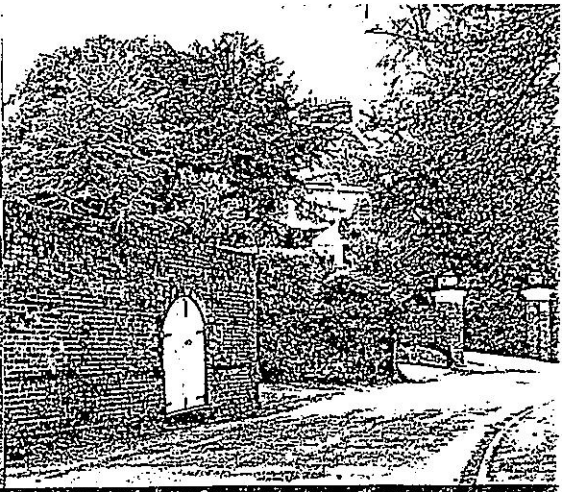


HIPS



NEWSLETTER

NO 37
spring 1979

HITCHAM & TAPLOW PRESERVATION SOCIETY

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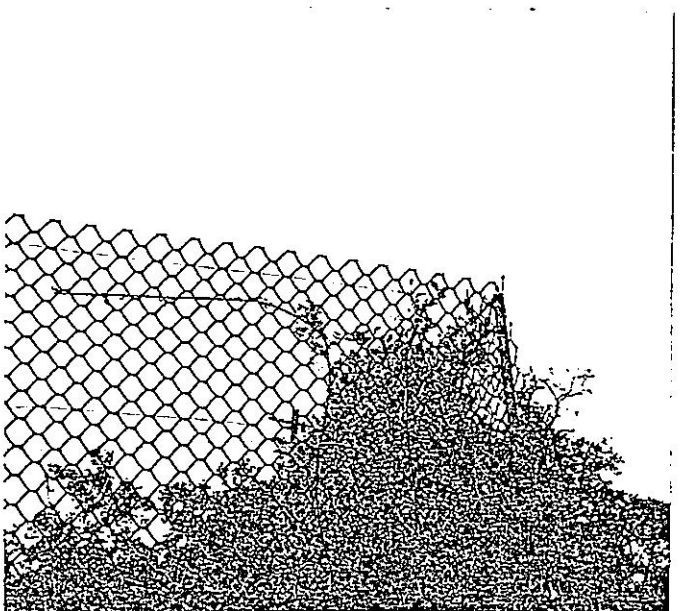
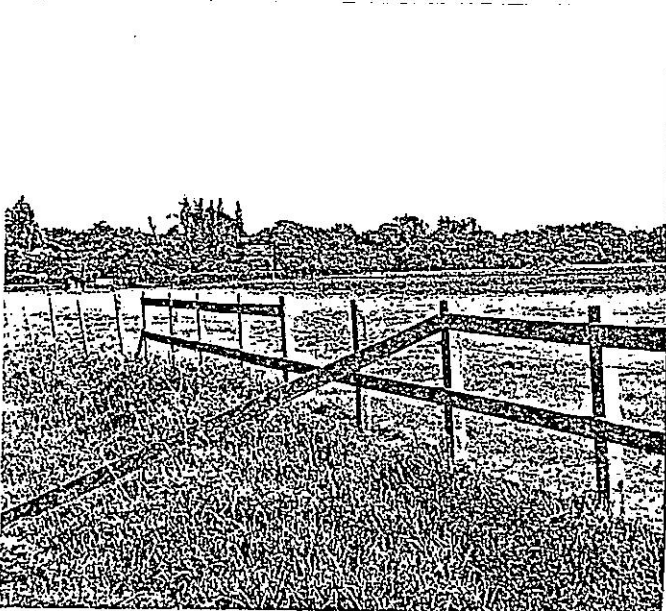
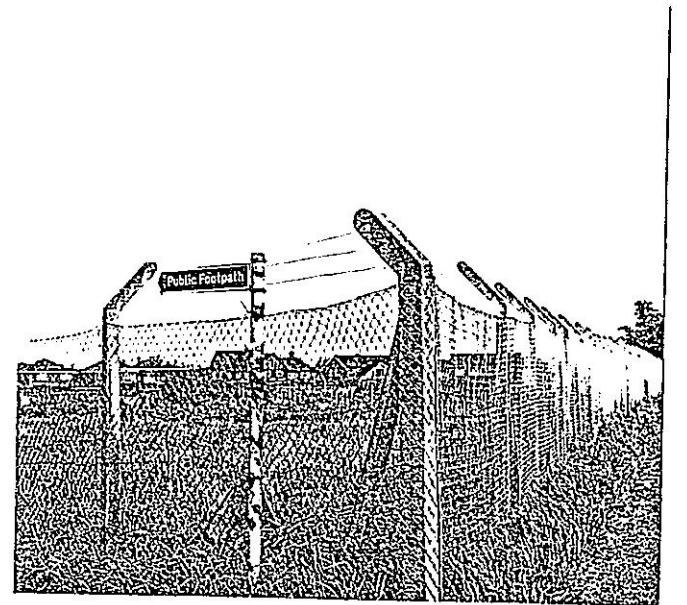
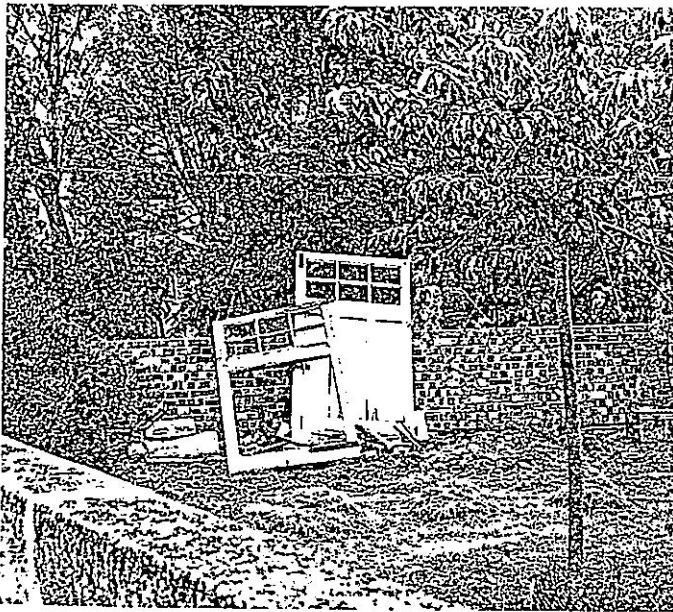
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SIX WELL KNOWN BEAUTY SPOTS
CAN YOU IDENTIFY THEM ?



EDITORIAL

Over recent months a number of important issues have arisen, needless to say gravel extraction has played a prominent role in the affairs of the Society. Gravel extraction is covered more fully in this newsletter. The newsletter also provides an opportunity to express a few thoughts on Taplow and its environs.

The major planning and amenity issues we are involved with tend to obscure the small everyday changes taking place around us. Many of us fail to notice them as we drive to and from work. However an observant walk around Hitcham and Taplow will uncover a variety of things occurring. For instance :

- loss of trees and the modest scale of replanting
- removal of hedgerows and the erection of crude wire fencing
- broken fencing and gates
- removal of traditional brick garden walls
- erection of temporary structures and garden sheds
- the condition of footpaths
- the creeping municipalisation of the village character
- general litter and lack of maintenance

Bring all these items into focus and they contribute significantly to the deterioration in the quality of the local environment. The lack of care, maintenance, and neglect is very evident. It is worth mentioning that since Dutch Elm disease took hold in the late 60's 15.5 million elm trees have died, and many other species are being hit by disease. In addition to the loss of trees, an astonishing 2500 miles of hedgerow are torn up every year.

