



The Bracknell Forest Society

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR BRACKNELL FOREST

Newsletter - Issue 49 – Autumn 2023

SOCIETY NEWS

The Society has had a busy time since the last newsletter. We have already had three evening talks since the summer – with one more to go. I don't think we've ever had a year with such a full programme of talks.

In September, Mark Stevens, the County Archivist at Royal Berkshire Archives (formerly the Berkshire Record Office) talked about **Broadmoor** in the Victorian Era. His interest in this topic was sparked by the transfer of the hospital's records to the Archives.

Our October talk was the second part of **Lily Hill House and the People who lived there**.

This followed the lives of the Neck (or Van Neck) and McComb families through to the sale of the house to the Bracknell Development Corporation in 1955. This included the poignant story of two brothers who died within a week of each other on the western front in 1914 and are commemorated by a window in Holy Trinity Church.



North Aisle, Holy Trinity, Bracknell

At the beginning of November, a member of the society, Christine Smith, entertained us with a lively talk about **Bracknell's Public Art** that she had discovered as she explored around the borough. In addition to telling us about the art and the artists, she shared her insightful opinions on many of them. There is certainly more that can be done to make residents aware of the wide range of public art around the borough than is evident at first glance.



Fulmar Crescent, Jennett's Park

In addition to the evening talks, we also had a very successful and oversubscribed **Ghost walk in Binfield** followed by a meal at the Stag and Hounds. Our experts on spooky apparitions, Gill and Andrew, recounted many tales of poltergeist around the borough. We all survived and enjoyed the evening.

We have already started work on planning our 2024 programme and have many ideas. However, we are keen to involve members as much as possible. Please let us know if you have any topics that you would be interested in - or even better would be happy to give a talk on. There are a limited number of external speakers who can talk on local topics, so we do rely on members to contribute.

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

Please put the dates in your diary.

Monday 4th December – 7.30pm

Bracknell between the World Wars – Urban Spaces Project – a talk by members Maggie Stock and Lily Viola on this collaboration with towns twinned with Leverkusen. *In the Recital Room at South Hill Park, Ringmead, RG12 7PA.*

Monday 18th December - evening

Christmas Party, Quiz and Pizzas – at the Admiral Cunningham, Priestwood Court Rd, RG42 1TU – the cost is £10 to be paid in advance – email Gill at tbfsinfo@gmail.com to book a place.

Saturday 13th January 2024 – 2.00pm

Annual General Meeting Afternoon Tea and a talk on the making of the new documentary 'THE STORY OF SOUTH HILL PARK' by Alex Harvey-Brown. *The Parks Community Centre, Nicholson Park, Bracknell, RG12 9QN*

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

The Heritage Open Days this year ran from Friday 8th to Sunday 17th September. As in previous years, the society produced a leaflet listing all of the local events – although this year it was only distributed electronically. Lynda spends a lot of time encouraging local venues to open. We would be interested to know how many of you

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.

participated this year and whether the effort is worthwhile. Please let us know by emailing tbfsinfo@gmail.com.

In the meantime, here are a few reminders of the events:



Cabbage Hill, Woodhurst Park History Walk



Eagle House School, Crowthorne



All Saints Church, Binfield

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.

At the beginning of November, we had our second meeting with Cllr Bidwell (Executive Member for Economic Development and Regeneration).

We started by discussing the council's £4m budget challenge caused by 50% funding cuts from central government plus rising costs, especially in children's services. In addition, since April 2017, Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) has processed £31.1m in business rates refunds to 1,749 businesses in the borough due to downwards revaluation of the business property's rateable value assessed by the national Valuation Office Agency. There will be some difficult decisions to balance the council's budget.

Since we last met, it has been confirmed that the planned development of The Deck on the old Bentalls site will not go ahead. The site is owned by BRP (Bracknell Regeneration Partnership) who need to develop a new plan for it, probably taking two to four years. In the short term, he is in favour of taking the hoardings down, flattening the site, and using it for short term pop-up vans, events, etc. In the long term, it is likely to be used for housing above retail units.

The new administration will continue the 50/50 partnership between BFC and Countryside Properties (Bracknell Forest Cambium Partnership) for development of council owned sites in the town centre. This will also include the future development of Town Square area (Easthampstead House/Bracknell Central Library/Bracknell Police Station/former Magistrate's Court) and sites adjacent to Station Way (including the current bus station, we made the point that replacement bus stops need to be close to the railway station). Social rents will be 60% of the going market rate. Market Street developments have 48% affordable homes, while a development at the council depot in Old Bracknell Lane will have 100% affordable. We highlighted the need for green space in the town centre for the new developments.

BFC are examining ways to make The Lexicon "more appealing" to the youth of Bracknell. This may include late night venues. BFC are keen to encourage link-ups between The Lexicon and South Hill Park.

Talks have taken place with Royal Holloway College in Egham about providing student accommodation in Bracknell, and the possibility of a "feeder college" is being investigated. BFC are also keen to get representatives from local firms in the Federation of Small Businesses into local schools and colleges to highlight local employment opportunities.

