

Hitcham and Taplow Preservation Society

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www.taplowsociety.org.uk

Hitcham and Taplow Preservation Society

Formed in 1959 to protect Hitcham, Taplow and the surrounding countryside from being spoilt by bad development and neglect.

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Vice Presidents: Tony Hickman, Derek Walker, Professor Bernard Trevallion
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Front cover: The Paper Mill from the air. How will this look 5 years from now?

Editorial

This newsletter sees a preoccupation with the situation in the Mill Lane area emerging. Ironically a lot of the area acquired by the new owners, Towntalk, is now within the newly expanded Conservation Area. It will be an interesting test of the planners' concern for the environment when the new owners come forth with their vision for this part of our parish. Although Towntalk representatives have apparently been in intense discussion with the District authorities and have held a brief meeting with our own Parish Council they have refused to meet with any of the directly concerned citizens' groups. These groups are fairly thick on the ground and many have quite specific views about the usage of that prime riverside land. They include HTTPS, the River Thames Users, the Chiltern Society, the Maidenhead Civic Society, and Ellington & District and Mill Lane Residents' Associations, to name just a few. I suppose we shall not be 'consulted' until the Towntalk plans have been fully developed and agreed with the District Council,

meaning there's little chance of a change to meet our needs. Still, you never know – their proposals may well be highly acceptable.

There is a groundswell of opinion among regional planning authorities that the whole of the River Thames should be regarded as a continuous Conservation Area and labelled as 'The Thames Corridor'. I believe the SBDC owns about 12km of river and they have shown great foresight in laying conservation orders on 2km of it. I notice the Marlow Society have created a special River Thames Group, which has as its prime objective 'To protect and enhance the natural and built heritage of our riverside environment': not a bad idea and objective for us to adopt. Included in this group membership are representatives from the River Thames Society and the Chiltern Society. Since they are only just upriver from us we could do worse than link up with them and develop a common vision of our own.

Fred Russell

Farewell to Taplow Paper Mill

The riverside site at Taplow has industrial links that date to the 12th century, and paper has been made there almost continuously for 240 years, leading up to the present high-production mill.

The 74th anniversary (and the last) of the restart of the mill as New Taplow Paper Mills Limited is an appropriate time to remember the fascinating and colourful history of this well-known local industry.

The earliest definite reference to a paper mill at Taplow is to a William Burnham in 1767, and a survey of the mid-18th century names Taplow as a 3-vat mill and one of the 12 largest mills in the country. Papermaking certainly would have started well before then. The Taplow site is ideally situated for the use of water for power and process uses. Water mills are recorded in 1184, a fulling mill (for cleansing and thickening cloth) in 1315 and corn mills in 1633 and 1698. William and Anne Burnham remained as papermakers until 1780, but the mill was used by a cotton merchant until 1810 when J.B. Wise restored it as a paper mill, going bankrupt himself in 1815.

The story then moves to Charles Venables & Co., 1840–1930. Charles and George Venables occupied the site around 1840, being well known in the High Wycombe and Cookham areas as papermakers, and it is likely that the mill was mechanised at this time. Charles was a doughty proponent of the rights of employers and wrote in no uncertain terms about reductions in children's hours of work in 1843: 'If the present government having done all that can be done to injure and ruin the papermaking trade in the United Kingdom by the protection and assistance given to the foreign manufacture, any further interference would be unjust and

arbitrary in the extreme and uncalled for.' A contemporary newspaper said: 'There was the authentic voice of thunder from Charles Venables of Taplow Mill. Fair and free competition in trade is also not a new desire!'

The Venables family were very active and are noted around 1840 as operating nine mills locally, including one at Cookham. Lord Orkney, auctioning the Taplow estate in 1852, records the mill as leased to George Venables on a yearly basis. The mill became a limited company 1918, being then a two-machine mill making brown papers. Bankruptcy ensued in 1930 with the old mill gradually going downhill.

New Taplow Paper Mills Limited was registered on 31 March 1933, with four directors, all from the Reed and Smith Company in the West Country. The two old derelict machines were scrapped and one 72-inch machine reconstructed from the bits. The Reed and Smith connection was strengthened in 1957 when that group bought the mill. The original machine was replaced in 1963 by a 120-inch machine, although a section of drying cylinders remained in use on No. 1 machine at the Silverton Mill of the group. Use of starch at a size press allowed the production of fluting medium from waste paper, the major product.

At the end of 1977, the Reed and Smith group was acquired by the St Regis Paper Company, one of the oldest and largest paper groups in the world. They set about modernising and updating the mill with major expansion of production 1979, from 37,000 to 50,000 tonnes per year. The Reed and Smith Division of St Regis was the second-largest producer of case materials in the UK, having taken over the Ashton Paper Mill at Sudbrook, South Wales, in 1983.

Until recently, the Taplow Paper Mill contributed to the community. They were a contributor to the Maidenhead Carnival and provided facilities for the orchestra to play on the Taplow side of the river. They allowed HTPS to have the use of their marquee to raise money for the National Trust Hanging Woods Appeal at Cliveden and were a long-standing corporate member of HTPS. Due to changing patterns of world demand for paper processing, the Taplow mills proved ultimately to be uneconomic and operations formally closed down last October and the whole site was bought by property developers. Watch this space.



The Future of Mill Lane

With the closure last year of Taplow Paper Mill, there is now the best opportunity for many years to improve the Mill Lane area.

For a long time a large part of the area has been in a state of suspended animation. Skindles Hotel is long closed and becoming derelict, the gas board site on the Thames bank has been levelled and de-contaminated, but remains silent and unused, Dunloe Lodge is empty and falling into decay and the open field and old Skindles Hotel car park to the east of Mill Lane are little used and gradually reverting to nature.

