

Hitcham and Taplow Society

Newsletter 117: Spring 2022
£3.50 to non-members



www.taplowsociety.org.uk

Hitcham and Taplow Society

Formed in 1959 to protect Hitcham, Taplow and the surrounding countryside from being spoilt by bad development and neglect.

President: Eva Lipman
Vice President: Fred Russell
Acting Chairman: Roger Worthington
Treasurer: Robert Hanbury
Secretary: Roger Worthington
Committee: Andrew Findlay, Charlie Greeves, Robert Harrap, Rupert Sellers, Jonathan Specktor, Jacqueline Turner.
Newsletter Editor: Not-the-editor team
Newsletter Production: Andrew Findlay

Contact Address: HTS, Littlemere, River Road, Taplow, SL6 0BB
secretary@taplowsociety.org.uk
07787 556309

Cover picture: Dunloe Lodge - the last phase of the Mill Lane development (Jacqueline Turner)

Editorial

Our cover marks the final stage of the redevelopment of the Mill Lane site. Your Society can take credit, alongside the parish council, our then local SBDC councillors and many individuals for what has been a very successful outcome, so much better than had been feared from earlier proposals. And thank you to Berkeley Homes for delivering it. There has been a subsequent lull in major development proposals for Taplow which may last at least until we have a new Local Plan for Bucks.

Good news is that the Village Green Party is back, although we cannot yet say that Covid is behind us. More happy events are also in train with the Platinum Jubilee for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in early June. A number of separate celebrations are to be held around the parish.

Sadly your committee is still struggling with no chairman and no editor. Looking back over 60 years of the Newsletter it has served as a comprehensive journal of record for Taplow life and we would all be the poorer without it. Being the editor is interesting as it gives you an excuse to nose around and ask questions everywhere.

Village Green Party

18:00 on 18th June 2022

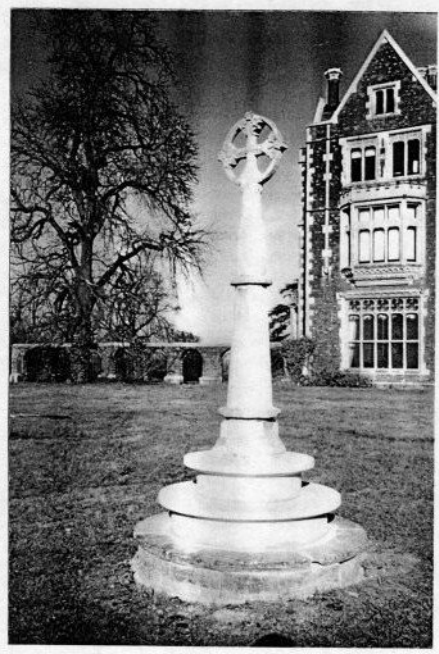
Tickets now available:

www.taplowsociety.org.uk/vgp

Acronyms

BUA is Buckinghamshire Unitary Authority. TPC is Taplow Parish Council. SBDC is South Bucks District Council (now defunct), TfB is Transport for Buckinghamshire

The Celtic Cross



Celtic Cross after restoration in 1998



Robert Harrap



Tony Bridge

Taplow suffered its fair share of damage from this winter's exceptionally severe storms with trees down and debris everywhere but by far the worst result was the damage to the Celtic Cross near Tæppa's Mound. There has been a cross in the old church-yard there since the 12th Century. The cross had seriously deteriorated over many years and an earlier project to restore the base was successfully driven by the Society (see "25 years ago" and NL 69 & 70). The recent storms did as much damage as 150 years of weathering and we are sure that Eva Lipman never expected to be faced with another restoration project!

Cliveden Conservation (who did the original work) have inspected the bits and tell us it is restorable. They quote £2755. Our earlier effort was funded by contributions from English Heritage £1988, SBDC £2350, THRGA £316 and ourselves £316. We expect shortly to be in pursuit of today's deep pockets.

Roger Worthington

Hitcham House



Hitcham House today is divided up into apartments but is still very much the original house.

