

# Hitcham and Taplow Society

Newsletter 114: Autumn 2020  
£3.50 to non-members



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

# Hitcham and Taplow Society

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

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Cover picture: Not the VGP. See Editorial (below).

## Editorial

What a year. Such sad, bad news. Stay home. Protect the NHS. Save lives. What about livelihoods? Diktats imposed, changed, changed again. Masks? No, but yes. Bubbles. Rule of Six. Hands, face, space. Test, track, trace. Trust? Tiers of lockdown. Tears before bedtime, fearing fear? Please, not the new normal.

Hereabouts, the School Field and Old Priory Garden vandalised, a riot on River Road's riverside lawn, no 'Tidy Up Taplow', no Carols on the Green, a scaled-down Remembrance and, for the first time since 1985, no Village Green Party. A few neighbours met in a socially distanced wake with fingers crossed that we can enjoy next year's VGP on 19th June 2021. Save the date!

Save this one too: 4th December 2020. At 8pm, the Society will 'Zoom' its 61st Annual General Meeting. The agenda, 2019 minutes, reports, nominations and joining directions for

this online video conference will be posted on our website and e-mailed to members. If you don't receive the e-mail by 13th November or 'don't do internet', please call the Secretary.

This Newsletter is pleased the Diocese of Oxford agreed to the names of our World War Two fallen being added to the memorial in St Nicolas' Churchyard but sorry that, for health reasons, stonemason Adrian Powell cannot do the inscriptions until next year.

Now for something completely different: a personal plea. This is the sixteenth Newsletter I've edited in eight years. Steam running low. I have plans for the Spring 2021 edition (as ever, looking well ahead) but never aspired to catch my eminent predecessor Fred Russell, who edited 29 Newsletters. If you fancy taking a turn, let's talk.

*Nigel Smales*

# Snapshots



Prince Fred 1749

Walton-on-Thames claims to be where baseball began and that Frederick, Prince of Wales (son of George II, father of George III, avid cricketer and Cliveden resident) played in the first game. So much for the USA in 1903 inventing its invention in 1839. John Newbery of Waltham St Lawrence made the earliest printed reference to 'Base-Ball' in A Little Pretty Pocket-Book (1744).



Rick Findler

The horse chestnut overlooking the kink in the High Street is now a very poorly tree. It would survive leaf miner beetle but not bleeding cankers and two fungii attacking its heartwood and roots. Sadly, it must come down. Such a pity.



Richard Skymansky

Making the M4 'smarter' requires its bridge over the Thames to be wider. Here's how.



No danger of imminent collapse? Really? Take care when passing Stockwells.



Andrew Findlay

Thanks to Terry Clark of Maidenhead Memories on Facebook for this 1950s Skindles Christmas card.

History forgot when the gasholder was built east of Mill Lane. Not Quentin Challenor. It was designed by his father James and constructed by Oxley Engineering (Leeds) Ltd in 1959 to rise and fall with the varying volume of gas. So, why did it stand tall and rusting sadly from being 'mothballed' in the 1990s to its demolition in 2016?



# Local Heroes

As the going got tough, many got going to help our community through the COVID crisis. Here are four heart-warming glimpses.



Courtesy of Cath Knight

Well done to St Nicolas' School for remaining open for children of key workers.



When it was Nearways, most of Eastfield Road was in Hitcham, not Burnham. BH Dhariwal has been our 'corner shop' since 13th December 1973. Thanks to Varinderjeet, his mum Bhupinder and sister-in-law Tirath for keeping open, well-stocked and smiling throughout the lockdown.

Congratulations to Marianne Boden for being awarded a 'Hero of Taplow' certificate by Joy Morrissey MP for assembling and running a WhatsApp group of 52 volunteers to help those in need.



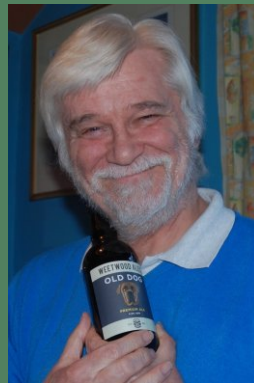
Marc Boden



Sanda McWilliam

As SGI-UK could not host courses or events at Taplow Court, its canteen staff have been cooking up to 100 meals a day for Foodshare Maidenhead, a charity providing food for the homeless, elderly and vulnerable. Congratulations to Lee Stacy, Kamil Dlugolecki and Adel Belhadj for being nominated for a 'Hero of Bucks' award.

## Editor at Home



Consolation in isolation on a hairy Happy Birthday.



Will these woolly hats work as masks?

Keira Smales

# Stranded in Paradise

After over two months backpacking around South East Asia, my partner Conor Deeigan and I arrived on beautiful Leyte, an island in the eastern Philippines where we planned ethical dives to see whale sharks migrate past its stunning coral reefs. Plans changed, and how.

A few days later, COVID-19 lockdown descended. Manila closed. Our flight to London: cancelled. No refund. Everyone desperately trying to find ferries and flights away. We booked a ferry to Cebu only to wake at the crack of dawn to find it cancelled. E-mails bounced. Messages didn't send. Calls to the British Embassy picked up but hung up immediately. Tourists turfed out or confined to their rooms. We were stranded at the dive school with half-a-dozen others. Safe but in a dilemma. Should we go or should we stay?

Could we get to Manila? On route, numerous checkpoints. Ever-changing rules and requirements for paperwork. If we caught C-19, would we be separated? Would hospitals treat tourists? And in this densely populated city, the greater chance of infection. Nowhere to buy food or water. No taxis. Tourists traipsing miles between hotels taking no guests and airports without flights. Would we get stuck, hungry, thirsty, sick, sleeping on the floor, surrounded by panic, unable to get a flight or spending hundreds to book one only for it to be cancelled? Would we be allowed to travel if we had a temperature? Two Americans at the dive school risked it. It took them four days to get home to Utah. Both had C-19.

Jaap the Dutchman

We were so lucky to be allowed to stay at the school on a simplistic beach front. The Filipinos were very inclusive, their compassion and community values touching. Rules followed diligently. Social distancing. Masks. Travel



Rachel & Conor, self-portrait

heavily restricted. Temperature checks at every rigorous checkpoint and supermarket. We were checked regularly and given the daily rice ration delivered to every family. No C-19 was reported on Leyte while we were there.

