



# The Bracknell Forest Society

**AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR BRACKNELL FOREST**

**Newsletter - Issue 41 – Autumn 2021**

## SOCIETY NEWS

Since the summer newsletter we've restarted our indoor events which have been well supported with several new members joining.

### **Easthampstead Park**



We had a lovely afternoon in September for a guided tour of Easthampstead Park house which has recently been converted into a hotel. We were impressed by the restoration of the main rooms with many original features preserved. The outside has also benefited from cleaning and restoration. It was good to see historical photographs and original architect's drawings as internal decorations. We did feel that the house was in good hands. It is difficult to see how such work to preserve this historic house could have been afforded had it continued under Bracknell Forest Council management.

### **Evening talks**

We've been back in the Recital Room at South Hill Park for well attended evening talks by Society members. In October we learnt about the history and owners of Warfield Park with a talk entitled 'A Tale of India, a Country House, Electric Fish and Cricket' by Colin Bird. We then went on 'A Virtual Pub Crawl around Bygone Bracknell' with Andrew Radgick in November.

### **Membership renewal**

The Society's membership year runs from January to December, so renewal of membership will be due in January.

We didn't charge existing members for renewal in 2021 since there was so much uncertainty about what the Society would be able to do during the year. With

fingers crossed we are planning a full programme in 2022. The annual membership fee will remain at £10 for individuals and £15 for households. Thank you to those who pay by standing order. For those who pay in other ways, we will send a reminder in early January.

We currently have 93 members (counting household membership as 2 people). We hope that you will all want to re-join for 2022 – can we achieve 100 members?

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## WINTER PROGRAMME

Please put the dates in your diary.

**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> December – 7.00pm**

### **Christmas Party - Quizzes and Pizza**

We will be returning to The Admiral Cunningham in Priestwood where we have booked a private room. Bracknell themed and general knowledge quizzes (not too serious!) will be accompanied by pizzas and drinks – all for £15 (paid in advance).

Please contact Gill at [tbfsinfo@gmail.com](mailto:tbfsinfo@gmail.com) to book your place.

**Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> January – 2.00pm**

### **Annual General Meeting, Afternoon Tea and a talk on 'The Weather and Bracknell'**

After missing out last year, we will be returning to The Parks Community Centre for our AGM followed by Gill's afternoon tea and a short talk about how the weather has impacted Bracknell.

Full details of the AGM will be sent separately.

***The Parks Community Centre, Nicholson Park  
Bracknell, RG12 9QN***

**Monday 7<sup>th</sup> February – 7.30pm**

**A vision of Bracknell in 20 years' time** An Open Forum with Cllr Chris Turrell (Bracknell Forest Executive Member for Planning and Transport)  
***In the Recital Room at South Hill Park.***

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For events see our website: [www.thebracknellforestsociety.org.uk](http://www.thebracknellforestsociety.org.uk) or find us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/thebracknellforestsociety)

For further information, please email: [tbfsinfo@gmail.com](mailto:tbfsinfo@gmail.com).

## **Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March – 7.30pm**

**Thomas Lawrence** A talk by Paul Lacy about the entrepreneurial Thomas Lawrence who had a major role in both the shopping and brickworks of Bracknell in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

*In the Recital Room at South Hill Park.*

## **Monday 4<sup>th</sup> April– 7.30pm**

**The Rivers, Brooks and Lakes of Bracknell Forest** A talk by Colin Bird about Bracknell Forest's waterways past and present

*In the Recital Room at South Hill Park.*

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## **PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **Bracknell Town Neighbourhood Plan**

There was a referendum on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> September on the Bracknell Town Neighbourhood Plan. The plan was approved by 3475 YES votes to 582 NO votes on a turnout of 9.6% of an electorate of 42,387.

You may remember that the Society recommended voting in favour of the plan. Now that it has been adopted, we will be referring to the plan as we review future planning applications.

### **Warfield Neighbourhood Plan**

Meanwhile, Warfield's Neighbourhood plan is progressing with a consultation on the latest version that was held between Monday 28 June and Monday 9 August 2021. The examiner will recommend if the submitted plan should proceed to a referendum.

Binfield and Crowthorne already have adopted their Neighbourhood Plans. Full details of the status for all the plans can be found by searching for neighbourhood planning on the BFC website.

### **Town Centre Developments**

The west side of Market Street is a hive of building activity and is starting to become infested with cranes. High rise developments of flats are either in progress or planned all the way from behind the council's offices at Times Square to the old bus garage site (long derelict) on the corner with Skimped Hill Lane.



Demolition of the Bentalls site has been finally completed. This was a challenging process as the foundations of Ocean House were integral to the Bentalls building. We hope that construction of The Deck will start soon to complete the plans for the Lexicon.

## **Brownfield Land Release Fund**

The council has secured £2.3 million from the government's Brownfield Land Release Fund to use towards development of three sites. £1.65 million will be allocated to the redevelopment of Market Street as part of the council's partnership with Countryside Properties (see planning applications below). £570,000 will be used towards plans for housing on part of the council depot site on Old Bracknell Lane West. £119,000 to create an access road to unlock a piece of tarmacked land off Opladen Way which can then be redeveloped in to 4 single-person homes and 2 wheelchair accessible homes.