Active areas include some housing and several businesses, including the Windrush car sales site, offices in the boatsheds, two boatyards and the gasometer site, though whether this last is still needed is not known. There is also a hangover from the closure of the Paper Mill operation – a storage and baling site for waste paper formerly used in conjunction with the Paper Mill, but which has recently made claim to a standalone existence as a waste transfer site. The planning application was refused, but the waste transfer activities continue and are likely to go on for some time yet.

The Paper Mill site and much of the land in the area has been sold to Towntalk, a property development company, who are in process of formulating a plan for the area. The company and its architects and planning advisers have met once with Taplow Parish Council and have been in discussion with South Bucks District Council, including attempts to reach an agreement on the footprints and floor areas of existing buildings as a basis for the scope of any future applications.

At the meeting with the Parish Council some very tentative ideas were presented by Towntalk's architect, which amounted to redeveloping Skindles for housing, putting housing on the old Paper Mill site and the storage and baling site and office accommodation closer to the A4. Possible public access to the north of the site was mentioned, as was possible public access to the hillside east of the Jubilee River. The intention would be to keep the centre of the site, including the existing public footpath, as an open area.

The Parish Council responded by reiterating the Parish Plan and Local Development Framework's core strategy aspirations for the area, pointing out that the public access should

be to the River Thames, in case the developers might think that the hillside above the Jubilee River might substitute for that. They also said that the areas shown on the architects' plan for office development were rather large in relation to the existing extent of built development. However, the outcome of discussion with the District Council would no doubt determine the size limitations. The Parish Council also urged the developers to consult with the public and organisations such as ours as soon as possible.

The extent of the land now owned by Towntalk includes Skindles, the Volkswagon garage, the field at the centre of the site, the hillside on the east bank of the Jubilee River, the storage and baling site, Dunloe Lodge and all the mill site and land to the north and west of the Jubilee River, except the northernmost part of Glen Island, which is owned by Taplow Court. Towntalk have also been in contact with the owners of the gas board site with a view to purchasing it, as yet with no result.

The key local references are the Taplow Parish Plan and the existing South Bucks Local Plan, which is now shading towards the Local Development Framework (LDF) that will replace it, so that increasingly there will be an emphasis on the emerging LDF. Both the Parish Plan and the Core Strategy proposals of the emerging LDF have specific policies for the Mill Lane area. There are in addition government planning guidelines and policy statements relating to the Green Belt, housing and flooding, which are particularly relevant, whilst many others, including regional planning guidance and the Buckinghamshire Structure Plan also have a relevance to the potential development.

The main points of the local plans are as follows.

The Taplow Parish Plan has proposed some key pointers to the way in which local people would wish to see the area improved. These are, firstly, to see a comprehensive rather than a piecemeal plan; secondly, to provide more public access for recreation to the River Thames including a riverside path leading to the confluence of the Thames and Jubilee Rivers. In order to help to achieve these objectives the Parish Plan accepts that there may need to be an exchange of land uses between what is now Green Belt and what is now developed land.

In the process of producing the Local Development Framework, the South Bucks

District Core Strategy proposals define the Mill Lane area as 'an area of potential change in order to bring about enhancements while still protecting its overall Green Belt function'. The Core Strategy acknowledges the Parish Plan, which pre-dated it, and supports a comprehensive and co-ordinated planning approach to the locality. It is also definite that the maximum amount of development that will be permitted must not increase the area of developed land above that which currently exists – although it might be in different places.

In addition, the Strategy states that any development will need to have particular regard to policies relating to flooding, employment land, the River Thames setting and the Conservation Area status of some of the site.

It is hoped that the developers will soon consult local organisations and the public so that we can all engage in a development, which, it is hoped, will be a renewed gateway into Taplow and Buckinghamshire.

Euan Felton

AGM Notes

The 47th Annual General Meeting of the Hitcham and Taplow Preservation Society took place at the Taplow Village Centre on 13 October 2006, attended by 31 members.

The highlights of the Society's activities and achievement over the past year include the success in limiting the Cliveden development to 135 age-restricted units; the Society's successful objection to the name 'Cliveden Village', and suggesting alternatives; the Society's contribution to the Conservation Area consultations; the Implementation and Monitoring Group for the Taplow Parish Plan and the South Bucks District Council initiatives; the successful 21st Village Green Party and another two high-standard newsletters, with thanks to Fred Russell and Andrew Findlay.

The Treasurer reported that membership remained stable. A loss of £195 on the Village Green Party had been offset by grant aid from SBDC. There was an excess of income over expenditure of £576. There was no need for an increase in subscriptions which should remain at £5 per household or £4.50 for those in block membership schemes, and £50 for corporate members. These payments are due on 1 October.

Bernard Trevallion gave a talk about the complexities of the raft of documentation being introduced by the new planning system. Although intended to bring about greater community involvement, it generally fails in this objective. There is particular concern that the Parish Plan is left out of the process.

Thanks were expressed to Taplow House Hotel for making their conference facilities available for the Society's meetings throughout the year and to Andy and Annick McKenzie for organising the evening's tea.

There followed a discussion on the future of the Society and means of recruiting new members to the Committee to undertake the tasks of the Society. Among the suggestions were: that meetings with guest speakers and social occasions and activities might be held; that the word 'preservation' in the Society's name may be a stumbling block for recruitment; that a recruiting campaign should be launched, including advertising and information packs to new residents.

Finally there was a vote of thanks for the outgoing Chairman Anne Hanford.

Village Green Party

June 16th 2007



The Squalor and the Glory

Living along Mill Lane

Life along Mill Lane is a life of two halves, offering possibly the best as well as the worst of life in Taplow. To envy, we have the River Thames as our back garden, but not so pleasant are the 40-ton lorries careering by our doors day and night. I expect that neither is much understood by other Taplow residents, who probably have no idea of how different our experience of living in Taplow is from theirs.

