



# The Buckingham Society

*Campaigning for a better Buckingham*

## Newsletter June 2022

### Celebrate Buckingham Day

This event was held on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> June in Bourton Park. It included tables organised by most of the town's voluntary organisations, prioritising activities for children. There were also speeches, music from the Winslow Concert Band and the Buckingham Ukulele Group and dancing from the Brackley Morris Men.

The Buckingham Society had a table where we invited people to roll dice to win a pig. In fact, there was no real pig but instead there were prizes of vouchers kindly donated by Smith and Clay and Waitrose with Percy Pig and Colin the Caterpillar cakes as prizes for children. We were also able to publicise the activities of the society and enrol some new members.



Pictured left: Town Clerk Paul Hodson in his Morris Man persona alongside John Weaver "The sides fool".

## Trader of the Year 2022 by Roger Edwards

After two years when the Buckingham Society Buckingham Trader of the Year shield was awarded to all Buckingham Traders to recognise the difficult time that they had during the Covid pandemic, it was back to normal for 2022.



Members of the Society were asked to nominate their favourite trader from all the shops, cafés, restaurants, market traders in Buckingham – a very difficult choice from so many excellent traders.

We judged a wide range of very impressive nominations, and after a very close vote, the eventual winners were Smith and Clay, Buckingham's town centre butcher and delicatessen. The award was given to them for providing outstanding service, quality produce and helping to keep Buckingham a great place to live. The (very close) runner-up was Leeders Hardware who had won the award twice in the past. Again, members commented on the high level of service provided.

In fact, quality of service was the main criterion cited for all the nominees and it brings home just how lucky we are in Buckingham to have such a diverse range of very fine traders.

The presentation took place in Bourton Park on Celebrate Buckingham Day. Fallon and Pat, managers respectively of the delicatessen and butchery sides of the business, were on hand to receive the winner's shield and certificate on behalf of everybody connected with Smith and Clay. Congratulations to them all.



Thank you to all the Buckingham Society members who took the trouble to put forward a nomination for their favourite trader. Without you there would be no Trader of the Year.

## Planning – Carolyn Cumming

### Local Plan for Buckinghamshire

Hot on the heels of the VALP, Buckinghamshire Council have begun preparations for a Local Plan that will seek to encompass the whole of Bucks, setting out policies and developable sites for new housing to 2040. The Council have issued a call for **brownfield** sites and have carried out an exercise in consultation. As part of the process, and as a pilot study, the Council has been funded by the Government to introduce a Design Code to the Plan. Clearly, a design code to cover the whole of the very diverse county of Buckinghamshire will be limited in its scope; but it will aim to cover several 'common' themes, such as:

- street design

- car parking
- cycle storage
- waste storage and recycling
- green spaces for nature
- walking and cycling routes

A key part of their bid was to find better ways to listen to local residents and stakeholders and understand what they think about the design of existing streets, public spaces, buildings as well as spaces for water and nature. The council would like to hear from you and have created <https://bucks.place> where you are encouraged to comment on what you might like, or dislike about a specific place.

### **Neighbourhood Plan for Buckingham**

As reported last autumn, our own Neighbourhood Plan is also undergoing revision and, as part of the process, The Buckingham Society, working jointly with the Town Council, has prepared an updated set of Design Codes that will be pertinent to our town, while observing the common elements of the Local Plan.

However, the key aspects of both Buckingham's Plan and the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire await updated Government policies, which will dictate housing numbers. It does appear that those policies first mooted in the White Paper of August 2020 have been discarded but let us hope it will not be out of the frying pan into the fire.

### **Public Open space & Timber Close Board Fencing**

The problems of appropriating public amenity space and/or the loss of appropriate boundary treatment has featured more than once amongst recent retrospective applications. Insensitive fencing can only too easily mar a familiar street scene while the loss of public amenity space is everybody's loss. We note that Buckinghamshire Council has refused permission in two recent cases, recognising that these actions have *"a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and results in harm to the amenities of residents who benefit from use of the area of open space"*. We hope this will deter further encroachment on to what were intended to be green spaces for the enjoyment of all.

### **No More Greenfield Development!**

Meanwhile green fields are continuing to be swallowed up into the built environment. You only have to witness the large numbers of developments being constructed around our local towns and villages with subsequent upheavals to roads and services generally.

St Rumbold's Fields at least has now been promised a post box! This development continues apace, and it is expected that the desired 30 mph speed limit will shortly take effect on Tingewick Road.

No final decision has been made (at the time of writing) on 130 new houses on land between Castlemilk Farm and Moreton Road but the application for 420 dwellings off Osier

way has been given approval and negotiations are in progress on S106 agreements. And, at Maids Moreton, a local resident, Pat Hardcastle is challenging the 170 house development at Judicial Review. Several members of the Society have offered support. See: [www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/patrick-hardcastle](http://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/patrick-hardcastle)

## Green and Open Spaces – Ian Orton

### Tree Walks recommence

The diverse nature of Buckingham’s treescape was perfectly illustrated on 1 May when the tree walks curated by Michael Hunt resumed after a near three year Covid 19-induced hiatus.

