

## LT. COL. H. TAPLIN

Lt. Col. Harold Taplin was an aviation pioneer and became a highly qualified Engineer. He established a number of companies, including Dinton Engineering, and Marlborough Engineering, as well as his final one, Birchington Engineering towards the end of his life. Among his many designs, and probably was his most well-known, was the Taplin Twin, created and developed in Birchington. This was a small capacity twin-cylinder diesel, between 5 and 7 ccs, for use in model boats and aircraft, initially for use in his personal models, but later produced for other enthusiasts in the modelling fraternity - a total of 5,000 being made.

Among his most bizarre efforts was the conversion to diesel of a 125 cc BSA bantam motorcycle. His main focus in his early days in Birchington was in cold wire-drawing, producing 'the most accurate extrusions in the British Isles', as a Scotsman in the Trossachs informed a Birchington resident.

Taplin was joined in his business by his two sons, John and his younger brother Mike. Mike died from Leukaemia in his early 40s, not long after taking over the running of Birchington business when his father died. Mike left a widow with two young children. John took over the business, but was never as committed as Mike, because, with his wife Diana, he was a semi-professional ballroom dancer, also running a dancing studio in Margate.

On John's death, the designs and precision machine tools were eventually sold to a business in Calcutta, where the model engines continued to be made.

The Taplin name survives in Birchington through a block of retirement flats, 'TAPLIN COURT', built in 2000, on the site of Col. Taplin's Engineering Works in Albion Road.



Col and Mrs Taplin with their two sons, John (L.) and Michael  
in the home at 23 St Mildred's Avenue