

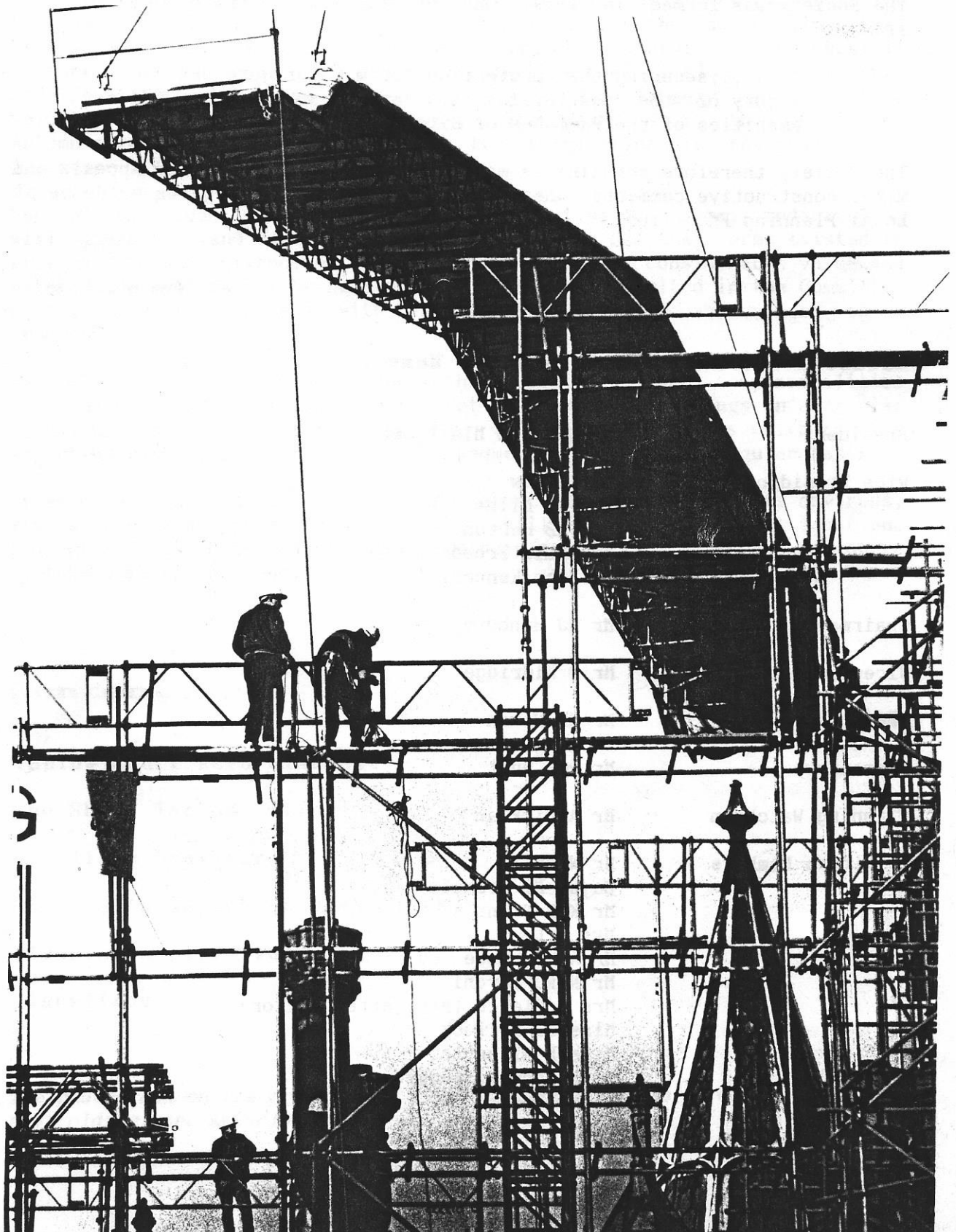
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Hitcham & Taplow Preservation Society

Spring 1991

NEWSLETTER

No. 59



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 Mrs AB Horton. Mr Louis Freedman CBE Dr John Kennedy
Chairman	Mr RJ Hanbury
Vice-Chairman	Mr D Aldridge
Treasurer	Mr HC Nixon
Secretary	Mr RGR Nutt
Planning Watchman	Mr A Hickman
Committee Members	Mr W Ball Major KB Francis Mr KIR Grant Mrs H Lee Mr A McKenzie Mr NBRC Peroni Mrs D Pierce (Newsletter Editor) Miss GG Pollock Miss E Ricketts Mr E Schmitz-Peiffer Mrs S Senior.

