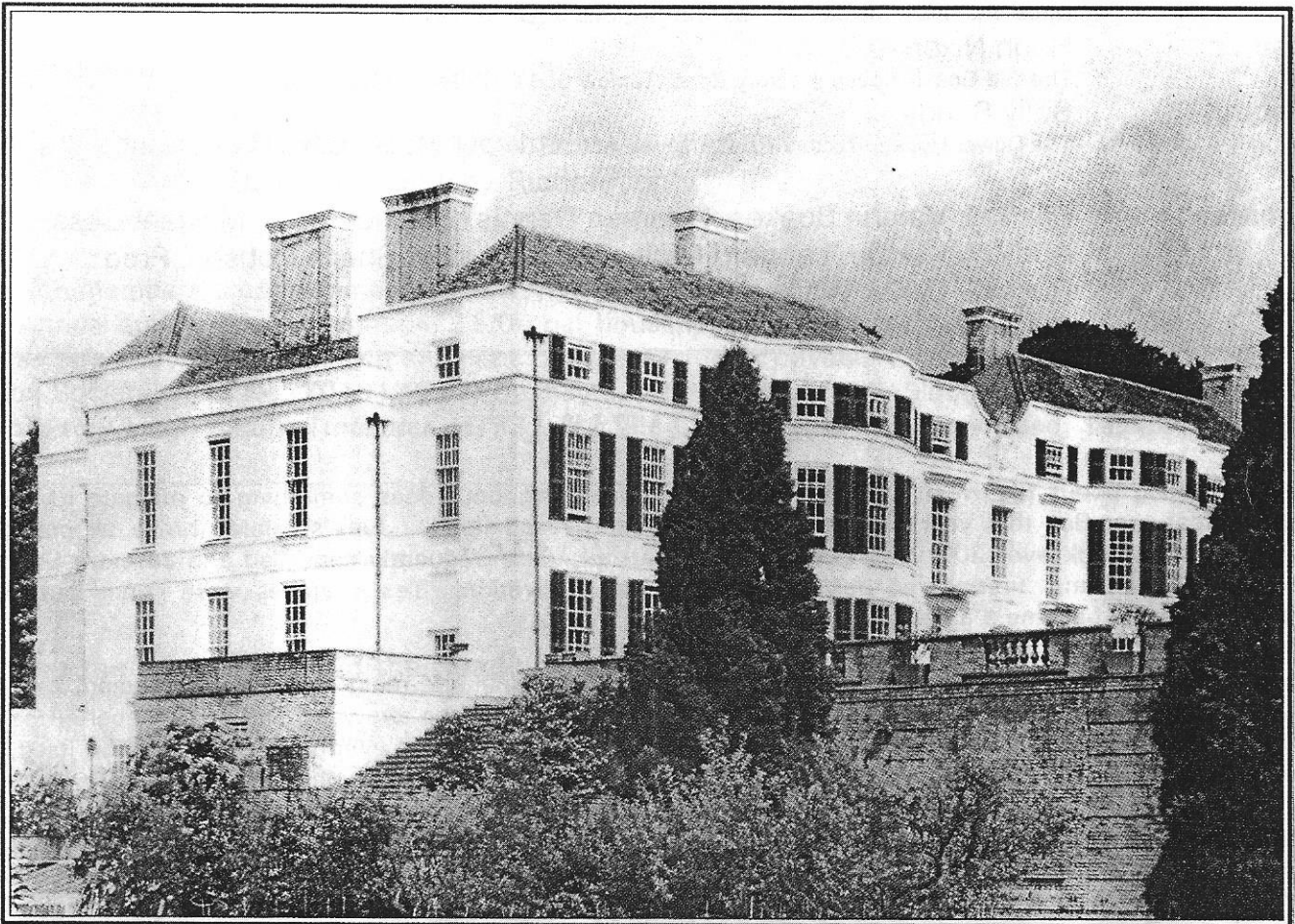


# HITCHAM & TAPLOW PRESERVATION SOCIETY

A Society, formed in 1959, to protect Hitcham, Taplow and the surrounding countryside from being spoilt by bad development or neglect.



