

HITCHAM and TAPLOW PRESERVATION SOCIETY



OPENING TAPLOW MOUND in OCTOBER 1883
(Courtesy of British Museum)

NEWSLETTER No 46 AUTUMN 1983

HITCHAM AND TAPLOW PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Officers and Committee Members

President	Mr Leonard Miall, OBE.
Vice Presidents	Mrs E Law, Mrs G L Milne, Mr A J G Paines, Mr E F J Perkins.
Chairman	Mr A Hickman, Allington Cottage, Hill Farm Road, Taplow.
Vice Chairman	Mr R J Hanbury, Hitcham Tithes Barn, Burnham.
Secretary	Mr R G R Nutt, Lea Rig, Hitcham Road, Burnham.
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Committee	Colonel S J Dagg, Mrs H Lee, Miss G G Pollock, Professor Eva Ricketts (Retd.) Messrs N B R C Peroni, E Pope, D Raeside & C I Snow.

EDITORIAL

Social Event.

Through the generosity of the management of the New Taplow Paper Mills, the Society enjoyed a very different evening in June. Some 90 members of the Society and friends heard one of the Directors of the Mills give an account of the history of milling at this site and later, in the splendid marquee beside the river, a delicious supper was served. Small groups were taken round the plant, and the staff patiently explained how the process is carried out. Many members were astonished to find out what went on in this corner of the village.

As a result of a nominal charge for tickets (topped up a little by the Society), a cheque for one hundred pounds was sent to the Thames Valley Adventure Playground, and the Management of the Mill made offers of scrap paper to further the artistic efforts of the pupils.

Warm thanks were sent to Mr & Mrs Stratton, Mr Kay and Mr Briggs and all the staff who went to so much trouble and gave their time to inform and entertain us.

A G M and the President's Supper

Enclosed with this Newsletter is the Notice for the A G M on Friday 21st October and details of the supper to be held afterwards in the Mialls' house to celebrate the Centenary of the Opening of the Taplow Mound.

If you want to attend the supper please complete the Proforma at the bottom of the Notice and send it in as quickly as possible; it will be first come first served if numbers have to be restricted.

New Blood

Shortly we are losing a number of members of the Committee including those who look after the money, scrutinise all the planning applications, edit this Newsletter and understudy the Chairman. Normally the committee only meets ten times a year but you would be expected to carry out a few other jobs in your spare time!

If you are interested, or would like to know more before you decide, please speak to one of the members - their names are shown above.

THE BUTTERFLIES OF ELIBANK HOUSE

(The writer of this Note, Mr Ted Wright, has had a life-long interest in Butterflies and lived in Elibank House from 1970-1979.)

The garden, when we came, was something of a wilderness but we kept some parts of it in that state, salving our consciences about untidiness with the thought that patches of wilderness provide excellent habitats for wild creatures.

After the limited butterfly fauna of East Yorkshire, the Thames Valley at Taplow soon showed its quality and all the regular 'garden' species were spotted in our first summer; from the early Brimstones emerging from hibernation with Small Tortoiseshells in March to the first hatch of Orange Tips with the other 'Whites, Small Green-veined and Large in the late spring. As summer came in we used to have first brood Commas, but the real glory of colour came in high-summer with Peacocks and Brimstones and then Red Admirals, second-brood Commas and the occasional Painted Lady right into autumn. They all loved the mauve flowers of the ordinary buddleia Davidii of which there were several big shrubs along the bottom boundary behind the wall along Rectory Road to attract them. At the end of the season, the Red Admirals took to sucking the juice of the fallen apples while the Commas preferred mauve Michaelmas Daisies and I once counted seven on a single clump.

The 'Browns' were surprisingly varied, including Ringlets, Wall Browns, Speckled Woods, Meadow Browns, Small Heaths and the occasional Hedge Brown or 'Gatekeeper' I suspect flying over from the Williams' next door. But, apart from Speckled Woods and Wall Browns, the habitat, as we tidied it up, became less congenial since their caterpillars mostly feed on grasses and like an undisturbed environment better than 'lawns'! The Speckled Woods especially found suitably shady habitats in the rather derelict thickets along the southern boundary and the old orchard to the east.

It was among the smaller species, however, that I had my few surprises. There were regular sorts of 'Skipper', the Large and the Small, both again grass feeders and evidently breeding along the rough banks round the tennis court. The Blues showed up well also, especially the Holly Blue which was common in most years with plenty of hollies and ivys as hosts. There were tiny breeding colonies of Common Blues and Small Coppers along the southern boundary. I cheated a bit by counting a stray Chalk Hill Blue by the roadside opposite the Oak and Saw in 1975 but never acutally saw one within the Elibank boundary.

