquatic plants, which can deplete oxygen levels and harm aquatic life.

Nitrates typically enter the river from agricultural runoff, including fertilizers. Elevated nitrate levels can also contribute to eutrophication and negatively impact both wildlife and human health.

Turbidity measures the clarity of the water and can be affected by various factors such as soil erosion, runoff, and algal blooms. High turbidity can impair the habitat of fish and other aquatic organisms.

Our results indicate that both phosphate and nitrate levels are relatively stable and within reasonable limits. The distance from the upstream outflow at Little Marlow Sewage Treatment Works significantly contributes to this outcome. While there is still room for improvement, the levels, especially for phosphates are considerably better than those measured closer to the outflow.



Checking the Phosphate level



Taking a sample

The turbidity of the water has remained relatively clear and stable. This is encouraging news for our river's ecosystem, however, after periods of heavy rainfall, we do note a marked decline in the clarity of the river water.

Despite the generally positive findings, we cannot be complacent. Additional testing conducted at Boulton Lock has revealed that levels of E. coli can fluctuate dramatically. These variations are closely linked to high rainfall and the unfortunate resulting discharge activity at the Little Marlow Sewage Treatment Works.

We care about the water quality in our river and will continue our testing efforts and advocate for better sewage treatment across our waterways so that both wildlife and recreational users can enjoy our beautiful river.

\* Eutrophication is the enrichment of a water body with nutrients

Neil Stewart

*Meanwhile the new chairman of the River Thames Society Middle Thames branch and Sir Steve Redgrave have both raised grave concerns about the state of health and maintenance of the river.*



# Old Houses



## The Old Lodge

Referred at various points as 'The Ruins', 'Castle Flint' or simply 'The Cottage', the elusive Old Lodge once occupied the garden of The Gables, which is now, confusingly, divided into Old Lodge, Old Lodge West and Old Lodge East. Pictured here c.1900 (note the lack of spire on St. Nicolas'), the building was demolished by Whitbread brewery director Jack Martineau in the 1940s and its name was adopted by its neighbour. Another notable occupant of the Old Lodge was the diplomat Sir Maurice de Bunsen who, as British Ambassador to Austria, played a key role in the surreal political saga that led to the outbreak of war in 1914 (familiar to avid listeners of *The Rest is History*).



## Elibank Lodge

Little is recorded of Elibank lodge, photographed here in 1906. In 1891 it was home to Elibank House's gardener, the Burnham-born George Horton. His master, Charles Seymour Grenfell, was a copper merchant and local Justice of the Peace, although arguably his wife

Elizabeth Grenfell had a more lasting impact on Taplow as a founding member of the Women's Institute in 1926.



## Taplow Priory

Formerly known as The Walnuts, a tribute to the trees that still line Church Road today, this handsome Victorian villa was first built by Henry Simmonds c.1852. After its acquisition by John Noble in the 1860s, the property was let to a range of characters, including East India Merchant Silas Martyn and Marylebone surgeon Henry Woolfryes. By the time Percy Noble inherited the property (c.1916) it had been renamed The Priory. However, Percy's lifestyle was far from monastic. A notorious and compulsive party-thrower, he extended the house and installed staff into the neighbouring cottages to suit his lavish tastes. Sadly, the building stood empty after his death in the 1930s and was eventually used by Fairey Aviation as their headquarters during WW2 (see Catherine Howard's article in NL 121). Although the house itself was demolished in the 1960s to make way for Wellbank, the legacy of Percy Noble's luxurious landscaped gardens lives on through conservation efforts in the Old Priory Gardens.

## Lyra Browning





# TVAP's new Taplow Flower Hub

Ekta Malhotra



TVAP are being supported again this year by Lavender Green Flowers who are generously donating pre-loved (but still beautiful) cut flowers and plants to be rehomed for a donation to TVAP. The flowers come straight from various prestigious events such as Ascot, Wimbledon and Chelsea. Last year they raised over £11,000 from various flower hubs. There is now a new flower hub in Taplow on Rectory Rd run by the lovely Ekta. Last week she raised £110 from the buckets of flowers on her driveway.

