



The Bracknell Forest Society

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR BRACKNELL FOREST

Newsletter - Issue 48 – Summer 2023

SOCIETY NEWS

The Society has reached a significant milestone – we now have over 100 members for the first time. Thank you to everyone who rejoined and welcome to new members.

Visit to Cranbourne Church

We had an enjoyable, informal visit to St Peter's Church which dates from 1846. It has recently been restored and re-ordered following a major fire.



Tea and cakes at the back of the church was accompanied by a short talk about 'Billy Smart's Circus and its links with Cranbourne'. The circus was based on North Street, Cranbourne – some members remember the elephants walking along local roads! The Smart family graves are in the churchyard.



Week of Walks



Another successful Week of Walks - despite heavy rain during the week, we were lucky to avoid it on all of our walks. We explored new and old countryside open spaces as well as urban areas – learning lots about the history along the way. Thank you to all who prepared and led the walks, and all

of you who joined in. We look forward to more next year – have you any suggestions of new places or repeats of previous walks?



Windmill Meadows SANG



Cesar's Camp

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

For further information, please email: tbfsinfo@gmail.com.

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

Please put the dates in your diary.

8th to 17th September

Heritage Open Days - look out for listing of local events.

Monday 11th September -7.30pm

Broadmoor A talk by Mark Stevens, County Archivist, Berkshire Records office. *In the Recital Room at South Hill Park.*

Monday 2nd October – 7.30pm

Lily Hill House and the People who Lived There – Part 2 A talk by Colin Bird. *In the Recital Room at South Hill Park.*

Monday 30th October– evening.

Binfield Ghost Walk An evening visit to haunted parts of Binfield hosted by Gill Cheetham and Andrew Radgick. Booking will be required.

Monday 6th November – 7.30pm

Public Art in Bracknell A talk by Christine Smith. *In the Recital Room at South Hill Park.*

Monday 4th December – 7.30pm

Possible additional meeting Details to be confirmed *In the Recital Room at South Hill Park.*

Monday 18th December - evening

Christmas Party and Quiz – more details nearer the time

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

The Heritage Open Days this year run from Friday 8th to Sunday 17th September. It is well worth visiting some of the venues that are opening – both locally and wider.

They are coordinated nationally by the National Trust with support from players of People's Postcode Lottery. Lynda encourages local venues to open, and the Society will distribute a leaflet of local events.

In the meantime, browse the list of free events at: <https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/>.



MEETING WITH COUNCILLOR BIDWELL

The Society is an apolitical organisation. However, we do aim to get to know and engage with councillors so that we can be informed about current issues and plans. We also make representations about issues that are relevant to members and the wider community.

Prior to the pandemic, we used to meet regularly with Cllr Brunel-Walker (then BFC Executive Member for

Economic Development and Regeneration). In July we were pleased to meet with the current occupant of this position in the new administration, Cllr Paul Bidwell.

Climate change and transparency are key issues for the new administration. Two Climate Change Summits have been held (see report later in newsletter). Future quarterly meetings with Cllr Bidwell fit well with the transparency agenda.

Regular readers will be aware that the new Bracknell Forest Local Plan has been progressing tortuously through the processes towards adoption. There is no desire to hold up this process by making significant changes that would require reopening the Planning Inspectors examination. However, there is no news yet of progress to the next step.

Footfall at the Lexicon has returned to more than 80% of the pre-pandemic levels and all shop units under the Lexicon's management are either occupied or have interested parties. Progress with the Deck on the old Bentalls site doesn't seem likely soon – ideas for interim use were discussed – we suggested an indoor market or temporary green space.

We highlighted that some of the neighbourhood shopping centres are looking tired. Section 106 money from developers could be used for improvements.

We also flagged the issue of parking provision for new developments in the town centre. Many planning applications have provision of spaces below the council's standards. A rethink is required – especially where existing public car parks are to be used for new blocks of flats. This is especially important given the imminent closure of the High Street car park (see later).

Please let us know if there are relevant issues that you would like us to raise at our next meeting.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Recent Planning Applications

The Society continues to review new planning applications each week. The last 3 months have been very quiet with no new applications that we considered to need a representation from the Society.

Beaufort Park. The planning inspectorate has rejected an appeal by Southern Home Ownership relating to refusal of an application by BFC for an additional 221 homes at Beaufort Park (north of Nine Mile Ride and west of South Road). However, the refusal was only because of concerns about parking, traffic congestion and blocked narrow roads.

This site is included for development in the draft Local Plan – in addition to the homes that are currently being built on an adjacent site. Crowthorne Village Action Group has bitterly opposed any development on the site as it will close the gap between Bracknell and Crowthorne (the Bucklers Park development on the old TRL site is on the opposite side of Nine Mile Ride).

It seems likely that the Beaufort Park site will remain in the Local Plan and the developers will return with an alternative application.

LOCAL HISTORY

Sandhurst's First Railway Station

When the Reading, Guildford and Redhill Railway opened in 1849, there was no station at Sandhurst, the nearest being at Blackwater. The town had to wait until 1909 for Sandhurst Halt (as it was then known) to open. The novelty and celebrations were so great that local people filled the platforms and caught a train just for the novelty of a ride. But there was another, temporary station which opened in 1852 and closed the following year. No-one knows where it was – until now.

The Reading Chronicle edition of 17th July 1852 reported: "A new station has recently been opened on the Reading and Reigate line at Sandhurst; it is about a quarter of a mile from the village church." A newly built pub at the east end of Church Road in Little Sandhurst obtained a licence a couple of months later; its location was "situate close to the Sandhurst station of the South Eastern Railway." Later the same year, an advert described the station as being one mile from Yateley Green (which was just to the west of Yateley village).

