



# The Bracknell Forest Society

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR BRACKNELL FOREST

Newsletter - Issue 47 – Spring 2023

## SOCIETY NEWS

The Society's programme of Monday evening talks in March and April continued to be well attended. I continue to be surprised that we find new topics related to Bracknell Forest and the surrounding area. However, we are always looking for new speakers and talks. If you have an idea or fancy putting together a talk, please let us know – we are already starting to think about our 2024 programme. As well as full length talks, we could also have a meeting with a couple of 20-30 minute talks on different topics.

### **A Virtual Pub Crawl Around Sandhurst and Crowthorne**

Following on from his talk last year on pubs in Bracknell, Andrew Radgick ventured south in the borough to tell us about the many pubs in Sandhurst and Crowthorne. As the older of the two communities, Sandhurst had many more pubs. One theme that kept coming up in the old newspaper reports was the amount of time the local constabulary spent enforcing licencing laws and dealing with drunkenness and antisocial behaviour – not just a present-day issue!



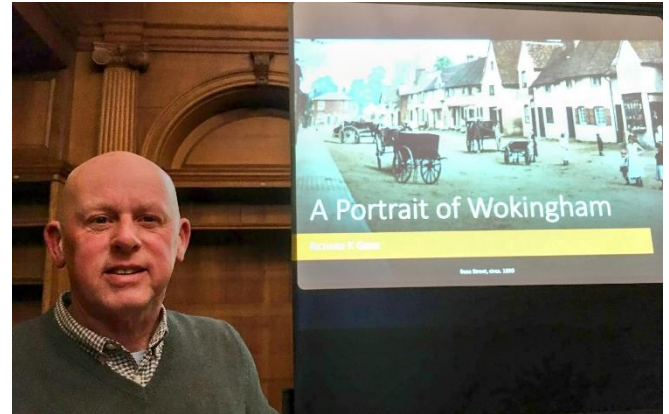
*Iron Duke, Crowthorne*

### **A Portrait of Wokingham**

For our April meeting we had to have a short notice change of speaker. For the second time, we were not able to hear about Broadmoor. We have now identified an alternative speaker to talk about Broadmoor on 11<sup>th</sup> September (see Programme of Events).

However, we were treated to a fascinating talk about Wokingham by Richard Gibbs, the author of a recent book 'Wokingham – A Potted History'. Richard based the whole talk around the history of the town that was associated with one old photograph of Rose Street and

a painting of the town from a nearby hill. This novel approach made for an excellent talk.



*Richard Gibbs – A Portrait of Wokingham*

## Membership Renewal

Thank you to all of you who have renewed your membership for 2023. We have had 86 membership renewals so far this year – a little down on last year. There is still time for those who want to stay with us – we'll be updating the mailing list soon.

Subscriptions can either be paid at a meeting or details of how to pay are on our website: <https://tbfs.org.uk/join-tbfs>.

## PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

Please put the dates in your diary.

### **Friday 26th May at 2pm.**

**Visit to Cranbourne Church** A guided tour of St. Peter's Church in Cranbourne followed by tea and cake with a short talk about Billy Smart's Circus's and its links with Cranbourne. **This is fully booked.**



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

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

### **Monday 31<sup>st</sup> July to Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> August**

**Week of Walks** The programme will be distributed to members in early July. As last year, spaces will be limited, booking will be required with priority for members.

### **8<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> September**

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

### **Monday 11<sup>th</sup> September -7.30pm**

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

### **Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 30<sup>th</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> November – 7.30pm**

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

### **Monday 18<sup>th</sup> December - evening**

**Christmas Party and Quiz** – more details nearer the time

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## **PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **Bracknell Forest Local Plan**

All seems to have gone quiet on the saga of the borough's emerging Local Plan. As reported in the last newsletter, the planning inspectors required some significant changes, including the removal of the proposed garden village at Jealott's Hill. A public consultation is required just on the modifications to the plan – there is no news on when this will be.

As we are sure you are aware, political control of Bracknell Forest Council changed from Conservative to Labour at the local elections early in May. We don't yet know whether this could have an impact on the adoption of the plan.

Although many residents would probably prefer the proposed residential developments in the plan not to progress, we must remember that the annual requirement for 614 new dwellings to be built each year during plan period is imposed from central government. Any continued delay in adopting the Local Plan risks approval of planning applications on land not currently identified for development.

### **Recent Planning Applications**

The Society continues to review new planning applications each week. The last 3 months has seen

several applications which could see significant changes to the town centre.