*Nashdom circa 1924*

# NEWSLETTER

No 69 - Autumn 1997

## CONTENTS

Editorial	2
AGM	3
Taplow Jottings	3
Nashdom	4
Archaeological Work on the Flood Channel	5/6
Restoration of the Memorial Cross	7
Local Planning	7
Taplow Village mid 1950s	8

---

## HITCHAM AND TAPLOW PRESERVATION SOCIETY OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

<b>President</b>	Anthony Hickman
<b>Vice Presidents</b>	Louis Freedman, Sheila Horton, John Kennedy, Helen Lee, Anne Milne
<b>Chairman</b>	Eva Lipman Upper Bumbles, Saxon Gardens, Taplow, SL6 0DD Tel: 01628 24626
<b>Treasurer</b>	Hugh Nixon The Old Coach House, Rectory Road, Taplow SL6 0ET Tel: 01628 70388
<b>Secretary</b>	Sally Sandy The Dower House, Rectory Road, Taplow SL6 0ET Tel: 01628 36351
<b>Committee</b>	Bill Ball, Valerie Boakes, Maureen Dennis, Heather Fenn, Michael Goss, Andy McKenzie, Leonard Miall, Barrie Peroni, Sheila Robson, Fred Russell, Derek Walker, Helen Wogan.

---

## EDITORIAL

We all like talking about the weather. Deploring it to one's neighbour does something to mitigate its more depressing features. But this year's weather has really surpassed itself. June's rainfall broke all previous records, which go back over 200 years. Wimbledon matches were frequently cancelled and an extra Sunday session, on a first-come, first-served basis, was a popular innovation. Test matches were rained out. The Glastonbury Festival became a sea of mud.

In the circumstances this year's Village Green party with its traditional spit roast and country dancing, held on 21st June, was relatively lucky. A number of people were put off by the showers, and some departed early. But many bravely turned up, enjoyed dancing at first in the Village Hall, and eventually on the Green itself, to the music of Mike Sanderson and his Musicians. Entrance fees covered all the expenses.

This year's party was organised by a team consisting of Bill Ball, Maureen Dennis, Michael Goss, Eva Lipman, Cassie Lloyd, Andy McKenzie, Hugh Nixon, Sheila Robson and Fred Russell. In addition, Heather Fenn gathered an outstanding selection of prizes for the raffle which realised a contribution of £468.50 for the restoration of the Memorial Cross in the Old Churchyard (see page 7).

Afterwards there was one complaint, that no provision had been made for vegetarians. In future vegetarian burgers could be made available as a special order, if booked in advance. Any suggestions for vegetarian dishes that could easily be cooked on a spit would be welcome!

A note for your diary: next year's Village Green Party, in what is hoped will be better weather, will be on June 20th 1998, from 6 to 10 pm.

**Leonard Miall**

Maryfield Cottage, High Street, Taplow SL6 0EX Tel: 01628 604195 Fax: 01628 663621

# NOTICE OF 38th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday 17th October 1997

The Annual General Meeting of the Society  
will be held at 8 pm in the Village Hall, Taplow

## AGENDA

Apologies for Absence  
Election of President  
Election of Vice-Presidents  
Approval of Minutes of 37th AGM  
Matters Arising  
Hon. Treasurer's Report  
Chairman's Report  
Election of Officers  
Any Other Business

8.30 pm approx. Break for Refreshments

9.00 pm approx. THAMES SALMON REHABILITATION SCHEME  
Speaker: Lindsey Richardson

### Notes

- 1 Non-members are welcome but are not allowed to vote at the AGM.
- 2 Annual subscriptions (minimum £3.00 per household per year) are due on 1st October. Please renew by that date, with a cheque or banker's order payable to Hitcham & Taplow Preservation Society, Acc. No. 70491349 at Barclay's Bank plc, POB 756, Slough SL1 4SG Code No:20-78-58, to:- Hugh Nixon, Treasurer, HTPS, The Old Coach House, Rectory Road, Taplow SL6 OET

---

## TAPLOW JOTTINGS

Lincoln Lee

### Moving the Accident Along the Road?

As you drive south down Cliveden Road and approach the top of Berry Hill you see some arrows advising you to bear right. Excellent. The signs reduce the chance of a driver whistling over the top and hitting the fence. But why just there? Why not also at the other end of Rectory Road, where it joins Hill Farm Road?

And as you go down Berry Hill towards the old Bath Road, why aren't there yellow stripes across the road, reminding you to slow down, like those on the Windsor Relief Road? For that matter, when you drive down Hedsor Hill why isn't there a sign to suggest what your maximum speed should be at that first corner? There are signs like that on roads near Thame, which seems far less busy. And yet again, when you drive along Boundary Road towards that nasty junction at the Maypole, there are signs like those warning of motorway exits, indicating 300, 200, 100... yards.