If you would like to find out more about the next Flower Fundraising drop, please text 07362 653199 and ask to join the group for first hand updates or email Lucie Grange at [lucie@tvap.co.uk](mailto:lucie@tvap.co.uk).

*Cat Howard*



**supporting children &  
adults with special needs  
and their families**

REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 1201368

# 25 Years Ago

Looking back through our archives reminds us of the endless struggle required to safeguard the attractive nature of our parish. Issue 73 from 25 years ago tracks both successes and losses. Tony Hickman reports on the first effort by the Society to preserve the Celtic Cross, echoed in the current issue by our second successful restoration. However it also records our donation to Burnham Abbey for restoration work while the current issue reports on the closure of the Abbey.

## AGM Notes - Heather Fenn

### Celebrating our 40th year

Tony Hickman, acute observer of all things local, was elected President for a further term. He took the chair, using the opportunity to describe some of the best moments of our last 40 years. He could point with pride to the way HTPS had been instrumental in seeing the history of Bapsey Pond recognised and cleaned out, planting trees along Boundary Road, and looking after flower beds at Taplow Station. The restoration of the Celtic Cross and its raising on a new plinth in the Old Churchyard, thanks to the tireless efforts of former chairman Eva Lipman, was a real achievement.

Societies like ours run the risk of becoming backward looking, but organising the Village Green Party every June is a powerful antidote to complacency and brings our community together in celebration each year. Few English villages can still boast the sort of tradition that only many years teamwork can create. The Party also serves a good cause: the proceeds are ear-marked for Charities such as the Thames Valley Hospice, and urgent local historical restoration projects. Recently, some £800 was donated to Burnham Abbey for the restoration of part of their 13th century edifice.



# Taplow Cricket Club 175th Anniversary

Taplow Cricket Club was founded back in 1850. Local personalities like Mr Skindles were founding members, and an early president was Lord Desborough. Records tell us that the first pavilion at the Ten Acres ground was erected in 1927. There are no photos available but by all accounts it was an attractive small cedar construction with a veranda and two changing rooms. A building very much in keeping with the local woodlands. By 1955 there was a Nissen hut erected as a clubhouse – purchased second-hand. No electricity or water were available in the hut, but teas were taken there and eventually a simple bar was installed.



In 1959 the ground was graciously conveyed to the cricket club by the Rt. Hon Viscountess Gage in memory of her father – Lord Desborough – and her two brothers, both of whom died in the war. With the ground now secure, a new sense of hope emerged, and it was decided a new pavilion should be built. The Nissen hut had served its purpose and the old changing rooms in the wooden pavilion were gradually deteriorating.

The new timber clubhouse was finished in 1960. An extension for changing rooms, showers and WC was added later, and officially opened by the Secretary, Col. Marriott, in June 1969.

Records indicate that the building fund for the clubhouse was circa £1000. A photo of the clubhouse from that era shows the three trees growing through the veranda (the horse chestnut came down in the storms of 2000). In this period a mobile home was also established on the site, for added security.

A further extension was added to the bar in 1986 and officially opened by local resident Sir Terry Wogan. The clubhouse still stands today and has benefitted from various grants over the years, for example the Lottery Fund and the English & Wales Cricket Board, to help maintain it. The club are grateful for the continuing support of the community and volunteers to keep cricket going in the village.



The pavilion at Taplow Court

The 175th season sees a notable milestone at Taplow Cricket Club: the reintroduction of a Saturday 3rd XI. The last time the club had such a team they used to play on the field at the north end of the Taplow Court estate. A photo of the

The clubhouse in the 1960s





'pavilion' shows the basic facilities that players had available. Fortunately, the modern 3rd XI will have better facilities at the Phoenix Recreation Ground. We look forward to this new chapter in the club's history, and an opportunity to introduce youngsters to senior league cricket.