Demolition of Lloyds Bank and old Post Office building extension followed by the erection of 8 storey's of flats. 6 - 10 High Street, Bracknell. A previous application for this site for 10 -12 storey flats has been withdrawn and was followed by a reduced scale 7-8 storey proposal for 39 flats. (Note this doesn't directly impact the 1930s Post Office building that has been used as a restaurant)

This is much more in keeping with the height of similar blocks of flats in the vicinity and in principle more acceptable. However, there is no provision for extra parking for the flats. The application acknowledges that this contravenes local parking policy and proposes annual passes for existing public car parks.

The Society submitted an objection to the application on the basis that the absence of parking provision does not comply with the council's town centre parking policy that requires 0.9 parking spaces per flat. We are increasingly concerned that town centre developments propose parking provision in existing public car parks. Whilst there is clearly some spare capacity, there should be a clear, publicly consulted plan on the use of public car parks for this purpose. One of the attractions of the Lexicon is the ease of parking that helps attract visitors from a wide area. There is a risk of discouraging visitors if parking becomes a challenge as in other nearby towns.



*View from High Street looking west.*

Prior Approval for construction of additional storey to existing commercial building to create 13 residential units. Atrium Court, The Ring, Bracknell. This is for the old Oracle building for which there was previous approval for the office block to be converted to 150 flats. The new application is for an additional floor to be added to increase the number of flats. Addition of up to two storeys does not require full planning permission so the council can only evaluate the proposal on a limited number of grounds. There is sufficient space in the buildings existing car parks to meet the town centre parking standards. The Society did not comment on this application.

Demolition of existing office buildings prior to construction of 349 flats in seven 4 to 16 storey blocks. Bracknell Beeches, Old Bracknell Lane, West Bracknell. In July last year planning permission was given for this major new development just south of the railway station. This application is really a formality to allow demolition of the existing buildings. However, it provides a reminder that the construction of tall buildings is now spreading out of the town centre. How long will it be before the council depot and other commercial

premises on Old Bracknell Lane West are replaced by mega blocks of flats?

## CORONATIONS

With the recent coronation of King Charles, I thought it would be interesting to see how previous coronations were celebrated in Bracknell. For this, we are reliant on newspaper reports, and news from Bracknell only started to appear in the Reading papers from around 1800.

### **GEORGE IV**

Organised in just six weeks, this took place in London on 19th July 1823. Flags, bands, and fireworks marked the occasion in Bracknell, with the poor being "regaled with roast beef, plum pudding, and beer."

### **WILLIAM IV**

The coronation of William IV took place on Thursday 8th September 1831, with all communities celebrating the event. "The residents of Bracknell were not behind their neighbours - a fat sheep was roasted whole for the poor, and a large company sat down to an excellent dinner at .... The Red Lion. In the evening a general illumination and a grand display of fireworks took place." The festivities took place four days after the ceremony in London.

### **VICTORIA**

By the time Queen Victoria came to the throne, the Reading and Windsor newspapers were crammed with details from their respective town's celebrations. Some of the other larger settlements in Berkshire received brief write-ups, but little Bracknell did not warrant a report. We have to assume the events mirrored those of previous coronations, with plentiful food and drinks, perhaps some music and dancing, and fireworks rounding off the day.

### **EDWARD VII**

"A large audience attended a public meeting at the Victoria Hall (located in Church Road) in April 1901 to consider how to celebrate the forthcoming coronation." It was decided events would include "giving a dinner to the aged poor," along with a tea to the school children. Originally scheduled for 26th June, the ceremony had to be postponed at very short notice after the King was taken ill and required immediate surgery. The effect of this in Bracknell was noted in the Reading Mercury: "The news of the king's illness was received .... with feelings of consternation. Between one and two o'clock, vague rumours began to circulate that something had occurred to postpone the coronation ceremonies, and shortly afterwards several private messages were received to the effect that the Coronation would not take place, but the absence of any official news increased the feeling of uneasiness. It was not until the early evening papers arrived that the true state of things was known. During the evening, various alarming rumours were floating about, and it was not until Wednesday

morning that the public were somewhat reassured when the papers announced that the King was progressing satisfactorily. In the absence of any official declaration, opinions varied with regard to the Coronation celebrations. The Bracknell Coronation Committee met and decided that all the arrangements should be postponed indefinitely, and the tradesmen also resolved to continue business as usual on Thursday and Friday." The uncertainty would have affected the Bracknell Brewery which had sole rights to sell ale at the Reading Coronation Fete.