One of the real surprises, however, was a White-Letter Hairstreak which must have flown down from its home in the high elm trees before the big ones round the cricket ground caught the plague and had to be cut down. Hairstreaks probably still survive, living off the elm saplings which grow from root-suckers even when the main trees have been killed. The other surprise was a Purple Hairstreak which I saw flying round the top of a Sycamore near where Elibank Court's gate now is and it stayed long enough for me to get my binoculars and make a postive identification as it rested with its wings folded to show the characteristic grey underside with a wavy band near the margin.

So that was the tally for those nine years of watching; twenty three species in the garden and another just outside. I always had my eyes open for other possibles like the Fritillaries or a Marbled White, or, of course, a Camberwell Beauty - after all someone found one sitting on the bumper of his car in one of the squares of West London a few years ago - but to no avail. The score here at Beaconsfield is similar; but we have yet to see a Purple Hairstreak or Hedge Brown although we saw one Marbled White last summer.

Of course, the message from this is that there is no need to kill butterflies in order to identify them. So many of our native kinds are struggling for survival as their habitats are destroyed that it is far better just to watch and record - and enjoy them. If anyone wants to pursue the study, the infallible book is the Collins Field Guide to the Butterflies of Britain and Europe by Higgins and Riley which is, of course, marvellous too for a Continental holiday; but there are simpler and cheaper books for starters, though none to equal Field Guide.

HEDSOR HOUSE

Situation

Probably most members of the Preservation Society will have seen the exterior of Hedsor House at some time or other. Set in 90 acres of park, woodland and formal gardens near the house, it occupies a commanding position on a headland overlooking the Thames, but is not readily visible from public roads. A distant glimpse of the upper storeys can be obtained from the Bourne End - Cookham road, especially in the winter months when surrounding trees have shed their leaves.

Hedsor House itself is in the parish of Hedsor, although the Upper Lodge and front gates on Heathfield Road are in Taplow, the boundary running through the grounds of Hedsor Park.

The Ancient Manor of Hedsor

One derivation of the name Hedsor ascribes it to a combination of the Anglo-Saxon words 'haed' and 'scorer' which together implied a steeply sloping heath. The manor had the distinction of not being named in the Domesday Book. The origins trace back to about 1100 and it was held by the de Hedsor family until about 1305.

In 1492 the manor comprised two mills, 150 acres of cultivable land, 16 acres of meadow, 80 acres of pasture, 100 acres of woodland and 60 acres of heath. The Hedsor church and the occupation of the Manor House on the site of the present house, The Priory - home of Sir Hugh Wontner - go back to these early times. The remains of a courtyard, said to be part of a mediaeval monastery, can be discerned in the undergrowth behind the present Hedsor House.

Founding of a Stately Home

In 1739, Frederick Prince of Wales, occupied Cliveden as a country retreat. (Incidentally, he died after being struck by a cricket ball and never became King). Cliveden was not then large enough to accommodate the Prince's retainers and so he rented Hedsor Manor to provide additional staff quarters. At this time Sir William Irby, later the first Lord Boston, was equerry to the Prince of Wales. In 1764, when he was Lord Chamberlain to the Princess of Wales, he bought the Hedsor Estate for his own use.

In 1776-78 Lord Boston built a new mansion on the hill top, the site being somewhat nearer the Thames-side slope than is the present house.

George III and Queen Charlotte had helped to design the mansion and were frequent visitors there. Large portraits of them were displayed and, today, having been given to Mr Alexander Shephard by his godfather, Lord Boston, and after surviving an American tenancy, continue to adorn Hedsor House. Queen Victoria followed the royal custom of driving over from Windsor and taking tea, although little remains of Queen Victoria's Drive which encircled the estate. Pictures of the first mansion, named Hedsor Lodge, show that externally its red roof and white walls were unremarkable. Internally it was said to be very comfortable but inconvenient domestically for the servants.