Editorial - Where are the workers?

Your Executive Committee is heading into deep waters and is in danger of sinking. At the last three AGM's, the Chairman has indicated his wish to retire from the position, but no volunteers have been forthcoming. Apart from the occupant's wish to retire, it is fair to say that all voluntary organisations tend to stagnate when the officers stay in place for too long and have a better chance of thriving with a regular injection of new blood from at the top.

The Secretary, having held the position for so long that it is difficult to find any members who can remember his predecessor, has at last given notice that he is likely to go on strike; when one considers the enormous load that he has carried for so long, we can only be grateful that he is still prepared to shoulder a proportion of his current load. For too long, additional tasks have been heaped upon him, due largely to the lack of volunteers to assume responsibilities. The deadline is the AGM in the Autumn at which he will not stand for re-election to the position of Secretary.

Many of the committee members have, from time to time, indicated a willingness to stand down but generally they have had their arms twisted to stay on; their experience on village matters being of considerable value and alternative members not being available. This has resulted in the Committee having very few members with the necessary skills and access to a typewriter.

Some of the newer Committee members have family and work responsibilities which make it difficult for them to get to Committee meetings on a regular basis; this makes it difficult for them to take on activities which require reporting back to the Committee at subsequent meetings on a regular basis.

So where are the enthusiasts who care about the village and its environs, with access to a typewriter - and the skill to use it with at least one finger? If you think you can help, please contact the Secretary and offer to take some of the load.

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The photograph on the front cover is of the roofs of Taplow Court under scaffolding; see Article on page 2.

Taplow Court Refurbishment

Andy McKenzie, Taplow Court Estate Manager, describes the work done by the Nichiren Shoshu to get Taplow Court into good order again.

On 31 March and 1 April the Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist sect will again be opening Taplow Court to the Public, these being the first of several open days planned for 1991. During the last year local residents watched with interest and perhaps some trepidation as to what was going on, as the building, formally the home of Lord and Lady Desborough, was shrouded in white tarpaulin. This protective covering was in fact a sign of the second phase of an extensive refurbishment programme designed to bring the grade 2 listed building back to its former splendour and to bring the office accommodation on the second and third floors up to present day standard.

Taplow Court was purchased by Nichiren Shoshu of the United Kingdom (NSUK) in January 1988, with the intention to use it as a cultural centre and its national headquarters. The first phase of the refurbishment programme involved the conversion of a modern computer block on the site into a hall where some 400 of the U.K. membership at any one time, can participate in Buddhist prayers and ceremonies. Contrary to popular belief Taplow Court is not a residential centre, the Nichiren Shoshu practice being carried out by members in their daily life in society and with meetings in each others homes throughout the country.

