

HITCHAM & TAPLOW

PRESERVATION SOCIETY

NEWS LETTER NO. 1.

MAY 1960.

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At the time of issuing this report there are 90 members of the Society. Whilst this is considered very satisfactory since the Society has only been in existence for some five months, it is hoped that the membership will continue to grow. A large membership is essential to give the Committee a substantial backing and it is therefore hoped that each member will do his best to persuade some of his friends to join.

A form of membership is enclosed and a 2nd copy of the News Letter.

The annual subscription is 2/- (or whatever larger sum Members feel they can pay).

The Society is now affiliated to the Council for the Preservation of Rural England.

Since the Society was formed last January the Committee has met regularly. Almost from the outset problems arose which were tackled as promptly and as energetically as possible.

These matters are dealt with in greater detail as follows:-

1. Poplar Farm Gravel Extraction

For the benefit of members who may not be fully conversant with the facts we would say that the Poplar Farm land, now being dug, was sold by the farmer to the Contractors and we understand the farmer holds an option agreement to re-purchase the land at the end of the operation. We do not know the particulars of this agreement, but it is obvious that the danger point will arise at that juncture.

Our attitude to this operation is quite straightforward and clear. Whilst we believe that Poplar Farm land ought not to have been planned for gravel, we must accept the position, and we do not wish to delay the operation - rather the reverse. However, we were successful in obtaining from the Contractor a promise not to work the dreadfully noisy Caterpillar on Sundays (its work was well ahead of the digging).

We would suggest that each householder who feels that damage might occur to his property should get in touch with the Secretary of the Society:-
Mr. J. M. Taylor, Mullion Cottage, Hitcham Road.

We are determined to expose all infringements of the Conditions laid down by the County Council as a part of the planning permission. One such infringement is now the subject of an exchange of letters with the Chairman of the County Council Planning Committee. The conditions clearly state that extraction must not exceed 10 ft., yet anyone visiting the site during March and April would have seen that there were holes quite twice this depth. We have no objection to the deeper digging, provided that the overburden (useless for the purpose of road-making) is replaced to give a final net depth of 10 ft., BUT we are strongly of the opinion that formal permission to dig deeper ought to have been given before the action was taken. The Conditions will be brought into contempt if they are allowed to be broken in this casual way, and the action condoned. Yet the simple action of formalising the matter has not been taken by the County Council authorities. In our view, if the conditions can be so lightly disregarded once, the same can happen again, and the essential ones which make the ground suitable for agriculture again may be ignored. This is our chief concern. We shall continue to press for a new set of Conditions to regularise the situation, and indeed we have obtained a new plan showing the revised 'order and method of working', which enables us to keep track of the situation.

We shall continue to do everything in our power to see that the Poplar Farm area is re-sown and returned to agriculture within the 18 months (from October 1st, 1959) as promised by the County Council.

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2. Council Houses in Taplow

The proposed building on the field known to many as the Taplow Horse Show field seems to us to be a gross breach of the Plan for the area. It is certainly a violation of the Green Belt. We are far from convinced that the houses are required on a site so far from shops and transport, nor do we think that such a high density is at all reasonable, (no less than 38 residential units, with garages, on 2.76 acres).

The Bucks. C.C. Planning Committee claims that this is not a major alteration from the planning map, and the Ministry has supported the Council. As the Executors of the late owner of the ground, Mr. Newton, have agreed to the sale, a public enquiry is doubtful so opposition must take the form of protests.

The Society has lodged a vigorously worded protest with the Ministry. A letter expressing its views has been sent to Mr. Ronald Bell, our M.P. and a sympathetic reply has been received. Furthermore, Sir Keith Joseph, the Parliamentary Secretary, has been reminded by a member of the Society of his promises in the House to preserve the Green Belt.

We shall continue this barrage of protest. Should it lead to an Enquiry (we are not optimistic), we shall be represented, and we hope to have the assistance of the C.P.R.E. If all fails, we shall hope to influence the architecture of the estate. If you want to see what we are hoping to avoid, look at the new council houses in Eton Wick.

3. Taplow Recreation Grounds Association

Some of our members may be interested in the story of this working, next door to the W.l. hut in which our Society was formed, and from which gravel is to be extracted.

Older residents will remember the wartime barbed wire dump. When this was finally cleared away the site was rescued from becoming a caravan ground by the action of some local people, who lent some £1,000. interest-free for the purchase. The Association of Residents thus formed to manage the site registered themselves as a Charity, and borrowed more money from the Bank to make the playing fields we now see there. But there were no funds to clear the scrub at the East end nor to manage the derelict 5 acres at the West.

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They have now negotiated a contract with the County Council and have sold the gravel under this 5 acres. With the proceeds they hope to pay off the debts, and also, we understand, to-

- (a) level and sow the whole area (this is a part of the contract and has the force of law - the Conditions must be observed).
- (b) plant the east end of the area with trees and shrubs, and to make it open to Hitcham and Taplow residents.
- (c) give a strip of ground along Boundary Road to the C.C. for a footpath.
- (d) lay out further playing fields.
- (e) build huts for the Scouts and the Guides (These are the only buildings planned).

We regard this as a great improvement of an area which has been squalid ground.

4. Other Action

Your Committee will welcome suggestions from members of ways in which we can take early action to preserve local amenities.

Annual Meeting

We plan to hold this in the Autumn, when we shall, of course, present a full account of our work. There will be opportunity for discussion, and we shall try to arrange for a representative of the Local Authority to be present to answer questions.