Why not at every junction?

Presumably some of these signs have been erected because there has been an accident, and there can be little doubt that they prevent a repetition at that spot. The phrase 'accident black spot' is very popular with the media. Maybe the signs are cost-effective. But there are some people who argue the opposite, suggesting that the signs merely move the accident to another location. Drivers do seem to have abandoned that old adage about driving only as fast as knowledge of the road permits. One wonders what some members of the Society think.

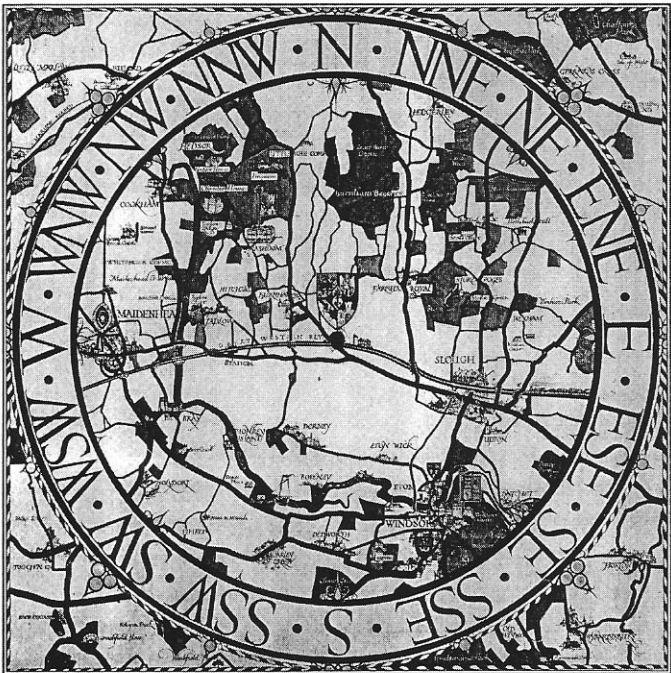
# NASHDOM

Leonard Miall

The many yellow signs (some say too many) along the local roads which direct drivers to Nashdom are a welcome indication that at last something is being done to preserve one of the finest buildings in this neighbourhood. Nashdom, on Taplow Common Road opposite Parliament Lane, was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens OM, the architect of the Cenotaph in Whitehall, the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Liverpool, and the Government buildings of New Delhi, as well as numerous country houses in the United Kingdom.

In 1908 the Russian Prince Alexis Dolgorouki and his wealthy English-born wife (Frances Wilson, the heiress of Fleetwood) commissioned Lutyens to build them a mansion in Buckinghamshire. They had decided to live in England because Russia was then in revolutionary turmoil. The Prince was a descendant of Count Vassili Dolgorouki, the renowned Russian Minister and diplomat who had been tortured and beheaded at Novgorod in 1739 on the charge of forging the will of Tsar Peter II.

Lutyens built Nashdom, which is the Russian for 'our Home', as a spacious house of gleaming white-painted brick. It was described at the time as having 'the spirit of Versailles and being reminiscent of the great Roman palaces'. In the grounds the newly-built fountains tinkled and electric light, a recent invention, added brilliance to the goldfish which swam in the pools. Above the main fireplace on the first floor an arrow swung over a decorated map of the neighbourhood to show the direction of the wind, activated by a weather vane on the roof.



*The Nashdom Wind Dial*

The magnificent ballroom had a minstrels gallery. An alabaster relief of Princess Alexis on a nearby wall can still be seen.

The Prince died in 1915, and the Princess four years later. In 1924 Nashdom was brought to the attention of a Benedictine community living in the Abbey House, Pershore, Worcestershire. This was a third attempt to revive the Benedictine discipline in the English Church. Its predecessors were at Llanthony, founded by Ignatius, and the Caldey Community. Pershore was initiated in 1913, but not established until 1922, when the minimum of three professed brethren was attained. The expanding Benedictine community needed a larger home, and in 1926 the move was made to Nashdom, the Russian name being maintained. A new wing was completed in 1968 and the lodge was adapted as a guest house.