We bought a gas stove to cook fresh fish, rice and vegetables. Star apples and mangoes. Best of all, daily snorkelling, always seeing new species. Puffer fish the size of pigs. Massive schools of squid. Talking with turtles on our porch. Breakfasting with Chippy the Labrador. Celebrating my 25th birthday free diving and enjoying Red Horse beer and cocktails made with gin Tanduay (their rum) in coconuts locals gave us.

The stressful days began when, often with hours to spare, we heard France, Germany or another European country had a flight out from an airport four hours away. Heavily discounted. Just €200. Great. Paperwork panic then hope dashed, the flight fully booked by that country's citizens. Others bought countless tickets cancelled without refunds. Finally, a UK flight. Tickets normally less than £450 priced at £1,000. Extortionate. The plane packed. No drinks, vegetarian food or attendant service. Many Brits left behind. What a relief to land at Heathrow. However, the UK two weeks into lockdown yet no social distancing, masks or temperature checks. Nobody asked where we'd been or advised us to self-isolate. We did so for two weeks out of common sense.

Despite our long lockdown, we very much enjoyed our eight weeks in the Philippines and really hope to return to the dive school to thank everyone for such an unforgettable time.

*Rachel Horton-Kitchlew of The Old Rectory*



# A Sense of Place

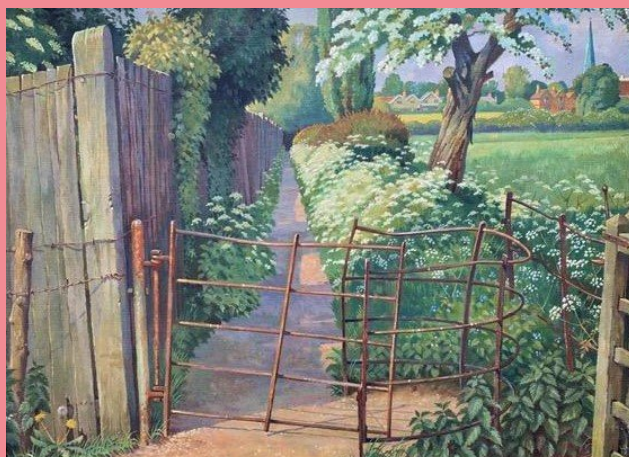
Places are important. They are where we live, work and play. We enjoy them as occupants or users, or as passers-by and visitors. They can lift our spirits, make us feel at home, excite and delight us, affect our health and wellbeing, our feelings of safety, security, inclusion and belonging, our senses of shared heritage and community cohesion. For centuries, the

indefinable quality of having 'a sense of place' was largely a result of local serendipity. It wasn't until 1947 that Planning took charge nationally. Mistakes were made but, with the population growing, Planning made sense. However, there was always the risk of it being a disconnected desktop exercise with no 'feel' for places. That's where civic societies like ours come in.

## The Essence of Our Place

The Society was instrumental in Taplow having two Conservation Areas – one for the Village (1975), another for the Riverside (1999) – and preparing the Taplow Parish Plan (2005). Nowadays, with Planning evolving so speedily, such designation affords little or no protection against insensitive development. Consequently, a new initiative set out to prepare a Taplow Neighbourhood Plan (NP) to supplement the joint Local Plan (LP) being prepared by South Bucks and Chiltern District Councils.

For such Local Authorities (LAs), NPs are a means to get locals to identify sites for development. For locals, they offer an opportunity to explore the identity of places and to capture their essence in the hope of preventing it being lost. As the freezing of the LP stymied progress on the Taplow NP, this



Miv Wayland-Smith has generously donated this painting, *Entrance to Taplow*, to Taplow Parish Council. It now hangs in the newly refurbished Perkins Room in the Village Hall. Please advise if you know the artist.

Newsletter chooses to muse on the Village. In doing so, it hopes to spark others to offer constructive comments or focus on other areas.

The distinctive character of our Village hinges upon six things. Rural setting – greenery all around, the river below. History – buildings dating back four centuries, each with stories to tell; a responsibility to remember. Variety – grand homes mixed with more modest yet equally intriguing cottages; even spots of uniformity at Buffins and Cedar Chase have the sense of places within a place. Community – neighbours sharing and caring for our past, present and future. Most important – two intangibles: Secrecy and Enticement.

The Village is secret. Church spires are normally visual magnets signalling the centre of somewhere. Ours only beckons briefly from two roads and one footpath. Consequently, people pass by without knowing the Village exists. Roads enclosed by hedges and brick walls. Glimpses through gates. Little sense of somewhere until, enticed onwards by what's around the curve ahead, at last, an open space – the Village Green and our pub, village hall, school and the church, its spire still hiding behind trees.

Change is inevitable but these qualities are ours to value and enhance.



# The Pilgrim's Progress

The Society tries to keep pace with the way of the world and to consider and communicate how complicated circumstances, possibilities and changes might affect our little corner. Newsletter 113 anticipated a legislative limbo during lockdown...

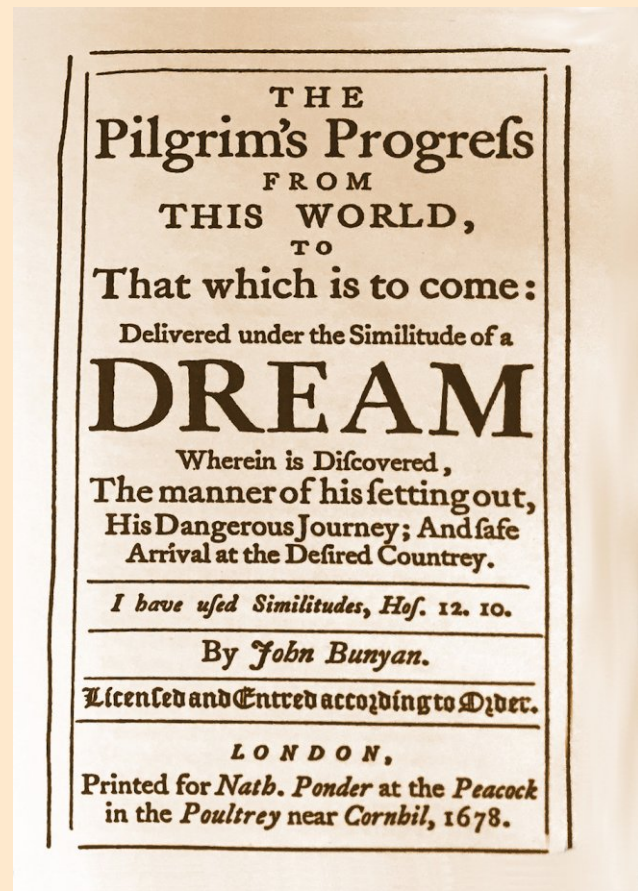
Then came June, and the discovery that South Bucks District Council (SBDC) had cooperated in a Local Housing Needs Assessment (October 2019) covering a high priority 'Inner Area' (including all South Bucks up to the M40) and a lower priority 'Outer Area' (see Page 9). This LHNA was easy to miss. It slipped under the Society's radar because the SBDC website posted the news under a Slough heading.