The railway came to a stop at Taplow until Mr Brunel finished his bridge in 1839 and the surrounding area became very attractive for commuters into London. Taplow continued to have a superior train service well into the twentieth century. George Hanbury purchased a piece of land in the parish of Hitcham and built his house in the angle between Hitcham Lane and Hitcham Road. He employed London Surveyor, Robert Marnock, and we have his account which states "To attending to fixing site of Blythwood House and superintending the garden works"; he started on Oct 9th 1866 and his charge was 3 guineas a day. By Oct 27th he had already completed a plan of his ideas, so much so that on the 31st October he met Mr.T.Roger Smith the Architect to explain his views regarding the site of the house!

At the same time as planning the house Mr.Marnock was also turning his thoughts to the planning of the gardens which will surround the house The first part that he seemed to concentrate on were the kitchen gardens. He started on these in November and by December 11th seems to have planned where the walls of this garden would be and its various hothouses. For all this work, at the end of November he charged Mr.Hanbury £13-7-9d for four and a quarter days work!

By the end of 1866 Mr.Hanbury had agreed to the scheme of the grounds, walls and fencing. Turner's estimate for the garden planting had

been approved and work had begun on same. The plans for the adaptation of the levels of the grounds – especially relating to the footpath were in progress, and the Highway Surveyor had determined the line of the boundary fence. All that was needed now was the House to be built!

The new year of 1867 saw the ground plan for the house being staked out on the 28th January. Two days later Mr.Hanbury, the Architect, and Mr. Marnock met at Hitcham to discuss the house which was now staked out. Mr.Hanbury obviously wanted his wife to see it for her approval before giving the final consent as there is an entry in the document for the 1st February which states: 'Received letter from George Hanbury to say Mrs.Hanbury was satisfied to believe it would do, without her seeing it.' On the 4th February the Contractor was given instructions as to where to lay surface earth from the foundations to form a store for use when the work is completed. So began the building of Blythwood House. It stayed with this name until Mr Hanbury purchased from the Fortesques land on the other side of Hitcham Lane which contained the site of the old Hitcham House, a Georgian House which had been burnt and then partly demolished; this enabled the name Blythwood to be dropped in favour of "Hitcham House". The purchase probably also included the land where Hitcham House Farm is now.

Thanks to Mrs Beryl Montague for research and to the present Mr Hanbury – great grandson of George Hanbury (and our treasurer).

25 and 50 Years Ago

What goes around comes around

Our newsletter has been running for over 60 years and we are reminded that some topics never seem to go away. Administration boundaries are endlessly fought over as can be seen from this excerpt from Spring 1972 NL24:

THE COUNTY BOUNDARY.

The Royal Commission has reported, the Parliamentary recommendations have been made, and, suddenly we are aware that the old order is threatened. There is a conflict between natural sentiments and the needs of administration that must be resolved. We realise that counties are not just areas on a map contained by lines called 'boundaries' but the places in which we live, with familiar views, lanes, fields, buildings and institutions. These divisions of the land have three main aspects, historical, geographical, and administrative.

Here in Bucks. it is the Thames that we might lose. Enquiries at the County Record Office produced no certain information of a definite decision that this geographical feature should mark the county limit. We asked Colonel Palmer of Dorney and in a most interesting reply he says:

" So far as I know the R. Thames has been the county Boundary for 1,000 years or more and no good reason has yet been produced for changing it.."

"The Parish of Dorney is part of Bucks. and wishes to remain so. Furthermore we wish to retain our separate identity and are averse to amalgamation with an adjoining Parish. Above all we do not wish to be absorbed by Slough...."

Clearly Taplow sentiments have not changed with respect to Slough! Buckinghamshire County is now busy redrawing ward boundaries. Perhaps a little more parochial but never-the-less of keen local concern.

Preserving our heritage is also a never-ending activity as this extract from our Spring 1997 NL68 issue shows:

The Society had for some years been clearing grass from the gravestones in the Old Churchyard, now established as National Heritage Site Number 19050, and had authorised the destruction of saplings which were dislodging some of the stones. The Celtic Cross in the Old Churchyard was in urgent need of repair. She outlined the work that she was doing to raise the necessary funding.

This was the first indication (from chairman Eva Lipman) that the Celtic Cross was in need of attention. The work was done in 1998 and reported on in issue NL70. As we see on page 3, it has duly come around again, although this time on a much more serious scale.