The monks of Nashdom Abbey were an enclosed and mainly silent community. The Abbot was one of the world's leading experts on Canon Law, and another brother was principal adviser to the Archbishop of Canterbury. The walled gardens of the house included a large area for the cultivation of fruit and vegetables, so that the monks were as self-supporting as possible. Nashdom flourished under their care, but their numbers began to dwindle and after half a century they left to merge with a larger monastery near Newbury. Shortly before leaving in 1985 the Abbot and one of his colleagues addressed the Hitcham and Taplow Preservation Society at an Annual General Meeting.

For the past two decades Nashdom has been a white elephant. It is a Grade II listed building under the control of English Heritage. For a while there were hopes that it might be converted into a conference centre, but they came to nothing.

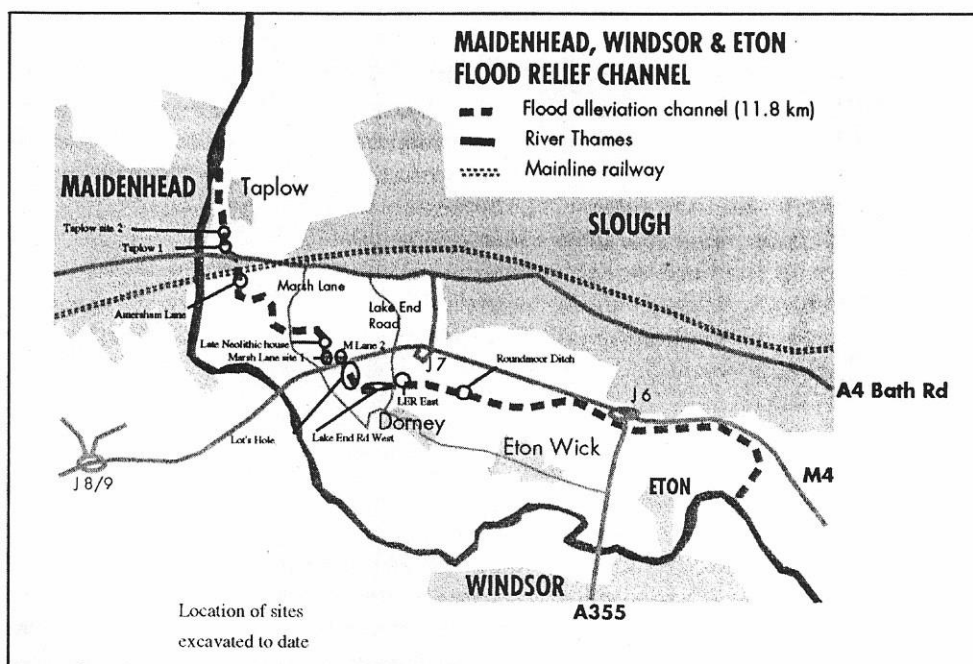
Now at last the Lutyens house is being sensitively converted into a limited number of luxury apartments and houses by Nashdom Ltd. This is a joint venture with Fairbriar plc, a development company which has been involved in the restoring of listed properties such as Farley Castle in Berkshire; and Macleod, whose acclaimed restoration of Oldfield Wood, the former convent in Surrey, has won several awards.

Fifteen two- and three-bedroom leasehold apartments are being created in the main house. A new East Wing will provide thirteen more. The outbuildings are being converted for freehold sale. Some will have adjoining gardens. The seventeen-acre grounds are being restored to their former glory, and residents will have the use of a hard tennis court, a heated outdoor pool, a solarium and a work-out gymnasium.

What a contrast with Nashdom's neglected neighbour, Dropmore.

If any member of the Society would like to see the original ballroom before it is converted, please telephone 01628 663435 for an appointment.

## Archaeological Work on the Flood Channel



*The Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton Flood Alleviation Scheme, which is so heartily disliked in Taplow, has brought an unexpected benefit in its wake: more clues to the settlement patterns of our prehistoric ancestors.*

**Phil Catherall**

Environment Agency Archaeologist in Charge

Last year we looked at a series of Middle Bronze Age ditches crossing one of the old river courses, together with two burial mounds which also dated to the Early and Middle Bronze Age (c. 2000 - 1200 BC). The anticipated earliest start date for the diversion is September or October, so we are ensuring that all archaeological problems are out of the way well in advance.

Traces of some earlier settlements have turned up this year, with Neolithic pottery and flints coming from ditches to the south of an old, peat-filled watercourse. From their arrangement, they would suggest a date of 3000 - 5000 BC for this settlement.