Then came August. Her Majesty's Government (HMG) went cryptic too, making yet another significant increase in its perceived housing need for England amid the launch of two consultations, one on changes to the planning system, the other on 'Planning for the Future'. Together, these proposals aim to make Planning simpler, faster and more predictable. Both are informed by a 'taskforce of experts' consisting of a leading developer, a planning lawyer feted for assisting developers, an LSE professor, an ex-CBI economist, an HMG 'mandarin' involved with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and an academic with the Historic England Commission. Nobody at the sharp end of real LA Planning.

Forever Valiant, Roger Worthington strives to make heads or tails of it all. His quest inspires an allegory. Apologies to John Bunyan (1628-1688) for borrowing the title of this piece, some subheadings and characters from *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1677-1684).

## The Hill of Difficulty

The Localism Act (2011) devolved aspects of decision-making and the NPPF (2012) updated and consolidated over two dozen documents. Good headlines. Devil in the detail. It took a while to see how significantly the centralised directives of the second would trump the supposed decentralisation of the first. Further, the NPPF lacked any requirement for environmental review and, although it wasn't formally replaced by a new edition until 2018 (with another in 2019), aspects of it were effectively revised by other legislation



including new planning practice guidelines (2014) and the Permission in Principle Order (2017). And within months of the 2019 revision, it was supplemented by the National Design Guide and, in part, superseded by Permitted Development rights (now under judicial review).

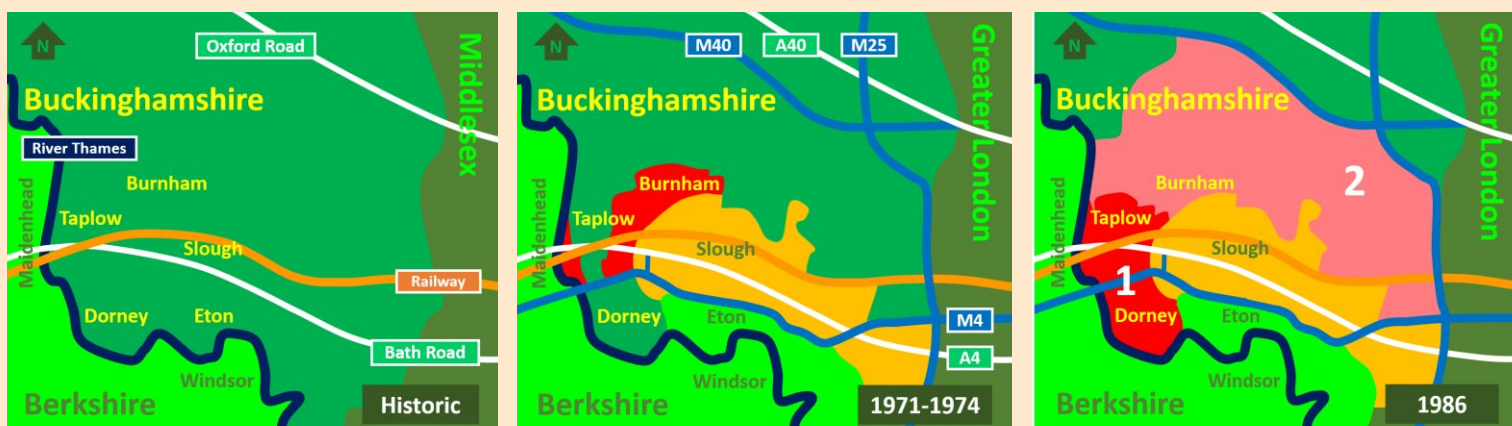
Meanwhile, in 2011, 2014 and 2015, HMG relied on the 2011 Census to project England's need for housing nationally and within each LA. Doublespeak is at work. These 'projections' are targets which LAs are required to deliver despite HMG promises to increase open spaces by 30% (to help wildlife thrive) and to protect the Green Belt, the aim of which is to check growth of built-up areas, to prevent neighbouring towns merging and to preserve the special character of places. Buckinghamshire's green tail continues to tick all three boxes. Taplow and South Bucks benefit our urban neighbours by being 97% and 87% Green Belt, respectively.

All this is hard enough for professional LA planners to comprehend but, perhaps by design, these ever-changing rules, extreme streamlining and lack of transparency make it more and more difficult for locals to influence their locale.

## The County of Coveting

Berkshire has long coveted south Buckinghamshire. In 1971-1974, it succeeded in sequestering from it Slough, Eton and their neighbours but not Taplow Riverside, Hitcham, Lent Rise and Burnham Village. Twelve years later, it tried first to take Dorney, southern Taplow, Hitcham and Lent Rise then to grab all South Bucks up to the M40 arguing this area "is dependent on Slough [and] sticks out

into Berks". Our then President Leonard Miall played Obstinate to counter: "In fact, the unnatural excrescence is Slough sticking into Bucks". Newsletter 53 (Summer 1987) was pleased to report that the Boundary Commission agreed Taplow is separate from Maidenhead, and there was "insufficient evidence that the transfer [would] result in more effective or convenient local government". Now it seems our urban neighbours are at it again.