The Bracknell Business Improvement District (see <https://bracknellbid.co.uk/>) is a business-led, not-for-profit partnership created to deliver additional services and to improve the trading environment. It is funded by a levy on businesses in the Southern and Western Business Areas. It has plans to introduce an electro bus service for its members to and from the town centre. They will also have a bike hire scheme, as well as Boot Camp sessions.

We raised two issues. Firstly, there appears to be no continuity in style in buildings in some areas of the town, especially Market Street and London Road. There also appears to be no overview for parking on central housing developments, each being considered separately.

Our idea of closing Market Street to through traffic was again discussed, especially in the light of the closing and future demolition of the High Street carpark. This could really help pedestrian continuity between The Lexicon and The Peel Centre.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Bracknell Forest Local Plan

The draft Local Plan has taken another step on its tortuous path with yet another round of public consultation. This time, the council is consulting on Proposed Main Modifications resulting from the examination by the planning inspectors. As far as we can tell, all of the most significant recommended changes have been included by the new council administration. The consultation runs for 6 weeks from Tuesday 31 October 2023 to Tuesday 12 December 2023:

<https://consult.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/kse/event/37701>

The Winkfield Neighbourhood Development Plan

A referendum on the Winkfield Neighbourhood Plan is being held on Thursday 23rd November 2023. If approved by parish residents, it will join approved neighbourhood plans for Binfield, Warfield, Crowthorne and Bracknell Town to influence developments alongside the Bracknell Forest Local Plan.

Recent Planning Applications

The Society continues to review new planning applications each week. We have submitted two representations since the last newsletter:

Demolition of garage block followed by construction of 11 houses Garage Block (Rear of Mostyn House) Merryhill Road, Bracknell. This proposal by Silva Homes for the site is on the Priestwood 2 estate would create new, much-needed residential accommodation. However, we objected as on-street parking in Merryhill Road is already congested during the weekdays, and even more so at weekends. The current site entrance is narrow and does not allow two vehicles to pass. Limited parking space is proposed for the new dwellings. We considered that there would be an adverse impact on vehicular and pedestrian safety. Bracknell Town Council also recommended refusal of the application on similar grounds.

Erection of 72 bedroom Care Home on the site of the former St Margaret Clitherow Roman Catholic Church Ringmead Hanworth. Since the demolition of the church, there have been two previous proposals for the site for only 14 dwellings and 15 apartments respectively. Whilst accepting that this is not a bad site for a care home, we objected to this new application since the scale and massing of the proposed development is still excessive and out of character with the development in the local area. In addition, parking provision for staff, residents and visitors is inadequate, especially as this site is not a central / town centre location.

LOCAL HISTORY

Sandhurst War Memorial

Being right on the county boundary of Berkshire, news from Sandhurst often didn't make it into the Reading newspapers in the past. Any that did was frequently associated with happenings at the Royal Military Academy. In the last newsletter I wrote about locating the first railway station at Sandhurst; this time it's about the unveiling of the town's war memorial.

After the First World War, a need was felt to commemorate those who died in the service for their country. Every city, town, and village planned a memorial of some kind. Many schools, businesses, social clubs, and regiments also wanted to record their thanks. A Berkshire County Memorial was planned but never erected as insufficient funds were raised for it. As one newspaper correspondent wrote at the time, "We are becoming a country of memorials." Stone and stonemasons were in high demand, so it was a few years before all the memorials were erected. Bracknell Congregational Church in the High Street was quick off the mark and managed to have a tablet in place within twelve months; this can now be seen in St Paul's in Harmanswater. Easthampstead had their cross in the churchyard in place by 1921, but it was another three years before the one in Bracknell was unveiled. With no newspaper report on the one at Sandhurst, the only clue was in this photograph. It was originally thought this showed an Armistice Day service until it was pointed out there were daffodils in flower! This started me on the track of finding when it was unveiled.



Land for the memorial was donated by the Majendie family who lived in a house called 'The Warren'. The house no longer exists and an estate of the same name stands in its place. The site was close to the railway bridge but the memorial was moved to its current position in 1983, after much public opposition, to reduce traffic congestion when memorial services were being held.

The first mention of a memorial is in the minutes of Sandhurst Town Council meeting held on 30th October 1919 when a motion was unanimously passed "to take it over on completion, the deeds, etc to be handed over to the council." There is no further mention until

21st April 1921 when Mr Simpson “would see the Rev. Baines respecting the war memorial deeds.” This suggests the memorial had been recently unveiled.

