

# Hitcham and Taplow Society

Newsletter 120: Autumn 2023  
£3.50 to non-members

[www.taplowsociety.org.uk](http://www.taplowsociety.org.uk)

# Hitcham and Taplow Society

*Protecting and enhancing Hitcham, Taplow, and the surrounding countryside for the local community*

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Cover picture: Early morning on the Jubilee River by Jacqueline Turner  
All material by Roger Worthington unless otherwise noted

## Editorial

It has been a relatively quiet period after the excitements reported in previous issues and finishing with the Coronation of King Charles III. However the stresses on Taplow coming from the final opening of the Elizabeth line are now becoming all too apparent in Approach Road and are discussed in this issue. Traffic levels are generally back to pre-Covid levels. We had plans then to monitor pollution levels on the A4 that were shelved as traffic levels dropped dramatically. Should we reinstate them or will enough electric cars arrive quickly enough? The Mayor of London clearly doesn't think that will happen. The moorings and parking issues reported on in this issue are reminders of how far away from Aylesbury we are – a principal concern for us when the Unitary Council was created. We hope that by our next issue we will be able to report on the completion of our technology update. In the meantime see the notice on this page.

### Make Contact!

We occasionally send information to members by email. Messages have "[HTSmembers]" in the subject line. If you have not received one of these

in the past few months it may be that our existing fragile membership system has lost you. We are working on more robust systems but if you suspect we have lost you please send your preferred email address to: treasurer@taplowsociety.org.uk

### Abbreviations

BC Buckinghamshire Council  
EA Environment Agency  
EDRA Ellington & District Residents Association  
NLnn Newsletter back-issue number: see website  
TfL Transport for London

# AGM

8pm on 6th December  
In the Village Hall



# Coronation

The Coronation of King Charles III took place only days after our last issue so it may seem a long time ago now but Taplow celebrated in style as always, so here are some reminders of the fun.



Village Green photos by Cat Howard

River Road photos by Anne Fairweather

# Village Green Party 2023

## A big thank you to all the helpers

Every year when we report on the Village Green Party there is a thank you to the helpers. We thought you might like to know just how big this effort is.

We have some 205 tasks listed on a spreadsheet that has been refined over many years to improve the event and avoid mistakes.

The day before, Taplow Court Estate generously deliver seasoned logs ready for the ox-roast fire.

Set-up starts on Saturday morning with teams erecting the band tent, ticket tent, BBQs, bunting, lighting etc.

The fire is lit at 5:30am, ready for the butcher to deliver the ox at 6am. Hourly shifts continue until 6pm to keep the fire stoked, the ox turned, and the meat thermometer checked. The ox is then transferred to the carving table for the beef to rest and tenderise.

At 6pm we see the evening team of ox carvers, barbecue cooks and front of house servers who feed 300 hungry villagers. It can be a bit hectic but always fun.

Pictures by Jacqueline Turner and Andrew Findlay





While the country dancing and the band are in full swing, the helpers still have clearing away to do. They also monitor the safety of the fire.

On Sunday morning the clear-up team makes sure the green is left immaculate and litter-free. Job done.

Well done to all the 54 volunteers that contributed – and thank you.

The HTS committee is already preparing for next year's event. We would welcome your help. With village support, it will run like clockwork.

The Saturday closest to summer solstice next year is 22nd June, so mark it in your diaries!

*Rupert Sellers*

## Burnham Care & Share

Burnham Care & Share was a newcomer for the VGP Raffle. Lisa Pope was delighted to report that they had raised over £1,000. This being sufficient to support some 255 people over a 6-8 week period with nearly half being children. She tells us that they also received offers of volunteering and food collection. This is both a reminder that hardship exists all around us and that the people of Taplow are also generous with their care and support.