One of the principal objectives of this Society is 'the securing of protection from disfigurement or injury the countryside and amenities of the parishes of Hitcham and Taplow.' There have been suggestions that the aims of the Society as conceived at present are too narrow, and that it should widen its vision. This will be debated at the next AGM. Meanwhile a stroll around can only lead you to conclude that the Society's principal objective is not being realised.

This is intended to be not only a comment but a plea. A plea to people who live in and care about their environment, to look at it closely and see for themselves the changes which are taking place.

Hitcham and Taplow is not in deep rural countryside, but trapped between the outer fringe of London and the increasingly urbanised Berkshire over the Thames. The pocket of protected landscape in which Taplow sits is particularly vulnerable. It will be increasingly so in the future. The open land around us will be subject to development pressure, not only for housing but for sporting and recreational uses as well. The Countryside Commission is examining ways in which 'fringe metropolitan green belt' can be utilised more fully for leisure purposes. This of course was one of the aims of green belt legislation - to allow the countryside to be used by people who reside in the conurbations.

The Society has contributed to and won victories in the fight to protect our environment. Local opinion is aware of the need to be vigilant against development pressures in the green belt, pressure to extract more gravel, and pressure to change the character of the village and its surrounding landscape.

One has to make sure that Hitcham and Taplow is worth protecting. If the present trend continues it may be difficult to convince others that it is.

BARGE FARM INQUIRY

In July 1976 Messrs William Boyer & Son submitted an application for permission to extract gravel from 45 acres of Barge Farm Taplow very similar to the earlier one rejected on Appeal in 1967. Bucks County Council rejected the application early in 1977, and an Appeal was lodged by William Boyer.

Taplow Parish Council instructed Mr. Raymond Tetlow, to represent them at the appeal, and to co-ordinate the evidence of other Parish Councils and Amenity bodies. Mr. Tetlow pointed out to the Department of the Environment that Bucks CC were preparing a new Minerals Subject Plan, which would be most important for any consideration of the need for gravel; the Department therefore postponed the Inquiry until this plan became available. It was issued in September 1978 and suggested 27 'preferred areas' in South Bucks for mineral extraction. Barge Farm was not one of these areas.

The inquiry into Barge Farm took place in February of this year. The proceedings opened with two changes to the proposal:

(1) The entrance to Marsh Lane would be placed opposite to the most northerly houses in Marsh Lane rather than South of the double bend opposite Devils Lane. The top of Marsh Lane would be strengthened and the junction with the A4 improved. This proposal had been agreed by the Highways authorities of the Bucks County Council.

(2) The site would be worked in strips rather than blocks, so infilling could follow extraction and the land be restored progressively as the work proceeded.

Boyers Counsel introduced their case by arguing that the need for gravel had increased over the last ten years, whilst there had been great improvement in methods of restoring land to agricultural use. He claimed that Boyers had had valuable experience in restoring land, and the site at Colnbrook was given as an example with Derek Boyer claiming that it was in better condition now than before extraction. An agricultural expert agreed that the Barge Farm land was of high agricultural value.

The County Council claimed their draft plan offered enough free land to meet demand. An agricultural expert also said there was no evidence that high quality agricultural land could be effectively restored, and Messrs Boyers record in this field was far from impressive.

The County Council's solicitor asked for the application to be rejected because of the damage that would be done to the rural and residential amenity, because it would be a precedent for further extraction in the area, because other land in South Bucks could be extracted with less damage, because of the loss of agricultural land and because none of Marsh Lane was suitable for lorry traffic.

On behalf of the Preservation Society, Richard Nutt portrayed the attractive landscape with the aid of his superb large colour prints: Anthony Paines, Chairman of Taplow Parish Council and a Vice-President of the Society emphasised the importance of Barge Farm to the narrow Green Belt corridor between Maidenhead and Slough.