The walk commenced in the Green Heartlands before taking in Elm Street, the “new” churchyard, Church Street, the old churchyard, the University and Chandos Park.

A highlight of the walk were the new plantings made in 2018 in the Green Heartlands. These included several interesting flowering cherries, some of which are relatively rare.

Flowering cherries also featured in the new plantings made by the University as part of the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee Canopy initiative, along with London plane trees.



The walk also illustrated the challenges faced by initiatives aimed at conserving and enhancing the treescape as well as the shortcomings of relying on a local authority - in this case the former Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC) - to oversee all the necessary work.

We should be very grateful to AVDC for funding the Green Heartland plantings. But, as Michael pointed out, AVDC failed to maintain the new plantings afterwards.

The reality is that if Michael had not taken the initiative to water the new plantings, they would not have survived the very hot summer we experienced in 2018.

The sad fact is that an extremely high proportion of new trees die within 12 months of being planted because of inadequate maintenance post planting.

One wonders how many of the 500,000 new trees that Buckinghamshire Council (BC) have planted as part of the Platinum Jubilee Canopy Initiative will survive.

Perhaps more effort should be made to ensure that appropriate maintenance measures are put in place, perhaps involving community groups such as Tree Wardens or the Buckingham Society, rather than making big grandstanding gestures involving hundreds of thousands of new plantings.

We also witnessed another facet of the lack of tree maintenance. Last winter's storms caused considerable damage throughout Buckingham. A number of trees, including the big sequoias in the grounds of the Manor House, were either uprooted or lost branches, causing considerable damage in the process.

A fallen tree straddled the River Ouse in Chandos Park for many weeks, causing localised flooding and a deterioration of the river in the process. The tree in question, which was on



private land, was eventually removed. But this was only after the Environment Agency sent a Riparian Letter to the landowner.

Landowners, not local authorities or government agencies are responsible for tree maintenance along with any liabilities that may ensue.

Thanks, once again, to Michael Hunt, for curating the walk, which was enjoyed by many members.

## Buckingham Society Design and Conservation Awards – Roger Edwards

In 2019 the Buckingham Society created a new award aimed at recognising people or organisations that have undertaken projects that have enhanced and improved how Buckingham looks. Called the "Buckingham Society Design and Conservation Awards", they relate to projects of any size and could include new buildings, renovation of an existing building, planting trees or creating or improving some other form of open space.

At the time it was stated that "*The Buckingham Society believes that there are many people and organisations around the town who have taken a lot of care and put in a lot of time and effort to try to ensure that their part of the town looks really good. This benefits everybody in Buckingham and the Society wishes to recognise their efforts with these awards*".

It was intended that the awards should become an annual event and that they would further encourage local people and developers to think about what they could do to make Buckingham look even better.

For obvious reasons nothing has happened for the last two year but your committee feels that the time is now right to resurrect the awards. So, members of the Society, this is your chance to have a look around the town and see if there is anything you think is worthy of an award.

To give you an idea of what to look for, here is a list of the 2019 winners:

- The University of Buckingham for the new Vinson Building – see below
- Morrison Property Consultants for the transformation of the former NatWest building
- The Mitre pub for improvements to what is believed to be Buckingham's oldest existing pub and an extension to the garden including the planting of new trees
- Mr T. Lawler for 1 and 1A Ford Street which was the conversion of a former outhouse of the New Inn into four residential units
- Mr T Campbell and Ms P Battle for the conservation of 4 Nelson Street (the Blue House)
- Grail Conservation Builders for a long-term conservation project at 11 Bristle Hill
- Stoneleigh House for the conversion of a town house into a boutique hotel
- Villiers Hotel for the internal rehabilitation of the iconic Old Town Hall
- Mrs N Parish for maintaining and improving the gardens of the Barton's Hospital Almshouses in Church Street
- The Railway Walk Conservation Group – for the work done by the group over many years in maintaining and enhancing the Railway Walk.



As you can see, they were a very wide-ranging group and, hopefully, we could see such a diverse set of winners this year.

Please let us have your nominations by the 28<sup>th</sup> of August and the results will be announced at the Annual General Meeting in November.

Send them to Roger Edwards [kingc8@btinternet.com](mailto:kingc8@btinternet.com).

## The Singing, Singeing Barber - Ed Grimsdale Local Historian and Friend of Buckingham



Fred Swift is shown here in the shade of his awning in 1909, wearing a long, white apron. He would open until Midnight on Saturdays so nobody needed to go unshaven, or reeking of manure, to Church on the Sabbath. In his spare time he was top of the Buckingham Hit Parade, singing comedy songs with a light, tuneful tenor voice.

