

Hitcham and Taplow Society

Newsletter 122: Autumn 2024
£3.50 to non-members



www.taplowsociety.org.uk

Hitcham and Taplow Society

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

President: Eva Lipman
Chairman: Roger Worthington
Treasurer: Mike Turner
Secretary: Roger Worthington
Committee: Andrew Findlay, Charlie Greeves, Robert Hanbury, Robert Harrap, Cat Howard, Rupert Sellers, Jonathan Specktor, Sue Thornton, Jacqueline Turner, Graham Valentine
Newsletter Editors: Cat Howard and Roger Worthington
Newsletter Production: Andrew Findlay

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

Cover picture: Installing the new Jubilee River footbridge, 10th June 2024 (Nigel Smales)

Editorial

The Jubilee footbridge is back to great relief after a nearly two year absence. See page five.

At last year's AGM we announced that we were moving our accounting year to the end of the calendar year, so we will not be holding our AGM in early December this year. We will announce a date in the spring of 2025 for this. With better weather at that time we hope to attract a larger audience rather than asking members to trek through the dark and wet of December.

We are hopeful that progress may finally be happening on our station parking problems, although the procedures involved will take time. Discussed in more detail in this issue on page seven.

This issue has come out a little later than usual. This reflects the fact that the Newsletter is critically dependent on the work of members who have many other responsibilities and just occasionally these have to take preference. Each issue is the product of many people – committee and Society members, other Taplovians of all ages and guest writers who contribute articles and photos and have done so for over sixty years. So my thanks to them all and in particular to Andrew Findlay who has been transforming these articles and photos into this fine magazine for some 17 years.

Roger Worthington

Acronyms

TPC Taplow Parish Council
BC Buckinghamshire Council
EA Environment Agency

AGM

The Society is changing the date of its year-end so the AGM will be in 2025: date to be announced.

Seabears

The opportunity to swim the channel came about when Stephen, swim instructor and coach at Taplow Lake, was offered a 'slot', one of the pilots had a cancellation. The Channel swim season is short and swim slots rare so he jumped at the opportunity.

Stephen approached six mixed ability swimmers from Taplow Lake, the Taplow Sea Bears team came into being. The average age of a channel relay swim team is 34, with an average age of 50 our team was not in the sweet spot let's say. In addition a team would expect well over a year to train and prepare, we had 7 months.



On the day we each swam for one hour, our observer taking notes about the conditions and how each of the transitions between swimmers went. One of the many rules, the ingoing swimmer had to swim around the back of the current swimmer, you are not allowed to touch each other or the boat, the outgoing swimmer is then allowed to board the boat. The first round of one hour swims went well with good progress being made.

As we swam into the night the weather worsened, tides and current working against us, at times it was like being on a treadmill with everyone swimming hard but little forward progress being made. In the early hours there was a tide change we were now heading rapidly towards Calais, this was not good. If we entered Calais approaches, the French authority could 'pull us' and the swim would be over.

We then had some good news, another tide shift in our favour. Instead of heading to Calais

we were now heading towards Cap Blanc Nez, the weather also calmed a little, dawn was breaking, at last we felt that we were going to make it.



By now we were coming toward the end of the third rotation, the team were tired but there was still work to do, this meant Katy, our fastest swimmer, having to go again. As the boat cannot make it all the way to the shore the last bit can be swum with a support swimmer, so long as they do not pass or exit the water before the official swimmer. In the end Katy made land, cleared the water and the Optimist horn sounded. We had swum to France!

Mike Sharp



The Seabears have raised £27,000 to date for the Samaritans, a tremendous achievement. If anyone would like to donate please follow this link:

<https://www.justgiving.com/page/taplow-sea-bears-1713707903093>

Taplow Lakeside

Tucked down a quiet lane is a hidden gem, where the water glitters and there is a sense of peace. This is Taplow Lakeside. This tranquil place is more than a beautiful stop to get a drink and a bite to eat, although the food is great! It also houses an ever-growing community of outdoor swimmers.