Roger Worthington

Living in Taplow Riverside



Nearly five years on and how does it feel? One word – great! I hoped for a friendly 'community' feel when we retired and moved, and this ticks the box perfectly. We were the tenth household to move into our development. Fellow residents and those moving in shortly after all seemed keen to get to know each other and share local knowledge. Mike Turner and I had lived in Taplow in the 1980's and so had knowledge of local amenities, useful when you need a postbox, local school, riverside walk or cycle routes.

By 2019 the number of residents had massively expanded and young families with babies and children added to the diverse group of ages and ethnic backgrounds. Then suddenly, we were all in lockdown, those who normally disappeared at the crack of dawn were working from home and school children were ever more present around the locale. No matter, social media came to the fore (we already had an active site) and residents communicated and shared practical household tips with newcomers and introduced themselves to the group. We had a regular mobile van with early morning coffees and breakfast treats for those pining for a 'bean to cup experience' and a mobile grooming van offering haircuts between zoom calls. A committee was selected to represent the whole estate with the intention of managing from within once all the residencies are sold. In fact, with the completion of Dunloe Lodge, all Berkeley's properties are now sold. The shared grounds and gardens were a blessing during

lockdown and are regularly enjoyed by many more than just residents. The walkways provide a perfect and attractive route for all, from the fit and energetic to those less able or pushing wheelchairs and buggies. Open spaces readily become impromptu cricket pitches, picnic areas and mother and baby meets. The trim trail provides a safe jogging circuit with stop-off exercise bars and balance beams en route. Of course, Taplow Bridge (designed by local architect Martin Knight's practice) has made a world of difference to the possibilities of a circular walk and a short hop to the wonderful Ray Mill Island.

The Roux and Boathouse Restaurants, both with splendid riverside views, offer gastronomic delights after a short stroll. The proposed gastro pub by Hall and Woodhouse will bridge the gap between the two restaurants with indoor/outdoor drinking and dining and opportunities to meet fellow neighbours. Work should be starting this year with completion in 2023.

We have seen our own garden develop from a walled green (snowy) patch to a mature mix of trees, vegetables and flowers, a mindful delight to wake up to every morning. Birds and wildlife provide us with hours of enjoyment and include blackcaps and nuthatches and a cheeky fox balancing on the pergola. I think I can speak for the majority of Taplow Riverside estate when I say that this is a truly wonderful place to be – let's keep it that way!

Jacqueline Turner

Hitcham and Taplow Society

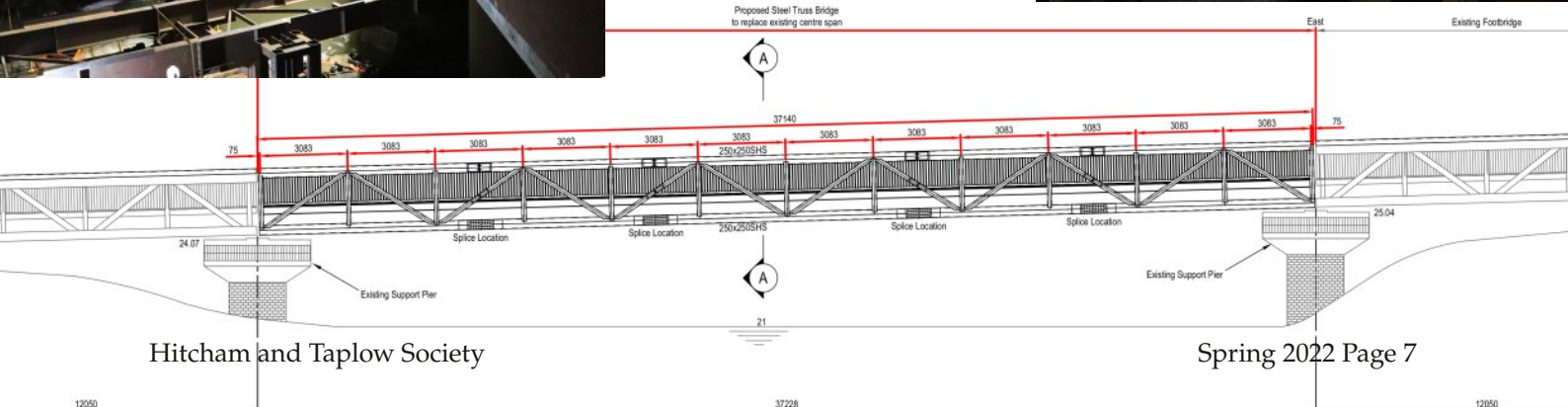
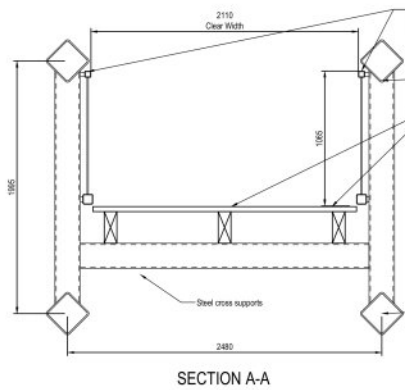