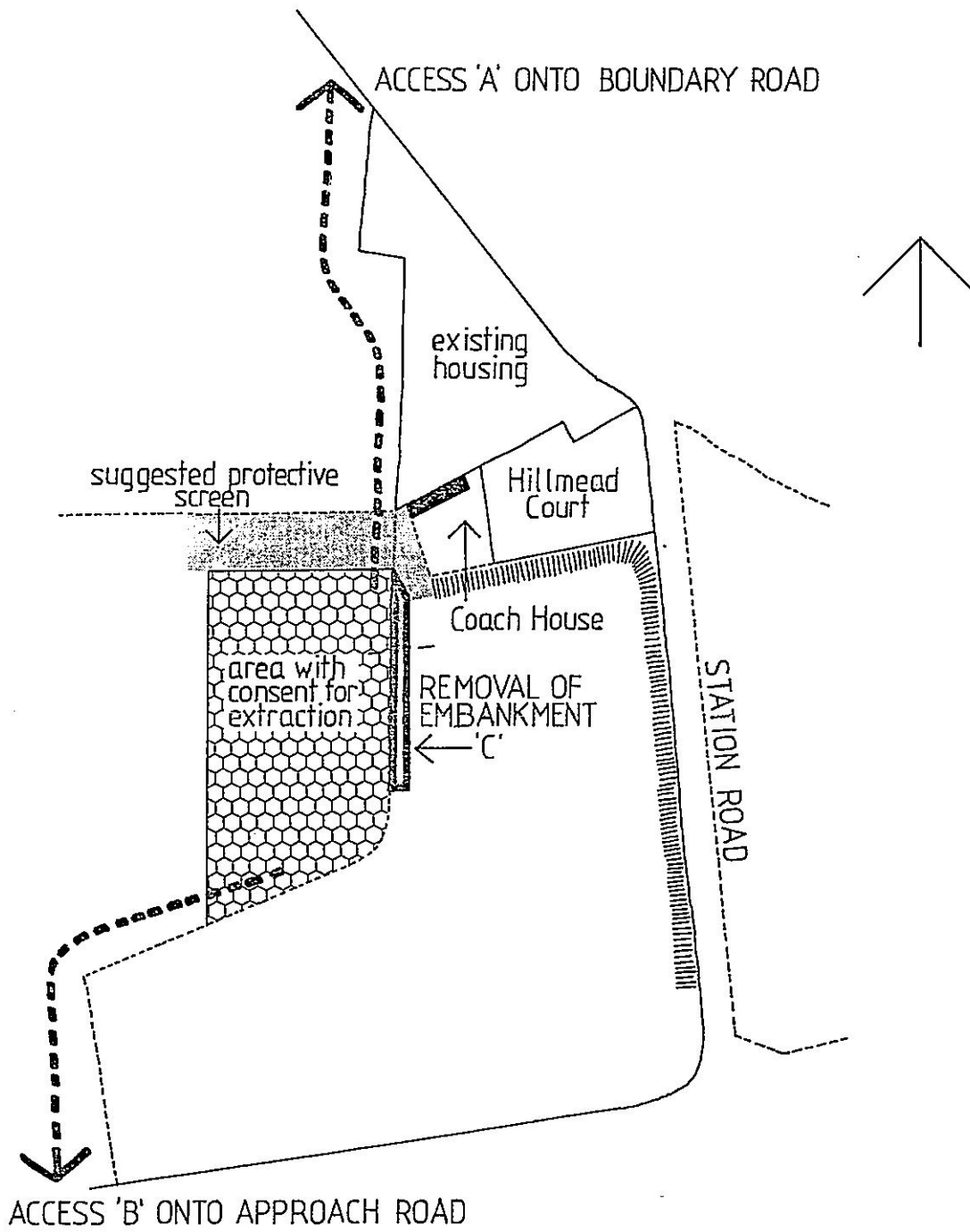
Over 550 residents in and around Marsh Lane said they all opposed the appeal, and their representative Jonathan Barker said 'if it were approved neither we nor our children would see the end of it'.