The Present Hedsor House

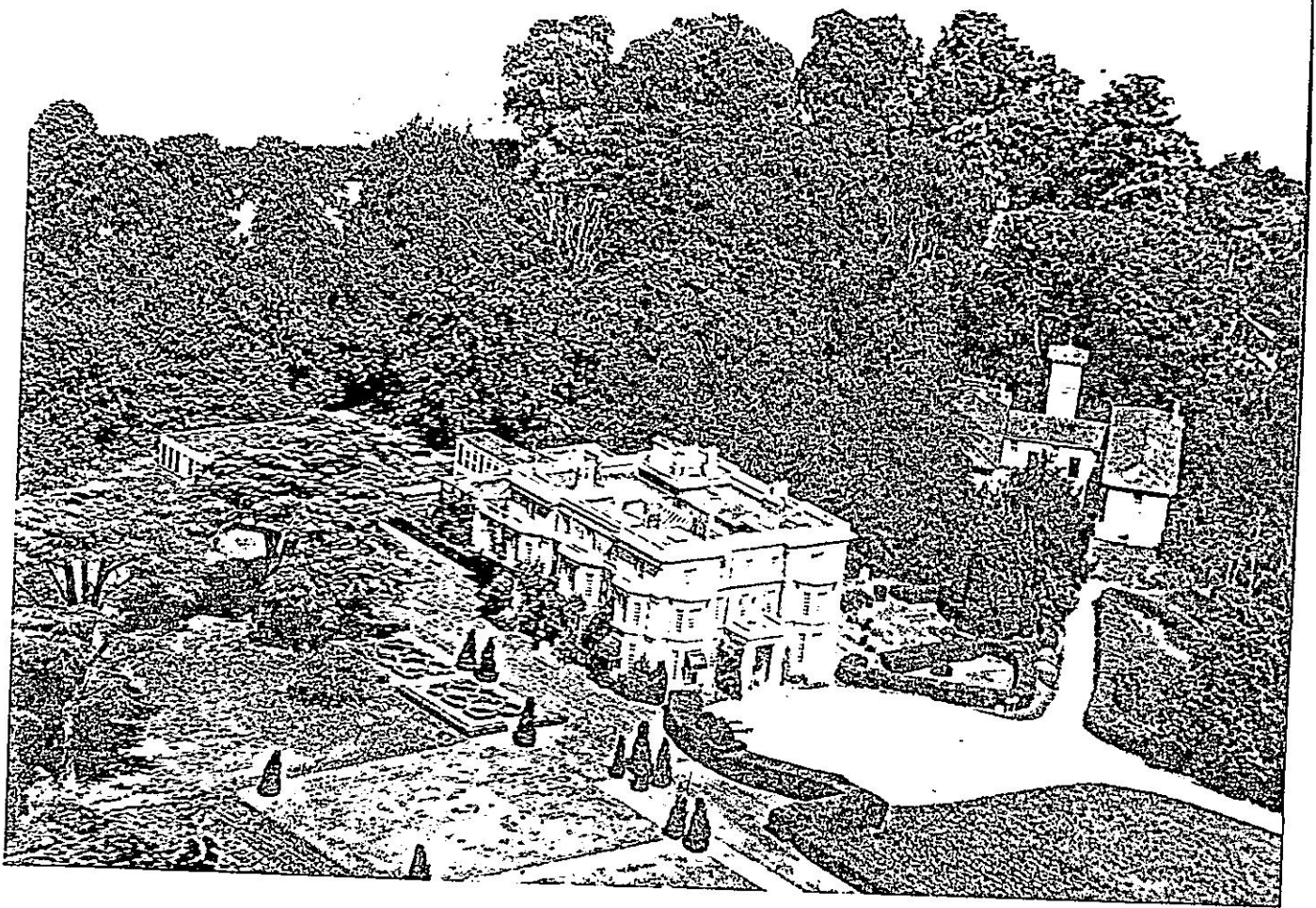
In 1865, Lady Augusta Boston, the fourth Lord Boston's second wife, had decided on a new house. Hedsor Lodge had been substantially built, but was eventually spectacularly blown up by explosives. James Knowles, the architect of the Grosvenor Hotel, Victoria was commissioned to build a new mansion, at a cost of 50,000 pounds. It was completed in an Italianate-Georgian style in 1868. It was square, had three storeys, a large domed hallway and an orangery or ballroom at the rear. A gallery at first floor level gave access to the various bedrooms.

Essentially this is the house that exists today, although it now incorporates considerable alterations made over the years. Not long after its construction, architectural fashions changed and four large ornamental domes were added at the roof corners. Pictures of the house so configured can be found in local antique shops, but the domes were removed during extensive restoration and improvements undertaken by Mr

D'Arcy Baker after he purchased the property in 1925. In 1923, the Hedsor estate was broken up and sold by the sixth Lord Boston, who had earlier moved to Hedsor Wharf. He now retained only The Priory.