Some 100 metres to the north are a number of postholes which appear to form a roughly rectangular structure measuring some 8 metres by 5.5 metres. A possible fence line consisting of five postholes runs off to the north-east from the building. Neolithic buildings are extremely rare finds and although there is no direct dating yet from any of the postholes, all the finds from within 100 metres radius of the building are Neolithic in date. This may well indicate that the building belongs to this period. It is hoped that some cereal grains found in one of the postholes will enable a radiocarbon date to be obtained.

Eleven cremation burials were also recovered from the area. These were grouped in clusters, spaced 110 - 140 metres apart, possibly in two lines, aligned on the Middle Bronze ditches investigated last year.

Three of the cremations had been contained in pottery vessels, the rest had been placed in the holes without any obvious containers being used.

Close to the burial mounds, part of an Iron Age enclosure has also been uncovered, together with a trackway immediately to the east which contained Roman pottery in the top filling of the ditches. A post-built structure alongside one of the ditches forming the trackway is still under investigation. Another Iron Age enclosure is being uncovered near Lake End Road to the south of the M4, where a team from the Oxford Archaeological Unit, who are carrying out the work for the Environment Agency, have stripped a large area near The Pineapple. This contains several Iron Age sites, together with some medieval remains closer to Lake End Road itself.

Groups of Late Neolithic pits, dating from c. 2500 - 2000 BC have been discovered, containing large quantities of a type of pottery known as Mortlake Ware. Most of the pits appear to contain the remains of at least three pots, together with flintwork, burnt material and cremated remains. One pit, however, is much larger and deeper and contains no sign of burning or cremated remains. The quantity and the quality of the pottery is unusual and very exciting. Unfortunately the amount of ploughing which has taken place, especially over the last 50 years, has probably removed all traces of slighter remains such as postholes and floor levels which may once have been present. Analysis of the soils from the pits

might provide clues as to the status of the site and demonstrate whether it is a settlement or cemetery.

The presence, both of ditches and of at least one cremation from the middle and later phases of the Bronze Age (1500 - 800 BC), suggests that settlement and burial were both taking place on the site. This was followed by a Middle Iron Age site dating to around 400 BC which consisted of field boundaries and enclosures. The trackway, which was investigated earlier this year to the north of the M4, crosses this site. One interesting thing about this trackway is that its presence as part of the landscape seems to last well into the modern past. Some of its line is preserved on the 1808 AD Estate Map as a component of Ashford Lane, while the southern part might be represented by the footpath running down to Dorney Court from the present end of Ashford Lane.

The layout of fields and enclosures suggests that the settlement itself might be found on the southern edge of the site, although traces of buildings within the enclosure may have been removed by a later agricultural activity. A later remodelling of the site appears to have taken place at the end of the Iron Age with continuing occupation in the first two centuries of the Roman period. The indications are that in the Roman period the site was an agricultural unit rather than a settlement. Perhaps the occupation was seasonal. Animals would graze on the floodplain during the drier summers and move to higher ground for the winter.

From the 6th century AD, there seems to have been extensive Saxon occupation of the site. A large number of pits are found over the whole of the eastern part. These are similar in size and nature to those found during last year's work on the other side of Lake End Road and at Lot's Hole, although the number of pits is considerably larger and, unlike those at Lot's Hole there does not appear to be any evidence of re-cutting or re-use.

Two types of pit seem to be present, one deep and relatively narrow, the other shallower and bowl-shaped. Their original use is currently unknown, although the deeper ones may have been wells, provided that the Saxon water table was higher than at present. A subsequent lowering of the water table would lead to the decay of any organic remains in the bottom of the wells. Certainly at a later date they were used for the disposal of rubbish, although the amounts of rubbish found do not suggest that they were primarily intended for this use. At present there seems to be an increase in the amount of rubbish coming from the pits to the easternmost part of the site, which might indicate that the Saxon settlement lay in that area. The presence of quernstones for grinding corn, made from lava from the Rhineland, demonstrates both the trade contacts and the domestic nature of the occupation.

Loomweights and other weaving articles, together with more personal items such as combs and needles, are being recovered. Unfortunately there are no meaningful groups of postholes to suggest the location of houses, although there is one feature still to be investigated which might prove to be one of the sunken-floored buildings which are often found on Saxon sites. These appear to have functioned as craft sheds or workshops. In the absence of any other Saxon material between the Saxon burial at Taplow and the settlement site at Wraysbury, work on the flood alleviation scheme is providing important information about the period which will help future studies in the region.