We believe that there is an opportunity to change all that, if a consensus can be found to do so.

A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to revive Taplow's riparian heart

The recent sale of Taplow Paper Mill's 45 acres has given us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to revive Taplow's riparian heart and to restore her loveliest amenity, her river frontage. There is still hope – together we can arrest the spread of dereliction and inappropriate development. I believe that we have a small but magnificent window of opportunity to throw open the amenities of Mill Lane and its river to everyone in Taplow, besting the forces that have created squalor and dereliction, and restoring the riverside to a vital, dynamic, thriving, delightful, lively area.

This is not mere fantasy. In living memory, Taplow (along with Maidenhead) has seen its riverbanks overtaken by Henley and Marlow as the 'playground of the leisured classes' (and everyone else out for a good day on the river). The lawns on the river at Skindles, where gloved waiters served tea from silver pots, are derelict, and the punts hired out at Bond's boatyard are no longer. And yet, even as late as the 1960s, Sunday drivers clogged Castle Hill, not Remenham Hill.

Henley and Marlow might well have lost their river amenities too, but for the foresight of the few. Surely both towns are living proof that focusing on the river brings benefits in quality of life, jobs, sport and leisure, which are immeasurable and beyond dispute.

We could ask how Taplow came to lose what it had, and it would be easy to point a finger this way or that, such as at the gas works

which blighted the riverbank during much of the 19th and early 20th centuries. However, it's important to realise that Taplow has always been a vital, hard-working stop on the Queen's Highway – and that for millennia the River Thames was the only real highway for transporting goods and people. Add to that the importance of the Thames as a source of food and energy, and your mind's eye will begin to see what a bustling place, chock full of men and animals and fisheries and mills Taplow was, with Boulter's the most important – and expensive – (and maybe the first) lock on the Thames. There isn't room in a short article to do more than mention a few of the key elements that shape our present, and my point here isn't so much historical as to sharpen our vision of what we want to see once again – and might be able to achieve if we can come to some sort of working agreement and move together to make our wishes known in time to influence the future.

To tell you a little more about the lifestyle and the Lane, Mill Lane as it is now has a not-so-nice side, which all too often is said to have the benediction of history – although no one ever bothers to explain how a few donkey carts sauntering to and from the Mill 50 years ago can in any way excuse away today's unrestricted numbers of HGVs allowed to thunder by at unchecked speeds. The donkey carts made the Lane a pleasant place. The endless dust and noise and broken gas mains caused by the HGVs cannot be said to do the same. (This piece is penned at 02:55 on a Saturday dawn, thanks to the growling of a passing lorry.) The residents of Mill Lane have a great story to tell about our years of involvement in the planning process in this connection, but the point I am trying to make here is that no Lane is an island, and resolving this problem will enhance the quality of life for all of Taplow.

Shortly after taking it over, the new owners of the Mill site let it be known that they intended to set up a website in order to allow the community to express its views on what should happen to the site. As that was last August, and as nothing has been heard since, it seems appropriate for us to seize the initiative and begin putting our ideas forward. So here goes.

I would like to suggest that the riverside section of the old Paper Mill site could become a wonderful, exciting, vibrant location for cafes, river walks, small shops, possibly a small hotel or two, a restaurant, a club headquarters, a park, a wildlife appreciation area, and a revamped water mill where the old one was until the 1970s and which might electrify at least part of the site. Of course, market realities would have to be taken into account, but perhaps a small area could be designated for punt hire and other river activities. A near-natural swimming area might be achievable in connection with a spa facility which might look financially attractive to City managers. Mill Lane could be widened to the East, allowing for a people-friendly promenade connecting the Jubilee Path safely to Maidenhead Bridge. This could be connected to the north by a romantic foot bridge between Taplow and Boulter's lock.

**A wonderful, exciting, vibrant location for cafes, river walks, small shops...
...a re-vamped water mill...**

Those are admittedly sketchy ideas – but perhaps better minds than mine could be put together to come up with a convincing plan. And surely some of the best minds around have retired to (or live in) Taplow. Let's start talking among ourselves – and then raising our voices in concert to make sure that we are heard by the men in grey suits at the Council.

Which leads me back to the subject of the miserabilis that is living along Mill Lane. We have to put up with continuing heavy industry on a site described as merely 'ancillary' to the now-defunct Mill, which has been REFUSED the requested retrospective planning consent – and yet which continues to operate without let or hindrance. Yes, it is currently operating without any planning approval, and therefore, without any restriction at all.

There is no justifiable reason for allowing this 'waste transfer station' to operate from what is a manifestly unsuitable site. This is, after all, an area of special interest (the River Thames setting) accessed along a substandard road, which is just 18' wide in front of many of our properties. The surface and subsurface of the roadway cannot cope, as proved by the

near-constant reparation by British Gas engineers of crushed gas mains.

There is no particular reason the site recommends itself as a 'waste transfer facility' – other than the ease with which it has been possible to push the planners into allowing it to continue. (The original Mill was located on the river because a mill intrinsically needs water to function). Other, more appropriate, sites up and down the motorway have been brought to the attention of the owners.

There is, however, a dazzling prospect, which it can be speculated explains the 'peppercorn rent' the new owners offered the previous operators on the site for the next year. This is because by that time they will have succeeded in bagging something called a 'certificate of lawful use', which will come into effect if they can continue to operate until August 2008. A certificate of lawful use can be described as a developer's ultimate weapon for cutting through the quaint restrictions of the planning process.