# Cliveden



To those of us closely familiar with the 376 acres of paradise by the Thames that is the Cliveden Estate, the growth in popularity of the property comes as no great surprise. As the locals and regulars will know, it holds a myriad of opportunities to commune with nature and beauty

But the net result of this rise in numbers is the challenges it can bring. While the estate itself never really feels too busy, having to close the gates as our car parks are full, and the knock-on effects to local traffic, are evident. Similarly, the increased footfall and cycles from Taplow Station is welcome for its sustainability but may impact locally. And the National Trust really does aspire to being the best possible neighbour.

We have spent a great deal of time and effort assessing this issue, and while we were initially months away from embarking on an ambitious infrastructure project in early 2020, Covid derailed everything. So, three years on we are moving back towards that project, but having to re-frame it, as one big change has happened: – The Elizabeth Line!

This opens a massive and diverse audience for us coming by sustainable travel. All we need to do is make it inviting to make the journey from the station to the estate, and that is where we need support from local stakeholders.

Certainly, the existing walking and cycling routes leave much to be desired, with areas of no footpath and difficult sightlines. And in addition to these forms of travel, we need to design for full accessibility so Cliveden can ensure we deliver on our values of making Everyone Welcome. Some kind of sustainable transport system linking the

estate and station is required. These changes will also make the Woodland Car Park a much busier part of the estate and we need to improve the infrastructure accordingly, not least with creating stronger links across the estate.

The wider infrastructure plans to improve the arrival through the Feathers Gate and create a welcome centre in the Old Dairy by the Water Garden are still being formed. As is having food and beverage offers across the estate including the beautiful area down by the Thames, which is increasingly busy since we overhauled our boating offer to go fully electric. The Old Dairy is underused at the moment, and is in the process of being listed, as it is a lovely collection of old characterful buildings, currently hidden away.

With the increasing footfall across our site, the business case for this extra investment is self-evident. What is more problematic is ensuring the improvements actually address the problems they are designed to solve and keep Cliveden as special as it has always been. Having grown up locally and spent my life waxing lyrical about the beauty of Cliveden, the pressure is on to ensure any changes we make enhance the amazing place. However, with input and help from our stakeholders, local friends, neighbours and the wider diverse communities we serve I am sure we can avoid that pitfall and deliver the next exciting step in the evolution of Cliveden. Please watch out for opportunities to engage with us in the near future, we would appreciate your thoughts and support.

*Robert Morris*  
*NT Cliveden*

# Planning and parking

Signals from Mr Gove that he is relaxing the straight-jacket on housing numbers for Local Plans combine with our local political climate to suggest that the forthcoming Local Plan for Buckinghamshire may release much less Green Belt land than was envisaged in the withdrawn SBDC Local Plan. We must wait till 2025 to see.

## Buckinghamshire ward changes

The council response to the consultations on this included:

*"Dorney Parish Council, Taplow Parish Council and the Hitcham & Taplow Society opposed our proposed Burnham ward, stating that Dorney and Taplow parishes are distinct from the more densely populated Burnham parish and should thus be warded separately. It was proposed that Dorney and Taplow parishes form a single-councillor ward, with Burnham parish forming a two-councillor ward. However, the former ward would have forecast electoral variance of -45% by 2028, which we consider to be unacceptably high. We could therefore not adopt this proposal as part of our final recommendations."*

## The Hermitage

The twenty year saga of applications to redevelop the Hermitage site may be in its final stage. An application has been made on the back of the approval to convert the house to six flats to add two further flats and a stand alone house. EDRA, the Parish Council and ourselves have worked very closely with the developers (Acquinna Homes) to fine tune and adjust the plans and Acquinna have been responsive on this. We wait to see how the planners may respond in relation to the sites' Local Heritage Asset status and there are things to resolve on privacy/screening matters but this is the best outcome for the site that we are likely to see.

## Cliveden Stud

Application PL/22/4027/FA at Cliveden Stud was taken to the Planning Committee as a test case for the site – a conversion of equine buildings to residential. It was approved. It was clear that the Committee sees no responsibility for the site as whole and will treat all applications individually. A request for an overall Special Planning Document was ignored.





