



# The Buckingham Society

*Campaigning for a better Buckingham*

## Newsletter June 2021

### A word from our Chair – Roger Edwards

For around 50 years the Buckingham Society has worked to try to ensure that Buckingham remains a great place to live. People often ask, what has the Buckingham Society done or what does the Buckingham Society do? Well, there are times that this is a difficult question to answer. For example, all planning applications are examined by the Society and commented on, but that is not something that would catch the public eye. Also, the Society responds to national consultations on planning matters and that also is not something that gets noticed. So, to try and answer the question, I have done a bit of delving in the Society's recent, and not so recent, past to unearth some of the Buckingham Society's more noticeable achievements and here are a few of the highlights.

Going back to the start of the Society, In the 1970s members campaigned for the creation of a Conservation Area which has saved many of the town's most historic places. Around the same time, the Society opposed AVDC plans for the demolition of the Old Town Hall for "road improvements" and, after a lengthy campaign, the plan was quashed by Government inspectors.



Left: Demonstrators outside the Old Town Hall in 1974 protesting about traffic congestion.

Later, the Buckingham Society was with other local people and organisations at the forefront of the campaign to have a bypass built to alleviate traffic problems and encourage new shops, houses and industry. Around that time, the Society was among the first to recognise the importance of maintaining open spaces to help reduce the possibility of flooding and continues to oppose building on flood plains.

Green and open spaces are vital. The Society maintains a close watch on housing developments to try to ensure that green space is included in all major developments. For example, the Heartlands area was zealously watched over by Society members to ensure that the housing estate did not encroach further than permitted into that area. And more recently, the riverside walk extension to the rear of the new Hamilton Close development

came about due to the insistence of the Buckingham Society that there should be public access to that area.

Other recent and very important successes for the Society have been the creation of the pedestrian crossing refuge at the foot of Moreton Road, something that the Society had been advocating for a long time. Also, the link path from the new houses in the Moreton Road to the nearby bus stop came about due to the urgings of the Buckingham Society.

On a larger scale, the Buckingham Society worked very closely with the Town Council to create the Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan in 2015 and continues to be involved with the Council in updating the plan. At the same time the Society has taken the lead in creating and updating a Design Statement for Buckingham, producing important design criteria to ensure that any new buildings reflect the distinctive character of our market town.

However, despite the work of the Society and the Town Council, Buckingham continues to face challenges with regard to developments. The strongly contested plans for 170 new houses in Maids Moreton and a further 130 on the Moreton Road, all of which are contrary to the Neighbourhood Plan, will, if agreed, have a major effect on our town and we will continue, in conjunction with partner organisations, to oppose them.

Hopefully the above goes some way to answering the question at the start of this piece. The Buckingham Society has achieved a lot. However, it can only continue in that way if it has a strong membership. The Society needs more members. So, please, if you want Buckingham to remain a great place to live, do what you can to recruit new members. Point any interested friends, relatives, acquaintances etc to our website, [buckinghamssociety.org.uk](http://buckinghamssociety.org.uk), where they will be able to get more information and join the Society.

Have a good summer.

## **Planning – Carolyn Cumming**

### **Planning Applications**

Recently these have mostly been minor with no objection to designs proposed. And all eyes have been on the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) Hearing Sessions, as detailed below.

If there are exceptions, this has been due to lack of enforcement on approved applications; the most notable being a complete disregard for conditions laid down as part of the approval for converting Oddfellows Hall in Well Street into student accommodation. Enforcement of planning conditions is one of the weakest links in the planning department and, along with our town and ward councillors, the Society continues to press for action that will uphold the special status of Conservation Areas and respect the rights of existing citizens in the face of unscrupulous developers.

## **Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan**

The Hearing Session, held over two days in April, looked principally at the much-diminished Buckingham Transport Strategy, together with the hugely controversial allocation for 170 dwellings in Maids Moreton (known as ‘Walnut Drive’).

The Buckingham Transport plan might as well be consigned to history and both Buckingham Town Council and the Society called for all allocations to be withdrawn until the re-instatement of a plan to build the western link was forthcoming.