In press releases issued by the new owners of the Mill site, they describe themselves as being 'able to cut through the complexities of the planning process'. If the usual niceties of the planning process are no longer in force, then what? Some blind-eyed, computer-generated housing scheme privatising these reaches of the Thames forever, or even, possibly, something worse – who knows what could be extracted from the planners, given the cudgel of a certificate of lawful use: a supermarket? a 20-storey apartment block? Who can say?

It can be speculated that the interest on 30-plus million pounds, the purchase price of the site, comes in at something like £3000 to £4000 a day, and this must surely colour the view of the purchasers, no matter how wealthy they may be. I merely point this out in order to suggest that it might be worth thinking fast, if we want to make ourselves heard.

An informal 'mutual interest group' has already been formed ad hoc and is a first step toward an exchange of ideas in view to seeing if we cannot make our voice heard by the local planners and the developers. This group is made up of river users and concerned groups from both sides of the river. We would welcome your input. Please write to us care of the HTPS newsletter.

Heather Fenn

Old Cottage – The Oldest House in Taplow

When I was first asked to write a history of Old Cottage I was, for a long time, reluctant to undertake the task, as researching the history of a 400-year-old property presents many difficulties – not least the fact that no deeds as such are available before 1825. According to the Victoria County History, the Taplow Manor was bestowed on Charles Harbert, by whom it was sold in 1635 to Thomas Hamson, whose son, Dennis, held it until some time about 1700, when he sold it to George, Earl of Orkney. An exceedingly long, faded, hand-written document of that date records the sale of land containing a number of cottages or 'messuages' from Taplow Court Estate. The Deed mentions a number of prestigious names, the main one being that of the Earl of Orkney who in 1852 'alienated' (transferred) it to Charles Pascoe Grenfell whose grandson was created Lord Desborough in 1905 and remained Lord of the Manor until its sale to the present occupants some years ago.



The original church of St Nicholas (spelt thus in old documents) stood on the site of the Mound or Low near the present Taplow Court. The Mound contained the remains of an important Saxon king called Tappa – thus Taplow. This old church fell into disrepair and was replaced by a Georgian-style rectangular church, which opened in 1828 on the site at the bottom of the High Street where the present church stands today, and the present building (now spelt without the 'h') was consecrated on 6 December, St Nicholas' Day, 1912.

There is no way of knowing accurately the history of Old Cottage but, bearing in mind that there would have been only a few other properties here at the time – namely the two nearby cottages now known as The Porches and three further to the east known as Neighbours, Elmbank and Losuce, which some historians suggest were once six tiny cottages and are now two houses, the rest being open fields right down to the river – it is highly likely that Old Cottage was once a small farmhouse, most probably thatched, and the other cottages part of a smallholding. These properties have been considerably altered and extended over the years with the addition of the staircases, dormer windows and, most recently of all, the modern facilities necessary to our lives today.

Over its 400 years, Old Cottage has had many owners too numerous to mention so I will recount only its more recent history. In 1871, Taplow Wesleyans preached out-of-doors, possibly by the large chestnut tree beside my garage. In 1872, they purchased a piece of land at what is now the southern boundary of my garden for the construction of a wooden chapel. It is described as being bounded to the east by the High Road leading to the church and to the south by the National School. I have two or three of the original foundation stones inscribed with initials and dates in my garden today. The chapel fell into disuse when the new Methodist church was built in Lent Rise and was eventually pulled down and the land once more became part of the curtilage of Old Cottage. The old school buildings were still in existence when I bought Old Cottage in 1967 though it had stood empty since the new school opened in 1964. (I had to make certain of the plans for its replacement in case of the possibility of high-rise flats overlooking me. Fortunately the site was wanted for a car park.)

When I bought Old Cottage in 1967 it was in an appalling state of disrepair. The only electric light in the living room came from a two-strand wire coming from a two-pin plug by the door and strung along the wall to a single unshaded bulb hanging from a hook over the fireplace. (This was immediately condemned by the authorities.) The kitchen was in a timber lean-to from which one could see daylight through the slats in the roof. It contained an old square sink with a water pump and the most ancient rusty

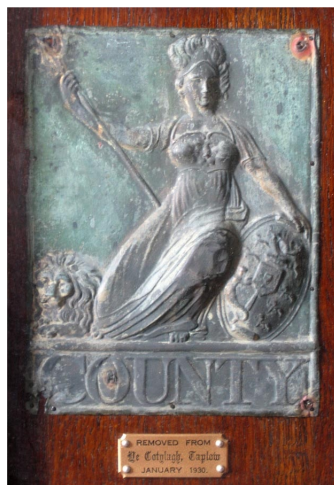
gas cooker I had ever seen. I added the modern extension you see from the High Street today to provide a decent kitchen with a third, single bedroom above. Remember that when the cottage was first built there were no roads – only open fields down to the river – and that will explain why my front door is on the south side of the building and not facing the road of today. Total re-wiring was necessary and in order to install central heating it was essential to dry-line the walls to retain the heat and stop the old, original bricks from crumbling. The attention of damp-proofing and woodworm experts was urgently required before any decorating or furnishing could take place. Other improvements such as a new brick-built garage, new fencing and the steps up from the High Street were added over time as funds permitted. When I first lived here my only entry was from the side gate on the footpath, which was not only very muddy in bad weather but extremely dark and quite scary to use late at night.

The only light on that corner continues to be the one from the lamppost at my gate and by my garage. None has ever been provided here by the local authority!