Roger Worthington



Swimming here started in 2020 and has evolved since. Last year the addition of a sauna gave visitors the chance to take part in the Scandinavian style hot and cold extremes of sauna and cold-water plunge. This is especially magical in the winter, when there is a bigger contrast in temperature and the dark evenings make the black water mystical and inviting.

More recently, the full moon and solstice swims take this a step further, often taking place early in the morning, or once the moon is in the sky, reflected in the water. These swims take place in

silence and with the addition of a gong to create a sound bath. With the sound echoing out over the water, it is a very special experience indeed.

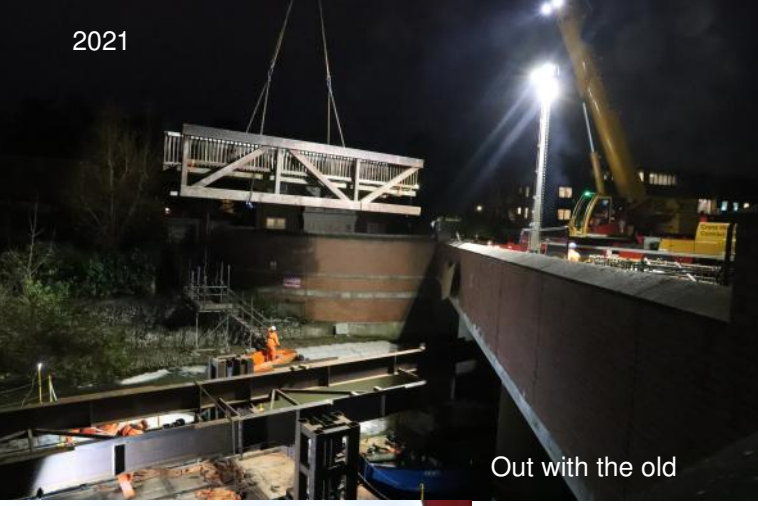
Now these sessions are in high demand and become booked very quickly, as you might expect!

People can be found in the water all year round, no matter the weather. Through the summer when the water gets up into the 20s a nice Belgian style beer waits for you after you've left the water. In the winter it's been known to freeze over, the ice needs to be broken before getting in to enjoy the cold plunge. On days like this a hot chocolate is very welcome.

The community of swimmers are constantly encouraging each other, whether that's saying well done for getting in the water on a day that was more of a challenge, or to take part in a solo or team challenge. For many people outdoor swimming is a step out of the comfort zone, but having others that are there to encourage and support you can lead to achievements you never even imagined.

There's no arguing that the lake is a beautiful place to have a swim, but it really is the people that make it what it is. Although Taplow lakeside continues to grow with more events and ideas each year, the community at its heart remains the same. Everyone who swims there seems to want others to hear about it to share in some of the joy.

Lauren Sharp



Out with the old



Where do you want it?

Footbridge

There was celebration in July when the long-awaited restoration of the Jubilee River footbridge was finally completed. Andrew Findlay first alerted the County to the failure of the old bridge when critical wooden members distorted, causing the whole bridge to slowly twist out of shape and leading to its closure.

Removal was demanding as there is no road access to the site, only river.

Reinstallation was even more difficult. The replacement had to be assembled onto a pontoon at the

bottom end of Mill Lane from a crane and then floated down, turned and raised into position. Congratulations to the engineering team who did an excellent job. A feature of the all metal new bridge is that the girders along the top edges are pyramid shaped to discourage people from diving in – a problem that the original bridge suffered from. We will have to see how effective this is.

The bridge was formally re-opened on 11th July 2024

Roger Worthington

Nigel Smales, Andrew Findlay, Roger Worthington



On the way



Nearly there



Hitcham and Taplow Society



Hooray!



But why didn't they fix this bit?