## Appeals

Of the appeals referenced in our last issue, the Cranford House coach house and the Downlands Barn appeals were refused, quite correctly in the latter case. The Huntswood Lane equine centre conversion was allowed – the appeal was strictly speaking on the matter that the council had failed to determine the case in a timely fashion. The Cliveden Stud appeal is still outstanding – see above.

An example of the extent to which developers seem free to ignore the planning regulations is on Hitcham Lane. A complete development of a grass meadow into a commercial stables layout was made with no pre-application. They were told by Enforcement in May that they must submit an application within four weeks. In late September with no application received, Enforcement determined that if they had applied it would have been allowed, so no action. Saves paying all the fees doesn't it!

## The station

Our previous issue picked up on commuter parking starting to use Approach Road. This was initially a desperate overflow for late arrivals but has morphed into a preferred option, with the station car parks less used. It is now at a level that makes Approach Road a one way street. Incidents are commonplace – the parked cars getting their mirrors hit (no great sorrow over that) but school buses are getting impeded and tempers are rising over the amount of reversing required to clear the jams.

We, MMPA and TPC met with TfL (the revenue receivers for the Elizabeth Line) and MTREL (the line operators) (don't you love acronyms!) to ensure they are aware of the concerns and to explore what better use of station parking can be made. It is clear that the south car park has potential to hold more cars. The lack of white lines means that parking is



White lines please!

haphazard and does not optimise space use. There is also a significant part of the space that is blocked off by portacabins. TfL are to come back with costing for white lining and it is to be arranged with Network Rail (the ultimate site owner) to move the cabins and open up more space. TfL emphasised that they are still recovering from the devastating financial impact of Covid and are not sanguine about funding availability but we will at least know what it will cost.

However, these improvements will not have much effect while people are still free to park on Approach Road (and Boundary Road soon?). This problem is dependent on the County introducing parking restrictions around the station. We are told that they are working on a plan and Councillor George Sandy is looking to ensure some local input to this before it is finalised. Even when a plan is agreed there is still a lengthy process of approval / legal process to go through, so no immediate end in sight. Best plan is to avoid Approach Road and go via A4 and Station Road.



Remove these...



... for access to more space

Roger Worthington

# Riverside

## Parking abuse on the river!

Roger Worthington



On this day, 11 boats were moored on the Taplow river bank, less than normal due to the Maidenhead Regatta a few days before. BC (and SBDC before them) have not collected mooring fees for at least 10 years. That is ~£100 a night missing – £700p.w., £35000 pa missing from Buckinghamshire coffers. Seriously it leads to the current situation that many of these boats are moored long term. Being semi-residential they are degrading the riverside environment with rubbish and cars and are blocking the moorings for genuine river cruisers. This matters as it is one of the few public moorings available locally.

Representations to BC over two years have produced no results. In years gone by SBDC had an arrangement with a local resident to put on a peaked cap and collect on the Council's behalf. The resident moved and councils have since failed to carry out any collection.. Some of the boats are even unregistered so the EA say there is nothing they can do. That ties in with the problems our friends in the Royal Borough have with derelict boats on their side. The EA told them it has the powers to move boats but only does so if they are a hazard to navigation. So much for their duty of care for the river.



## Regatta and Punt championships

Although the Maidenhead Regatta continues in strength (courtesy of Taplow) despite a rainy start this year, there is sad news about the Festival of Punting and the annual championships.



Andrew Findlay

It appears that support for punting in clubs has dropped to a level that is too low to sustain such a festival. Unless interest and support recover it may be that we have seen the last punting event here on the Thames with its  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile stretch that can accommodate the Amateur Championship. Some of the private schools no longer support punting so are such events heading into history outside of Oxford and Cambridge?

Better news is that the disorderly conduct on the river bank beyond the railway bridge on River Road has dramatically subsided from the levels experienced during the Covid years. Not yet quite idyllic but back within reason.

Also the concerns over the road surface opposite Gaiety Row have settled into monitoring to see if any damage is progressive. Nothing has yet collapsed!