Mill Lane Footbridge

The failed footbridge was removed on 16th December. It was lifted on a purpose-built steel carrier mounted on a pontoon barge, cut up by a tree surgeon and transferred to lorries by a large crane at the Mill Lane road bridge.

BUA plan to replace the central span with a steel lookalike, rotating the main members by 45° to deter swimmers – a rather boring design, but not as bad as some earlier proposals.

Andrew Findlay



Parish Council update

Andrew Findlay



George

George Sandy served as a Parish Councillor 1975-1983 and 2003-2022 and was chairman from 2012 to 2017. He has stood down after this long service. He will however not be totally absent from meetings as he will often attend in his capacity as a Cliveden Ward councillor for BUA. His achievements on our behalf were well recorded in NL 107 in the spring of 2017 and we thank him for his long service.

We welcome Professor Alan Sinclair of Orkney Court to the council. Alan married in Taplow in 1981 and moved back here 6 years ago after living in London. He is a Consultant at Kings College London.



Alan Sinclair

Alan

Following the renovation of the Perkins room further work is continuing in the rest of the Hall, delayed by revenue shortage during the pandemic. Sadly some damp intrusion was only spotted after it had caused damage to the Reading Room Murals. The damp problem is now cured but the restoration of the mural requires careful assessment and skill. Fortunately one of the early uses of the Land Securities money was to make high quality photos of the mural. Is there an Old Master forger in the village?

The annual Parish Meeting is on May 10th at 8pm. Do attend to air your views on Taplow governance and hear what TPC thinks it has been doing in the last year.

Kerbstones

Roger Worthington

You may remember last year the troubles with the kerbstones on Rectory Road being continuously dislodged by every passing lorry and being rescued to Nigel Smales' garden. After much ado TfB were on the job, the road was closed, stones re-sited and problems solved. Or not. This photo of the kerbstones on 1st April (!) this year perhaps serves as a fitting epitaph to the demise of TfB, that unloved provider of our Highway services for too long.



Role of the newsletter

The recent work we have done to complete the uploading of all newsletters to our web site brought my attention to the nature of the Newsletter and its content and how this has evolved over 60 years. NL101 told how the hard work of producing an issue is done and NL112 listed the editors who toiled away at it.

The actual appearance of the Newsletter perfectly traces the technological advances the world has made in these years.

Early issues were probably made from a typewriter created stencil that was then put through a 'Gestetner' duplicator using very messy inking processes. This happily gave way to the photocopier (doubtless someones office machine after hours) until NL75. This burst into colour by 1998 and from 2001 the Newsletter was printed commercially.

From 2003 it was sent as a '.pdf', meaning that we had almost total control over its appearance and could work to much shorter printing turnaround at a lower cost. This did of course require that we have in-house skills to do the layout and PDF production ourselves, a job borne for many years now by Andrew Findlay.

Newsletter content also mirrors technology changes as well as the evolving focus of the Society. For many of our early years the only way to know about or read a planning application was

to go to the District Council office or possibly the local library. To overcome this limitation the early issues listed all the planning applications made in Taplow and the subsequent decisions – a laborious task. The emergence of the internet and the subsequent implementation of online access to the District Council Planning Department transformed the ease of use and removed the need for this big list in every issue. From then on issues could simply concentrate on those applications of significance or contention. Articles such as one I found explaining about 'low energy lightbulbs' equally became superfluous as just about everything is only a few clicks away.

