

Hitcham & Taplow Preservation Society

NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 1987

NO.53



1850 – 1987 TEN ACRE FIELD

Taplow Cricket Club has been playing on Ten Acre Field since 1850. The land was donated by the daughter of Lord Desborough, Lady Gage. To mark their centenary, they played a star team raised by R W V ROBINS, shown above which included LESLIE COMPTON and BILL EDRICH.

HITCHAM AND TAPLOW PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Objectives of the Society

The Society was formed in 1959: one of its most important objects is:-

".....securing the protection from disfigurement or injury of the countryside and rural surroundings and amenities of the Parishes of Hitcham and Taplow....."

The Society therefore scrutinises many Planning Applications and Appeals and makes constructive comments when appropriate: it also gives evidence at Local Planning Enquiries.

Officers and Executive Committee Members

President Mr Leonard Miall OBE

Vice Presidents Mrs E Law Mrs GL Milne Mr AJC Paines Mrs AB Horton.

Chairman Mr RJ Hanbury

Vice-Chairman Mr NBRC Peroni

Treasurer Miss E Ricketts

Secretary Mr RGR Nutt

Planning Watchman Mr A Hickman

Committee Members Mr W Ball Mrs CJL Cumberlege Lt Col SJ Dagg Major KB Francis Mrs H Lee Mr HC Nixon Miss GG Pollock Miss ER Read Mr E Schmitz-Peiffer.

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EDITORIAL

In seeking a summer mood for this issue, we are highlighting two green spaces in our village and their constant utility to our community.

They are the village green and the cricket pitch.

The cricket ground was given to Taplow by Lord Grenfell's daughter, Lady Gage in 1959; the village green, by contrast, has only existed in its present form for eleven years.

How this good fortune for the village came about is detailed as regards the cricket ground in our first feature; the very existence of our village green is a comparatively recent legacy from the leadership of a former Vice-President of our Society, the late Ernest Perkins, who died earlier this year. His many friends and colleagues in Taplow confirm that without his sterling leadership as the then chairman of Taplow Parish Council, we would not today have a village green, on which to sport the maypole or to enjoy succulent roast pig at our June party, also reported in this issue.

Thanks to modern technology and your committee, this issue of the Newsletter has a slightly altered format.

In seeking to preserve and report on the delicate balance between maintaining the best of the past and building on the future, ideas and contributions for these pages are always welcome.

TEN ACRES IN TIME

Our village cricket pitch has a fascinating history and its preservation has contributed much to our village life, here detailed by the secretary of the Taplow Cricket Club, Keith Paskins.

Few of the many who danced a summer night away recently under the lime trees on Taplow Hill, imbibing the essence of barbecued steak, took pause to reflect on the history of those ten treasured acres surrounding them, the well-worked lawns of Taplow Cricket Club.

It was a cold November night in 1850 when Messrs, Skindle, Rance and a dozen others paid their founder's subscription and formed the Taplow Union Cricket Club. Members paid one shilling each month, and as new cricket balls cost seven and sixpence each (37½p.), patronage from local gentlemen was essential.

The most important patronage concerned the Ten Acres field, which was grazing land owned by Lord Desborough. A playing area somewhat smaller than today's square was mowed before each match and cricket balls were still being reported lost in the long wet grass around it in 1948 when Farmer Newton finally agreed to keep his cattle thirty yards from the wicket. The somewhat 'sporting' nature of rough hewn wickets make today's use of protective helmets seem excessively cautious. Club records indicate that the best batsmen averaged less than fifteen runs each innings, while top bowlers conceded five runs per wicket. To make matches last longer, each team had two innings in the afternoon, rather like a five day Test Match.

As any treasurer will appreciate, Club finances were badly affected in August 1914 when hostilities off the field of play prevented the collection of outstanding subscriptions. No more cricket was played until 1919, when a Special Peace Celebration Grant of £10, more than covered the price of four new bats, while one shilling was paid to a certain Mr Wigmore for the repair of pre-war leg guards. Cricket was again suspended during the Second World War and the Club was re-constituted in 1946 when advertisements for players were placed in Taplow station, village shops and the Church magazine. Essential repairs to the pavilion and the provision of sight screens was made difficult by the acute shortage of materials.