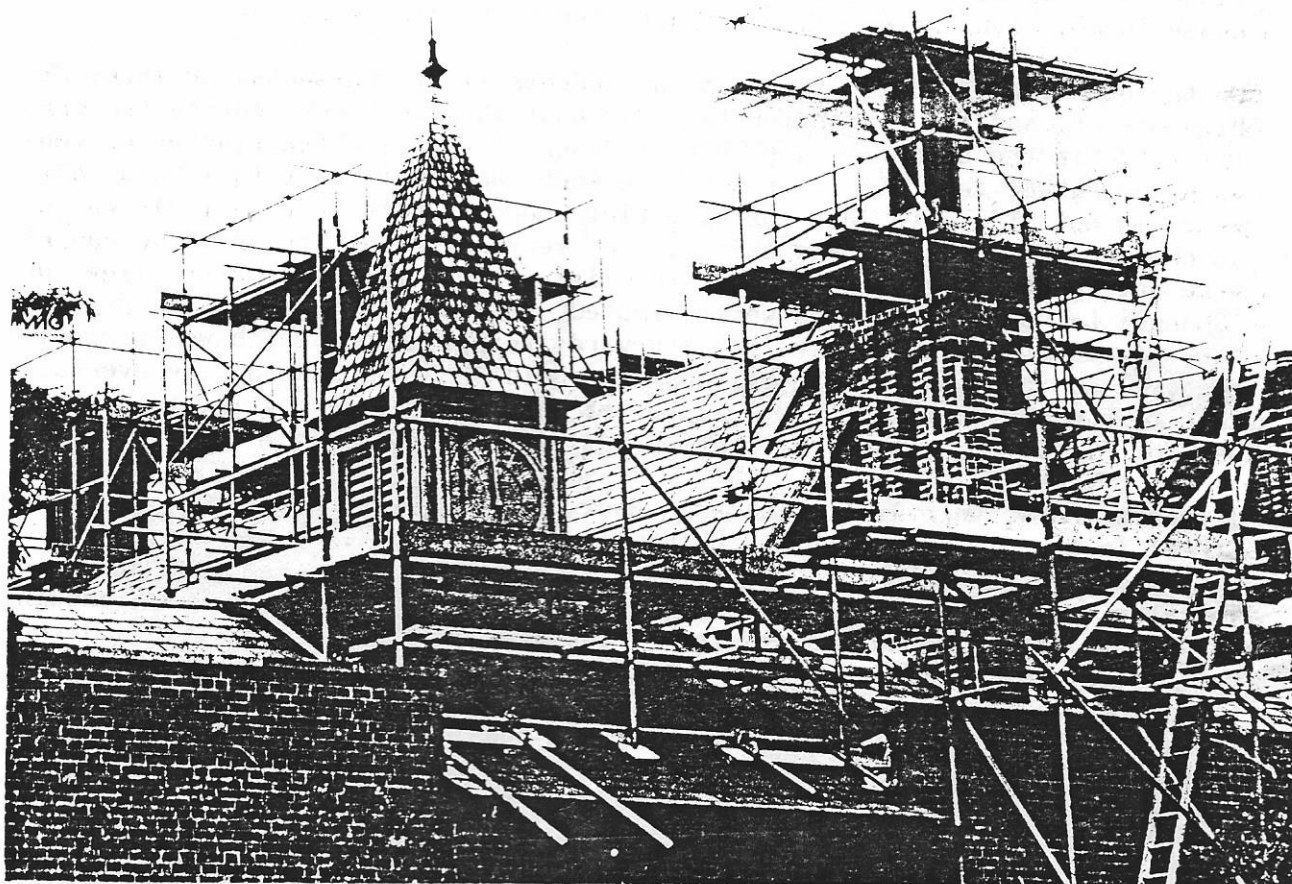
During the first phase which was completed in May 1989 the manor house underwent extensive work to bring the ground floor reception rooms back to the splendour of the days of Lord Desborough and judging by the comments of those who visited during the open days in 1989 this was achieved if not exceeded. Due to its grade 2 listing every effort was made to preserve architectural features and detail but one room in part of the link building to the later southeast wing could be altered. It was in this room that the members of N.S.U.K. constructed a permanent exhibition on the history of the house. This has proved to be a favourite attraction during the open days and traces the history from the days of the Saxon chieftain Tappa, to whom the site owes its name, through many of the subsequent owners to the present day occupants.

A major part of this first phase involved the conversion of the southeast wing servants quarters into accommodation to house members when attending weekend training courses. In addition to members the rooms will also be used to accommodate visiting scholars who wish to make use of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy's library which contains an extensive collection of books on oriental religion and philosophy.

The second phase of refurbishment commenced during the turbulent winter of 89/90, the architects and members holding their breath as the hurricane force winds ravaged the grounds and whistled through partially erected scaffolding around the building. The scaffolding fared better than the massive cedar trees which ran along the famous "Cedar Walk" overlooking the Thames. Thirty two of these familiar landmarks were felled by the storm and together with other less prominent trees have taken most of 1990 to clear. Despite the wind and delay, whilst the scaffolding was strengthened to well above British Standards, the building was gradually encased in white tarpaulin including a 16 panel roof which was lifted section by section by an 85 ton 170 ft. high crane to perch on top of the 300 tons of scaffolding. Maneuvering the crane through the front gate of Taplow Court was in itself a work of art; half an inch clearance on either side of the listed brick gate

piers is something to be avoided if at all possible!