Removal of the word 'Preservation' from our name reflected a desire both to avoid being seen just as a NIMBY organisation but also to reflect a widening concern for our Heritage and the wider Taplow community.

Where next? There is a lull at present in major development proposals for Taplow, after many decades of large scale projects from Cedar Chase and Buffins to Mill Lane. This can of course change at short notice but focus today seems to be swinging to environmental and ecological concerns and emphasis on the protection of smaller scale matters across the parish.

Roger Worthington



Planning Matters

Andrew Findlay



Downlands Barn: No Des Res

We recently responded to a BUA consultation on electoral boundary changes. This is the hopefully last stage in realigning the county after its conversion to a Unitary Authority. The initial implementation had an astronomical number of councillors and clearly had to be rationalised. A first wave of discussions with the Boundary Commission settled that there should be 98 councillors – still a lot. This last consultation asked how many wards there should be with how many councillors each.

As there are 49 wards presently our response was that leaving them alone with two councillors each solved the problem. Along with many others this means that our Cliveden Ward would lose a councillor but such changes are broadly inevitable. The large scale developments mooted for the north of the county suggest that there will be a future need for realignment. However in the absence of an agreed government planning policy at this time, no local plan available for several years yet and fairly heated disputes over actual housing need numbers, any short term changes would be a serious council workload to little clear benefit. We shall see.

Miv Wayland-Smith



Marsh Lane gate: neglected

The last few months have been rather quiet in terms of significant new applications but there have been decisions on some outstanding ones.

The appeal by Challen's Chicks on the application to build a house in Marsh Lane was approved. This was perhaps rather expected as SBDC had originally granted an approval for temporary accommodation. Our objections had been made on the grounds that, despite government statements as to their strong protection of the Green Belt, in reality there appear to be all too many ways in which development can perfectly lawfully take place therein.

Another application that was happily turned down was a subsequent one following an approval to convert Downlands Barn to residential. This sought to demolish the barn on the grounds that it already had permission as a residence and then redevelop the site. This will hopefully stem any further wave of unlikely barn applications. Downlands Barn may even remain as such as it would be a very ungainly house.

Marsh Lane has been the focus of some attention. Following a steady stream of complaints from residents the Parish Council obtained approval from the area technician for the siting of MVAS speed detection systems. Funding approval from the Community Board has been applied for.

Many of the approach roads to Taplow have white gates to the side of the carriageway but the one in Marsh Lane has been lying neglected on the side for a number of years. This has been rescued and restored. It may hopefully act as a slight speed awareness marker as well as improving the amenity.



...and restored



The Hermitage in 2011

The Cliveden Woodlands entrance has caused excessive on-road parking and damage to the verges. There are discussions with the National Trust over possible alleviations.

Highway services in Buckinghamshire have been provided under a commercial contract to create TfB 'Transport for Buckinghamshire'. This rather unloved agreement is coming to an end so hopefully we may see a more responsive service soon.

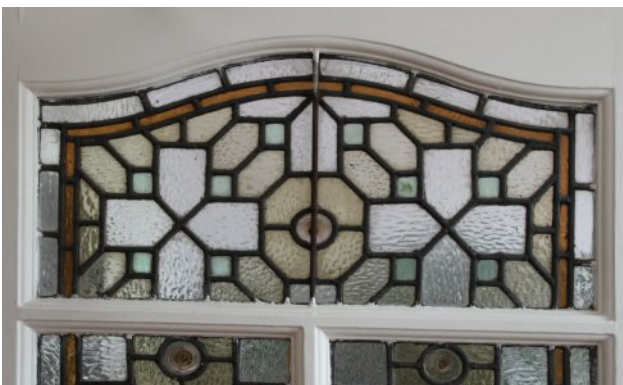
Our last issue noted the setting up by BUA of a Local Heritage Asset Register. This has been pursued by the Taplow Neighbourhood Plan Working Party, driven by Martin Maund and has successfully submitted The Hermitage and Coach House on the Ellington estate as our first entries. They have passed through all the stages of assessment and await cabinet approval. It remains to be seen how much such listing influences development applications.