A cartoon of a 19th Century cricketer taking guard on Taplow Hill, by John Wilson the well-known Bray artist

The shortages extended to cricket teas, and heated correspondence eventually produced a temporary catering licence from the Government Food Office, permitting a frugal tea for thirty people on Saturday afternoons. These were the days when first prize in the raffle was a joint of meat and second prize a bottle of Scotch Whisky.

It was a tradition that the local Rector was appointed club chairman, and in 1947 he presided over a contested debate which explored the practical and spiritual issues surrounding the proposition that Sunday cricket should be played outside the hours of divine worship. No doubt the voices of the several playing members from the All Nations Bible College were influential in defeating the motion 14 - 7. One year later the Rector, Bishop Hay, stood down and a resolution to play Sunday cricket was carried by a majority of 12 votes.

The conscription of young men into the armed forces, made team selection difficult, but there was plenty of enthusiasm among remaining civilian members for the Club Centenary celebrations in 1950. Mr F. T. Wilson made a cine film entitled "100 Years on the Hill" featuring the club at various moments in its history. The film, which received acclaim at the time is now missing, and if anyone knows of its whereabouts its re-appearance ahead of the 150th anniversary would be warmly welcomed. A centenary cricket match was played at Ten Acres against a Middlesex County XI under R.W.V. Robins, who insisted upon a good safe wicket to avoid injury to the likes of Bill Edrich, Denis and Leslie Compton and Fred Titmus.

Gift of Cricket Ground

Following the death of Club President, Lady Desborough, in 1952, the Desborough Estate was put up for sale and there was speculation that the Council would grant building approval for Ten Acres, which would end cricket on the ground. However, in 1959, thanks to Lady Gage, a Deed of Gift was completed which gave possession of Ten Acres to the club. This did not exclude the rabbits however which, with mixamatoxis rife, were a problem to the groundsmen and special permission was granted to Mr Brookling, a local sharpshooter, to despatch them. Today's problems are worm casts and golf balls.

In 1955 the Mid Thames Archaeological Society excavated part of the ground and discovered Roman remains. The Parish Council planted four flowering Cherry trees in recognition of the vital part that the Club played in village life. Of course half of the fixtures were played outside the village, and whereas in its formative days the team travelled under horse-power, in the late 50's the absence of petrol coupons gave fixture secretaries a headache.

We now hear that Taplow Court is for sale and the cricket ground which is adjacent to Ten Acres and also used for matches may be lost to the club.

The facilities at the ground were very basic for most of the club's history and it was reported in 1957 that the ladies' "facilities" were in a poor state and a committee was formed to 'look into them'. Since then the wartime Nissen hut has been replaced with a new Desborough Memorial Pavilion, and bar, changing room and showers have been added. Local charities such as the Thames Valley Adventure Playground, have been beneficiaries of members' fund-raising activities, notably the Charity Cricket Matches against show business teams, aided and abetted by Honorary Vice President Terry Wogan.

Today the club still offers the prettiest ground and the most friendly atmosphere in Buckinghamshire village cricket and welcomes new cricketers and social members, and continues to play its part in village life.



NEW TREES FOR TAPLOW

A Project Report

A progress report on one of the enterprising projects undertaken by members of the Society to improve the view of Taplow alongside Boundary Road

THE PROBLEM

Dutch Elm Disease - this had drastically reduced the trees surrounding Taplow, completely changing the view. Urgent action and replacements were needed.

THE PURPOSE

To restore the wooded appearance by a planned and economical programme of planting trees, mainly those native to England. The wide area of grass verge alongside Boundary Road was chosen first as this area had lost all its former trees.

THE WORKING PARTIES

Fortunately the Society could enlist the expertise of Chairman, Bob Hanbury, who provided the extensive knowledge of silviculture and the actual trees.

THE PROGRAMME

1983 - Planting commenced with the first batch of ten trees per annum.

1984 - Protection provided with wire guards, and losses replaced.

1985 - A large number of working parties prepared ground for further planting and protecting young growth.

1986 - Supervision continued.