The prime reason for cladding the building in this was was to allow continuous building work to take place, whatever the weather. The plan was to completely renovate the roof removing all slates, making good timberwork and replacing all of the 150 year old lead. Whilst this was being done the 52 decorative chimneys were dismantled and rebuilt. It sounds a simple operation but it was found that all the stonework needed to be replaced as did the bricks. The former was faithfully reproduced in the specialist workshops of the building contractors and the bricks moulded and colour matched to the originals.



In conjunction with the exterior work the interior second and third floors were being refurbished to bring them back into use as offices. The ravages of the deathwatch beetle were detected in some beams. Further investigation revealed this also to be a problem in a beam supporting the first floor and necessitated some very intricate building work to incorporate steel strengthening plates without damage to the original decorative ceilings below.

The final decoration has brought the whole building back to life and will permit a variety of exhibitions to be staged in the first floor gallery to enhance the open days throughout the year. Inevitably, with a building of this age, work on one area reveals additional problems. Just as the scaffolding was finally removed and completion of interior works at hand, the drainage system proved to be inadequate and so further work continues to rectify this problem.

The Shop, Taplow Village

Tony Meats gives details of his house in High Street which used to be the village shop.

Sarah and I live in a house with the wonderfully simple address of 'The Shop', a very clear and unambiguous description of what it looks like. The village Pub is in the same category. There is no need to describe it further and I suspect everyone knows the Shop and the Pub in Taplow Village. For friends visiting us for the first time, it is instantly recognisable on the High Street with its dark green Victorian shop front reminiscent for us of a 'pharmacie' in a small French country town. We like this pleasing visual quality with its references to other places we know well. I assume house 'names' conjure up similar images for their owners.

On the question of names, the official address is of course Number Three The High Street, and the reason for this is that when we purchased the property the title in the deed was 'The Tudor Village Store' with the flavour of Anne Hathaway rather than middle France. We were united in that this was a name we could not live with, and the District Council in their wisdom allowed us to choose another name. Now this is a very difficult thing to do and we were not particularly attracted to living in 'Village Green View' or 'Shangri La' or whatever and were tempted to call it just 'The Shop'. In the end, we opted for a straight forward postal number which was promptly rejected by the Council for reasons I could not comprehend. We overcame this by spelling out No. 3 in full but of course everyone writing to us just use No. 3. But 'The Shop' will still do.

I understand we were in the Guinness Book of Records as being the only High Street in the Country which has only one shop.

The shop was purchased in 1979. We were looking for a building large enough to convert into a house and studio. I was attracted by the location and the potential of refurbishing a near ruinous environment in the heart of the village. Whilst the building has a narrow frontage of 15 feet (the full street width of the plot), it goes back a considerable way. I have always thought of it being like a railway train - a series of compartments linked together; a progression of spaces leading through to the rear. The rear of the property has a special quality, being completely secluded and hidden within large trees and retaining walls. The gardens and landscape flow into each other and continue into the churchyard of St. Nicolas. This very private domain is overshadowed by the bulk and spire of the Church.

For most of this century the premises have functioned as a local village food store, although it ceased trading as a grocers shop a few years before I arrived in Taplow. In its last years of commercial life the shop was ran as an enterprise, specialising in mail order garments of the kind seen on cut out coupons in Sunday tabloids - line drawings of pretty frocks.