## **Recent Planning Applications**

The Society continues to review new planning applications each week. After the flurry of applications reported in the last newsletter, there haven't been as many of interest to the Society in recent months. The first three below are ones for which we were considering our response at the time of the last time.

Proposal to convert Lily Hill House to 33 flats. Lily Hill House, Lily Hill Road, Bracknell. This application by the owners of Lily Hill House raised considerable interest because of concerns over any possible impact on Lily Hill Park. This Prior Approval application has now been granted. Government legislation relating to the conversion of offices to flats substantially limits the grounds for council to object. The Society recognised that there were unlikely to be grounds for rejecting the application. However, we did raise concerns relating to ensuring that the historic character of the house and its grounds in relation to the park are maintained in the long term. We are pleased that the approval takes these into account as far as legally possible.

Proposal for 169 flats and ground floor commercial space in three blocks on the former bus depot site Market Street, Bracknell. The Society decided to object to this application by the joint venture between Bracknell Forest Council and Countryside Properties. The scale and height of the proposed buildings (up to 16 storeys) is excessive. We were also concerned that some of the parking would be allocated in the High Street car park which doesn't take into account likely future public need for this car park. We also felt there was insufficient provision for electric vehicle charging considering the ban on sale of internal combustion engine vehicles from 2030.

Proposal for 7 new buildings ranging from 5 to 16 storeys comprising 377 residential dwellings, commercial floorspace and new station access following demolition of existing buildings. Bracknell Beeches, Old Bracknell Lane West, Bracknell. The Society decided to object to this application. Primarily because of the overbearing nature of 7 blocks of flats on the surrounding residential properties. We are also concerned about the potential creep of the town centre boundary – we accept that tall buildings will be built within the town centre, but this location is outside of the current planning boundary. We also objected to the inadequacy of the proposed car parking provisions.

Demolition of the existing buildings and erection of 18 residential dwellings utilising the existing access off Forest Road, Winkfield Manor Forest Road Ascot Berkshire. Until about 2001 Winkfield Manor was a listed building because of some 18<sup>th</sup> century woodwork. More recently it was used for sheltered housing. However, it was badly damaged by fire in a suspected arson attack in April 2020. The Society decide not to object to this application.

Erection of 226 homes including associated on-site SANG with an access route, open space and pedestrian/cycle connections. Beaufort Park South Road Wokingham Berkshire RG40 3GD. Beaufort Park is currently the location of an office block that has never been occupied since it was built. The land is included on the draft Local Plan for residential development. There is already planning permission for 68 dwellings on the site. This application considerably expands the scale of development on further parts of the site. We have concerns about the impact of traffic from the access from South Road. We are considering our response.



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Change of use from a Public House into a single 4 bedroom dwelling house with external alterations The New Leathern Bottle Maidenhead Road Warfield Bracknell Berkshire RG42 6ET. The New Leathern Bottle pub at Jealott's Hill has been closed for a year or so. This application proposes converting it to a private house. The pub has been on this site since about 1650 when it superseded the Leathern Bottle in Bottle Lane. Whilst we regret the loss of this historic pub, we are not aware of any legitimate planning reasons to object to this application.

## **NATIONAL AND LOCAL LISTED BUILDINGS**

Being a New Town, you might not think there are many old buildings in Bracknell, but we have five Listed Buildings in the High Street alone, and 286 across the borough.

Listing marks and celebrates a building's special architectural and historic interest, giving it protection for future generations. There are three grades of listing:

- Grade I buildings are of exceptional interest – the grotto in the grounds of Ascot Place is the only Grade I listing within Bracknell Forest
- Grade II\* buildings are particularly important buildings of more than special interest

- Grade II buildings are of special interest

To qualify for listing, a building must be either:

- Over 200 years old
- Of significant architectural interest, or
- Associated with a person of historical significance

Local Listed Buildings can be seen here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/results/?searchType=NHLE+Simple&search=Bracknell+Forest>

Bracknell Forest Council also has a list of Local Heritage Assets, nominated by local authorities. The Bracknell Forest Society submitted a list for Bracknell, most of which have been included. Whilst not offering the same level of protection, the list has so far worked to prevent the demolition of a building in Binfield.

Local Heritage Assets can be seen here: <https://beta.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/locally-listed-buildings/local-list>

We have now identified some more buildings that we believe should be on the list and will be submitting details early in 2022. If you know of any building you think should have protection, please send the details to our History Officer Andrew Radgick at [tbf.history@gmail.com](mailto:tbf.history@gmail.com)

## **BOROUGH GREEN**

Our History Officer took us on a tour of Borough Green during the recent Week of Walks. If you weren't able to join him on the walk, here is a self-guided version.

Borough Green was a community in Easthampstead parish, south of Bracknell alongside Bagshot Road. The road was formerly called Sandpit Road, the pits being next to The Horse and Groom pub, and approximately at the far end of Firlands in Harmans Water. The east side of the road was mainly lined with pairs of cottages, with tracks running to bungalows behind them.