D'Arcy Baker embarked on an ambitious restoration of the Georgian style Hedsor House. He removed the corner domes, installed sumptuous marble and onyx bathrooms, now mostly protected by board linings, and fitted pine panelling to the ballroom. The cost was about 150,000 pounds. After his death in 1929 the builders took possession until the property was bought by Mr Philip Shepard in 1934, and the House furnished magnificently by Mrs Florence Shepard. During the war it was requisition, first by the Army and later as a convent school. After the war, the Shepards returned to it until leasing it in 1952 to the U.S. Government as an Air Force communications centre. When the Americans left in 1964, the Shepard family re-occupied the House, leasing it in 1968 to the present tenants, International Computers Limited. The House has about 60 rooms and the stable block comprises 12 bedrooms constructed within the preserved outer walls by I C L, who have also built a bedroom block in semi-permanent construction at the rear of the House on the site of Hedsor Lodge.

S.J.D.



Recent Planning Developments

These ~~items~~ arisen since the last newsletter and most of them have been considered by the Executive Committee of the Society:

- Bishop Centre, Bath Road (104/83) As previously reported, this revised application for improvement of existing sales area, etc., was refused. An enforcement notice was authorised (only) and, it is understood, will shortly be issued.
- Cloverdown House, Hitcham Lane (82/83) Consent given to 6ft close boarded fence and secondary access.
- Bridge Cottage, Bath Road (139/83) Conditional permission given to single storey side extension.

Skindles Hotel (196/83) Conditional permission given for continued use of car park. (415067 - W & M) New entrance to Rocking Horse Bar.

Feathers Inn, Cliveden Road (203/83) Consent given for externally illuminated post sign.

Fielden House, Berry Hill (207/83) Conditional permission (CP) given for car port.

Hitcham House, Hitcham Lane (272/83) Listed building. Conversion of main house into 9 residential units and stable block into 4, with other extensions. The Society objected to:
(1) the density of development, which provided 44 bedrooms
(2) the loss of good established trees to provide for car parking, no garages being included
(3) a dangerous main entrance in a narrow part of Hitcham Lane and
(4) division of the grounds into separate lots.

The District Council has deferred this application pending a legal agreement to secure maintenance of the grounds and a scheme for garages.

Barge Farm (300/83) CP given for retention of two residential caravans.

Nashdom Abbey (308-9/83) Listed building. CP given for conversion of garage/stable block to small conference centre etc.

Taplow Cricket Club, Cliveden Road (314/83) CP given to retain caravan for caretaker.

Old Court Hotel, Bath Road (321/83) Two storey extension to provide eight extra bedrooms. The Society asked for a more consistent design and also objected to the provision (not in this application) of airport parking services. Permission refused.

The Wharf, Mill Lane (352/83) CP given for demolition of existing buildings (except Tower House) and erection of eight 2 and 3 storey houses.

W.I.Hall, Institute Road (378/83) Retention of caravan for caretaker.

Old Post Office, Bath Road (393/83) Change of use of first floor to offices: consent refused.

1 Church Cottages, Hill Farm Road (399/83) CP given for single storey rear extension.

Jameson Cottage, Marsh Lane (433/83) Consent refused for first floor rear extension.

Thatched Cottage, Berry Hill (450/83) CP given for single storey studio.

Old Lodge East, High St. (511/83) Extension for sauna etc, enlarged sun lounge and new garden store.

Portland, Marsh Lane (542/83) CP given to two and one storey extensions.

Riverholme, Marsh Lane (566/83) Consent refused for first floor rear extension.

Rosssonny, Marsh Lane (569/83) Subject to legal agreement, CP given for single storey extension for bed-sitter and replacement garage.

Sheepcote Farm (575/83) Detached garage.

(686/83) CP given for garage and altered siting of converted house no 3, ref 857/81.
(778/83) New septic tank.

Cliveden NT (576/83) Listed building. Demolish glass canopy in stable yard.

Dumb Bell PH, Bath Road (609/83) CP given to extension for toilet block and conservatory.

Anchorage, River Road (616/83) CP given to extensions of hall and roof.

School House, Rectory Road (654/83) CP given for single storey front extension.

Stanley Jones Field, Berry Hill (Old Paludians) (673/83) Retention of caravan.

Lewis Marine Bldg. Mill Lane (Taplow Investments Ltd) (677-8/83)

Change of use from restricted class IV to class III, light industrial use.

Red Cottage, Hitcham Grange, Hill Farm Road (750/83) One storey living room extension.

New Taplow Paper Mills, Mill Lane (571/83) Lay-by (revised, reduced length) for lorry traffic and relocation of fuel pumps.
(753/83) Effluent treatment plant.

Taplow Service Station, Bath Road (782/83) CP given for small rear extension.

Queen's Lodge, Cliveden Road The construction of a games room, now completed, as a detached building of limited height, not for habitation, required no planning consent.

Hitcham Lane, land behind Holly Cottage, Hill Farm Road It is understood that a planning application is being made for the 6ft fence erected on this site.