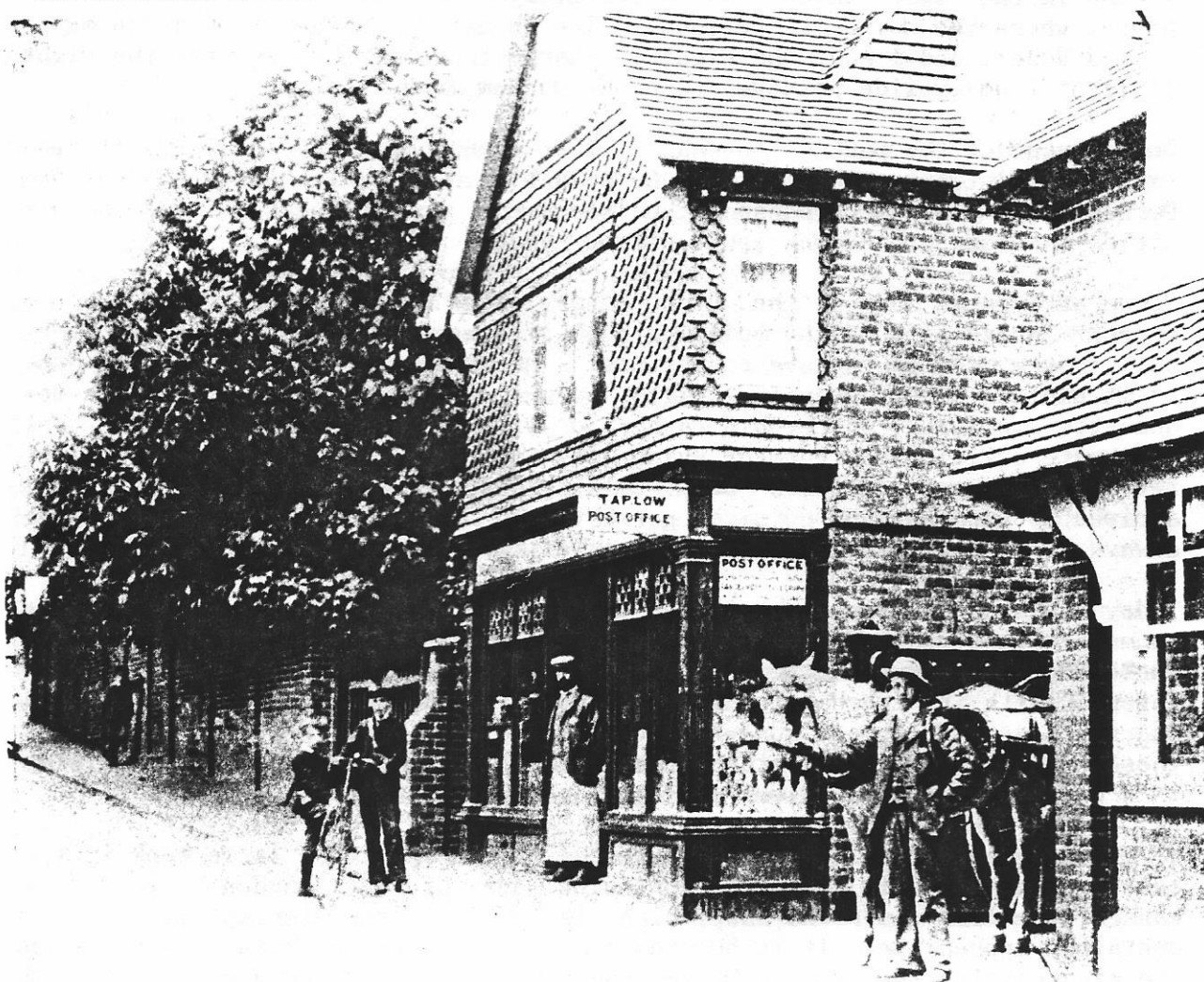
This seemed to me to be rather an odd activity for a shop in the centre of Taplow Village: at the weekend, Deane's as it was known, attracted hordes of old ladies who would stagger wearily up the High Street to find a bargain. Behind the shop there was, to all intents and purposes, a wholesale warehouse. So we had in fact purchased a retail outlet with a series of utilitarian spaces at the back. None of them were really domestic in character and the whole structure was lashed together with endless security wiring. There were window bars everywhere, and this gave the interior a gloomy prison like atmosphere.

Therefore, we had to create a house from scratch with the number one priority of getting rid of all traces of Deane's. A difficult task!

The buildings are very old and the core of them date from about the middle of the 18th Century. If you look closely at the structure, you will see that it historically consisted of a number of south facing cottages of humble origins, like myself. These were built at right angles to the High Street, with entrances off a side passage which we still use today. The roof line of the original structure is still intact and is clearly visible. There are bricked up window reveals on the south face which come from the period when there was a window tax. Another sign of the age of the property is the construction used in the roof with the purlins and trusses.