These planning pages are usually full of grumbles and worries over developments so it is refreshing to look forward to a project of a different nature.



Behind these forbidding gates Morgan Stevens has applied to develop an artisan shop selling his own produce grown on the site and other organic products. The site is a large long neglected remnant of the John Noble estate where the house has been replaced by the Berry Hill Court flats. There has been no shop in the village for 50 years. We wish him well.

On a final note the Society is sad to note the resignation of Heather Baker – better known here as Heather Fenn. Few have made such a contribution to Taplow life. The high quality of the Mill Lane development and the very existence of the Taplow footbridge owe much to her perseverance and energy over many years. We wish her well in her new life in Devon with our thanks.



Hermitage internal detail

Roger Worthington

Tidy up Taplow



Instruction manual
(Cath Knight)

Project Plan
(Jacqueline Turner)

Result
(Mike Turner)

We were lucky with the weather again for the third annual litter pick. Twenty participants collected twenty bags of rubbish and it was generally noted that there was less rubbish than previous years. Are the general public appreciating a cleaner environment perhaps? A big thank you to everyone who took part. We were delighted that everyone stayed on for tea

and cake and chit chat. The exercise will hopefully be repeated next Spring and we encourage you to join the throng.

Jacqueline Turner

And a very big thank you to Jacqueline and Mike and Charlie for impeccable organisation and great cakes - ed.

This half page has no article

It reflects the fact that without an editor the Newsletter is increasingly difficult to produce. We would hate for it to disappear. It has recorded life in Taplow, with our concerns and interests, for some 60 years to the benefit of all Taplow, not just our members.

So please look around and at yourself. Could you be the Editor? It takes enthusiasm more than anything else together with an interest in the place where you live.

There is plenty of support available

Improving amenities for Taplow



Cliveden Café

Great news is that the Orangery Café at Cliveden has reopened after a major refurbishment. The roof has been almost completely rebuilt (15 individual roof sections to match the existing struts) and the interior brought very much up to date. The separate small coffee bar at the end has been incorporated into a single larger space with a much improved service area. As almost everything at Cliveden is listed the planning process and construction detail was very much drawn out but the result is excellent. As an interesting quirk, new General Manager Robert Miles tells us that it had never actually been an Orangery but mainly a conservatory with very early electric heating! Built close to the house so that guests could walk across to be entertained with fresh fruits.



Roger Worthington

Taplow House (Hotel) – A new look

As we go to press we learn that a major revamp and relaunch is nearing completion. Hannah Folwell, sales and marketing manager, tells us there is a refocus away from traditional business groups and weddings to a much more amenities-based approach, centred around the provision of extensive spa facilities and reflected in the dropping of the word 'Hotel' from their name. Treatment rooms, a juice bar, spa, showers and nail bar are all housed below ground under the original brick vaulted ceiling in a maze of small rooms. As Taplow House is a listed building it has taken much effort and patience over several years to achieve these results. The restoration uncovered a mosaic floor to the reception area which has been carefully restored and is a reminder of the grand history of the house. Dining facilities are also greatly enhanced with a new chef.



Taplow House

We expect that a result of the redevelopment and refocus will be that Taplow House becomes much more accessible to Taplow locals in addition to hotel guests. We wish them every success.

Jacqueline Turner & Roger Worthington



Sustainable gardening

For 50 years I have gardened with minimal soil disturbance, (so as to conserve the natural biome of the soil), with minimal watering, no fertiliser except my own compost, and no pesticides. My plants like it where they are so I don't have the uphill battle to save those that don't thrive. It is what I call 'negative gardening' in that I deadhead, cut back those plants which are overwhelming their neighbours, and pull out those which I don't want. Foxgloves etc. are allowed to seed. When ripened I shake them and lay them where I want them to grow next year. Nature knew best when to plant its abundant seeds. I try to grow bee friendly plants where possible.

We only have the lawn cut every other week. It saves on fuel and this allows small weeds to flourish. This means that our lawn is not a 'green desert' but is buzzing with insects in the summer and has birds happily pecking away on it. It still has stripes.

Everything in the garden has its turn at shouting 'look at me' and then it can go back to being a bit untidy but as other things take their turn it really does not matter.