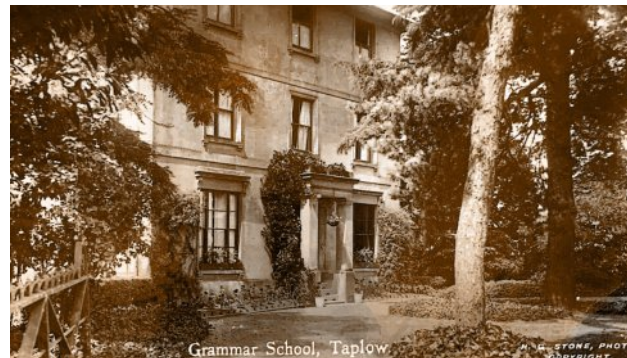
My thanks to the club archivist, Stephen Daglish, for help with this article. Photos kindly provided by eminent long-time members, David Wigmore and Simon Christy. They both deny being the model for this caricature commissioned in the Centenary year!

Andrew Somerville



## Taplow School

If, as a parent, you happened to have been reading *The Times* in March 1880, you may have paused on one particularly appealing advert for an all-boys boarding school in an attractive yet accessible countryside setting. This would be Taplow's very own Grammar school, which occupied the site that is now Hillmead Court from around 1870 to the late 1940s.



Front façade of Taplow School

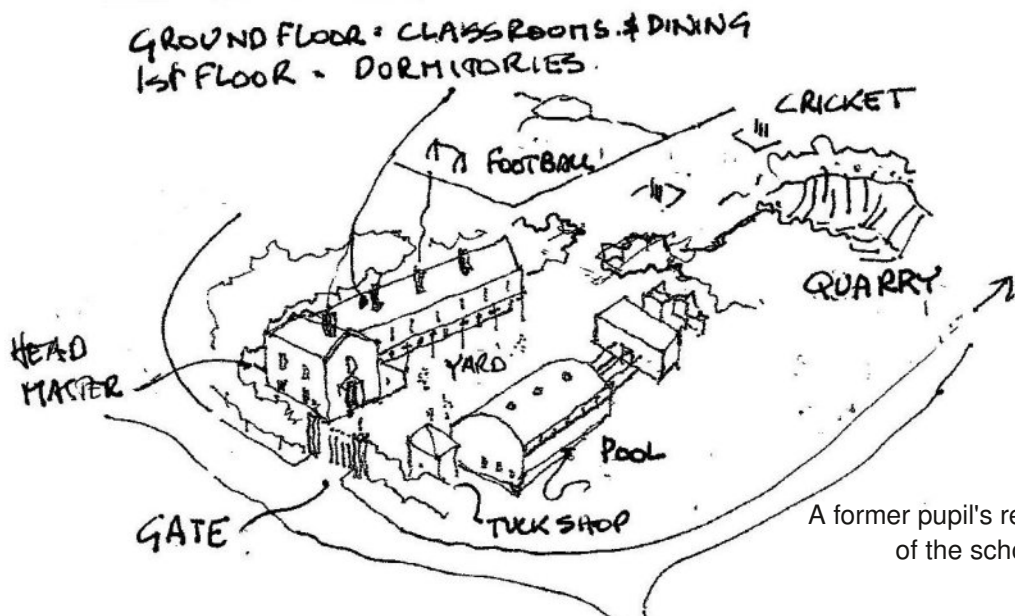
Upon further enquiry parents would receive a brochure, the contents of which prove that abstract slogans and pithy promotional material are not a modern invention. Students were always under the '*wholesome influence*' of experienced staff and disciplined well in a diverse range of subjects ranging from Drill and Dictation to Mensuration and Mechanics. It had the top facilities, including '*unusually extensive playing fields*' (now the site of the pit), a swimming bath, gymnasium and tennis courts.