Parking 1: Approach Road

After a long period of frustration and inaction we wrote to the *Maidenhead Advertiser* in conjunction with the Parish Council and the Marlow and Maidenhead Passenger Association as follows:

Dear Sir

Many of your readers will be aware of the parking problems around Taplow Station. The problem was foreseen and brought to the attention of the Local Authority when Crossrail was first announced back in 2016. The final opening of the Elizabeth Line and rapid housing growth in the Beaconsfield area precipitated the present chaos.

Prior to the outbreak of Covid, County had produced a comprehensive set of parking restrictions and charged-for parking bays covering the whole of Taplow and Burnham, that would have dealt with these problems, if not ideally. The plan lapsed with the outbreak of Covid.

We are aware that money is tight but are not asking for the re-introduction of this large-scale plan but for a much smaller area of the roads immediately around the station to ensure the free flow of traffic and safe driving conditions. The current frequent occurrence of blockages in Station Road and confrontations in Approach Road affecting school buses and local traffic is unacceptable.

Our current representations to County through our ward councillors and the Chairman of the Beeches Community Board have produced no effective response. We are advised that a survey is required before any commitment can be made (although the earlier plan had no such survey) and we were referred to the Community Board to progress this. However, the Board has experience of spending many thousands of pounds on similar surveys in earlier years only for County to reject them, thus wasting all that money. They are correctly unwilling to spend again without some assurance from County that the outcome will be positive.

This lack of response from County is in sharp contrast to TfL. We met with them in October to discuss improvements to the Station South Side Parking. They responded promptly and have re-laid the entire area and marked it up and installed effective signage. However, this will be of limited benefit as long as commuters are free to cause problems by parking on Approach Road and Marsh Lane (Boundary Road next?) for free. The situation can only worsen as rapid housing growth continues in greater Beaconsfield. It should be addressed as an infrastructure requirement for the emerging Local Plan but there is no sign of this being included.

This issue has now reached crisis point.

We have an obligation to our residents to take further action on their behalf. If we have no appropriate response from County within the next two weeks we will be forced to take further public action.

*Professor Alan Sinclair Chairman, Taplow Parish Council
Eva Lipman President, Hitcham and Taplow Society
Nigel Phillips Chairman, Marlow and Maidenhead Passenger Association*

Cc:

*Martin Tett Leader, Buckinghamshire Council
Steve Broadbent Cabinet Member for Transport, Buckinghamshire Council
Dev Dhillon Chairman, Beeches Community Board
George Sandy, Paul Kelly, Kirsten Ashman Cliveden Ward Councillors
Joy Morrissey MP*



Approach Road at mid-day on a Wednesday

The Parish council has now made contact with commissioning officers at BC whose job is to help parish councils formulate proposals. The September TPC meeting agreed a draft set of parking and yellow lines around the station and councillors are working with these officers to turn it into a form suitable for a first informal local consultation. To make the proposal acceptable to BC it is almost certainly necessary to include parking charges for the allocated parking zones. After digesting local views and refining the proposals the formal process can then start. Sadly the total process is not speedy. The closure of Station Road under the railway bridge after the downpour on 24th September is a timely reminder of some additional constraints.

Parking 2: Mill Lane

The success of the No Name H&W pub on Mill Lane has meanwhile created a new parking problem. At peak times pub parking overflows onto Mill Lane and causes obstructions for residents and can make access impossible for emergency vehicles. Berkeley Homes make their parking space available after business hours but many people do not realise this. The Parish Council has surveyed the problem with a view to approaching BC for some yellow lines but will undoubtedly face the same problems as we have experienced on Approach Road. As ever, the problems can spill over as River and Ellington Roads are also saturated and some residents there are wondering about resident only restrictions.

The Government and pundits comment on low productivity and financial poor performance of the UK, so where are all these extra cars coming from?

Roger Worthington



Planning

At the country level the change of government is expected to lead to planning legislation and changes. An indicator of this is an extract from an article in *The Economist* on July 13th that probably reflects a government view:

"... Ms Reeves, too, is focused less on the rump of Tory MPs, more on "voices of local opposition". Where Mrs Thatcher singled out Ken Livingstone and Derek Hatton, leading figures at councils in London and Liverpool respectively, Ms Reeves might have mentioned the likes of Martin Tett. As Tory leader of Buckinghamshire council since 2011, Mr Tett has a reasonable claim to being Britain's most successful NIMBY. Responsible for an almost 1,900-square km county nestled between London and Oxford, his administration has turned blocking development into an art form...."