In terms of the traffic implications, the above two items are linked, along with the allocation at Moreton Road Phase 3; the VALP maintaining that vehicles from both sites can avoid the town centre at the Old Gaol by using “alternative routes”. In practice, this means Mill Lane leading from Maids Moreton church to the A422 (increasingly a hazardous route due to volume of traffic from Moreton Road developments). But plans put forward as mitigation measures for the Walnut Drive development seek to **deter** traffic from Mill Lane, which will inevitably put more pressure on the Old Gaol roundabout.

This conflict of interests becomes a central argument in the debate over the sustainability of these two sites and their inclusion in the VALP. All parties now having “had their say”, the decision rests with the Inspector, whose final - and therefore binding - report is expected this summer.

## **Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan – Roger Newall**

A revised neighbourhood plan is in the process of being drafted. However, this needs to be in accordance with the Local Plan, which, currently, remains unadopted (as reported above).

On a related issue Buckinghamshire Council has been selected for the Government pilot scheme relating to the formulation of design codes to guide future developments to attain a minimal design standard. The Society has drafted its own Design Guide, including codes, which has been adopted by Buckingham Town Council and will become an appendix to the revised Neighbourhood Plan when adopted.

## **Transport Report – David Child**

### **Buckingham Freight report**

The Society put forward a number of options to reduce the HGV traffic through the side roads of Buckingham - a summary can be seen via the link below.

[https://buckinghamociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/BucSoc\\_HGV\\_Summary.pdf](https://buckinghamociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/BucSoc_HGV_Summary.pdf)

It was hoped that a consultation document would be published by Buckinghamshire Council in March, but the local elections intervened – hopefully we will see the consultation document very soon.

## Chaos in Well Street



## Recent Successes

### Old Goal pedestrian crossing



The new pedestrian refuge was installed earlier this year. The Society had been campaigning for a pedestrian crossing on Moreton Road near the Old Goal since Nov 2015 - see the link below

<https://buckingsamsociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/MoretonRoad20151110.pdf>

### Moreton Road path

The Society had campaigned since November 2015 for a safe path to the bus stop at Bradfield Avenue to link to the development on Whitehead Way (Moreton Road Phase 1) see link below.

<https://buckingsamsociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/BradfieldAvePath.pdf>

The new path was completed late last year.

“Path” Before

And after



## Riverside walk Hamilton development



The riverside walk has been extended at the Hamilton development linking Fisher Fields and Clarence Park along the River Great Ouse. The Society made representations at the consultation stage of the planning cycle to the developer and was successful with support from other interested parties.

Link path along the river at Hamilton's

## Green and Open Spaces: Two steps forward...and one back – Ian Orton

### One step backward

It isn't just the activities of developers or disease that provide a significant threat to Buckingham's treescape. Recent events suggest that insurance companies can be just as culpable and devastating. At least three mature trees on Page Hill (Foscott Way) along with another on The Badgers development have been felled at the behest of insurance companies because of alleged subsidence risks. Moreover, in the Foscott Way example, at least one of these trees - a maple - had a tree-protection order (TPO) attached which was ignored.

Furthermore, they were felled with the acquiescence, if not the connivance, of Buckinghamshire Council (BC), the planning authority. The trees in question were identified as either responsible for building subsidence or as potential threats. According to BC's park and planning tree officer the maple had been "highlighted" in an insurance claim.

What is worrying is that the trees in question were a considerable distance from affected or potentially vulnerable properties and little effort appeared to have been made to ascertain whether or not the trees were either really responsible for subsidence or posed a significant threat.

This is clearly not acceptable and establishes a worrying precedent, not least because it seems to make insurance companies, rather than the planning authority, the ultimate arbiter about whether or not a tree should be felled, especially if the tree in question is in a residential area. At the very least the onus should be placed on applicants and their

insurance companies to prove beyond reasonable doubt that a tree, or more pertinently its roots, IS responsible for subsidence.

The Planning Special Interest Group is currently investigating the situation and consulting with groups elsewhere in Buckinghamshire to establish if anything can be done to mitigate or change what is clearly a very unsatisfactory situation.

## Two steps forward

There is better news on the green and open spaces front, however.