The next clue to the station comes in a report on the Windsor and Eton Express, published on 19th February 1853. "The Government are in earnest regarding the exercise of the Line and the Militia during the ensuing open season. Ground is everywhere being laid out for camps of instruction." These camps continued until the outbreak of the Crimean War in October. The station closed at the end of the year, with the Reading Mercury lamenting two months later: "The Sandhurst Railway Station which has been now for some weeks closed, it is hoped will be again opened, as it is a serious inconvenience to all the inhabitants of the vicinity, and must occasion some loss to the South Eastern Company."

The station re-opened on 2nd June 1856, for one day only, for those wishing to attend the laying of the foundation stone of the main building at the Royal Military College at Sandhurst by Queen Victoria. "Good weather for the event led to large numbers of people from Reading trying to get to it. There were insufficient carriages at Reading station to cope with the crowds, and a block on the down-line between Wokingham and Sandhurst added further delays." Excursions were also run from Brighton for the event. Now the station's location is described as "one and a half miles from the College."

Mapping the distances from Sandhurst Church, Yateley Green and the RMC, we arrive at the railway bridge on Church Road in Little Sandhurst.

A small road on the north side now runs to a few 1930s houses, but it does not take much imagination to believe this continued to a railway platform, especially as a map of 1871 shows a kink in the field boundary adjacent to the line.



1896 OS map



Road leading to site of original station.

There are still occasional references to Sandhurst station as a location until 1879, so presumably the platform was still there, unused, and finally removed in the following decade.

Andrew Radgick (History Officer)

CLIMATE CHANGE SUMMIT

The summit was organised by Bracknell Forest Council, invitations were sent out to interested parties. I attended on behalf of Bracknell Forest Natural History Society and was asked by our chairman to represent The Bracknell Forest Society and supply feedback.

The summit was held over two days; results from both days to be analysed and recorded and circulated to everybody concerned.

Leader of the Council gave an address in which it was suggested that BFC have committed to a net zero emissions pledge to achieve by 2050. It was pointed out and unanimously agreed that, without immediate action to reduce emissions within the borough, this target is almost certainly unachievable. Simple acts can have a positive effect. It was also agreed that climate change is upon us, we can already see the effects across Bracknell Forest. As a body we must quickly come up with a plan of how we can reduce our carbon footprint in a way that is embraced by community, business,

education and local authority which is workable and acceptable to all. It was also stated that this meeting will have effect with further summits and subcommittee/group forming already in the pipeline.

Delegates were split into groups and asked to complete a number of questions aimed at who they were and what had they already done, and what are going to do.

- There is no dedicated cycle track to Windsor. It would be a good idea to involve cyclists in future planning. Better and more cycle tracks.
- Public transport is available in evenings across Bracknell but is poorly advertised and promoted.
- Reduce car journeys, lift share and seek alternative methods.
- Planning, BFC has no desire to re-invent and resubmit the local plan. They have to work within the modifications agreed from central government. Are committed to protect SANGS.
- Electric vehicles and carbon neutral buildings could reduce local emissions. Where possible delivery vans/companies could work together to supply neighbouring businesses.
- A 'Share' items operated from our local disposal facility to reduce need to purchase.
- A community 'Brand' that is shared throughout the borough to help people recognise the recycling points.
- Reduction in single use plastic water bottles (This is the largest waste in plastic that is not recycled. Provide many more filling points for water bottle-there are none in the Lexicon) Better recycling info in schools.

Delegates had an opportunity to network. It was agreed that we need to communicate and share resources and information. Further action was pledged by the leader of Bracknell Forest Council.

Gill Cheetham July 2023

OTHER NEWS

High Street Car Park to Close this Autumn



High Street car park will close on 31 October following independent surveyor reports that show the structure is corroding and cannot be fixed. The council's executive has agreed to close the car park, which is currently safe to use, within the timescales set out by structural experts.

The car park, which was built in the 1970s, has already had its middle parking bays suspended to spread weight load. This has provided a temporary solution to keep it safe and open. However, surveyors have said that this cannot continue as the structure is corroding. They recommended closing the car park before the end of the year, as the level of corrosion within the concrete reinforcement cannot be remedied.

It will remain open safely until 31 October. Work will then begin to safely hoard off the car park in November. The site will be added to the overall town centre masterplan for regeneration – it is too soon to say what may be placed on the site in the future. High Street car park is mainly used by council staff working in the nearby Time Square office and a handful of monthly season ticket holders. It is not the car park of choice for shoppers or those visiting The Lexicon.

Bracknell town centre has lots of alternative car parks available: Braccan Walk, Princess Square, Albert Road, Weather Way are all within walking distance of the town centre. The closure of High Street car park should not impact on people's ability to park, as only The Avenue car park reaches capacity at Christmas peak times, while others have plenty of space all year round.

Structural engineers have advised that the businesses under High Street car park could remain in place safely until 2025, subject to regular inspections.

Discussions are ongoing between the council, Bracknell Regeneration Partnership and Shopmobility to find an alternative parking and drop-off point for people that use Shopmobility

BFC News article

Annual Membership Subscriptions

Membership is for the calendar year with renewals due in January each year. It can be renewed at a meeting or by contacting:

10 Shaftesbury Close, Harmans Water, RG12 9PX
or tbfsinfo@gmail.com.