Whatever view one has on releases from the Green Belt there is a serious constraint at least in our area in the south of the county that the roads are simply not up to any meaning growth of traffic. The A4 is now often at a standstill well outside rush hours and the feeder roads are simply too narrow and twisty.

I have mentioned before the difficulties facing our Local Plan writers with the planning legislation in flux. The changes announced so far imply yet more difficulties for them, with talk of unrealistic time frames being demanded.

The more local problem of unlawful despoilings of meadowlands is still unresolved. Van breaking yards and repair works have seriously damaged fields north of the village and Enforcement powers are frustratingly slow to rectify the damage and the offenders have appealed the enforcements. Currently we have seven appeals in the queue, all only intended to drag out the process.

An interesting application reflecting a wider issue arose at The Feathers pub opposite Cliveden over use of Common Land. The application site plan included the Common Land at the front of the pub, over which The Feathers has no control or management authority. Taken to the Planning Committee the application was approved but

notes added to the effect that the Common Land could not be utilised in any way without Secretary of State approval.



Roger Worthington

Consequently TPC wrote to The Feathers reminding them that it would not be lawful to make parking charges for visitors parking on the Common Land. They had been doing this for some time as their ANPR cameras only recorded entry / exit from the highway. In a nice touch of irony, George Sandy was issued a penalty notice when visiting the site as a member of the Planning Committee, even though he had parked on the Common Land! We subsequently wrote to our members in case you had been caught by this.



Parked on common land: no payment required

And finally the twenty year fight to preserve the Hermitage is over! Approval has been given to the application to extend it somewhat but preserving the core house and frontage. Congratulations to Martin Maund for winning this long fight.

Roger Worthington



Rectory Road

Rectory Road was busy over the summer while the gas mains were modernised. The old pipes looked truly ancient, even those supplying Cedar Chase. Multiple holes in the road and 40 ton lorries made access into something of a lottery, though Liam and his team made sure that properties stayed reachable from one end or the other. Cadent's customer liaison officer, Jackie Bridger, did sterling work keeping everyone informed. Not to be out-done the school ordered up its own 40 tonners while carrying out building works - at least mostly done during the summer break. The program took a hit when the team found that connecting to gas-meters at Cedar Chase involved removing asbestos boards, requiring more specialists and several weeks delay. Word is that the rest of the village will get new mains soon, so look out for further works.

Roger Worthington and Andrew Findlay



Lady Helen Wogan

We are sad to record the death of Lady Helen Wogan. The former Irish model married Terry (later Sir Terry) in Dublin in 1965. They settled in Taplow in 1976 and shared four children and five grandchildren.

They were longstanding members of our Society. Helen served on our committee from 1996 to 2004. She will be fondly missed by Taplovian friends of almost 50 years.





Elibank Court



Taplow Walls

bricks from Burham that were not strongly baked, many of them are looking the worse for wear and walls are beginning to tilt.

It is therefore very encouraging that owners are now stepping up to the challenge and renewing them to a high standard. The most dramatic occurrence was of course the collapse of the Rectory Road wall of Elibank Court, which

remained down for a long time while the property changed hands. High quality brick walls need good foundations and are not cheap, so we must congratulate those owners who are now maintaining the look and feel of Taplow. As you can see, wall maintenance is never ending.

Roger Worthington

Taplow Village is very much characterised by its brick walls and earlier issues worried about their state of health. Built with



Upper Lodge



Old Lodge West



South of the A4

Village Hall

The entire heating system was successfully replaced across the summer break and the hall is now reliably warm and split into three separately controlled zones. Ruth finally has heat in her office! In time for the winter. Our new Chairman

Professor Alan Sinclair has valiantly chaired meetings from a wheelchair while recovering successfully from an ankle operation but has now sadly tendered his resignation.