The ground climbs away behind the shop as the High Street rises, and the cottages were built into the slope of the ground. There are hardly any windows on the north side, and the ground level is almost at the height of the ground floor ceiling. Visitors are still surprised to find, on climbing the stairs to the first floor, that they are just above ground level.

The original structure has been extended over time, most significantly with the addition of the Victorian shop front we have today. A photograph taken



in about 1885 shows the Taplow Village Store in its full glory as a grocers shop, bakery and post office. What I find remarkable from the photograph is just how little the appearance of the shop has changed. We often relax in the sitting room, which was the shop proper, and think about where the counter was with it's cheeses and sides of bacon, together with the general bustle of a village store. We can almost hear the inevitable gossip. In

that respect nothing much has changed, for we can hear contemporary gossip through the window from the High Street outside.

We also ponder on who the severe figure in his apron was, standing in the shop door. Perhaps he is still watching us all as we walk up and down the High Street. One odd coincidence is that the young man with the horse in the side passage was named Charles Fryer, the same name as my father-in-law.

Although, essentially, only the shop front and external structure remain, we still have another visible symbol of the past - the baker's oven. This splendid piece of cast iron was built in Hammersmith in 1888 and is engraved to that effect. The bakery is now our dining room although the flues were dismantled long ago. But the oven is still with us albeit as a plaque. Our cats find it very intriguing and are constantly vanishing into its interior!

Therefore, for most its life, the building was the village store and the focal point of the local community. I think most people are aware of the more recent history. Its role as a Budgen's Store, followed by a short period as a more exotic and up-market 'delly' owned by a Mr and Mrs Durham. I never knew them, and their legacy to me was primarily the curious electric wiring in the shop which was effectively controlled from my neighbours house, where the Durham's resided. The house immediately next to me is called Rozel, and I have the right to charge the owners a rent for the right of light from my side passage - another Durham invention.

One remnant of the past which has almost been completely eradicated is the exterior paintwork which I called Deane's blue, but which I now suspect was Durham blue. When I purchased the shop the outside was painted in this strident colour and so was Rozel at one time.

So we arrived in 1979 on the High Street, the proud owners of a funny old property which none of the building societies were too keen to lend us money on. What we seemed to have bought was a great deal of interior space, some of it useless and literally miles of timber shelving. There were few domestic amenities, not even a bath. So with two small children we set out to create a living environment which was quite a challenge. For the first few months we camped with a Baby Belling. Numerous tired old ladies still arrived to purchase an 'outsize' garment and feeling sorry for them, Sarah always gave them a cup of tea, courtesy of the Baby Belling.

Today the shop is a house on three floors and consists of a number of large rooms architecturally crafted to our own tastes and requirements in an enclosed, protective and private habitat facing out towards the church. The interior with its rough natural surfaces of timber, painted brickwork and quarry tiles must appear somewhat unfinished to many people. But for us these robust materials reinforce the history and continuity of the building in a completely modern idiom.

We do, however, still find the odd trace of blue paint, a large hook in the ceiling and very old bottles surfacing out of the garden. We have a wonderful cellar under the shop which is perfect for storing wine which I certainly appreciate. It is our home and, although on certain nights when the wind rattles through the house, the trees groan and the doors creek, and we vividly sense the past, we feel the ghosts are friendly!

I am personally very sentimental about the shop. It appears as a 'logo' or crest on my professional notepaper, even though my office is elsewhere now. Few of my colleagues and clients understand its meaning, but for me it is a talisman and I shall continue using it wherever I am. I have a strange feeling that our ghosts will start playing up if I don't.

A Village Graveyard

*Some reflections on epitaphs on Gravestones found in Taplow's Old Churchyard
by Lincoln Lee.*

The village of Taplow has always clustered round the church and, of course, for most of its history the church was beside the mound which gave the village its name.

It must be more than a century since the last interment in the 'old' graveyard was made, but there are still people in the district with names like Cox, Neighbour, and Andrews, whose forebears are recalled by the names on those stone slabs. And if the grass is pulled back, the epitaphs which are revealed can tell us something of our social history and even, perhaps, a little about spelling and pronunciation.

Here for example is one of the charming epitaphs:

She was honest and Just
In all her ways,
God called her home
When he did please.