In 1920, Sir John and Lady Beatrice Pole-Carew bought Knoll House, renamed it Maryfield and added a servants' wing to the north-east side. They also acquired the Coach House – now known as Maryfield Cottage – and Old Cottage. Maryfield Cottage still had the two two-storey coach-house doors in the east side of the house when I first came here. This part was later remodelled to form the charming upper drawing room which now exists there. During the Second World War, Lady Beatrice (by then a widow) moved into Old Cottage and lived there until she died in 1953. As Maryfield and the Coach House had now been sold, her daughter, Miss Mary Pole-Carew, moved into Old Cottage but retained a piece of land to the south of the Coach House for a garage for her car and also a small piece of land on the other side of the driveway leading up to Maryfield because she hoped to be able to drive her car across to what is now the side gate of Old Cottage. She made several attempts to obtain planning permission to do this but these were always refused as she would have had to cross a Bucks County Council designated footpath and permission to

do that would never be given. This explains the anomaly of the positioning of my garage today.

Other interesting facts come to light when researching such an old property. One of these is the history of the Fire Insurance Wall Plaques, or firemarks. One of these was removed from the wall of Old Cottage in 1930 and the then owner had the foresight to have it framed and it now hangs on the wall of my entrance hall. It is made of metal and shows the figure of Britannia and bears the inscription 'Removed from Ye Cottleigh, Taplow, January 1930' with the word 'County' below this. In early days people who lost their homes and all their possessions through fire became destitute and had to rely on charity to survive. After the Great Fire of London in 1666 it became obvious that some system of indemnity against such disasters would have to be found. Thus the birth of insurance companies. The early companies originally served only the London area but



gradually extended their business to cover the whole country. The metal fire plaques – or firemarks as they came to be known – were needed for identification purposes if a building was totally destroyed and the owners needed to be able to prove that they were insured with that particular company. As insurance companies began to introduce written policy documents the use of firemarks died out during the 19th century. All the different companies had their own firemarks bearing their different logos and, interestingly from my point of view, among these were a Sun Insurance Company and a Royal Insurance Company. The County Insurance Company was absorbed into the Alliance Company in 1906. This then became the Sun Alliance Group – which is now the Royal Sun Alliance company, which insures the Old Cottage to this day.

In the Kelly Directory of 1930 the name Ye Cotteigh is still shown – occupied by a Mrs Dorsett – under the heading 'The Village' as there were no road names here at that time. The names of the owners are listed in alphabetical order, headed by Lord Desborough shown as owner of Taplow Court. Walter de la Mare was living in Hill House and a Mr Lester, Clerk to the Parish Council, lived in The Nest which I am reliably informed was the name of the house we

now know as Victoria Cottage. In 1936, Lady Constance Butler is listed as owner of Ye Cottleigh. She was still living there in 1942 but the house is now referred to as Old Taplow Cottage. In 1948, Lady Pole-Carew was in Old Taplow Cottage and was still there in 1952 though this entry refers to the High Street. The records for this period are incomplete so I cannot get any closer than that to the exact date when it was considered necessary to affix names to these roads.

Old Cottage has been altered many times during its long life and was certainly divided into two dwellings for much of its earlier life. It is a delightful and tranquil place in which to live and, although an old resident who had lived here all his life once told me that the small end part on the west side had been owned at one time by a coffin-maker who used to sleep in his

coffin every night to save the undertakers trouble if he was taken in the night, I have had no feelings of unease here; if there are ghosts, they are obviously benign. The need for constant repair and renewal never comes to an end with a property of this age but it is a home of real charm and historical interest as I have endeavoured to show here and it makes a very comfortable and welcoming home.

I must acknowledge that some of the details about Maryfield were supplied by an article written by Leonard Miall for this newsletter some years ago and I wish to thank Helen Grellier for her historical knowledge and for pointing me in the right direction for some of my research.

Pamela Bentley

Conservation Area Extension

In September last year the recommendation was made that the existing Taplow Conservation Areas should be extended. This decision was a direct result of local lobbying to bring forward the decision time for the Riverside Settlement to coincide with the Village Conservation Area review cycle.


Under normal circumstances the Riverside Settlement would have had another few years to wait before we were due for a review. Those few years could have been crucial for the Riverside community, since a large slice of it was still designated as a GB3 area. The implication of such a designation was that limited infilling was still allowed in the existing Conservation Area – the only Conservation Area in the whole of South Bucks with such a loophole for developers to take advantage of. The latest review includes the recommendation that this designation be changed to GB1 to bring it into line with all the other Conservation Areas in the District, an anomaly long overdue for correction. There was also another threat ahead: the Local Development Framework, which replaces the old Local Plan, is still not set in stone and had the Riverside review timetable

been left as it was, it could have resulted in further development of the area being approved as still being within the GB3 zone and approved under the old Local Plan conditions.