## The Slough of Despond

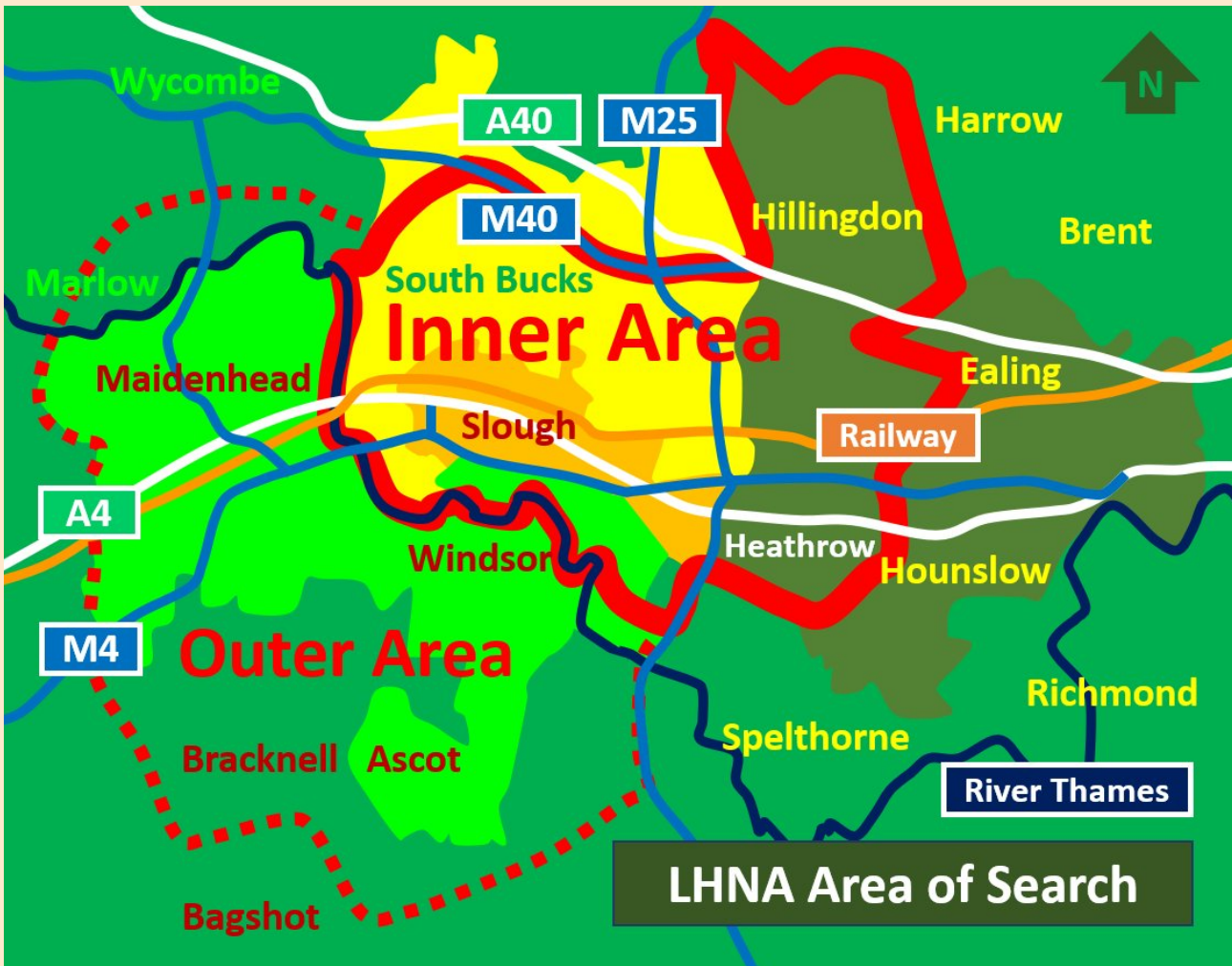
SBDC revised its 1999 LP in 2007 and supplemented it with a Core Strategy in 2011. Having insufficient land available to achieve HMG's 2015 housing targets without significant Green Belt incursion, it combined with Chiltern District Council (CDC) to prepare a draft LP in 2017 based upon an agreement that the 'projected' new housing shortfall in these Districts (and in Wycombe) could be 'exported to' (meaning 'built in') Aylesbury Vale.

The lack of an up-to-date LP left SBDC Green Belt vulnerable. Slough took advantage. With no prior consultation, it declared an aspiration to build thousands of homes in Stoke Poges, a 'Northern Expansion Plan' now impossible to research due to online access being blocked. To defend against this threat, SBDC-CDC completed a fresh Housing & Economic Needs Assessment in 2019 and revised its draft LP, rather rushed and threadbare but still based upon this pan-Buckinghamshire cooperation. And the good news for Taplow was that recent developments have provided all but a few of the new homes expected of it until 2036, and our Green Belt was threatened

only by removal from it of three brownfield sites. Preparations had been made to challenge two of these threats only for lockdown to freeze the HMG Inspector's consideration of the draft LP.

The expectation was that an approved SBDC-CDC LP would be adopted by the new Buckinghamshire Council (BC). However, there were whispers that the Inspector might reject it on the grounds that SBDC had failed in its 'Duty to Cooperate' with Slough. Doublespeak again? Whilst at first glance an excellent principle, is 'Duty to Cooperate' really a heavy-handed way for HMG to pass the buck to LAs by imposing a 'Duty to Agree' to carry a neighbour's can? And if it is to be discontinued, as proposed, what resonance does it have? Enough for BC to not only withdraw the frozen SBDC-CDC LP on 21st October but also to cover its tracks by removing all online references to it. This leaves our patch to be included in a completely new countywide LP or, as implied by the LHNA, condemned to Berkshire urbanity. Should Taplow be Pliable by placing its 'sense of place' at risk and sacrificing chunks of its Green Belt to satisfy Big Bucks or, in a sad case of 'Back to the Future', the Nosy Neighbours.





**The Age of Algorithm**

Amid all the pandemic panic, the panacea of algorithm crept in quietly. This mysterious mathematical astrology is a worrying affliction. One symptom is dependency on precisely defined sequences to compute solutions. Another is difficulty in applying logic, common sense or the human touch to the quality of input or the interpretation of output. Computer says "No"? No question. No exams? No problem. Apply the magic of algorithm. Pandemic persisting? Mask-up and apply another algorithm.

