

HITCHAM AND TAPLOW
PRESERVATION SOCIETY

NEWS LETTER NO.24

SPRING, 1972

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OFFICERS

At the Annual General Meeting in October:-

Dr. M.A.T. Rogers was elected to the vacant position of President.

Mr. C.I. Snow was elected as Chairman in succession to Mr. B. Durham.

As mentioned in our last Newsletter, Mr. R. Sneyd will be unable to continue as Secretary beyond 1972. We have not yet been successful in our search for a new member of our Committee to assist Mr. Sneyd as Deputy Secretary with a view to becoming Secretary in due course, and would be most grateful for any suggestions. Meanwhile we thank Mrs. D.L. Lines most sincerely for her help with typing.

CURRENT EVENTS REPORTED PREVIOUSLY.

DROPMORE.

Little was heard until very recently, when a planning application for a change of use to offices was followed within a few days by another for use as a residential College. The former was rejected and the latter is under consideration by the Eton Rural District Council. Very recently the sale for private use has been reported in the Press, but the name of the buyer has not been revealed.

WARREN'S WAREHOUSE, MILL LANE.

The rejection of the appeal against the closure notice has been reported in the local Press.

COMMON LAND

We have regretfully conceded the withdrawal on a technicality of our proposed registration of two areas on Green Common Lane. Our other registrations remain.

NEW ITEMS

ODDS FARM, WOOBURN COMMON.

We have written to the Eton Rural District Council regretting that prior use should lead to the retention of caravans in this area of Green Belt, and hoping that conditions will be attached to any planning consent to ensure that the caravans will be brought together, well screened and properly managed.

TAPLOW COURT.

An application has been made for permission to demolish existing buildings and erect a two storey block of laboratories. This will alter the appearance from Cliveden Road, but the new buildings and their surroundings seem to be carefully planned and if well constructed should lead to a satisfactory result.

SPRINGFIELD

Parts of the outlying buildings of Springfield on Berry Hill are being renewed and there is a proposal to replace the main house with residences of a comparable floor area. After making some enquiries, your Committee have concluded that this could improve the appearance of the site.

HILL FARM, TAPLOW.

The new owner of Hill Farm has sold several of the fields and now no longer requires the older barns east of the house. He has, therefore, applied for permission to convert them into a residence with garages and stabling.

These buildings, however, lie in the Green Belt in which residential development can only be permitted in very special circumstances. They are visible from Taplow High Street and neighbouring houses and so could become a prominent eyesore if they are not maintained or demolished.

Your Committee expressed the view to the Eton Rural District Council that these circumstances were special and that residential development here would be preferable to industrial. If residential development were allowed, conditions should be attached to ensure that this case would not create a precedent and that the character be preserved of the buildings as a whole.

SKINDLES HOTEL CAR PARK.

Concern was expressed by the residents in Mill Lane lest the spinney which screens them from Skindles Hotel Car Park might be felled during the developments then in hand. A letter was, therefore, sent to the Eton Rural District Council supporting a proposal that a Tree Preservation Order be applied.

In reply we were informed that the developers are not now intending to go ahead with their original proposals and will be submitting a further proposal for car parking and landscaping.

SKINDLES GARAGE.

Application for permission to rebuild on the existing site include the erection of two large illuminated advertising signs. We are objecting to these on the grounds that they would be unsuitable in an area of Green Belt and could be distracting to motorists near the bridge.

FOOTPATHS.

We have found that the footpath by the Hedsor Sawmills has not been registered. Steps are being taken to correct this.

BERKSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

In view of the interest aroused in Boundaries by the Bill now passing through Parliament, we are most grateful to Mrs. R. Ibbetson for the following study of the history of our western boundary.

THE COUNTY BOUNDARY.

The Royal Commission has reported, the Parliamentary recommendations have been made, and, suddenly we are aware that the old order is threatened. There is a conflict between natural sentiments and the needs of administration that must be resolved. We realise that counties are not just areas on a map contained by lines called 'boundaries' but the places in which we live, with familiar views, lanes, fields, buildings and institutions. These divisions of the land have three main aspects, historical, geographical, and administrative.

Here in Bucks. it is the Thames that we might lose. Enquiries at the County Record Office produced no certain information of a definite decision that this geographical feature should mark the county limit. We asked Colonel Palmer of Dorney and in a most interesting reply he says:

" So far as I know the R. Thames has been the county Boundary for 1,000 years or more and no good reason has yet been produced for changing it.."

The Parish of Dorney is part of Bucks. and wishes to remain so. Furthermore we wish to retain our separate identity and are averse to amalgamation with an adjoining Parish. Above all we do not wish to be absorbed by Slough...."

In a quick search in the Library through books on local history in "Roman Influences in the Middle Thames Valley", by Luke Over, we read that even in A.D. 43 during the period when Britain was inhabited and governed by the Belgae, the kingdoms naturally divided and were ruled separately, north and south of the Thames.

With reference to its actual position Colonel Palmer tells us:

"Except for one or two spots the County Boundary was the centre of the R. Thames and within Dorney my Family owned up to this boundary."

According to the Ordnance Survey the line runs up the centre of the River until it passes under Maidenhead Railway Bridge where it swings over to the Bucks. bank and continues along this side, cutting off the Skindles bridgehead but leaving the gasworks and paper mill in this county. Boulter's and the other islands are in Berkshire. Local tradition has it that Berkshire was conceded this bridgehead to accommodate a toll house as they paid for the construction of the Bridge. Perhaps a search through the Quarter Session Records would verify this.