The walk starts outside THE HORSE AND GROOM pub. The building started as a cottage, built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Later it was converted into a public house called The Borough, before changing to its current name. It is said to be a coaching inn on road to Bagshot and was also the venue for fox-hunts in the 19<sup>th</sup>

century. It has two ghosts: an old lady who only cleans the upstairs rooms, and a spirit that likes to drink spirits!

Start heading south towards Elizabeth Close. The large trees belonged to EASTHAMPSTEAD NURSERY which operated between 1890 and 1918. Next to the nursery was a house called 'EMBLEMS' built in 1890. It was acquired by Bracknell Development Corporation and housed the Bracknell News Office. Again, there were reports of ghostly footsteps on the stairs.

Continue along ELIZABETH CLOSE. This was built to house workers at the BMW Head Office on the Southern industrial Estate. It was named after Elizabeth Cottages that stood here. The last of the old bungalows was demolished 2017.

At the end of Elizabeth Close, turn left and follow the path into Nightingale Crescent, then turn right to Firlands.

The block of flats on your left, Iveagh Court, stands on the site of the original HARMANS WATER LAKE. In front of you is NIGHTINGALE TRIANGLE, an area of woodland recently restored by Bracknell Natural History Society and local residents. You can either take the path through the woodland or walk down Firlands. The house in front of you now stands on the site of a large house called Firlands. Two planes collided over the house in World War Two and crashed nearby.

Take the path on your left (running parallel to Bagshot Road) and down the steps into the underpass.

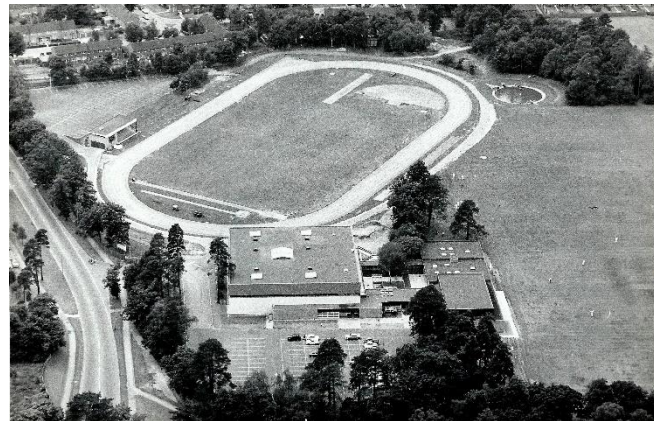
From World War Two:

"On the corner of the road (opposite the Sports Centre) ... was a huge concrete water container for forest fires as the area was all woodland. Further back was a very large camouflaged Nissen hut, possibly an ammunition store used during the war as it was surrounded by sandbags .... At the junction of Bagshot Road and Harmans Water, there was a camp of black Nissen huts for Italian POWs."

Diagonally across from the Sports Centre was another large house, WESTWICK HOUSE, built in about 1900, and demolished in the late 1980s. "It was a lovely old house with a great staircase, wooden block floors and there were stables/garages as well outside." It was occupied by the computer firm Ferranti.

The site of the Sports Centre was formerly occupied by another EASTHAMPSTEAD NURSERY (totally unconnected to the one we have already seen). It operated for fifty years under William Saunders, and then his son Richard. They supplied many of the trees and shrubs for Lily Hill.

The SPORTS CENTRE originally opened in 1963 and has been subsequently enlarged. Building costs spiralled and it was labelled: "disgraceful, a white elephant, a £¼ million pagoda." Pop concerts were held here in the 1970s, including many big names (Genesis, Iron Maiden, Queen, Slade, and Status Quo).



Bracknell Sports Centre c1962

Continue back up the west side of Bagshot Road to Glebe Wood. Here was COLLEGE HOUSE, a private boys' school for about 12 pupils which operated in the 1860s.

Continue to KFC. Here stood WESTWICK HALL (the Parish Hall for Easthampstead) and ORCHARD STORES and CAFÉ. HUMPHRIES GARAGE also stood here.

Follow the path behind KFC. BOROUGH GREEN SCHOOL is on your left. This Secondary Modern school opened 1958 but quickly acquired a bad reputation. It was renamed BRAKENHALE in 1969 when it became a Comprehensive.

Continue to Rectory Close. This was the original PARSONAGE LANE, renamed Rectory Lane by Bracknell Development Corporation. The original parsonage was demolished to make way for POINT ROYAL.

Ahead to your left is BILL HILL, a Bronze Age bowl barrow on top of a steep-sided hill. It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, making it a nationally important archaeological site.

Turn right along Rectory Close and under Bagshot Road back to The Horse and Groom.

*Andrew Radgick*

## OTHER NEWS

### **Bus Service Improvement Plan for Bracknell Forest**

As required by the government's National Bus Strategy Bracknell Forest Council published a Bus Service Improvement Plan in October. This 112-page document contains much information and intentions for improvements. It doesn't appear to propose any radical changes. If you would like to take a look, we would welcome any comments. Details of the plan and also the bus services around the borough can be found on the council's website: <https://beta.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/roads-parking-and-transport/travel-and-public-transport/buses>