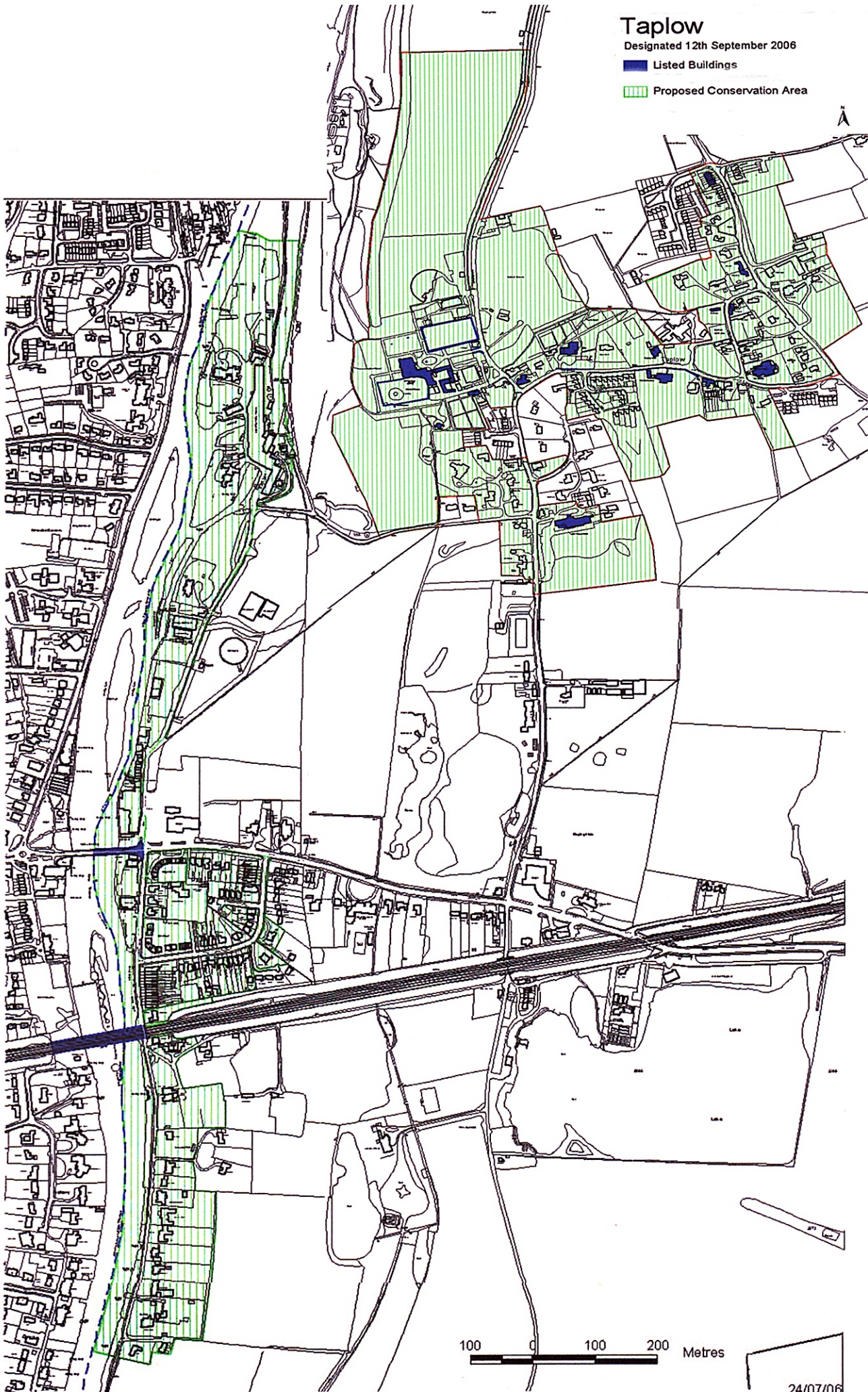
The new areas bring about 2km of riverside under conservation control, which has to be a major contribution to the protection of this area of our Parish. In one sense it is strange that, despite all the messages we were getting from the Environment Agency regarding their concern for preserving the Parish environment, the Jubilee River was not considered worthy of protection – or was this a case of the District not talking to the Environment Agency? Perhaps this omission is another instance of the essentially urban orientation of our planners in that they regard the only things worth preserving to be buildings, rather than fields or riverside habitats. Nevertheless, this extension to the protected area is to be warmly welcomed and may give us some ammunition in the up-and-coming problems that are sure to emerge when the new owners of the area around Taplow Paper Mill and Skindles attempt to profit from their investment.

Taplow

Designated 12th September 2006

 Listed Buildings

 Proposed Conservation Area



Third Runway Update

Sadly, as I predicted when I wrote the last piece on runway alterations and additions, it now seems almost inevitable that the Government, aided and abetted by BAA, are going to see that more new runways are going to be built in the South of England.

Before dealing with Heathrow, which is of course our major concern, it is just necessary to comment on Gatwick and Stansted, as both have a bearing on what happens at Heathrow. There is a plan to build a new runway and a new terminal at Gatwick Airport in 2019 if plans to construct a third runway at Heathrow fall foul of EU pollution controls. So far as Stansted is concerned, it is said a second runway at Stansted Airport would be 'economically unviable' without cross-subsidisation from Heathrow and Gatwick, according to leaked Treasury documents. Currently against cross-subsidisation of airports, the Civil Airports Authority, which is the industry regulator, would need compelling evidence to change its mind. With no subsidy, the new Stansted runway could put £10 on ticket prices and would massively reduce the profits of low-cost carriers, possibly ruining the airport's future.