Among the books on local geography was a paper, "The Geomorphology of a Part of the Middle Thames", read by Prof. F. Kenneth Hare to the Geologists' Association (1947).

He examines the gravel terraces of our area, ".....a belt of drift covered country that lies north of the Thames between the Wye and Colne confluences...". These descend in steps to the Flood Plain, the last one being the Taplow Terrace stretching from Taplow towards Langley.

It appears that the bed of the Thames had moved during the ice ages from near Watford to its present position and in the process laid down the gravel stratas that have left us with mineral diggings and an environmental problem that requires national administration.

There is an excellent map showing the sweep of the Terraces and the Recent Valleys, among them the blocked one of Taplow and that of Lent Rise, from which point it is still possible to see the geographical features and to mark the contours of some of the spread as the Taplow Terrace slopes to the Flood Plain.

From the physical nature of the terrain could have developed the political divisions of the long parishes of Taplow, Hitcham, and Burnham. One of our members has an old map where these are marked. Within each the parishioners were able to find various natural resources that they needed. Colonel Palmer informs us:

"The present civil Parish of Burnham contains what was once a detached portion of the ecclesiastical Parish of Dorney, including, of course Dorney Wood. The whole of this area was owned by my Family together with other substantial lands in the ecclesiastical Parish of Burnham. It was part of the Dorney Court estate and was so managed. There was no such thing as Local Government as you know it to-day."

"In a lease of Great Dell and Cold Harbour of 4th March, 1767, the tenant was allowed to dig chalk, brick earth, pot earth, clay and sand and to sell it on condition that he set up a kiln. The timber was reserved to the landlord."

"Timber, coppice, and furze, were managed on a commercial basis."

Professor Hare in describing the Flood Plain states:

"...The surface consists of low, gravelly hummocks called eyots, with

On the life and use of the river Colonel Palmer writes:
"The River was a highway and bulk loads such as coal for Dorney Court were brought by barge to the end of the "Barge Path".

"There was a ford near Queen's Eyot and another at Boveney, but these have been dredged away for the steamers. There was a ferry to Monkey Island and another to Bray. Except for isolated pubs opposite the two fords there was nothing to go to Berkshire for. Otherwise the toll bridges at Windsor and Maidenhead were used. Business was mainly in Windsor where the brewers were bankers. At one time a substantial area of Dorney was owned by the Dean and Canons of St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle".

In the past the third aspect, 'administrative', has been a mixture of duties between the ecclesiastical and the civil authorities. From Colonel Palmer we learn:

"the chapel of St. Mary Magdalene in the Liberty of Boveney was a Chapel of Ease of Burnham Church. Births, marriages, etc., were recorded in Burnham Parish Record. The Liberty had various detached portions. It has now been broken up and the main part is now in the civil Parish of Dorney with other parts in Eton Urban District and Burnham Parish".

"In Dorney proper and in Boveney, land was owned and farmed on the open field strip system and everyone's holdings were intermingled. Hence the importance of the Manor Courts".

"Dorney and Boveney were liable to annual flooding of the River Thames until this century - the last great flood being in 1947. Flood banks were built and maintained under the order of the Manor Courts and in normal years were effective. With the decay of the Courts these banks became breached".

"Before the Thames Conservancy appeared, certain islands were protected by piles which broke up the water flow. These islands were let by my Family to fishermen who were responsible for the piles".

If left to 'natural sentiments' it is inborn in us to mark out and defend our territory, but changing times force us to reconsider 'administration'. It is nothing new for national authorities to cross over county boundaries. In the County Record Office is a map (1793) of a proposed canal to be dug from Taplow Mill to Isleworth. It appears to have been superceded before it was started by the 19th century railways; while in this century the motorways span our land and the flightpaths to the huge airports streak our skies.

Planning is no panacea but it provides a brake and helps to foresee some of the conflicts of interest that can occur. Slough is a modern development and still not absorbed into the County. It came with the railways. Eton College objected to having the trains too near, so they stopped at Slough, and its station is the most attractive an original architectural composition that the town has. At the end of the First World War the Trading Estate introduced industry into what had been an agricultural area and covered some of the best land in the Thames Valley. It created work at a time of unemployment but brought its labour from the depressed areas away from their own native counties. It encouraged domestic development over the surrounding countryside to provide homes and shops. But, unlike Letchworth in Hertfordshire, Ebenezer Howard's planned Garden City, it was a piecemeal solution.

There has to be a balance between national and local duties and interests, and the 'Report on Diocesan Boundaries in London and the South-East 1965/7', deals with a similar situation within the Church.

In Chapter XI are recommendations for the Oxford Diocese. The report noted that the Boundary Commission on Local Government was still sitting, but on its own findings writes under 'General Principles':

".....We have received much evidence in support of the view that, wherever possible, diocesan boundaries should coincide with county boundaries, and rural deaneries with district boundaries: Almost everybody knows in which county he lives and there is quite a large element of county loyalty which has its roots deep in history....."

May we trust that due consideration by the final authority be given to this real attachment and that the county boundaries are respected for what they have grown to mean to man, while solutions to national problems are looked at each in its own context.