First, following completion of the Hamilton Close development off Tingewick Road, another segment of the Riverside Walk has been opened. Although only a few metres long this effectively extends the section of the walk from the Tingewick Road bridge by around 600 metres and opens up the possibility of an extension behind the Tingewick Road Industrial Estate to link with the Railway Walk. Or more precisely, the public footpath that goes by the former station master's house. In addition the new section of the walk provides another access point to one of Buckingham's new open spaces created as a by-product of the Foundry Drive development. The walk provides new vistas of the town and River Great Ouse, especially the northern bank. One interesting facet in this respect is that the river seems both broader and deeper here than downstream.

The second piece of good news is that there could be much more tree planting on the horizon as part of HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in 2022. The Buckingham Society hopes to collaborate with Buckingham Town Council, Buckinghamshire Council (BC) and other landowners in identifying suitable locations for tree planting initiatives as well as suitable species. BC intends to plant 500,000 trees on its land. There may be Community Board funding to support other projects.

Any suggestions for possible planting locations?

## Wildlife

Notwithstanding a wet winter followed by a cold and wet spring wildlife within the town appears to be prospering, at least on an impressionistic basis. There continue to be regular sightings of otters, deer, hedgehogs and water voles while the bird population seems to be more diversified, at least around Church Street and Victoria Row, with sightings of egrets, heron and kingfishers. Song birds also seem to have increased.

Unfortunately the numbers of wood pigeons and jackdaws show no signs of diminishing.



Owls, on the other hand, appear to have disappeared - there used to be nests on the Railway Walk - and it is many a year since I last heard a cuckoo.

On the water vole front, BC's surveys report an increase in activity around Buckingham Golf

Club and Tingewick Road Industrial Park. Overall water vole numbers continue to persist at low to medium densities.

## Encroachment: Bucks and Buckingham - Ed Grimsdale

Legally speaking, encroachment occurs when there is 'adverse' possession. Adverse possession means the occupation of land that denies the rights of the existing owner. However, broadly speaking, the legal owner loses his or her ownership after there has been uninterrupted adverse possession for the "relevant legal period" : never less than 12 years but often no more than 12 years . So, if legal owners 'sit on their hands', 'their' land may become the legal property of its 'illegal' occupants, or users. No doubt, Monsieur Barnier would stress "the clock is ticking..."

The problems in Buckingham which concern the Buckingham Society, and Buckingham Town Council are not those between private neighbours but those where private land abuts the public realm I.e. land that is owned by Buckingham Town Council or our 'new' Unitary Authority.

Here's a typical example of concerns to managers of the public realm: a row of houses backs onto, say, 'public' woodland or heathland. The area immediately behind the houses tends to get 'adopted' by the residents, either inch by foot, or all of a sudden in a smash and grab raid.

Action may be initiated through garden rubbish thrown over 'the fence', or wheeled in abarrow through 'our ' gate, and gradually the pile moves further and further as it gets larger. Alternatively, the 'grabbers', having decided they like a neighbouring piece of land, ring fence it, and install gnomes & goblins.

In both instances, it's vital for the landowner to be on the 'qui vive' and to act without delay as, if one person in the row sells their house, a solicitor, noticing the state of affairs, may suggest that a bigger garden would increase the value of the house, and start the legal process of declaring ownership of the land. What's good for the Goose family is good for Mrs Gander, too. Little by little the public's land will be whittled away, and turned into shrubberies!

One issue for Buckingham is that much of 'our' public land is in the care of our new Buckinghamshire Council. With many past months having been been strangled by 'Covid', it is still creating assets database. I know that on a personal basis for I had a visit by its man, 'Nat', a few days ago. Our front garden is enclosed by a 10' high wall that supports the Brackley Road. "Do you regard that wall as 'your' or 'our' responsibility, Ed?" He'll be back with a mate, meanwhile, I'm hearing the 'Tick Tock' of MB's clock as the wheels of Tettocracy have not been turning quickly. One area, amongst several, of common concern is Maids