The swimming bath

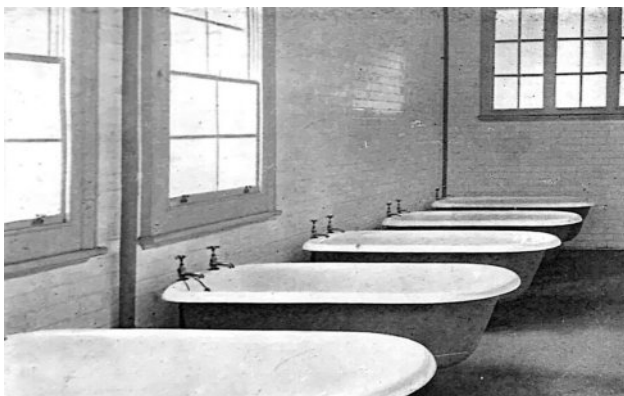
The picture of a rural idyll, the school was complete with a farm and vegetable garden that by 1906 included 5 cows, 4 heifers, a cart horse, a boar, 3 sows, 4 porkers, 6 young pigs, 56 head of poultry and a mare. Parents were also assured that especially '*young*', '*delicate*' or '*backwards*' boys would be treated '*with particular care and attention*'.





School room

However, this portrait hides some of the sadly not unexpected, less-than-wholesome practices of a Victorian school. Alumni recall daily caning during the 40s and learning to conceal unwanted food to avoid particularly harsh penalties for not finishing one's plate. Despite this, a few former pupils have shared fond memories online of trainspotting and tuck-shopping adventures.



The less-than-inviting proper baths

Records show that Taplow School was not only attended by locals, but also accepted many students from the empire and beyond. One notable alumnus

was South African-born Sir George Cory, renowned for his 6-volume history of settlers and slavery in South Africa. In his boyhood diary of 1874, he describes the building as a 'fine mansion' with an equally fine playground. Later, under Master Edward Dyke in the 1880s, the census registers boys aged 9-15 from Wales, Ireland, Spain and Russia. During the 30s and 40s, the school hosted refugees from Eastern Europe – one alumnus that arrived from Czechoslovakia in 1939 with little English posted a sketch online of how he remembered the school.



The Second Team and Reserve, c. 1920s

The school was unfortunately forced to close during the 1940s, unable to keep up with new government requirements for teaching science. The buildings were demolished during the 1970s and 80s, making way for Hillmead Court, which reportedly occupies its same footprint.

Taplow School, although short-lived, reminds us of one of the village's most valuable and increasingly vulnerable qualities – the fresh air and green space that attracted people not just from the capital, but from all over the world.

*Lyra Browning*

Photos from an original school brochure

# Who Will Buy?

Burnham Abbey is 739 years old. An Augustinian convent for 264 years, a farm for 367, an Anglican convent for 108. Now it can be yours for £3.5m (subject to caveats).

It is remarkable how often our little corner of the world features in significant moments of history. Here's another.

Simon de Montfort, 6th Earl of Leicester, usurped King Henry III at the Battle of Lewes (1264) and reclaimed his ancestral estates (including Taplow) only to lose them (and his life) at the Battle of Evesham (1265). In the interim, Henry's little brother Richard, Duke of Cornwall (lord of Cippenham and Hitcham), vowed to create an Augustinian abbey if he survived his incarceration. And so Burnham Abbey came to be (1266). Income from land in Cippenham and Burnham and from Burnham's annual fairs and weekly markets was sufficient to sustain a small community of nuns until the Abbey became the last of England's religious houses to be dissolved by King Henry VIII (1539).