# Village Hall and Parish Council news



Having reported in the last several issues about things going wrong at the hall I started earlier to write this article beginning "Fortunately nothing else has gone wrong at the hall...". I wrote too soon.

The modernising of the toilets started with the stripping of the old wall tiles, only to discover that the tiles were the only thing holding the walls up! So one wall had to be replaced and the other reinforced. All still got done just in time for the new term of St Nicolas Playgroup

Better news is that the mural has now been successfully restored under the skilled management of Conservator Claudia Fiocchetti. We were fortunate to find someone of her skills to do this work. She has worked widely in Europe and we have a picture of her in 2018 during the conservation treatments of the medieval wall paintings at St John the Baptist's church, in Cold Overton Leicestershire.



In line with the current concerns for the environment the Parish Council carried out an ECO audit of its activities with funding from the Community Board. The results have been generally satisfactory other than the ancient gas heaters in the Reading Room, which are end of life anyway and will be replaced.

CCTV has been installed to cover the car park at the hall. Hopefully this will discourage some of the more anti-social activities such as drug dealing and car theft that occasionally mar our peaceful village.

In line with the re-wilding article on page 13, there are plans to improve the part of the Village Green below the barn.

There are regular queries to us and the council about uses for the barn. Sadly it is in such poor condition that to make it formally safe for use even in its present primitive state would be prohibitively expensive. So it looks to continue simply as a storage shed for the Parish Council use and fortunately ourselves for the Village Green Party equipment.



## 50 & 25 years ago

### Autumn 1973

First appearance of Anne Hanford on the committee, who is still happily with us at Cliveden Gages. The Hanfords lived in Cedar Chase at the time, and the following year she helped to get High Court approval for the Scheme of Management that governs the estate to this day.

### Autumn 1998

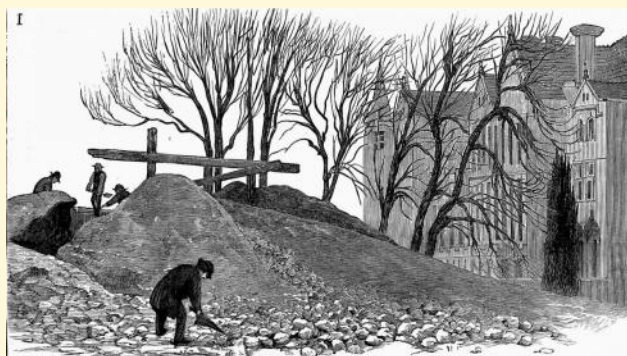
The success of the restoration of the Celtic Cross at Tæppas Mound was recorded. See page 12 for our current efforts to protect the cross.

# Tæppas Mound then and now



The Society has a long memory through its archives but the population of Taplow has grown significantly in the last couple of decades so it may be that many newer arrivals may not be fully aware of the Mound and why today it is still a centre of activities.

As a 7th century burial mound it was excavated in the 19th century and was the richest source of Anglo Saxon objects in the UK until the Sutton Hoo discovery. Most relics are in the British Museum but replicas are held locally.



W Bollams Illustrated London News, 17th November 1883

It sits within the curtilage of the old Taplow churchyard where in more recent centuries the crypts of the owners of Taplow Court were built, in particular the Hampson family. The site is a registered historic site under the care of Historic England.

Although the Mound itself appears impervious to age, other constructs have been ageing and problems are arising. The access to the Hampson Crypt collapsed and has been fenced off for some years and the Celtic Cross was deteriorating badly.

The Society picked up the challenge in 1998 (NL70) and drove the restoration of the base of

the Celtic Cross. Today the Society is engaged in further fund raising to repair the Cross again after the gales of winter 2021 blew the cross itself off the plinth (NL117). At the same time fund-raising has been led by the Friends of St Nicolas Church to repair the crypt access and make it safe again. An architects' report has been made and an engineering solution report awaited.