BUT... Yet again something has gone wrong. The storm of

22nd September overwhelmed the supposedly fully replaced and repaired flat roof over Ruth's office and she is again flooded out and equipment damaged.

Roger Worthington

Outdoor Cinema on Taplow Village Green

On September 6th Taplow villagers were transported Back to the Future – and straight to a downpour on the village green! As the rain fell villagers of all ages gathered, armed with popcorn, sweets and a healthy dose of nostalgia. Dan Evans' Split Bean, a beautifully restored Volkswagen Type 2, now an electric hybrid espresso bar, served up enough coffee to power a village, keeping spirits high. Other

spirits were flowing generously from the Oak & Saw ensuring no one noticed soggy popcorn or soggy bottoms. We raised almost £200 for Thames Valley Adventure Playground proving that a little rain, a lot of sugar, good beverages and Taplovians can conquer anything – even time travel!

Jennifer Thompson



The Celtic Cross

After a delay of nine months the Oxford Diocese finally deigned to grant us permission (a "Faculty") to carry out the work to restore the Celtic Cross. Our restoration of the pedestal of this cross in 1998, our restoration of the War Memorial in 2018 and the addition of the WW2 names to the War Memorial in 2022 all suffered the same excessive delays in approval. Our thanks to Tony Bridge who most valiantly persevered his way through the obstruction course. Cliveden Conservation can now actually start the restoration.

Roger Worthington





Village Green Party

The Village Green Party took place on Saturday 22nd June and, in spite of an unsettled summer, the weather was perfect!

Thank you to all those involved including the spit-turning team (hourly shifts throughout the day from 6am), the set-up team, the beef carvers, the BBQ cooks, the food servers, the clear-up team and Taplow Court Estate for their supply of the firewood for the spit roast and the 'vintage' barbecues. 'Vintage' because the drums and stands were constructed 30 years ago! They have stood the test of time (just), however, the drums will undergo a bit of refurb and upgrade, ready for next year's event.

The 'ox roast' was in huge demand this year, 60kg of perfect beef totally devoured by 320 villagers. Also popular was our upgraded veggie option of portobello mushroom and melted cheese (on a separate non-meat barbecue).

A special mention to Mike Sanderson and his band for the entertainment. They have had the Taplow villagers dancing on the Green for a lifetime.

This year, we were delighted to have Alexander Devine Children's Hospice as our charity raffle partner. They sent a very touching letter the following day: "We do many community events but yours has been one of the ones we've enjoyed the most. The brilliant community spirit and the support you gave was heartwarming and we are pleased to tell you that we raised over £1,000!"

Mark your calendars for next year's VGP. It's on summer solstice day – 21st June 2025.

Rupert Sellers



Pictures by Nigel Smales and Andrew Findlay

Memories of Taplow Court 1977 – 1981

Jacqueline and I moved to our new home in Taplow in October 2017. However, this was not our first time living here.

Shortly after finishing my Electronic Engineering course at Kingston Polytechnic, I was fortunate enough to secure a job with Plessey Telecommunications, which was then based at Taplow Court. In August 1977, I joined a team developing the state-of-the-art digital telephone system for the Post Office, known as System X.

As a young engineer, it seemed like a dream job, utilising all the skills I had learned at the polytechnic. But I soon realised this was more than just a dream job—it was almost a utopian existence.



Those who have visited the current Taplow Court might be surprised to learn that the main house was once full of administrative offices. The beautiful Desborough Lounge served as the 'canteen,' while the library retained its function, albeit as a technical library. The bar and social club were in the Blue Room on the right-hand side of the entrance hall, although a lovely oak door in the Desborough Room bears the scars of what was once a darts board. Can anyone remember?

The 'labs' where we worked, Building 42, were located north of the main house, where the new Ikeda New Century Hall now stands. These were brick-built with a concrete slab roof—functional rather than attractive.