HMG's August consultations rely upon an algorithm which requires England to build 300,000 new homes a year for years. Is HMG once again passing the buck without any consideration of local circumstances by setting targets and, with "a standard method" and "a simple formula", requiring LAs to work out how to provide their share? Algorithm rules, OK. A neat trick to reinforce England's place as the most centrally controlled country in the western world.

And there's more. Will reform require LAs to follow in SBDC-CDC footsteps by scrapping

their LPs and starting again? If public review of a draft LP happens in parallel with assessment by HMG Inspectors, whose opinion would matter most? Is 'consultation' nothing of the sort and 'Localism' a fig leaf?

The aspiration for more beautiful homes is admirable. But beauty is in the eye of the beholder. How will it be judged and by whom in a "less discretionary, rules based, fast track for beauty" with reduced public oversight? HMG aspires to 'level-up' the country yet proposes changes that will encourage developers to pack yet greater numbers into south-east England. What is beautiful about turning our countryside into a patio? This all adds up to being deeply undemocratic, an absurd waste of resource and a recipe for confusion, chaos and controversy.



## The myths of Madame Bubble

Even Watchful can be so enchanted by incessant assertion and rhetoric of the beguiling Bubble that he falls asleep and never questions them. We are told that currently adopted LPs will provide England with only 187,000 new homes a year, 113,000 fewer than 'projected'. This totally ignores all the draft LPs now close to adoption, many held back on questionable 'Duty to Cooperate' grounds. Each would reduce this perceived national shortfall. All by itself, the SBDC-CDC LP would have provided 13,160 homes (almost 12% of the total).

These are turbulent times. What will be the new normal? More working from home, more homes with studies? Fewer city-centre offices, less commuting, living more widespread? If fewer flights mean Heathrow doesn't expand, will Slough need to? What impact will Brexit have? Wouldn't it be wise to ponder once more what kind of homes we need, how many and where?

The fundamental need is not so much for more homes as more affordable 'first homes' yet Mr Worldly Wiseman wants to flood the market to make more homes more affordable. This oversimplistic supply-and-demand theory will do little or nothing to aid those who cannot afford to buy a home right now and those who are never likely to. Instead, it prioritises the profit of developers wishing to build large, soulless estates of supposedly carbon-zero homes in the middle of nowhere over the creation or protection of the

'sense of place' we value in both rural and urban situations. Many developers don't do 'sense of place'. At best, they just take advantage of it. And what about those who want to live in vibrant urban locations with a degree of locational flexibility only possible in rented accommodation? Our towns and cities have many brownfield sites ideal for this kind of housing, maybe also redundant offices capable of conversion to homes. Let's see HMG live up to Housing Minister Robert Jenrick's noises about 'Brownfield First'.

HMG alludes to the need for supplementary infrastructure but, as usual, neglects to offer for objective assessment any relevant metrics about roads, public transport, schools, healthcare, places of work, leisure facilities, utilities, recycling, flood protection, the environment and all. Who will decide what's required and how? Who will design and fund it? Powers to reject ambitious, algorithmically produced housing targets on the grounds of inadequate infrastructure must be included if the public is to respect the housing plans.

## The Celestial City

Perfection will always be unattainable but let's help Hopeful to dream the impossible dream. Quality of outcome is about so much more than numbers. Simple rules and process make sense, but not at the expense of diluting local democratic accountability and preventing local involvement in decision-making.



# Vanity Fair

Welcome to the carousel of changes imagined, real or refused.

**Burnham Beeches.** The Society objected to a proposal to protect this ancient woodland not for its aim or content but for its omission of the current requirement for any development within 5.6km (which includes Hitcham and most of Taplow) to include provision for 'Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace' and an Air Quality Management Strategy.

**Odds Farm.** Application for a mini-golf course.

**Hunstwood Golf Club.** George Sandy's recommendation resulted in permission being granted for a replacement clubhouse.

**Hill Farm Road.** Outbuildings without planning permission have finally been removed from Little Karoo Farm. 'Fake News' led to unjustified social media sympathy.

**Rectory Road.** Errant drivers have displaced twelve kerbstones. Eight have been rescued awaiting restoration.

If you've taken the other four for safe-keeping, perhaps you'd let us know their whereabouts.



**Bath Road.** If the triangle currently occupied by Roots Garden Centre is removed from the Green Belt, a proposed office development will necessitate the widening of the Bath Road to two lanes in each direction. Traffic will have more room to queue before merging to pass under Dumb Bell Bridge. Go figure! A massive monopole (a curse of 5G telecommunications) will soon appear by Miller & Carter. Shell will replace its petrol station shop and add a charging point. The saga of The Hawthorns continues. Permission was granted in 2016 for its conversion to a care home but not for an extension, a retrospective application for which was refused in 2018. An appeal was dismissed. SBDC issued an Enforcement Notice for demolition. When this too was appealed, a different Planning Inspector struck a rather curious deal that the offending extension could remain if a part of one of the outbuildings was demolished. The deadline has passed. No demolition has taken place, another outbuilding has been equipped for habitation and the rear of the site now seems to be an unapproved builder's yard, possibly for their whole care homes group.



**Taplow Station.** If commuting ever resumes to previous levels, cars will buzz back to the station like bees to a honeypot. Some favour a car park. Not BC. It proposes pay-and-display parking on public roads (who will profit?) with passing places. More double-yellows in Taplow? Shock! Horror!

**Marsh Lane.** Perhaps anticipating its refusal, Challen's Chick Farm has withdrawn an application to add a new permanent dwelling but has appealed the earlier refusal of a quail barn and is busy erecting sheds without planning permission. Meanwhile, any house hereabouts which hasn't added a rear extension is the odd one out.



Sue Billington

**Ellington Gardens.** Approval for an additional dwelling has expired. An application to extend the period of approval was refused.