The Mound has fine views of the surrounding countryside and is well worth a visit. You can reach it by the public footpath off the triangle of land at the top of Berry Hill. As the highest local spot the Mound has also been used to light a beacon in celebration of royal events, most recently with a torchlit procession from the Village Green in 2012 on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II. (NL 98).

Nigel Smales book *Taplow Moments* has an excellent introduction. The excavation was led by James Rutland, a name now commemorated as Rutland Close at Taplow Riverside.

More detail on the Hampson Crypt work is on p8 of the Easter 2023 edition of *Taplow and Dropmore Parish News*.



The Crypt and the Cross Today

# Wilding at Taplow Court

An interview with Phil Rollinson, Head Gardener, Taplow Court

*Tell us about rewilding at Taplow Court*

The term "rewilding" originally refers to the science and practice of nature recovery on quite a large scale, so in much bigger estates than Taplow Court it is underpinned by the introduction of megafauna – different species of grazing animals which are free to roam, which would be very difficult for us to do here!

However, rewilding or wilding, as I see it, is very much part of a growing awareness or response to the climate emergency and loss of biodiversity in gardens and the countryside. So, it's quite possible to do it on a small scale, in one's back garden by just deciding to leave a patch to do what it wants – let the weeds in, let wildflowers and grasses grow and leave it as habitat for birds, insects, butterflies etc. To me this is rewilding too.

At Taplow Court our response is very proactive – it is saying "this is what is happening so what can we do to contribute to a more sustainable future?" Also, it is about creating beautiful spaces for people to enjoy and so aesthetics is just as important as the science.

*How did you originally go about it when you decided to do it here at Taplow Court?*

We have a huge amount of grass here and it requires a lot of maintenance by a small team. So, we began to look at ways of moving away from traditional close cut lawns and developing some areas as wildflower meadow. Often people associate rewilding with the importance of tree planting schemes but it also recognises that retaining meadow is just as important because they act as a huge carbon sink.

Our first attempt was to actually create a wildflower meadow. At the time of the 2012 Olympics there was a huge amount of publicity about the Olympic Park in Stratford where some really colourful and vibrant annual meadows had been created and were very inspiring. So, we tried this annual model here and everyone loved it and it was very successful. However, with an annual meadow you have to start from scratch every year, there's a lot of preparation involved and it can cost a



fortune! So, we felt we needed to reduce our ambition and move away from annual meadows, at least on a large scale and go down the route of creating perennial meadow which can be just as satisfying to see. They still require a lot of work initially in controlling the amount of weed grasses in the mix but you can help by sowing seeds of plants like Yellow Rattle which helps other wildflowers to come through and thrive.

*What other developments are taking place?*

Looking at the history of the estate and by studying maps from the 19th century it would appear that the three huge paddocks to the north of the mansion house would have been grazing pasture with occasional pockets of trees in a very traditional English landscape park style. So, at the same time as we were creating meadows closer to the house, it seemed an ideal opportunity to restore the paddocks to parkland and we planted 12 pockets of trees which are now established. As it is not possible to have grazing cattle or sheep we started the process of managing the grassland as traditional meadow to see what would happen. Usually there's one cut in late summer/early autumn and in the first few years an incredible amount of grass/hay was taken off. But gradually, by doing this over the last seven years, the soil fertility is reduced, the grasses weaken and other wildflowers start to establish and flourish. Plants started to appear that had always been there but had just never been allowed to establish. Now the grasses get less and less vigorous each year and a more traditional meadow has been allowed to grow and the difference in insect life that it attracts is phenomenal. We recently had the meadows assessed by experts working for Buckinghamshire Council who commended us on the work we are doing in this area to restore chalk grassland which have become very rare in the UK. Because of this and our other innovations and sustainable practices in the gardens and estate we were recently awarded Local Wildlife Site status.