The beautiful wooden building, Building 34, now the café, was once a 'real tennis' court but, in my time, served as the woodworking/engineering shop and drawing room.

The leisure facilities were numerous: a squash court, tennis courts, a bowling green, a croquet lawn, and rowing boats on the Cliveden Reach. Not to mention the acres of grounds to stroll around during lunchtime. W.H. Grenfell's squash court was measured in the early 1900s to

provide the international standard size for squash courts.



The library - once the technical library

Being practical academics, my fellow engineers often got up to mischief over the lunch break. Once, a casual discussion about blow darts escalated into a full-blown experiment to measure the velocity of a blow dart. A blow tube and dart were constructed from available resources (where they came from, goodness knows). A ballistic pendulum was fashioned out of a polystyrene block and weight suspended from the ceiling, and several darts were fired at the block, with the swing carefully measured each time. I don't recall the actual speed we calculated.



The Blue Room - Bar & Social Club

Another time, we used an oscilloscope camera – a very basic Polaroid camera – to make a pinhole camera. Not content with that, and because it had such a long exposure time,

Mike Turner

someone came up with the idea of having a person move around the room with a flash gun, taking multiple images. The end result looked like a ghost moving around the room.



The Turret Room

Because Plessey had other facilities spread across the country, and System X development involved other companies like GEC and STC, we often had top executives flying in by helicopter. Even in those days, Health & Safety required an emergency response team to attend any landing or takeoff.

I volunteered to join the Fire Squad. We had an hour's training every Wednesday after work, but to offset that, we left an hour early on Fridays – bonus! The helicopter procedure was quite simple. One person stood with a flag to indicate wind direction, and another attended with a rather antiquated-looking foam fire extinguisher. Ultimately, it was the pilot's decision whether to land. If the engine caught fire, most likely during startup, we were instructed to thrust the long nozzle of the extinguisher into the engine nacelle and pull the trigger. Fortunately, this was never required.

The major part of the fire squad training was to facilitate the evacuation of the building in case of fire. Taplow Court is quite a tall building with many small rooms on the upper floors. Several of these rooms had emergency abseiling devices mounted near the windows. The idea was that in an emergency, if the room was cut off by fire, you could place a strop around yourself, climb out of the window, and abseil to the ground.

These devices needed to be tested, and in those days, the best way was to have someone put one on and jump out of the window. As I was the smallest (lightest) member of the squad, I was 'volunteered.'

On another occasion, we had to test the fire escape ladder. This was an exceedingly long ladder stored in the yard adjacent to the squash court. It had several sections that were raised by pulling a rope on one side. It was long enough to reach the windows on the fourth floor and above. Again, the leader asked, "Who wants to go up the ladder?" Deathly silence. "Well done, Mike, you can go up!" Today, I don't have a head for heights, but at that time, I gingerly started up the ladder. Climbing one step at a time was surprisingly hard work, and halfway up, I started to get the shakes. Being midway up the ladder accentuated the swaying, and I was clinging on for dear life. The only way was up, so I very carefully climbed to the top.

One looks back on these escapades with humour, but such activities would never be allowed nowadays.

I only worked at Taplow Court for a fairly short time, moving to Canada in 1981, but I have great memories of that period. I love to visit again on open days and regale my guests with tales of the old days.



Outline of the Plessey dartboard in the Desbourough Room



Myself & Sue Thornton

My thanks to Sue Thornton, Vice General Director of SGI-UK, for showing me around and refreshing my memory on locations.

Mike Turner

Editor's note: I applied to join System X at Taplow Court in 1975..

Olympic GOLD for Tom Dean

Congratulations to Tom Dean for GOLD in the 200m relay at the Paris Olympics! Another medal to add to his two GOLDS from the Tokyo Olympics. Great celebrations on River Road. Taplow again punching above its weight. And now he is on Strictly!

Roger Worthington

Jackie Hughes



Taplow Cricket Club

As the summer draws to a close, we reflect on the 174th season of Taplow Cricket Club. Firstly, on behalf of the club a big thank to you all the volunteers who have helped keep the club running, and the parents and supporters in the village who contribute to the wonderful atmosphere at the club.