**River Road.** Applications for extensions to Harefield and East Bank.

**Thames Riviera Hotel.** Application to convert to residential refused on appeal.

**Mill Lane.** The Environment Agency promised a public car park by the bridge over the Jubilee River. It was built but never opened and will remain closed while a new gantry system is installed to make Taplow Weir safer to maintain and easier to operate. Sadly, operational necessity may prevent this facility ever being made available for public use. Maidenhead Sea Cadets seek approval to rebuild their headquarters. Discussions continue regarding Driftwood Cottage and the Boathouses site.

# The Taplow Affair 1916

Surely this title and timing must herald a tale of illicit liaisons at Skindles? Sorry. Not at all. Morals were questioned. Romance was rumoured. And although the setting was Cliveden, it involved not fancy-free frolics but accusations of unacceptable behaviour by senior staff at the Duchess of Connaught Canadian Red Cross Hospital (CRX). The hospital had been opened by Lady Nancy Astor on 10th February 1915 and was fully operational five months later when King George V and Queen Mary came to call. They were kept blissfully unaware of the growing rivalries which led to the traumatic events of September 1916, a hush-hush policy that persisted ever since for everybody until recently when three Australian academics – Miltiadis Roxanas, Marilyn Gendek and Vivien Lane (once the Hanfords' nanny) – turned over a few stones...



Royal Visit 1915 – King George V and Queen Mary with Gorrell and Campbell to her right

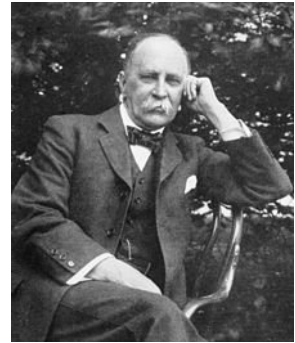
Two storms blew across the Atlantic from Canada: a 'powerplay' within the Canadian Army Medical Corps (CAMC) and a Red Cross 'sock selling' scandal.

In England, Surgeon General Guy Carleton Jones was content to lead CAMC within a team directed by the British War Office. In Canada, Sir Samuel Hughes, Minister of Militia & Defence, saw such cooperation as unacceptably subordinate to Britain. Hughes appointed Dr Herbert Bruce, a Toronto surgeon, to conduct an inquiry which identified 23 CAMC deficiencies. CRX Head Physician Sir William Osler objected that it collected grievances "in a fairly obvious witch-hunt aimed at bringing down Jones" who was replaced by Bruce then, after Hughes was

deposed, praised and reinstated by a second enquiry which advised an "unequivocal" reversal of the Bruce report.

This furore bruised CRX. Despite being declared by *The Times* on 3rd November 1916 "one of the two best hospitals in England", it was decapitated by the 'sock selling' scandal, a tangle of rumours and regrettable reality that rocked its foundations. Many Canadian women volunteers were assisting the war effort by sending food parcels, socks and other "knitted comforts" for the Red Cross to deliver to the troops. One rumour was of their upset at receiving no thanks. Another that these gifts were being sold to soldiers. A third that this rumour was enemy propaganda. It wasn't. But sadly, CRX was guilty. Although its Commanding Officer Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Gorrell escaped censure when a non-commissioned officer was convicted for accepting bribes from local suppliers, the discovery in his office of cash "to the tune of £11,000" was taken as evidence of him making personal profit trading in Red Cross supplies, possibly in cohort with others including unidentified Taplovians. He was dismissed on 29th September 1916, hospitalised with a mental breakdown then discharged only to commit suicide on 27th January 1917.

This dramatic, apparently immoral, undoubtably tragic aspect of what CAMC folklore recalls as 'The Taplow Affair' was but the half of it. Sister Matron Edith Campbell was also dismissed. CAMC Matron-in-Chief Major Margaret Macdonald felt this was justified but did Edith's realisation of "where she had done wrong" relate simply to complaints from three nurses that she was "cruel and undermined



Osler



Gorrell

their health"? Our Australian friends think not. Their research reveals Edith confided to Osler that Nancy wanted rid of her (and Charles) because she "interfered in everything and everybody, and [could] be moody and nasty when she likes, quite a different person to her usual sunny self".

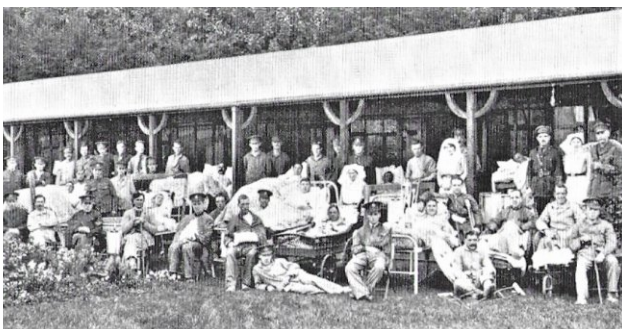


Campbell

The rift widened. Edith accused Nancy of spreading the "vulgar story [that she] was in love" with Charles. Nancy reckoned Charles was "overthrown by the viper", who she implied was "SM". Sister Matron?

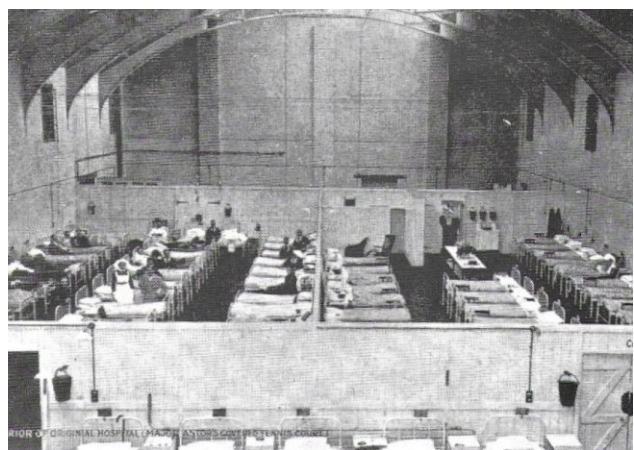
How did it come to this? Why couldn't these admirably strong women be allies not enemies?