*The future of rewilding?*

I feel we can do a lot more tree planting and we've got the space to do that. I've become very interested in microforestry, a method of growing trees in groups, very close together. They appear to establish quicker and thrive by being close, so this will be a project for the next few years. Also, apart from rewilding, we have been considering how the changing climate is affecting what we plant in the

garden. We are being very proactive about this and creating new planting schemes in dry gravel beds based on plants which do not require irrigation and can withstand very dry periods. We believe this is the way forward and despite the changing climate you can still create a garden which looks really vibrant and is interesting all year round.

Do come to see us at Taplow Court on our Open Days in 2024 and take a look at what we are doing.

*Interviewed by Sue Thornton*

## HTS Tech

The move to more advanced technology for our operations continues.

We recently subscribed to SumUp. This is a technology that allows us to accept credit cards and more importantly contactless payments. Now we don't often need to take credit card payments – our major fundraising activity is the membership who mostly pay by standing order, however the summer Village Green Party is an opportunity to capture 'on the night' ticket sales.

The SumUp machine is a small device the size of a pack of cards that communicates via a mobile phone.

The customer just needs to present a contactless card, smart phone or smart watch and the transaction goes straight through. Although the majority of VGP tickets have been sold to date through an online partner EventBrite we sold 59 tickets on the night and 30 of these were via the SumUp process. The whole process is very simple and this will be a tool we can use in other sales situations that may present in the future.

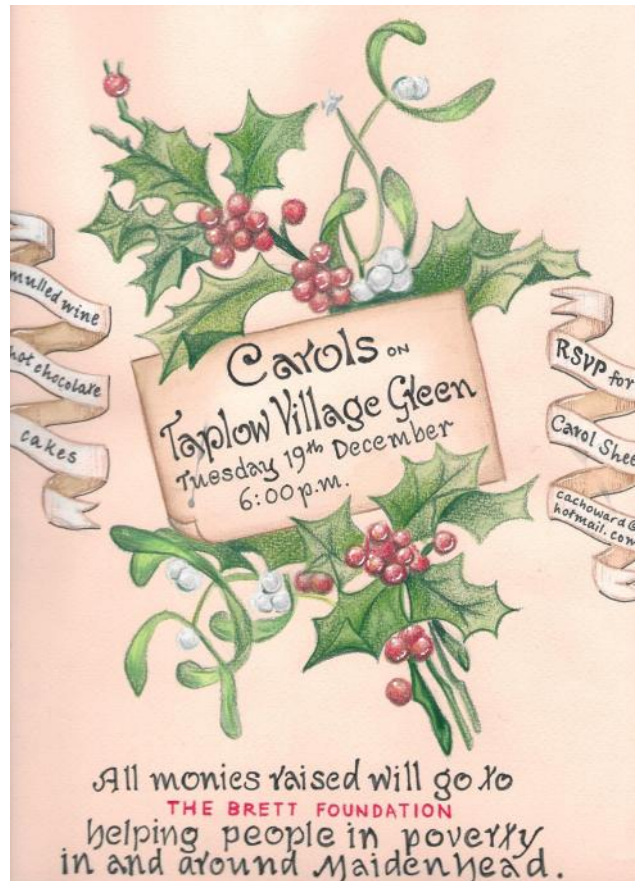
On the membership front, we have signed up for a simple affordable club membership software package called membermojo. It facilitates online applications and renewals, electronic payment, a central member database and group email distribution. It will be easy for members to join, renew and maintain their own details online. No more paper forms and manual member mailing lists – we can send an email to a single address and let membermojo forward to members. We will be able to accept online payment using PayPal, credit or debit cards. Your existing standing orders will still be valid.



Mike Turner

There is still a little work to do to verify all the current data we hold in the membership spreadsheet and massage it into a form we can import to the membermojo database. There will probably be a few snags encountered along the way but the plan is to have this running before the end of our financial year in October. And report at the AGM. Now is a great opportunity to make sure we have up to date contact details.