Our colts section continues to expand. This year we added Dynamos cricket for 8-11 years old to the programme. Big thanks to the Club Chairman, Andy Bond, for helping run the sessions. The All-Stars cricket (for 5-8 years old) had another successful season. A notable highlight was their first match, against a visiting

team from Boyne Hill. An abiding memory for me was a parent describing the scene as a Taplow Circus! U11 and U13 teams were successful, and we are building a pool of talented youngsters, including several in the county development pathway. Girls' cricket remains an aspiration for the club, and we continue to look to give them opportunities.

Despite the poor weather in April, we had a full season of Saturday and Sunday senior cricket. The pitch at Taplow Cricket Club is consistently one of the best in the area, and we are indebted to the volunteers who maintain the ground and our groundsman Dave. Sunday match-day teas are also one of the best in the area. Thank you to everyone on the tea rota this year, including a welcome to Sophie and Lawrence from Wickenden.

In the Spring newsletter, we mentioned the clubhouse refurbishment. The first stage – new internal lighting and double-glazing – is nearing completion. Next stage is to re-decorate; look out for calls for labour to help. The club is still open in the off-season and available to hire for events, plus we will be hosting various social events.



Dynamos with their certificates

Drew Somerville

Lincoln's End

Remembering Lincoln Lee

Walk

In June the Village Green was a staging post on the 50k walk from Bray to Wooburn

Roger Worthington



Croquet!

The River Road Croquet League was in full swing with 24 ruthless competitors and supporting groupies. Thanks to Sam and Leah Foyle at White Place.

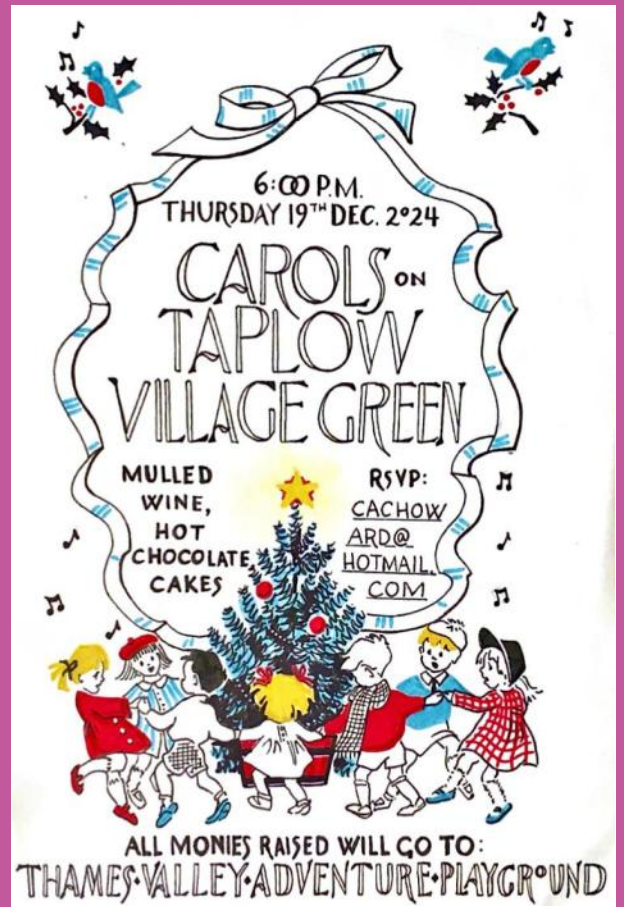


Northern lights

Jo Leftley



Taplow Village Green in the early hours of May 11th.



Lyra Browning

St Nicolas dates

14th November 19:00

Martin Uden talk: Stories of British servicemen buried in the UN Cemetery in Korea

23rd November 14:00 at Taplow Court

Talk on the Old St Nicholas church and the Hampson Vault - in aid of the restoration cost

The End



Surely the beginning?

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