1987 - During the spring drought, copious watering was necessary; also clearing of ground and feeding.

THE PROGRESS

Nearly 50 trees are growing and flourishing in great variety. Types planted include: Chestnut and Cedar; Maple and Mulberry; Lime and Tulip Tree to the beautifully named Liquidambar.

However, Members should not relax in idle contemplation, as the maturing of a tree takes up to ten years, with much watering (especially on the present gravel soil), protection and manuring still necessary. So the class of 1993 will see the growing benefit.

THE GREEN PARTY

A minute-by-minute account of the pig-roast and party held on the Village Green in late June observed by Lincoln Lee.

Relax! this is not just another political manifesto, it is the diary of the Party on the Taplow Village Green in 1987.

- 26 June 19.00 Dedicated Workers start cutting sods from the Green. We have to make sure that the fire for roasting the pig doesn't create a Village Brown.
- 27 June 07.00 The fire is lit. Apparently it takes 12 hours to roast a pig weighing 120 lbs.
09.00 It also seems to take 5 lbs of timber to roast each lb of pig. Much the same D.Ws. are humping all this timber, disagreeing about the best layout (12 Chiefs but no tribespeople), and setting up tables.
12.00 The first few spots of rain fall on the head of the fire-tender - a man, not a vehicle.
14.30 Volvos are churning up the Green and exotic creatures from Outer London are arriving for weddings. Frilly-hatted ladies pose on their sunken stilettos near the fire and giggle "We hope he is a Male Chauvinist Pig".
18.00 The band arrives.
18.30 A slight jostling for protected pitches as thousands (well scores) arrive on the Green under a threatening sky.
19.00 **MUSIC !** Who can control their feet?
19.30 **PORK !** Who can control their salivary glands?
20.00 So this is barn-dancing. It seems infectious.
21.30 The raffle; as usual somebody else has won.
21.45 We need a larger Village Green with so many dancers. Is Number 179 a real policeman?
22.00 The final hilarious and tangled Barney. Why has it stayed so fine and warm?
22.50 Still clearing up. The tables seem much heavier that they did 12 hours ago.
- 28 June 10.00 Some residual clearing up. That fire is still hot!
16.00 And it's still too hot to replace the sods - this is when we could do with some rain.

SUMMARY. No, we haven't said too much about the Party itself. If you were there you enjoyed it. If you were not, you don't want to hear all the details of the good time you missed. Much of the work was done by Committee Members of the HTPS, but special thanks to Adam Francis for his culinary expertise. The event was more than just a happy village occasion - The Thames Valley Hospice raised some funds there.

TAPLOW HOUSE HOTEL

A local resident, who attended a recent meeting about possible developments at Taplow House Hotel, contributes this report.

It seems likely that Taplow House was the original 'manor house' in the village. It was probably sited below the line of springs on Berry Hill so that even in Elizabethan times, the kitchen could have running water, although this facility did not prevent the house from being burnt down in about 1660. Most of the present building is Georgian and, although built during several different periods, it is a handsome building; it is, of course, listed.

The Skimmings, the last people to occupy it as a family home, are said to have employed 9 gardeners; there is still much to admire in the grounds in addition to the two famous tulip trees.

After the House had been used as a nursing home for nearly twenty years up to 1975, it stood empty and thieves even stole the lead from the roof. Fortunately it was bought before it fell into dereliction and was repaired and converted into an hotel. Since then it has changed hands two or three times.

On 6th July 1987 the new management gave a presentation on their ideas for an extension to the Hotel. Mr Clutterbuck, the new Manager and Mr Nanjii with Mr Farrand, a consultant from Bradbury Projects, explained that, at its present size, the hotel was not really a viable proposition. They feel that they need to increase the number of bedrooms to achieve this.

About 17 local residents, including two members of the Society's Committee who live nearby, attended the reception. Bearing in mind what happened to other large houses in the area, especially Berry Hill House itself, most of those attending had some sympathy for this point of view.

The draft plans did not seem unreasonable; a T-shaped extension is to accommodate 28 bedrooms and a swimming pool. The exterior styling would be in the style of a coach house and half the extension would only be single story. From the Society's point of view, the proposals seem difficult to fault.