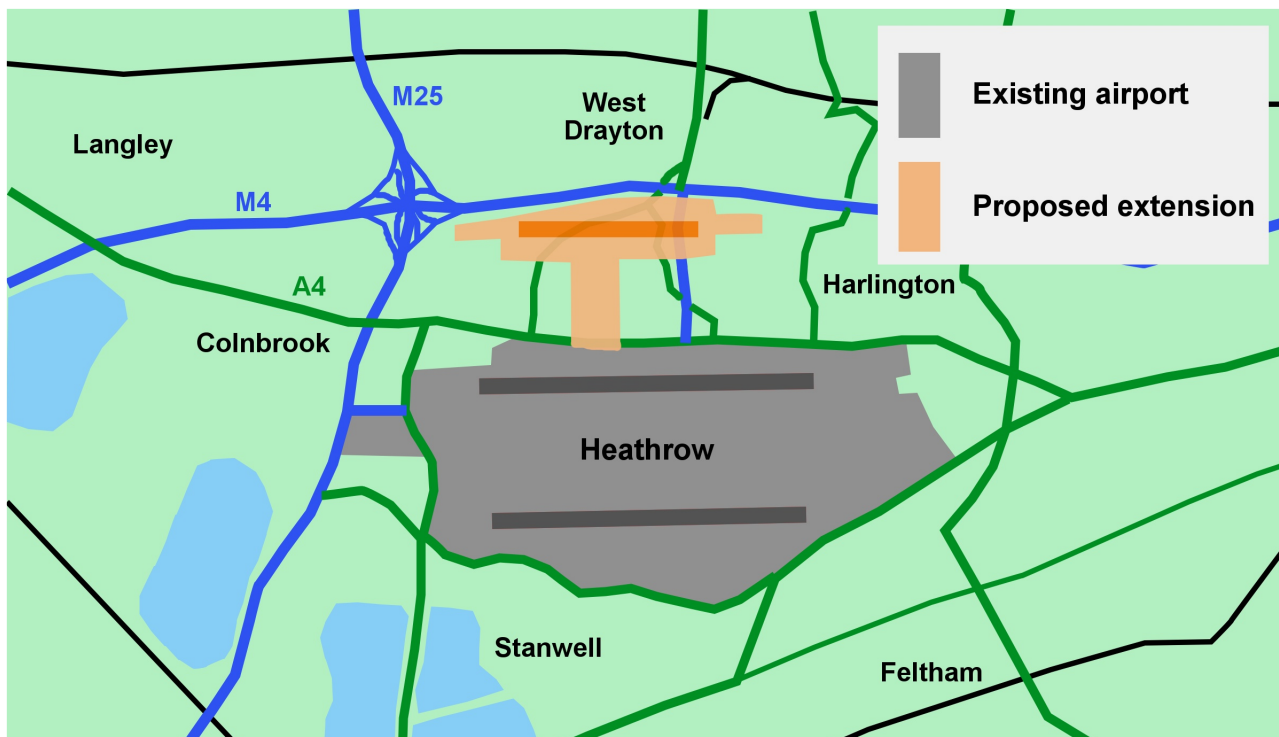
Now, to Heathrow. The latest information is contained in a BAA Heathrow publication dated spring 2007 and it states: 'The

government's progress report on the 2003 air transport White Paper has confirmed its commitment to increasing Heathrow's runway capacity. Both increasing the number of flights by introducing Mixed Mode [this means ending runway alternation] or building a third runway would only go ahead if tough environmental standards can be met. Tony Douglas, CEO of BAA Heathrow, said: 'Both of our runways are full, operating at 98.5% of their permitted capacity. Competitor airports in Europe such as Frankfurt, Paris CDG and Amsterdam each have between three and five runways, and all operate at less than 75% capacity. Yet the continued success of Heathrow depends on our ability to remain a leading hub airport.'

'Heathrow plays a unique role in the competitiveness of London and the UK. It supports hundreds of thousands of jobs, provides vital links between the UK and the global economy, and is an essential factor in convincing companies to locate here.'

'Heathrow operates the UK's only direct air links to key emerging world markets and more than half of all the UK's air freight passes through Heathrow.'

'Some 90% of businesses in London and around Heathrow rate the airport as either "vital" or "very important" to their business.'



However Tony did add, 'The expansion will only go ahead if local environmental impacts can be minimised. This means no more noise than in 2002, all air-quality pollution safely within EU limits, and public transport improvements to reduce congestion.'

A third runway at Heathrow is highly controversial. Department of Transport studies suggest a third 'short' runway (2000m as opposed to 4000m) could be constructed to the north of Heathrow, with additional terminal capacity provided by a sixth terminal. The third runway would be constructed adjacent to the M4 motorway and would involve significant property demolition (260 buildings) and would use 23 hectares of Green Belt. The villages of Sipson and Harmondsworth would essentially be demolished to make way for the new runway and terminal buildings.

The environmental impact

Currently, a cap of 480,000 air transport movements per annum is imposed on Heathrow to reduce the effects of noise and pollution (this was one good result of the Terminal 5 enquiry). A third runway would mean exceeding this cap; the DfT study suggested removing this cap but retaining the 'noise contour cap' of 145 sq km. This means that noise is only allowed to reach a certain level over a specified area around the airport. It is also expected the increased traffic would

worsen levels of pollution from the M4. However, a recent scheme suggests putting the M4 in a tunnel past Heathrow to overcome the excessive pollution should there be a breach of EU pollution targets.

Airport capacity

Today's forecasts show that use of the airport will rise from its current level of 64million passengers per annum (mppa) to the airport capacity of 89mppa by 2030 (this includes capacity created by Terminal 5). Adding a runway would increase capacity to 116mppa and air transport movements to 655,000. As you can imagine, all the local councils and some vociferous campaign groups are opposed to the expansion of Heathrow in this way.

On a lighter note to end: work has begun on the test track for the world's first Personal Rapid Transit (PRT) system, which will run between the N3 car park near Longford village and Terminal 5 and will benefit local residents as well as Heathrow passengers. The PRT consists of small cars with rubber tyres that travel along a guideway. The system has a number of great advantages, including the fact that, being battery powered, it is extremely quiet – 'no louder than a normal conversation at 10 metres', they say... Depends who is talking, doesn't it!!

Derek Walker

History: Village Green and Hall

The former Eton Rural District Council acquired the westerly portion of the land from the executors of Newton in 1961. The same Council purchased in 1966 the remaining land to the east fronting the High Street, which was under threat at that time of being used for housing purposes. Following the above acquisitions, the Parish Council carried out clearance of the various old buildings on the site, followed up with seeding and tree planting schemes, and now hold a lease of the land from the present Beaconsfield District Council.

The area of land containing the Reading Room and the car park was acquired by the Parish Council in 1967. The old village school which occupied part of the site was then demolished to make way for the new car park. The old part of the Reading Room was formerly the church hall and certain alterations were then carried out to prolong the life of the building. The final phase commenced in August 1974 when the Parish Council accepted a tender for the new extension, comprising a new committee meeting room,

modern kitchen, toilets, and an office for the clerk. At the same time, the opportunity was taken to carry out extensive redecoration to the old part of the building, and the whole works are now complete, with the exception of the curtaining which is shortly to be provided.