Nancy was never easy to get on with. But with less self-esteem and a thinner skin, she would never have become a principled and pioneering politician, always fascinating, often infuriating, her tongue too quick, her nature quixotic yet her energy inexhaustible and her punch well above her weight. Edith too was a woman at war, ever ready to bear the burden of responsibility and fight her corner as she went on to a no less distinguished career at CAMC Hospitals at Buxton (Derbyshire), Étaples (France) – where she was Mentioned in Dispatches and then awarded the Military Medal for her bravery during a bombing raid – and finally back in Canada. Yet it seems the atmosphere improved after her departure for, as Newsletter 110 (Autumn 2018) reported, Nursing Sister Jean Parkinson's recollection of 1918-1919 was that "the low death rate [at CRX] was attributed to [Nancy's] inspiring personality and presence".



Canadian Patients 1916

With a century's perspective, we can speculate about the 'perfect storm' between the professional nurse, for whom healing was a vocation and a hospital must be orderly, and the passionate amateur who, not one to toe any line and recently inspired by Christian Science, preached 'heal thyself' to motivate patients to recover from their wounds, injuries and illnesses. Maybe this philosophy wasn't medically robust enough for Edith. CRX was her domain but it was in Nancy's and, to a significant degree, at her husband Waldorf's expense. It was over-dramatic for Nancy to refer to patients as her "children" but there is ample evidence she cared deeply for their wellbeing. Ever the consummate hostess, they were her guests to be given comforts and amenities such as fresh food, flowers, vocational rehabilitation, a sergeants' mess, sports, cinematographic evenings, educational lectures, visiting orchestras, actors and dignitaries (including Royalty) and free use of Cliveden's library, gardens and riverboats. Perhaps Edith had a similarly possessive personality and was irritated by Nancy's vivacity and largesse, her yen to be centre stage, her sense of privileged entitlement and her easy familiarity with Osler – a friend since her youth – and his medical peers. Perhaps the Matron resented the beguiling benefactor as a rival who stole thunder by taking credit and gratitude which should be due to the nursing staff. And perhaps she was right.



Tennis Court Ward 1915

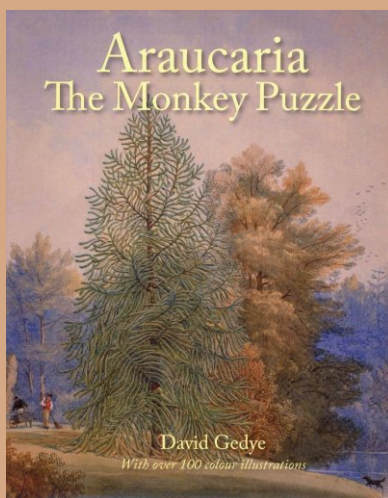
Now, as we struggle to recover from the 2020 pandemic, are the stresses between medical care (the science) and parochial care (welfare and mental health) uncanny echoes of this unfortunate conflict?

# A Touch of Frost at Dropmore

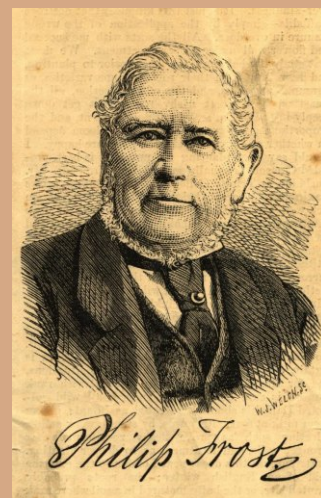
David Roderick



The Author



The Book



Philip Frost

The Gardener's Chronicle 1875

Philip Frost's name is synonymous with Dropmore, once a "bleak and barren" estate acquired in 1792 by Lord William Grenville with the aim of making it a horticultural heaven.

Frost (1804-1887) trained at Dropmore, Kenwood and the Chelsea Physic Garden before being summoned back to Dropmore in December 1832 to become its Head Gardener, a position he held for over 54 years under Grenville, his widow Anne and their nephew George Fortescue's wife Louisa. Each relied heavily on Frost's knowledge and pioneering vision, not least for nurturing three species brought from the Americas.

Archibald Menzies first documented *Pseudotsuga menziesii* in 1791 on Canada's Vancouver Island. David Douglas sent seeds to the Horticultural Society of London (HSoL) from which Frost grew the tree which in 1841 became the first home-grown Douglas fir to set cones, the source of further trees he planted in Dropmore's pinetum. That same year, at its Chiswick Show, the HSoL awarded Frost its Silver Banksian Medal for being first to successfully germinate seeds of the Chilean plant *Triptilion spinosum* and get it to flower. But it was for the *Araucaria imbricata* that Frost was truly feted. Menzies grew six Monkey Puzzle trees from seed and brought them to Kew from Chile in 1795. An early cutting from one was planted at Dropmore in 1824, possibly by the teenage Frost. Two further Monkey Puzzles were gifted to Grenville. The HSoL donated one in 1826 and King William IV sent another from Kew in 1830. In Frost's care, the 1826 tree grew to be a most magnificent specimen by which all others came to be judged. It was painted for Lady Grenville in 1850 by William Richardson.

Frost's Golden Jubilee as a gardener was marked by Dropmore in 1872 with the planting of a *Juniperus japonica alba* and by fellow horticulturalists at a complimentary dinner in Salisbury where his achievements were toasted. Friends and admirers presented him with a silver cup engraved with his *Araucaria* and Douglas fir and an annuity purchased with 200 guineas collected by public subscription. In December 1882, his Diamond Jubilee was marked by the dedication to him of Volume 22 of the magazine, *The Garden*. He was buried by St Mary's Church, Hitcham.

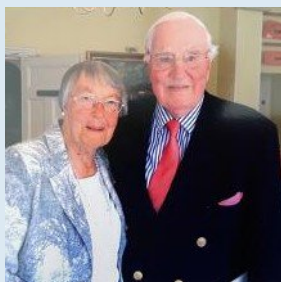
I was aged ten when I first heard of my great-great-grandfather Philip Frost and twenty when I inherited from my grandmother her photographs of him standing beside his trees at Dropmore. In 1969, by coincidence, I started my working life in High Wycombe and determined to research Frost's famous trees. It wasn't easy. For years, Dropmore remained inaccessible, an abandoned estate going to wrack and ruin. However, thanks to the Hitcham & Taplow Society and its interest in the restoration of the house and grounds, I finally gained access in July 2007. From this seed has grown a book, *Araucaria – The Monkey Puzzle*, which tells how this iconic tree came to Europe and how those at Dropmore became the most renowned of the 19th Century.