Strangely, in view of the presence of medieval settlement on the eastern side of Lake End Road, no definitely medieval features have yet been discovered, although the post-medieval field boundaries as marked on the 1808 Estate Map are present. Work will continue on the site into September and then, when the site work finishes, the study of the finds will begin in Oxford.

---

## Yet Another Reason for the Name Berry Hill

Lincoln Lee

The previous edition of the Newsletter offered several possible reasons for Berry Hill having that name. One member of the Society came up with yet another.

Apparently, despite what it says in some books, the word Bray originally meant Ford, and there was at one time a ford where Brunel's Sounding Arch now stands. So, before the area around Ellington Road was developed, the road now called Berry Hill might perhaps have been Bray Hill. For that matter, of course, the extension of Berry Hill leads down to where at one time you could cross by ferry to Bray. Whatever next?

# Restoration of the Memorial Cross in the Old Churchyard, Taplow

Eva Lipman

It was noticed last summer that the base of the Celtic memorial cross in the old churchyard was in dire need of repair. After consulting with the vicar (it is owned by the church) and after checking that it would come within our Rules, it was decided the Society would try to undertake this. We had to do some of the paperwork in the name of the Church and Alan Dibden has given his support.

In September 1996 I asked for three quotes. Luckily the one from Cliveden Conservation Workshops was the most competitive. Funding had to be found and it was decided that the proceeds from the raffle at the 1997 Village Green Party should go towards it. The Taplow and Hitcham Recreation Ground Association very kindly offered to fund half the cost of the scheme which was not financed by official bodies.

In November 1996 I applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund. After satisfying them that we might be eligible, they sent the detailed application forms. These required at least half an inch of paperwork, and quite a few phone calls. It was eventually decided that, as English Heritage might be interested in the project, the Lottery could not help us. I gathered that it would have been much easier to obtain a £50,000 grant than a £5,000 grant

from the lottery! I had already applied to English Heritage for Scheduled Monument Consent at the outset, and this came through in April 1997. English Heritage was therefore aware of the project and I was able to use quite a bit of the documentation which I had assembled for the Heritage Lottery Fund to apply to English Heritage for a grant. In June I heard that they would give us 40% of the costs. I had also applied for a South Bucks Community Grant (South Bucks District Council) in September 1996 and heard in March 1997 that they would be prepared to give us a grant of £2,000.

In the meantime I had been trying to discover the original wording on the base of the cross which had become indecipherable over the years. I tried various books and newspaper records of the period, together with the church archives, the County Museum and Library Service, the Oxford Diocesan Registry, the County Archivist, various local historians et al. I eventually found an entry in Caroline Georgiana Grenfell's diary of the 22 September 1868 in the County Record Office which reads "The cross in the churchyard put up. ...The inscription is 'In memory of all who rest in this churchyard' and a text." I cannot find details of this text anywhere, and therefore will simply put on the restored base "In memory of all who rest in this churchyard".

---

## PLANNING

The Minutes of the SBCD Planning & Transportation Committee from 4th March 1997 to 1 July 1997 have been studied and extracts are given below:

**Huntswood Golf Course, Taplow Common Road, Taplow.** Retention of entrance walls was unconditionally permitted, but the retention of externally illuminated wall signs was refused. Single storey front and rear extensions to the clubhouse were also refused.

**Maidenhead Sea Cadet Headquarters, Mill Lane, Taplow.** Conditional permission was given for a single storey side extension.

**Trumpers Field, off Meadow Way, Taplow.** An application by the Dorney Village Hall Foundation for the construction of two tennis courts was refused.

**The Bishop Centre, Bath Road, Taplow.** Anglian Conservatories were given conditional permission to increase the number of conservatories being displayed from 5 to 7 and to incorporate an office and seating area.

**Joes Folly, Amerden Close, Taplow.** An application by Mrs J Hire for the demolition of wooden kennels and the erection of a block of 8 kennels was deferred.

**St Nicolas Church of England School, Rectory Road, Taplow.** The application by the Parent teacher Association for a single storey side extension to the reception class was given conditional permission.

---

Unless otherwise stated, the views expressed in the Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Society or its Committee. The Newsletter is published by the Hitcham and Taplow Preservation Society. It is edited by Leonard Miall who welcomes contributions and is printed for duplication by Ginny Felton, 21 Byways, Burnham, SL1 7EB Tel: 01628-602972



*Taplow Village in the mid-1950s before the Village Green was created.*