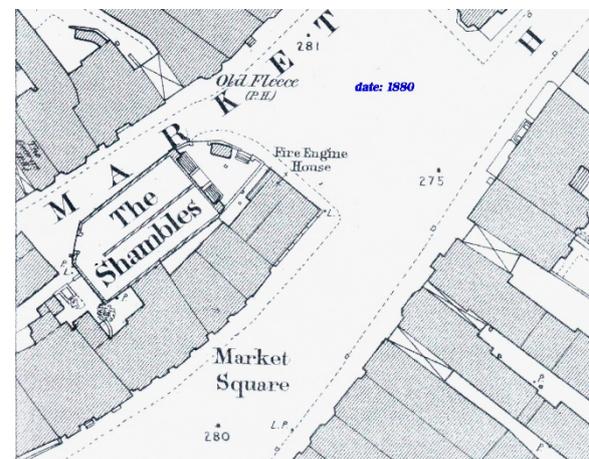
Moreton Avenue which has been confined by the high fence to one side to protect the pupils of a Primary School and on the other side there is evidence of encroachment by some owners of houses along Highlands Rd. Without care and, if necessary, enforcement, Maids Moreton Avenue, which has been a valued green amenity in Buckingham for over 200 years, will be blocked and destroyed forever.



“It won’t get that bad, Ed, you’re a loudmouth and exaggerator,” I hear you muttering, “Show us an example.” Well, I can and you may examine its issues thanks to Kathy Robins’ pictures snapped along the Chewar. As you walk up the Chewar, if you’re on the footpath to its left, you will have noticed that it’s narrow, and then contracts in steps to a point where it stops dead. Let me tell you its history:

At the start of the 19th century, the Chewar had no footpaths, its rough surface was used by slow horse-drawn vehicles that jostled with pedestrians. The lower side of the Chewar was defined by the Shambles building and forecourt erected by the

Marquess of Buckingham in 1813. The Shambles sheltered itinerant butchers and those based in villages around Buckingham. It was equipped with benches but had no storage lockers. One by one, the regular butchers placed external tool-sheds that ‘leaned’ against the Shambles and were grounded on the Chewar, itself. This was a flagrant example of encroachment by multiple nibblers but the Town Council acquiesced and what was public roadway became privatised. When the Shambles was sold in sections at the start of the 20th, the new building line along the Chewar became stepped as may be seen by the later Barclays Bank Building. Later, when a pavement was added to aid pedestrians, its shape took the bizarre and inconvenient form it has today. Town planning by village butchers. Chop, chop, and trim that fat!



## Parking in Front of The Old Town Hall

One of the attractions of Buckingham is its historic centre of narrow streets with buildings in prominent locations, for example The Old Gaol, The Town Hall, and the Parish Church. Each of these buildings form a punctuation to street views and are much cherished by residents and visitors. How sad then that the view of the Town Hall from Market Hill is spoiled by the hard surfaced area to the front being used as a car park!

Looking at this surface there are now faded signs that appear to say 'loading only', but evidence shows most of the vehicles being parked are left there for a considerable time, some all day. We therefore assume that there is a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) in place limiting this part of the highway for the use mentioned, but unfortunately it would seem that your Council does not enforce this legal requirement



The footway immediately adjoining the Town Hall is owned by The Villiers Hotel and the remainder of this hardstanding is owned by Buckinghamshire Council.

The Society suggests positioning planters at the perimeter of this hard surface to not only prevent vehicle parking but also enhance the quality of the environment; an uncluttered view of this Grade 2\* listed building would be a vast improvement on the present situation. We are aware that many residents would happily sponsor a planter at this location, and the Society is willing to take part in such a scheme when it comes to fruition. The Buckingham Town Council also supports this approach.

## West End Skeletons

Ed Grimsdale has been finding out more about the bones found at West End Farm. The Buckinghamshire Council Archaeology Officer, Lucy Lawrence, has told him that stabilisation and initial analysis have revealed that there were over 70 individuals. She adds that there is no secure dating yet because of the very limited artefactual dating evidence. She suspects however that they are medieval and hopes that scientific dating may in time provide further information. Ed adds that until we have dates we cannot begin to surmise how they died.

## Update from the University – Matthew Cross

The University of Buckingham is gradually increasing the numbers of students returning to campus in line with government guidelines, with the medical school now returning to full teaching in the Chandos Road building.

With the increased duration of the Covid lockdown student attendance is not expected to return to normal 2019 numbers until September 2021.

Operating practices for the university are continually being reviewed to ensure that all students' staff and visitors remain covid safe in all university properties, with LFD and home testing kits being provided on site to all students and staff.