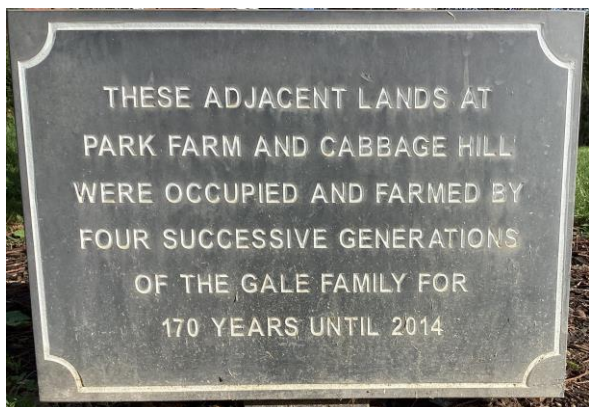
As well as the daffodils in the photo, there are a lot of umbrellas. The event would almost certainly have taken place on a Sunday when everyone was able to attend. To narrow down the date further, we need to check the weather records of the time. With generally mild weather that year, we can date the photograph to one of the four weekends from mid-March to mid-April. Easter Sunday fell on 27th March so it was unlikely to be held on that date. For April, “a belt of high pressure maintained fair warm weather over the greater part of the British Isles.” But it was a different picture on 20th March with “moderate falls of rain in all districts.”

So now we have the date for the unveiling of the Sandhurst war memorial – 20th March 1921

Andrew Radgick (History Officer)

Gale Family of Warfield Farmers

During Hugh Fitzwilliams’ Heritage Open Days’ history walk around Woodhurst Park, he told us about the Gale Family who have farmed in the area for 170 years.



In 1848 John/Jack Gale moved to West End, Warfield, with his large family and farmed a few acres. His children worked as farmers or farmer’s wives, and one ran a bakery and another the local post office.

One of his children, James, had 14 children all of whom survived into adulthood.

One of James’s sons, Joseph, married to Emily Gough and living at Skimped Hill for a while, also had 14 children.

At various times, members of the Gale family have farmed at Peacock Farm, Manor Farm, Park Farm, Fairclough Farm, a farm at Jeallots Hill, Honeywood Farm, Church Farm and Grange Farm on Cabbage Hill.

The area around Warfield is not good agricultural land as the soil is mainly London clays and Bagshot sands so the farms were mainly a few acres in size with a cow, a pig, hens and vegetable beds.

Lynda Lunn

POWs captured near Bracknell

The first prisoners of war to escape from the thousands held at Frith Internment Camp, near Frimley, were part of a work party at Pirbright. Four sailors and one air service man were not discovered missing until roll call on the Monday night 25th September 1916. Blood hounds from Camberley and Woking were brought in to track the fugitives but the trail went cold when it was thought they boarded a goods train for the coast.

However, three of the men were recaptured on 27th September 1916 near The Royal Foresters, on the London Road, Bracknell to Ascot, while the other two were found the following day in woodland near Jeallots Hill, north of Bracknell.

Apparently, many of the Germans in the camp spoke English fluently. The inmates were outnumbered by the hordes of sightseers who surrounded the camp. Gifts of cigarettes, tobacco, apples, ginger beer and cake were brought and very much appreciated.

OTHER NEWS

Princess of Wales visits Bracknell



The Princess of Wales visited the Ukrainian community hub (Vsi Razom) in Princess Square on 4th October, speaking to staff and volunteers as well as families who have been using it for advice, support, and friendship.

During the visit, Her Royal Highness helped to pack goodwill boxes for local families, which provide essentials like toothbrushes and toothpaste, nappies and wipes.

The visit by Her Royal Highness coincided with the first anniversary of the hub’s opening. Over the past 12 months it has helped more than 200 people – mostly people from Ukraine who have made Bracknell Forest their home - but also people who have been displaced by other international conflicts.

BFC News article

New climate action board

Friday 13 October saw the first meeting of the Bracknell Forest Joint Climate Action Board, set up to accelerate collective action against climate change in the borough.

The board consists of representatives from local businesses, schools, community groups, parish and town councils, as well as Bracknell Forest Council officers and councillors. They will play a key role in creating and implementing the new Bracknell Forest community climate emergency strategy, an essential requirement following the recent council motion to reach net zero as close to 2030 as possible.

BFC News article

Bracknell Forest Economic Strategy

A new draft strategy has been launched about how we can strengthen and improve Bracknell Forest's economy and business sector. Consultation runs until 6th December:

<https://consult.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/kse/event/37721>

The borough has real pockets of productivity and is an ideal location for small, medium and large businesses.

However, recent global events like the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic downturn have impacted

the number and types of businesses calling Bracknell Forest home. It has also impacted the training levels of local people – creating a skills gap.

The council is now looking to reverse this by driving prosperity, increasing skills and encouraging more businesses to come to Bracknell Forest through a targeted 10-year plan running from 2024 to 2034.

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.



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**South Hill Park – Recital Room
Monday 4th December 2023 at 7.30 pm**

Bracknell between the World Wars Urban Spaces Project

Maggie Stock and Lily Viola

A presentation of short film clips showing aspects of life, and urban and cultural development, in Bracknell during the Interwar period, 1918 to 1939

**Urban
Spaces**

Based on local history research, these film clips have been produced as part of a European Urban Spaces project in partnership with Bracknell's twin town, Leverkusen, in Germany, and six other twin towns of Leverkusen from other European countries. Together with local history film clips from other partner towns, the Bracknell film clips have been assembled into an electronic film kit or Digital Clip Kit (DCK), which is now live and freely available online as an educational tool primarily intended for use by young adults.

Members free; Non-members £3.00

For more information about the society: www.tbfs.org.uk
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