*Mike Turner*



Poster by Lyra Browning

# Mill Lane News

When Gage originally applied to build new houses on the Old Boatyard site, the Heritage office at the council insisted that the original old boathouse must be kept and converted to residential rather than being demolished. We had not objected as we thought it was too flimsy a construct to survive the process. Matters then became worse as the developer was told by the EA that the building had to be raised to meet new flood level requirements. A specialist company was employed to dismantle the building before reassembling at the new level (NL118). To no great surprise, the framework was in such poor state that reassembling it proved unrealistic, so in September 2022 the council bowed to the inevitable and the developer was allowed to replace with a brand new construct, finding itself thousands poorer in the process.



Larger than the original!

The unnamed pub (aka Hall and Woodhouse Taplow) opened in May and, like the Coronation, just missed our last issue. It has been a great success, crowded from day one, which admittedly gave them teething troubles. It is clearly attracting many visitors from across the river as well as within Taplow.



The adjacent site "Millstream Moorings" (the original marina in the Berkeley Homes application) remains in limbo, possibly connected to the long outstanding application for moorings enhancements at the old boatyard?



Moorings in waiting

## Suspended Bridge

Our last issue reported that the funding for the replacement Jubilee River footbridge was in place for this financial year. Requests for an update and a likely installation date went unanswered until our MP was invoked. We have seen this on other occasions – letters go unanswered – our MP is copied in, helpfully forwards the letter and this invokes a response. This is not a good use of our MPs time.

We wrote to the Council:

*"Dear Mr Broadbent*

*It is a sad reflection on the state of Localism in Buckinghamshire that it took the intervention of our MP both now and to obtain the original funding information for the bridge. These are very straightforward queries that are clearly of great concern to the residents of Taplow."*

The reply we received finished with:

*"Please be assured that it is intended that Berry Hill Footbridge will be reopened over this coming winter/spring"*

With such positive commitment we should have no worries.

# Lincoln's End

*Remembering Lincoln Lee*

Caroline Sellers



## 1929

Here is a world tale of someone whose fascination with horses was clearly nurtured in Taplow.

On my recent holiday to Kenya, I stayed on the shores of Lake Naivasha. I was visiting a friend at her mother Janey's home. Her home is filled with equestrian photos and paintings that she inherited from her father, Peter Benson. Janey has always lived in Kenya, so it was with some surprise, as we were leaving, that I spotted this engraved trophy on top of a cabinet. It reads:

*"Taplow Gymkhana 1929 2nd Prize, Pony Class  
Peter Benson on Autumn"*

The accompanying portrait of Peter was painted also in 1929!

I asked the obvious question, and yes, her father did live in Maidenhead as a child.

Peter Charles Bethene Benson left Maidenhead for Tanzania (probably Tanganyika then) and then Kenya directly after the war. As a chartered accountant he was asked by the army to help sort out the management of the failing ground nut scheme in East Africa. It turns out you can't grow peanuts at altitude. He went on to great heights in agriculture in Kenya, and he was on the coffee board and tea board too. He married a German rescue worker named Ingelore Schubert.



Peter never lost his passion for horses and was instrumental in setting up the Jockey Club of Kenya. He was chief steward for many years as well as an owner. His most auspicious equine moment was a win in Paris with his prize horse, The Marshal.

Peter was awarded an MBE for public services in 1957.

Does anyone have local information on the 1929 Taplow Gymkhana, or any other prior to The Taplow Horse Show and Gymkhana founded by Eileen Law (nee Matthews) in the 1940's? See NL112,113.

*Caroline Sellers*

## Three Ladies

I recently went to a talk in the church about Taplow. It was really interesting. We started by walking to the church and after that we had some delicious cake! Next we all sat down and the talk began. There were 3 ladies who have been here for over 50 years being asked questions about living in Taplow. I learned some really interesting things such as: people used to set houses on fire and two burned on Berry Hill! There used to be shops in Taplow and people rode all the way from Ealing to Taplow and so much more. At the end we bought a tea towel that had lots of beautiful drawings of places in Taplow. It was really good and I learned so many new things about this wonderful village.

*Amelia Williams, 11*



Published by the Hitcham and Taplow Society

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

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