No doubt the residents near-by will be anxious for reassurance that the proposals do not have adverse effects by creating extra noise and traffic or by spoiling the outlook from their houses. Further discussions are necessary and it is hoped that they will shortly take place.

BOUNDARY COMMISSION DECISIONS

Local Pressure Swings Results in Taplow's Favour

Local residents have been waiting anxiously for the results of a review by the Local Government Boundary Commission of the boundary between Berks and Bucks.

Berkshire County Council's first proposal was for part of the parish of Taplow to be transferred to Berks; these proposals were subsequently extended to bring all the land south of the M4 motorway into Berks.

300 Individual Correspondents

Considerable opposition was expressed to these proposals and the Preservation Society asked individuals to make their views known. In fact, over 300 private individuals wrote to the Commission, objecting to the proposals affecting this area, and were supported by parish councils and members of Parliament.

Taplow Separate from Maidenhead

After consideration of the evidence, the Commission reported that:-

"from the views expressed to them, and their own assessment of the nature of the area, Taplow was separate from the Maidenhead community."

The interim decision, published in the report by the Commission, is that, not only should Taplow remain within Bucks but also that there was insufficient evidence to show that a transfer of a large part of South Bucks District would result in more effective or convenient local government.

Concerted campaign against Canal

This outcome is, of course, greatly to be welcomed. It also highlights the necessity and effectiveness of individual members being alert to take up the cudgels by writing direct to the authorities in the cause of local preservation.

In this respect, we call your attention to the threat of a Relief Canal in Taplow and to the letter regarding concerted action in the Parish printed in this Newsletter on page 10.

A FESTIVAL OF FLOWERS

An historical and floral celebration of the seventy fifth anniversary of the rebuilding and re-dedication of St Nicolas' Church.

Seventy five years ago the rebuilding of St Nicolas' Church was completed and its distinguishing copper spire added.

To celebrate this anniversary, festivities started with a Flower Festival held over Whitsun weekend, the focus being a series of special floral displays in the church.

The theme was "Christianity in Taplow through the Ages" and a great variety of displays imaginatively depicted seventeen different subjects, ranging from the early history of the parish in Saxon and Norman times to the reconstruction in 1912; these included the symbols of the past and present patrons, the Merton Priory, the Crown, the Bishop of Oxford and the Sacraments.

All the arrangements were carried out with much care and expertise by members of the congregation, co-ordinated by Peggy Binsted.

Musical entertainment was also provided throughout the weekend, including piano and violin recitals and the choir of St Nicolas' School sang "Daniel Jazz" and played recorder music.

In an address on Whit Sunday the Archdeacon of Buckinghamshire, the Venerable John Bone, stressed that the most ancient of buildings and the most beautiful of displays served a wider cause as an inspiration and stimulus to the a community. This is a theme that has a message for the whole membership of those within and without our Preservation Membership.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We print below a letter on the far-reaching effect of the proposals for a Flood Relief Channel through Taplow from the Chairman of Taplow Parish Council. A feature on this vital subject is being prepared for a future issue.

From The Chairman of Taplow Parish Council

25th Jun 87

Sir,

Although the new Taplow Parish Council has not yet had the opportunity to express its views in depth, I believe that I speak for all my fellow councillors in wholly condemning the proposal to construct a Flood Relief channel through Taplow. This is also the view of the eighty or so parishioners who attended a presentation by Thames Water in April.

As Chairman of one of the parishes most affected by the proposed scheme, I have since been invited by Thames Water to attend a meeting at which the views of local people were to be considered. At our first meeting, it became clear that, as far as Thames Water are concerned, the pros and cons of the East Bank Option are no longer a matter for discussion as they are determined to push it through. They are only seeking our advice to chose the best (or should I say the "least worst") route through our Parish.

We believe there is no "good" option as far as the East Bank Scheme is concerned. It will constitute the excavation and destruction of our natural environment to a totally unacceptable degree, and no platitudes from Thames Water will make us feel any different.

We propose to fight the scheme and, at our next Council Meeting, we will be discussing the best method of attack. The battle will start in earnest at the end of this year, if the current study gives it's approval to the East Bank Scheme.