I buy as few plants as possible, not because I am being mean, but the fewer plants are introduced into the garden the fewer the chances of importing pests and diseases. How sustainable is it to ship plants, which may have been grown in greenhouses using compost, which might not have been made by the suppliers, round the world and sold in plastic pots? Think of the carbon footprint involved. I take cuttings and layerings and sometimes sow seeds which of course I can do now because my garden is so very well established.

Shrubs and small trees, some evergreen, comprise the structure of the garden so there is a symphony of different greens and interesting shapes all year round. There are flowers every day of the year so that on Christmas morning my dining room table always has a small vase of freshly picked flowers.

I love the different seasons with their wonderful colours and how the garden changes completely as they come around.

Here are a few photos of my garden throughout the year.

Eva Lipman



Remembrance Day

The Kohima Education Trust



The Cemetery at Kohima

At a well-attended Remembrance Day service our Vice-President Fred Russell laid a wreath on behalf of the Society. Although noted earlier in the St Nicolas newsletter, the Kohima Epitaph spoken at the service has a strong connection to Taplow so we thought it would be of further interest.

*"When you go home, tell them of us and say,
for your tomorrow, we gave our today"*

The epitaph is carved on the memorial of the 2nd British Division in the War Cemetery at Kohima on the slopes of Garrison Hill, in what was once the District Commissioner's tennis court. It was therefore remarkably appropriate that at our service this epitaph was read by Esme Mitchell.

Roger Worthington



Esme Mitchell

That District Commissioner for Naga Hills was Esme's great uncle Sir Charles Pawsey! Taplow may be small but we have global connections.

This version of the epitaph is linked with the battle at Kohima, seen as one of the most critical of the 2nd World War in the east, between Japanese and Anglo-Indian forces. It derives from one written by John Edmonds in 1916 and is thought to be inspired by an epitaph by Simonides in honour of the Spartans who fell at the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC. Edmonds' original wording has also morphed from what he intended as a 1st World War memorial inscription for a graveyard in France:

*"When you go home, tell them of us, and say
"For your to-morrows these gave their to-day"*

There is a Kohima Museum In York if you would like to know more:

www.kohimamuseum.co.uk

We are still awaiting a date from our stonemason Adrain Powell to add the WW2 names to the Memorial plinth but fully expect this to be done in time for our next Remembrance Day.

Roger Worthington

Ukraine

Sadly today we are reminded that war is not just a matter of remembrance but is ever present. Many individuals in Taplow have responded with donations and a major effort is being led by the church, working with local resident Ukrainian Sasha Savitsky to deliver much needed supplies. Our new Parish Councillor Professor Alan Sinclair is working with a WHO group to identify key medications for the elderly. We have offered the raffle at the VGP to raise funds for these efforts. If you can help further please contact:

taplowforukraine@gmail.com
alexandra.savitsky@gmail.com

Lincoln's End

Remembering Lincoln Lee

Flying Scotsman



No magazine with pretensions to Heritage can miss items such as the Flying Scotsman crossing the Brunel bridge!

Anti-Social Behaviour



Sadly anti-social behaviour has returned in strength to the river bank south of the Brunel bridge. Eton has closed the Rowing Lake to the public in response to the same issue.

The dubious benefits of traffic lights

You might have noticed in March that one of our endless A4 queues was caused by work on the Berry Hill traffic lights. The use of 4-way temporary lights produced queues tailing back past the fire station roundabout. But one morning there were no queues at all, although the work was not finished. Why? They had forgotten to turn on the lights!

Platinum Jubilee celebrations

There are a number of separate activities planned rather than a single parish event.

The church is arranging tours of village gardens and refreshments. There is an application to close the High Street for a tea party and fun and at least River Road and Cliveden Gages are planning events.

Taplow Court



Happily, Open Days are returning to Taplow Court! We are advised that dates are:
The afternoons (2.00pm to 5.00pm) of Sunday 3rd July, Sunday 7th August, Sunday 4th September and Sunday 11th September (National Heritage Day).

Published by the Hitcham and Taplow Society

E-mail: editor@taplowsociety.org.uk

Unless otherwise stated, the views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Society or its Committee.

Prepared for printing by Andrew Findlay using Scribus, Linux, and The Gimp

Printed by Gpex