The rearranged coronation took place on 9th August. By the morning, the town had been decorated with flags and bunting. "Special services were held at midday at Holy Trinity Church and at the Congregational Church .... Afterwards at the Victoria Hall, dinner was provided for the older people, of whom a large number were present .... During the repast, music was provided outside the Hall by the Bracknell Band. After dinner, the school children assembled at the Hall, and after singing the National Anthem, marched in procession to a meadow in Clay Lane (now Park Road) .... Here, sports, etc were carried out, and other amusements were provided for both old and young. After the company had partaken of tea, each child was presented with a commemorative cup, and the prizes presented. The evening was devoted to dancing and other amusements, the programme concluding with an excellent display of fireworks."

### **GEORGE V**

A number of licence holders applied for various extensions "on the occasion of the Coronation Festivities .... on 21st and 22nd June 1911." After consideration, the Chairman of the Wokingham bench announced that they could not see their way to grant extensions longer than 12 o'clock. The celebrations in Bracknell commenced with a short service in the church at noon. A dinner was given to the old people at 1 o'clock "at which their wants were amply provided for," accompanied by music played by the Ascot Brass Band. At 2pm, local children assembled at the Victoria Hall, each receiving a medal. After the singing of the National Anthem, they all marched down Church Road to a meadow at Cooper's Hill. "There each child was presented with a Coronation mug, and prizes were given for the best fancy costumes .... Sports for boys and girls followed, and at 4pm the children sat down to tea. As there was plenty of tea, cake, bread and butter, and other provisions left, the visitors and parishioners present were also entertained with refreshments and tea. At 6 o'clock, an open-air concert was held on the field, to which the local talents contributed. The whole proceedings terminated with a grand display of fireworks and a bonfire, the latter, however, being somewhat marred by the rain."

### **GEORGE VI**

The coronation of George VI was celebrated on 12th May 1937. Trains ran between Reading and Waterloo

for 24 hours, starting at 3am. Locally, the celebrations started at 10:30am with a bicycle polo match at the football ground in Larges Lane. Pensioners sat down to lunch at midday, while a service was held at the War Memorial Recreation Ground (this was located at the top end of London Road; the site is now occupied by the Kelvin Gate flats). At 2:30pm, a procession through the town was led by the band of 4th Queen's Own Hussars and was recorded as being "one of the most spectacular seen in the town." The King's speech was broadcast before some sports took place. Local schoolchild again received a mug, while fifteen-year-old Hilda Slade was crowned Coronation Queen. Just after 6pm, the Chavey Down gymnastics team gave a demonstration, and day concluded with a bonfire and fireworks at 9pm, brought forward an hour due to rain starting.

## ELIZABETH II

Fundraising took place to celebrate the Queen's coronation, but by mid-May 1953 the figure raised was only £390, "considerably below the target aimed at," although this had reached £520 by the end of the month. The day was celebrated with a picnic tea on the cricket ground (this was the old cricket ground located on the north side of the High Street) for children, an old folk's dinner, and a procession (held at 7pm so that the actual coronation could be watched on the television), starting at the Recreation Ground, proceeding along Church Road, Station Road, and High Street.



There were also entertainments, dancing and displays by the children, darts competitions (for teams of four), dancing at the Cricket Ground, a Coronation Ball at the Victoria Hall, and fireworks and a bonfire at the Recreation Ground. More than eighty children attended a street party in Priestwood, and to round off the commemorations, Bracknell Development Corporation announced the pathway between Jock's Lane and



Rounds Hill would be named 'Queensway.' The trees there were planted by local children (who ferociously guarded them against vandalism).

*Andrew Radgick (History Officer)*

## BRACKNELL'S 2023 CORONATION EVENTS

King Charles III's coronation parades and service were shown on a large screen at Bond Square followed by a coronation concert. Unfortunately, the weather didn't cooperate. The following day there was a Coronation Themed Tea Dance undercover in Princess Square as well as numerous celebration street party gatherings that took place in the borough.



*Photo: Lynda Lunn*

## OTHER NEWS

### Road Improvements

The council has approved its road improvement plans for 2023 to 2024. In addition to pothole and road surface works, planned traffic management and road safety work for includes:

- A new toucan crossing on Temple Way (north of the junction with Boltons Lane), which will help parents and children get to King's Academy Binfield more safely.
- A new zebra crossing on Cambridge Road in Sandhurst, near to Owlsmoor Primary School.
- A new zebra crossing on Rectory Road, opposite Brakenhale School.
- An extension to the upgrade of the footpath and cycle path on South Road to link in King's Academy Easthampstead Park.
- Increased parking in Claverdon, Swaledale, Kibble Green, Latimer, Fraser Road, Holland Pines and Prescott.
- Speed management to improve road safety on Temple Way, Wood Lane, Park Lane and Sunninghill Road.

## **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](mailto:tbfsinfo@gmail.com).