David Shott of Dorney Parish Council said the area from Dorney northwards to the A4 is the only remaining part of the Thames flood plain in the district which retained its historic landscape; much of this is owned by gravel companies and would be endangered if this Appeal was granted. This view was supported by the Maidenhead and District Civic Society. The Chairman of Bray Parish Council, pointed out the danger to the attractive backcloth to Bray and to the houses along the river bank which commercial activity would destroy, and the Chairman of Bray Preservation Society, emphasised the importance of protecting valuable agricultural land and the environmental value to Bray of Barge Farm.

Eight other organisations, including Berkshire County Council and Beaconsfield District Council had written opposing the Appeal.

Overall it seemed that the argument was evenly balanced. In the view of this Society it was unfortunate of the County Highways Authority to concede the proposed access before their own solicitor gave evidence. However, all in Taplow and its neighbourhood can be satisfied that their case was very well presented.

The Minister's decision is expected near the end of this year.



BERRY HILL FARM GRAVEL

Many people will have noticed the small gravel working that has been started on the Farmland behind the new Hillmead block of flats. They may be surprised that this operation has started without, apparently, any prior warning.

Planning permission for this was first submitted by Messrs Stevens in 1956 and was refused. It was then the subject of an appeal in 1957 which was successful. The original application was approved with a number of conditions appended. Most people thought the permission had lapsed, but due to the interpretation of planning laws in relation to mineral extraction it is still current. It is therefore perfectly legal for the extraction to take place and neither the Society nor anybody else can do anything about it.

The diagram opposite shows the site.

The Summerlease Gravel Company who are working the site have put in 3 related planning applications; two of these are for revised means of access - the original access was to be at the junction of Approach Road and Station Garage Taplow; one is in the North East corner of the field onto Boundary Road (access A) and the other is in the South West corner of the field onto Approach Road (access B). Your Society has objected to both of these thinking that the original access was a better one but, if this is not possible, we have favoured access B so as not to disturb the inhabitants of Hillmead and the nearby houses on Boundary Road.

The third application is to remove the tree lined embankment (shown as C on the plan) on the East side of the site. The line of trees standing on the embankment would have very little chance of survival once gravel extraction starts. They would manage to keep very little water near their roots. We have therefore suggested to the County Council that the removal of this embankment be permitted, provided a substantial screen of trees is planted to the Northern & Western sides of the site as required by one of the original ten conditions, and also on condition that a protective triangle of land on the North East corner is left unworked and is landscaped by the gravel company.

The Society, as local residents will know, has also distributed a number of leaflets suggesting that they should write in personally objecting to the northern access 'A'. The planning authority will be considering these applications in June of this year.

MEMBERSHIP

The Society is a forum where local opinion on matters affecting our environment can be voiced, and it is important, particularly when evidence is presented at an enquiry, to show the firm base from which our comment stems.

The Society has produced a small brochure outlining the objects of the Society and some of the projects that have been tackled. The Committee hope that membership can be increased substantially over the next six months and the brochures and application forms have recently been widely distributed by the Committee to non-members.

Would you please help as well by trying to recruit at least one new member using the enclosed brochure and application form.

TAPLOW PERAMBULATION

On Sunday June 10, weather permitting, a walk in Taplow and Hitcham will be conducted by Paul Lampitt of Cedar Chase. This will start at the Taplow Reading Room at 2.30pm and will make use of the areas footpaths and bridleways. Stout shoes are advised. The walk will not be more than five miles. No calls will be made for refreshments, so please bring your own.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Society's AGM will be held on October 26 1979 so please make a note. We are going to make it a more social affair this year by providing wine and light refreshments. As well as the formal business of the Society we also hope to have a lively discussion.