The Abbey became a farmhouse leased with land, woods, a mill and tithes of Burnham, Cippenham and Dorney by a series of notable individuals including (1692) Edward Villers, 1st Earl of Jersey, whose half-great-uncle George Villiers, 2nd Duke of Buckingham, had built the original Cliveden (1666), and whose sister Elizabeth married George Hamilton, 1st Earl of Orkney, of Taplow Court and Cliveden (1695). Former Prime Minister William Grenville, 1st Baron Grenville (of Dropmore) was a later lessee (1812/1834). Thereafter, the Crown sold off peripheral land incrementally. Maidenhead architect James Bissley acquired the Abbey (1914) and renovated its ancient buildings to become an Anglican convent for the Society of the Precious Blood (1916), a contemplative order founded (1905) and led for 50 years by Mother Millicent.

Eventually, generous donors enabled the Society to grow strong, but quietly. A new dormitory block was added (1964). HRH



Princess Margaret and the Archbishop of Canterbury came to celebrate the Abbey's 700th anniversary (1966) but the community gradually shrank. Seven of the last ten sisters relocated to long-term care and three to a convent in Gerrards Cross (2024). Who will write the next chapter?

## Midwinter Murder

Now the sisters have gone, the story can be told of a Midwinter Murder at the Abbey.

John Pocock built a farmhouse on former Abbey land (1834) and later let it to Ralph Goodwin. He returned home late on 1st November

1853 to find a trail of blood leading upstairs to the battered and charred body of his housekeeper Mary Ann Sturgeon.

Coroner John Charsley held an inquest in The Mile House (then a pub, now the day nursery by Sainsbury's). Goodwin's groom Moses Hatto admitted falling out with Sturgeon because he refused to lend her money and she served his supper with only half-a-pint of beer, not the customary pint. He was arrested, tried, convicted of murder and hanged at Aylesbury Gaol on 24th March 1854.

An open and shut case? Maybe not. Research by Pauline Hodges of Cippenham (2005) identified various contradictions in witness testimonies and irregularities in the circumstantial evidence and the curiosity that prosecutor Frederick Charsley might be related to the coroner. Is it too late to call the cold case squad?

*Nigel Smales*





# Lincoln's End

*Remembering Lincoln Lee*

## Carols

It was yet another perfectly festive evening for the annual Christmas Carols on Taplow Village Green. Neil Matthews did a splendid job playing for us all and we managed to raise £328 for Thames Valley Adventure Playground.



## Railway Model

Work is continuing on the model of Taplow Station. See it with its latest progress at Burnham Park Hall October 25/26.



Roger Worthington

## Taplow Court Open Days

The house and grounds will be open to the public on the following Sundays: 11th May, 8th June, 13th July, 10th August, 14th September (National Heritage Day). EVERYONE WELCOME. Grounds open from 12.30–5pm House open from 2pm–5pm Tea and cakes available. Admission and parking free.

## Row the Atlantic!

Two local rowers, Ben Cornwell and Henry Eastick are preparing to row 3,000 miles across the Atlantic at the end of the year to raise £50,000 for the Alexander Devine charity. Their boat Pegasus was on show at the Rowing Club earlier this month. More information and how to donate at [www.oceanoarsmen.com](http://www.oceanoarsmen.com)



## Plessey in Taplow

Following his earlier article on his time at Plessey at Taplow Court Mike Turner found this item from a current Plessey old employees newsletter.. The radio station was run by Plessey for the hospital.

**'Radio' Quiz ? ? !**  
**? ? at Cliveden**

Wednesday evening 21st August saw the inauguration of a new entertainment feature by Radio H.B.A. (Hospital Broadcasting Association) at Cliveden Hospital. Wards 4 and 8 competed in a battle of wits for the honour of top ward. The two teams of patients (all ladies) entered into the spirit, resulting in a win to the ladies of Ward 8 by 22 points to 12½.

"The technical side went more smoothly than we expected," said Tom Mitchell, the Outside Broadcast Engineer, "Some of the difficulties we were expecting didn't materialise."

This was the first broadcast of what is to become a regular feature of Radio H.B.A. programmes.

Here is Tom Mitchell at the controls; and opposite are some of the participants, Ward 4 above and Ward 8 below.

20

Roger Worthington