The university is continuing to develop the computing and AI centre at the Franciscan building at the Verney Park campus with an opening ceremony planned for Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> August 2021. Lord Tim Clement-Jones, who is Chair of the Parliamentary AI and Technology Committee will be attending, as well as Greg Smith Buckingham MP, the Mayor of Buckingham and other guests.

We continue to progress development at the Station Road site for student accommodation which is in final stages of discussion.

The Tingewick Road site project is also under review with a new university estates strategy being developed for this site in line with the universities long term requirements and planning.

## **Railway Board – Roger Edwards**

You may recall in the last Newsletter, an item on the Society’s proposal to commemorate Buckingham’s railway heritage by erecting an information board on the old railway station site at the end of Chandos Road. The good news is that, thanks to funding provided by Buckinghamshire Council’s Buckingham and Villages Community Board the information board has been created and will be installed in August. It describes in words and pictures the history of the railway from its opening in 1850 up to the final visit by Her Majesty the Queen in 1966 and the removal of the track in 1967.

A formal unveiling is planned for Wednesday August 25<sup>th</sup> (time will be notified later) and you are all invited. So please come along and see history in the making. A reproduction of the Board is at the end of this Newsletter.

## **Dates for your Diary**

Executive Committee Meetings: at 5pm on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2021 and 22<sup>nd</sup> September

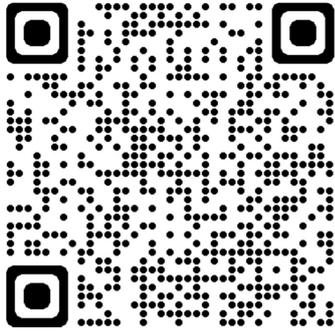
Please contact any committee member for further details if you would like to attend.

The Summer Lecture and Garden Party will be on 31<sup>st</sup> August: Lecture at 6.30pm and the Garden Party at 7.30pm. Details to follow later.

## **Executive Committee:**

Roger Edwards	Chair
David Child	Treasurer, transport, web site and planning
Carolyn Cumming	Planning
Ed Grimsdale	Planning and Society Historian
Gill Jones	Membership secretary
Belinda Morley-Fletcher	Secretary
Nigel Morrison	Ent Fest representative
Roger Newall	Planning
Ian Orton	Green and Open Spaces, planning
Anthony Ralph	Planning
Kathy Robins	Newsletter Editor, Planning

## We should like to hear from You



Please give us some feedback - tell us what activities you would like The Buckingham Society to prioritise, any ideas for social events (once they are again allowed) or simply write to us on any Buckingham related matter. If you have any ideas, questions or comments please address them to: [kathyrobins@walnutyard.co.uk](mailto:kathyrobins@walnutyard.co.uk) Tel: 07834 484762. If you would like to become involved in any of our activities or attend a meeting of the executive committee, just contact us and come along. [www.buckinghamssociety.org.uk](http://www.buckinghamssociety.org.uk)

# The Railway in Buckingham



You are standing at the heart of Buckingham's former railway station. The railway came to Buckingham in 1850. It could have been here even earlier, complete with a large locomotive and carriage works if, as is generally believed, that plan hadn't been scuppered by the First Duke of Buckingham & Chandos who would not allow the railway line to cross his estate at Stowe. So, instead the line went via Wolverton - how different Buckingham might have been if the original plan had gone ahead! Eventually, the family at Stowe and Sir Harry Verney from Claydon House came together to build a link from Banbury to Bletchley and a single-track line was opened on 1 May 1850.

The first station was difficult to get to being a fairly basic wooden building, probably not much more than a glorified shed, standing in a boggy field and it wasn't until 1853 that access was improved via Chandos Road. Then, in 1861, a new station was built and a new road - Station Road - was laid down from Chandos Road to connect with Gawcott Road to allow passengers to reach the new booking office.

In the early years a number of railway excursions were organised, taking passengers to destinations such as the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace where they could have enjoyed a pork pie made in Buckingham by one Mr Town and transported there on the same train. And there were often trips to the seaside. On one occasion in 1913, more than 200 Buckingham residents headed off to Great Yarmouth for the day.