T.M. Balfe March 1977

This is a contemporary account which may have appeared in a previous old newsletter but I cannot find it in my old copies. Does anyone remember T.M.Balfe? Ed.

The Old Public Slipway

A bit of history, by S.S. Smith

Following the recent purchase of the Skindles site by Towntalk Ltd, the slipway just north of the bridge is to become a key factor in the negotiations with the developers for a number of reasons: firstly, it's a public slipway owned by you and me (held in escrow by the District Council); secondly, it carries a public footpath beneath the A4; thirdly, it's the only access to the river for a considerable distance for the large cranes sometimes needed for bridge repair and maintenance; fourthly, it carries fishing licensing rights; and fifthly, it's a piece of Taplow history that should not be quietly lost to us simply because a developer needs it to make money. Some time ago Joy Marshall met with a man called S.S. Smith (now deceased) who was a partner of George Bond and intimately connected with this part of Taplow and who gave her the following interesting background to the slipway. The language and style are entirely that of Mr Smith. Ed

[Riparian rights: A Free Fishery, or the exclusive right of fishing on a public (navigable) river, can be a Royal Franchise. Grants can no longer be made, being prohibited by King John's Great Charter, but the right of conferring them was considered to be one of the flowers of the prerogative and it is from this origin that the validity of a free fishery at the present day must in every case be derived. (Stephen's Law of England Vol.1 p.643.)]

Shortly after we had bought the boatyard from George Bond, the Guards Boat Club put up for sale by auction their old boathouse in Mill Lane, Taplow, plus the riparian rights marked 'X' on the plan [not included here]. Bond advised me to buy them, the best advice he ever gave me. The reason the Royal Franchise fell into private hands is that Henry VIII gave them to Anne of Cleves as part of her divorce settlement. I was told by a friend that all fishing rights are now abolished and anyone can now get a licence. They are now of great historical interest and would make an interesting research for the Taplow Society to find their history from Anne to the Guards Boat Club.

The following is as near the truth as is possible for 20 years of tittle-tattle.

The firm under George was called Bond's and when I took it over it became Bonds (Maidenhead) Ltd. In 1936 my wife took me to

see some of her old friends in the Goring area, among them was the miller of Streatley. He was very old and took little interest until he heard that we were thinking of buying Bonds, when he came to life and said that he knew Jonathon [Bond?] when he was a cattle drover



**The Return from the Boating Trip
James Tissot 1873**

and used to rest the animals for a night at the mill. When he [Jonathon?] passed over the bridge, what made him think of the ferry rights? Were the toll charges too excessive? We do know that when Brunel's railway stopped at Taplow while the bridge was being built, Londoners used to walk down to the river. Jonathon realised that taking them out in his ferry [from the slipway] was a money-maker and when he bought a few skiffs and let them do the work it was even better.

As you know, Jonathon's older son was drowned in the Bray reach and George took over. In the First World War he and many other local watermen were in the Inland Water Corps, which ferried army stores along the canals. George heard that many new barges

had been built in the Teddington area, but that it was unknown how to move them to Southampton or Bristol. George went to London and offered to do the job. Which he did by taking them to Bristol through the Kennet and Avon Canal. Later, in the inter-war years, the Great Western Railway tried to close the canal but the opposition was able to quote the use it had been. The GWR lost their case and the K&A Canal remains. One up to George!

An interesting snippet from the Financial Times of February 1891: Next to the site of the Bank of England or the Mansion House the most desirable freehold to own in this country is in the neighbourhood of Maidenhead Bridge. A correspondent informs us that a small strip of river frontage beside the bridge was let on Friday last by auction. It is only 140 feet long and 18 feet in depth, but a well-known boat builder [Bond?] thought it worth bidding a rental of £215 a year for the fortunate lessors being the Corporation of Maidenhead. The capital value of £215 a year, reckoned at 3½%, is worth over £6,000 and today [his time] would be worth £50,000.

The real reason of Bond's high bid was that there were no other contestants except a

stranger. After the sale a furious Bond asked the stranger how he would have been able to pay a rental of £215. 'Rental?' said the stranger, 'I thought it was for the freehold!'

[As a tailpiece, the story told by Mr Smith goes on to talk of the Festival of Britain in 1951, omitted from this narrative, when the landing stage collapsed...]

After the disastrous collapse of the landing stage we heard that Cecily Courtneidge was suing the Corporation (I gather Cecily was dumped in the river!) despite the marvellous publicity she got. The Mayor wrote to her to say that he was bringing the Town Clerk and me to see 'Gay's the Word', in which there were quips about the mishap. After the performance we went backstage to see her. She sat stony-faced with a lawyer on either side of her.

[A note for HTPS: In the programme for the Festival there is a mention of the Chantry of St Andrew and Mary Magdalene. Is this the religious order that built and maintained the old wooden bridge?]

George Bond was with the crowd that took the old tollgates and threw them into the river!

Joy Marshall and Fred Russell



The Old Court – Then and Now

It's with great sadness that I feel it necessary to print the following two pictures. The Old Court featured on the front page of our newsletter last April, when I finally accepted that it was to be demolished to make way for a block of service apartments. The building was originally one of the five great houses built in South Taplow and it was hoped that a sympathetic builder (and the District Council) would do the same sort of marvellous conversion job that a builder did with Lansdowne House. This was not to be. The Old Court was demolished within a week of our newsletter appearing and the timing suggested that the owner was very aware that the District had just acquired the power to take over unused buildings. A gang of labourers turned up in the



Old Court, early 2006

morning and without any attempt at observing safety precautions simply bulldozed the old place to the ground. No effort was made to preserve any of the wonderful

brickwork that made such a feature of the house. Today, as I write, a year later the vermin-infested wreckage still remains.

Fred Russell



Old Court Today

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