We will keep you informed of developments within the Parish Council and may wish to discuss the possibility of joint action.

Yours faithfully,

Alistair Forsyth.

Letters on subjects of interest to Society readers are welcome and should be addressed to:-

The Editor,
A.G.S. Grellier,
Victoria Cottage,
Taplow Village.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Planning decisions given by Planning and Development Committee of the South Bucks District Council.

We publish these extracts because they are another indication of the work that County, District and Parish Councils undertake to preserve the countryside and regulate urban sprawl.

Extracts from Council Minutes 10th December 1986 - 7th April 1987.

The Coach House to rear of Rhone Villa, Bath Road. Conversion to self-contained flat and double garage.	SBD 1001/85 Appeal allowed.
Maidenhead Autos, Bath Road. Partial re-development and extensions to north side.	SBD 630/85 Appeal dismissed.
Bishop's Plant Depot, Bath Road. Storage of new cars on part of existing plant depot for temporary period of 2 years.	SBD 289/86 Conditional permission.
School House, Rectory Road. Covered way	SBD 539/86 Conditional permission.
Stanley Jones Field, Berry Hill. Continued siting of residential caravan	SBD 754/86 Conditional permission.
Joe's Folly Kennels, Amerden Close. Continued siting of residential staff mobile home.	SBD 908/86 Conditional permission.
Oak & Saw Public House, Rectory Road. Single storey rear extension and extension to car park.	SBD 717/86 Refused.
Norfolk House Hotel, Bath Road. Additional illumination of front access from highway, patio & selected trees. Hotel sign and 2 flags and flag poles. Two externally illuminated signs	SBD 920/86 Conditional Permission. SBD 921/86 Refused. SBD 29/87 Conditional permission.
Abbotts Wood Mill, Heathfield Road. New entrance gates, closure of existing and formation of new vehicle access.	SBD 1018/86 Conditional permission.
Parrs Cottage, Taplow Common Road. Extension and alterations.	SBD 1175/86 Conditional permission.
Meca Liveries, Wooburn Common Road. Continued siting of one mobile home.	SBD 1162/86 Conditional permission.
Erection of one detached dwelling and double garage.	Refused.

The Hermitage, Bath Road. Change of use to nursing home	SBD 1186/86 Conditional permission.
Sheepcote Manor, Wooburn Common Road. Detached double garage.	SBD 1197/86 Conditional permission.
New Taplow Paper Mills, Mill Lane. Erection of shed and covered area for industrial purposes.	SBD 995/84 Conditional Permission.
Taplow Village Centre, High Street. Continued use of premises for pre-school playgroup.	SBD 1171/86 Conditional permission.
The Chestnuts, River Road. Erection of conservatory.	SBD 1254/86 Unconditional permission.
Bishop Centre, Bath Road. Two-storey office extension, prefabricated cover to car wash and single-storey studio.	SBD 1292/86 Refused.
Thames Water, Sheepcote Woods, Wooburn Common Road. Water service reservoir, underground booster station and access road.	SBD 209/87 Conditional permission.

Some Recent Applications with the Society's Views

Little Barns Wood and Wymers Wood, Washdom Lane. Boundary fence and gates.	Objection.
Queen's Lodge, Cliveden Road. Two storey rear extension.	Objection.
Neuk House, Bath Road. Erection of bungalow with internal garage, fronting Amerden Lane.	Objection.
Former Lewis Marine Building "B", Mill Lane Change of use to Conference/Training Centre.	Objection.
Station Garage Taplow, Station Road. Four part internally illuminated fascia signs.	Objection.
The Hermitage, Bath Road. Extension and alteration to provide additional space and bedrooms.	Objection.
Guildersfield, Hill Farm Road, Hunt's Lane. Extensions and alterations; conversion of main house to 4 houses. Demolition of 2 existing garages and erection of 4 new garages. Demolition of existing single storey house and erection of new house and garage.	Objection.
Taplow Service Station, Bath Road. Installation of new underground tank.	Objection.
Bishop Centre, Bath Road. Prefabricated cover to car wash.	Objection.