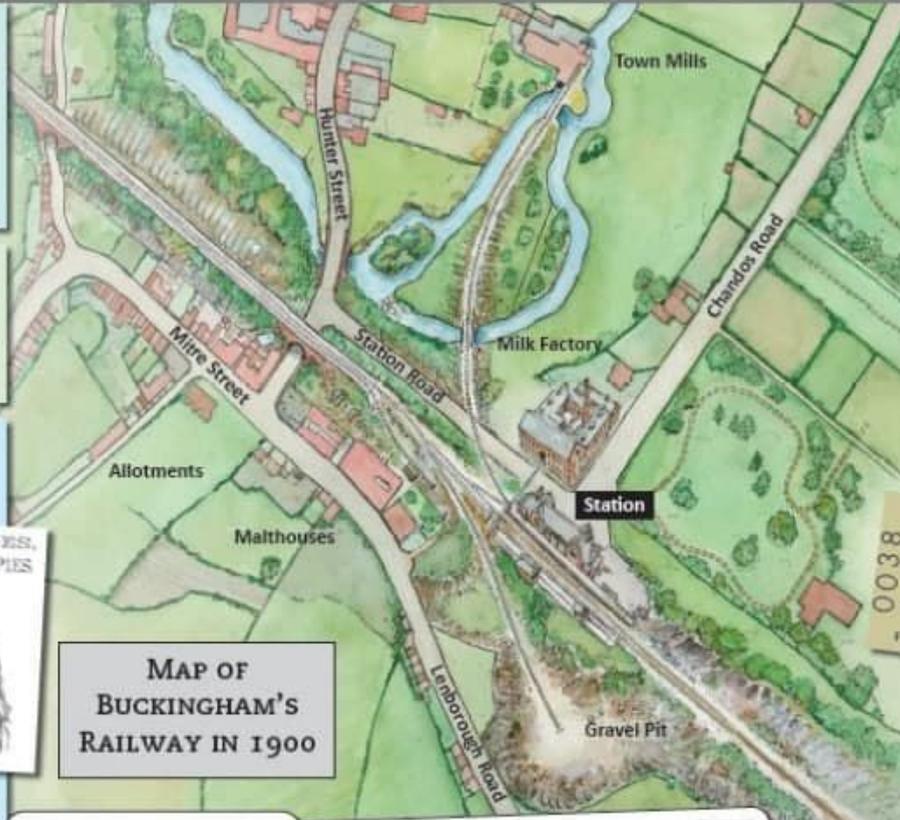
Regular passenger services comprised five daily trains each way on weekdays and one afternoon service on Sundays. Passengers could travel to London via Verney Junction and Bletchley in around 2.5 hours, much faster than by stage coach or horse, and then continue, if they wished, to Liverpool and Birmingham. The completion of the new line south from Verney Junction to Aylesbury in 1868 opened up the possibility of further destinations. Buckingham was on the map.

For five years from 1889, the Comte de Paris, the pretender to the French throne, lived at Stowe and the railway company installed bilingual signage at the station as an aid to his staff. In 1898, W H Smith installed a book stall. Things were looking up!

During World War II, there were regular trains moving munitions from a weapons factory at Banbury with local ammunition dumps being set up around Buckingham. Local people soon learned to leave them alone.

Passenger traffic over the line was never especially heavy, although it was a useful goods route, and by the late 1940s Sunday passenger services had been withdrawn and there were only four trains each way on weekdays.

The decline continued and on 7 September 1964 passenger services were stopped altogether leaving just the line to Verney Junction open for freight. Final total closure took place in 1966 with the last train arriving on 4 April carrying Her Majesty the Queen who had come on a visit to Buckingham.



Transporting milk and milk products became an important source of railway income at the turn of the 20th century. A creamery and factory making milk products such as condensed milk and Hooker's Malted Milk (a forerunner of Ovaltine) opened in the building opposite the station that is now part of the University of Buckingham.



MAP OF BUCKINGHAM'S RAILWAY IN 1900



Photograph © The Buckingham Advertiser



The track was removed in 1967 and subsequently the Railway Walk was created. It follows the line of the old railway and is a haven for wildlife and walkers. Managed by Buckingham Town Council and Buckinghamshire Council, it is maintained and protected by the Buckingham Railway Walk Conservation Group.