Some gravestones certainly seem to tell a tale, because they are engraved with the skull and cross-bones. One theory is that during the Plague of London, and for some years afterwards, this sign was carved on the gravestones of those who, it was believed, had died of the plague. The practice then remained fashionable for some years, as it would certainly help in deterring grave-robbers. Be that as it may, there are three adjacent stones of the Andrews family, dated 1672, 1675 and 1678, each carrying the skull and cross-bones. Incidentally, spelling not then being what it is today, one of these three DYED, another DESECED, and the other DECEACED.

Another historical oddity of the time was the way in which the year seems to have been less sharply defined. Thus George Sallia, a servant of his Royal Highness ye Prince of Wales, is recorded as having died March ye 2, 1738/9.

Heart attacks seem to have killed people last century just as they sometimes do these days, and this is suggested by epitaphs to two brothers. One of these is difficult to read, but ends: "the strongest man groans, fights, and dies." The other reads:

"A Sudden change! He in a moment fell
And had not time to bid his friend farewell.
Think nothing strange, chance happens unto all
His lots today, to Morrow thine may fall."

This last epitaph has a familiar ring to it; perhaps it has been quoted from Taplow in a book of epitaphs, or perhaps it did not even originate in this village.

Of course the finest burials were of the aristocratic family which occupied what is now Taplow Court, but the story of the vault below the graveyard deserves a separate account.

Chairman's Report at 31st A.G.M.

These extracts from Mr Hanbury's report at the A.G.M. last year are given here as a reminder of some of the current problems facing the area.

Trees on Boundary Road. A number of these trees had been destroyed in a grass fire on the Recreation Ground; they were being replaced. We had planted three trees on the Ground itself. County had offered to provide rowan and other trees for planting this autumn. Watering was a problem.

Flower Beds on Taplow Station. All the work on these beds was carried out by the Committee Members and their families; we were grateful to NSUK for providing wood chips, for transporting them to the station and for spending a morning helping us hump them over the bridge to the beds.

The Party on the Village Green.

(a). This year the party had been organised by David Aldridge's Sub Committee as both the Chairman and Secretary decided to take a rest from the hard work; on the day there were fewer people than last year due, probably, to the doubtful weather.

(b). We had, however, received a letter from Taplow Parish Council complaining in detail about the parking of cars on the Green, the lack of publicity and charging for entry. The Chairman was surprised that, after five successful years, the Council should see fit to find fault with our organisation of the Party.

(c). We had provisionally booked the Band and its tent for next year's party on 22 Jun 1991 but these could easily be cancelled if Members thought that we should not continue the party or if another organisation, eg the Parish Council, should run it.

(d). There was considerable discussion, but a show of hands showed that the Meeting wanted to continue the party as before.

Newsletter. Mr Hanbury thanked Danita Pierce for her efforts as Editor; the results spoke for themselves.

Thames Flood Relief Channel. We had just received some of the detailed plans which showed car parks along the banks. We were concerned about wild life in the Mill Leat. We had approached Tim Smith MP who had been onto the Audit Commission who were looking into the economic feasibility with NRA. I seemed that the cost was now up to £50M from £32M which it had been at the beginning.

Summerlease Gravel Appeal. The Chairman referred to this which, despite considerable efforts by Tony Hickman and Alistair Forsyth, Chairman of the Parish Council, was allowed due to the Inspector's view of the "need for gravel". We shall observe carefully that the conditions are observed.

Sainsbury's HomeBase Appeal. This we had also lost despite further efforts by Tony Hickman, this time with Dick Nutt for the Society. We were astonished to receive the inspectors opinion that more DIY superstores were needed in the area.

Appeals. We were grateful for the attendance of many members at both appeals and were only sorry that all our efforts were unsuccessful.