Priced at £25 plus £5 P&P, orders for the book can be sent to me at [orakariapress@gmail.com](mailto:orakariapress@gmail.com). All profit from sales of this unique book is donated to the International Conifer Conservation Programme to support its work to ensure the survival of Monkey Puzzles.

*David Gedye of Bluntisham, Cambridgeshire*

# Remembering the Grelliers

Frances Grellier



Helen (née Florence Helen Brindle, 1930-2020) and Aley (1927-2020) lived in Taplow for 63 years. Known and loved by so many whose lives they enriched, they died in April within three weeks of each other.

She hailed from Yorkshire, he from Sydenham. Naturally, Aley went to the nearby Alleyn's School before being evacuated. They met whilst undergraduates at Oxford – he read PPE at Trinity, she History at Somerville – where her middle name was first used. Who knew Helen was with MI5 before they married in 1953? Four years later, they settled at Victoria Cottage in the High Street where their children, Frances and Jonathan, grew up and thrived.

Helen was first and foremost an educator. After teaching at Cliveden's CRX Hospital, she became Headmistress and *tour de force* (1971-1993) of St Nicolas' School which fortunately had been saved from burning down in 1965 by Jonathan's keen eye and Aley's quick thinking. Aley was also an educator, lecturing in graduate management training at the Road Transport Institute Training Board until taking early retirement to help Helen with school social and charity events and by officiating on sports days and playing the piano at assemblies and a shepherd on school trips. Helen's vision and Aley's support positively impacted generations of pupils, of which I am only one.

When I started at St Nic's as a shy five-year-old, little did I know that Mrs Grellier, and later her husband, would be part of my life for half-a-century as our paths crossed at village parties, church fetes and in Sainsbury's fruit and veg aisle. I was never her star pupil, but she made me feel that way. She instilled in me a love of history and a tenacity so valuable in my own educational adventure which culminated in 1998 with a PhD from Duke University, USA. Helen, I couldn't have done it without your enduring encouragement.

It wasn't only the children of Taplow who experienced the Grelliers' devotion to the community. Helen served the St Nicolas' Parochial Church Council, the Women's Voluntary Service and, not least, by single-

handedly defending the Rec from a traveller invasion, the Taplow & Hitcham Recreation Ground Association. Aley's contribution was convivial. He was immensely proud to have rowed in the 1950 Head of the River Race, to be elected to the elite Leander Club to delight in a lifetime of rowing, regattas and entertaining family and friends at Henley, and that Jonathan followed in his wake as a GB Junior. This publisher's daughter remembers the Society benefitting from Aley's experience as a trade journalist for Morris Motors. He edited this Newsletter in the 1980s, modernised its format and made Number 56 the first to be folio-bound.



Sheila Horton / Todd-White



Jonathan Grellier

In retirement, Helen, Aley and my parents became great friends attending art galleries, the theatre, book launches and Cumberland Lodge discussion groups together. They became fond friends of mine too, although it was hard to bring myself to think of Mrs Grellier as Helen. Almost 20 years ago now, my husband James and I shared the dance floor with them at our wedding. How wonderful was that? I loved Aley's art, his conversation, his humour, but most especially his beautiful devotion to Helen. I feel so fortunate to have known and admired my primary school headmistress and her loving husband for so long. I miss them both.

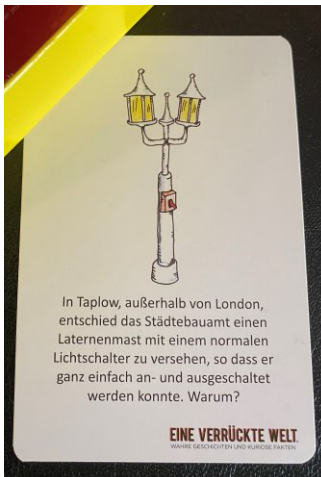
*Roisin Lakings (née Lawrence)  
of Denver, Colorado, USA*

# Lincoln's End

Remembering Lincoln Lee

## Crazy World

Corinna Harder



German author Corinna Harder is writing a book called *True Stories* (target release Spring 2021). She knows of a card game called *EINE VERRÜCKTE WELT* (*A Crazy World*) that includes a card which on one side says: "In Taplow, outside of London, the city planning office decided to provide a lamp-

post with a normal light switch so that it could easily be switched on and off. Why?" And on the other: "Lovers often visited a certain alley and wanted to remain undetected, so they smashed the lamp to darken the alley. At some point the town planning office was tired of constantly repairing the streetlamp and attached the switch so that the lovers could switch off the light without destroying the lamp". Corinna wants to know if this is true, and where the lamp-post might be. Can anyone shed any light on the matter?

## Crazy Words

Newsletter 113 mused on how Corona evolved from a fizzy drink to be a beer and a deadly virus. This set Lincoln's End thinking. Once 2020 meant excellent vision or abbreviated cricket. Now it will be remembered as The Year of COVID-19 (actually, SARS-CoV-2) and The Age of Algorithm (not the reincarnation as a rapper of a former USA VP). Now everyone knows we need R below One and that PPE can be either a degree in Philosophy, Politics & Economics or the Personal Protective Equipment essential to care safely for infectious patients.

## Tales of Taplow

Churchwardens Hilary Monaghan and Tony Bridge are telling tales. Their colourful new look at the history of Taplow is available for £10 in aid of St Nicolas' Church.



Hilary Monaghan & Tony Bridge

Packs of Taplow Christmas Cards (with envelopes) are also for sale:

*Taplow Village Green in the Snow* by local artist Ann King (148mm x 210mm): five for £3.50  
*St Nicolas' Church stained glass windows* (99mm x 210mm): eight for £5

For details, see <http://st-nicolas-taplow.org/> or contact [tony.bridge@gmail.com](mailto:tony.bridge@gmail.com)

Books and cards can be delivered locally or bought at the Church or Taplow Rectory. Books are also available at The Oak & Saw.



Ann King

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Unless otherwise stated, the views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Society or its Committee.

The Newsletter is published by the Hitcham and Taplow Society.

Prepared for printing by Andrew Findlay using Scribus, Linux, and The Gimp

Printed by Gpex