Planning Applications

Planning Decisions given by the Planning & Development Committee of the South Bucks District Council (SBDC):

Taplow House Hotel, Berry Hill, Taplow (SBD/863/89). Extensions and alterations to hotel to form additional bedrooms and car park extensions.	Refused
Taplow House Hotel, Berry Hill, Taplow (SBD/864/89). Listed Building Application for extensions and alterations to form additional bedrooms.	Conditional Consent
The Chestnuts, River Road, Taplow (SBD/1357/89). Single storey side extension.	Conditional Permission
Silchester House, Bath Road, Taplow (SBD/8/90). Outline application. Redevelopment of site to provide 14 flats.	Deferred
Silchester House, Bath Road, Taplow (SBD/313/90). Outline application. Redevelopment of site to provide 28 flats.	Refused
Cliveden Estate, Cliveden Road, Taplow (SBD/745/90). Formation of new exit to Cliveden Road, from car park.	Conditional Permission
Glenburn, Mill Lane, Taplow (SBD/649/90). Formation of room in roof space with new dormers, single storey lounge extension and detached triple garage.	Deferred
New Taplow Paper Mills, Mill Lane, Taplow (SBD/569/90). Continued use of one end bay of warehouse for vehicle maintenance and repair area. (Renewal of SBD/954/84).	Deferred for Site Visits
New Taplow Paper Mills, Mill Lane, Taplow (SBD/574/90). Retention of building and extension permitted under Outline Application SBD/955/84 and detailed applications SBD/662/87 and SBD/252/87 and continued use for the loading and unloading of lorries and the storage of paper. Continued use of part of former warehouse building as baling unit. (Renewal of SBD/955/84 and SBD/242/87).	Conditional Permission
The Old Coach House, Rectory Road, Taplow (SBD/458/90). Two storey and single storey extensions and alterations.	Conditional Permission
Horse and Groom Public House, Bath Road, Burnham (S/90/997/LB). Listed Building Application for removal of existing rear extensions and demolition of timber shed to rear of public house.	Conditional Consent
Horse and Groom Public House, Bath Road, Burnham (S/90/998/FF). Change of use of public house to staff accommodation and offices.	Conditional Permission
Glenburn, Mill Lane, Taplow (SBD649/90). Formation of room in roof space with new dormers; single storey lounge extension and detached triple garage.	Conditional Permission
Cliveden Hotel, cliveden Road, Taplow (SBD 747/90). Modification of planning permission SBD 384/89 to amend limit on number of persons to be employed from 85 to 105.	Conditional Permission

Miscellany

Bridge Boat Yard

The area on the Buckinghamshire side of the A4 near the Road Bridge is the subject of discussion with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

The Royal Borough is pressing the case for siting Maidenhead Rowing Club in the Boat Yard. This will cause the demolition of the Boat House. Pressure is being put on them to ensure that the pedestrian right of way, claimed by all local users, is maintained. However, part of the path, and presumably part of the Thames Walkway, will, as currently planned, restrict it to a narrow curved way with a chain link fence on one side and the stone of the road bridge on the other. This fence also debars access to the claimed Public Watering Place.

Our concern is that, after April this year, the area comes into Buckinghamshire with the county boundary change. We then will be held responsible for a very poor piece of ground used by the public.

We are asking if anyone can offer firm evidence of the rights of access from Mill Lane to the river bank in that area between Skindles and the bridge. If you can, please contact K.B. Francis, Maidenhead 21700 as soon as possible. The Royal Borough are due to consider the situation in the very near future. They state that the observations of local people, amenity bodies and others form an important part of any consideration.

Budge Francis

Cedar Chase Trees

The two magnificent trees which gave the name to Cedar Chase have had to be felled on grounds of safety. During the autumn of 1990, fungal growths were noticed on both trees and investigations were put in hand. Samples of the fungus were taken for analysis by a reputable firm of consultants (recommended by the Association of Arboriculturists) and identified as *Phaeolus Schweinitzii*. This is a pathogen which spreads from the roots and weakens the timber at the base of the tree where the stresses are greatest.

It is, unfortunately, a characteristic of fungal attack of this type that there is no indication of its presence until "fruiting bodies" appear on the outside of the affected tree. By this time it is generally too late to do anything about it except to remove the trees if they represent a hazard to life or property. A replacement programme is in hand.

Bill Ball

Village Green Party

The party will be held this year on Saturday 22nd June. The arrangements will be similar to that for previous years with dancing and food.

All Members will receive the usual circular with details in plenty of time but please put the date in your diary now.

A Sub Committee has been set up and has met to organise the activities so, if you have any suggestions, please get in touch with the Vice Chairman, David Aldridge on Maidenhead 24532.