Edwin Jeffs on a visit to his hometown in 1954 reminisced *"Fred Swift used to shear our golden locks, plus applying a liberal supply of scented hair-oil, all for twopence."*

Swift was the middle of Buckingham's three great Barbers : Meehan, Smith, and Miller, who by then was long gone. He, *'one of nature's gentlemen'* retired 'Down Under' to Queensland in 1920 These days we have a new Turkish Barbers at the head of the Bull Ring. It is brightly illuminated and I'm sure they offer singeing.

The following poetical effusion, written around Election Day 1909, will no doubt be read with amusement by many of our readers. We presume it is from the ready pen of our old friend, Mr. Thomas Baker, betrayed by his style of writing!

*Last Monday's election would fill with chagrin  
The bosoms of those who did not get in.  
The frolicksome barber did well to be dumb  
To all politicians who to him might come;  
He also was cute a deaf ear to turn  
While scraping rough chins his living to earn.  
'Twas policy wise to have **nothing** to say,*

*By which he might frighten his patrons away;  
'Twas wisdom also to turn a **deaf ear**.  
For then he was sure he had **nothing to fear**.*

***His deafness and dumbness of course was a joke.  
And p'raps it would lead to him selling a smoke.  
And he thus would steer clear of cutting adrift  
Those friends who might enjoy the jokes of Fred Swift. "***

## **THORNBOROUGH MOUNDS: at Buckingham's Limit - by Ed Grimsdale Local Historian and Friend of Buckingham**

(ONE OF THREE) SONNETS by George W. Barge  
Printed in the Buckingham Advertiser on 17th October 1874 but written when the author  
was a teenager.

Illustrating historical events near Buckingham.  
SONNET ON THORNBOROUGH MOUNDS.

"Solitary mounds, what mystery here?  
What secret locked in Time's immortal hand  
Lies ever dormant. Age past age ye stand,  
Defying ruin's storms and earthly tear.  
To mark the battle-field do ye appear,  
Where Aulus Plautius with his warrior-band  
Forded the Ouse, and from your hostile land  
Drove sons of Cymbeline with conquering spear?  
Or do ye trace the monumental tomb  
Of Roman leader, or some British chief?  
O, mystery based on mystery! Dark gloom  
Pervades for aye such problems of belief.  
And thus life: for as we daily seek  
Eternal light, how oft our faith is weak."

### **Thornborough Mounds**

On the north side of the road from Buckingham to Thornborough are two large barrows called Thornborough Mounds, which are about 25 feet in height. In 1839, one of these barrows was opened under the direction of the Duke of Buckingham; and it proved to be the depository of the richest series of Romano-British remains hitherto explored, with the exception, perhaps, alone of the Bartlow Hills, in Cambridgeshire.





A trench was first cut through the centre, which displayed the stratification, consisting of alternate layers of clay and mould, until the workmen had dug down to the level of the contiguous ground, where a large and long layer of rough lime-stone was disclosed, in which were found many bronze ornaments, in excellent preservation, among which were a very curious and beautifully shaped lamp of bronze, totally different in pattern from any which had before been discovered, and so perfect that on being taken up with great care, the wick remained to be seen in the lamp.

Besides these there were found two large and elegant bronze jugs, a large dish, a bowl, and the hilt of a sword; also an ornament of the purest gold, with the figure of Cupid most elaborately and elegantly chased upon it; and a large glass vessel or urn, which contained ashes and fragments of bones no doubt the remains of some important person.—

Mr. Robert Gibbs, Aylesbury.

(Some of these Roman artefacts have been returned to Buckingham Old Gaol Museum.)

Ancient human bones were unearthed on 'Bone Hill' facing the Mitre Inn during the 19th century. They could have been the product of a skirmish or battle dating back almost two thousand years. The unanswered question is: did the 'local' battle in A.D. 44 between the Roman, Aulus Plautius, and the sons of Cymbeline [c.f. Shakespeare] which involved a successful crossing of a fast running stream, possibly thanks to Plautius's German mercenaries, occur below **Thornborough** or under **Bone Hill**?

## Local Bird Observations - Mary Melliush

At the end of the first week of May, the swifts arrived. The numbers so far seem down on last year. It is a pity that the boxes for swifts promised by one of the building firms working off Tingewick Road were not put into the houses. Swifts feed very high or quite low depending on the weather.

Great spotted woodpeckers are seen often in the area off Newcombe Crescent, they are nesting nearby.

At 4.40 am on May 14th I heard a cuckoo clearly. It was just passing through, sadly. The dawn chorus was a delight that morning. A little egret flew overhead. A family of wagtails was active in the old churchyard this week.



In the garden I watched a male bullfinch in May and June feeding in the crab apple tree and hopping along the bench. Another very occasional visitor was a greenfinch. The bluetits nested successfully in their box and the sparrows and robins in the hedge. It is fun to watch fluffy speckled young robins being fed before they change to adult plumage. Sparrow courting behaviour includes feeding each other, then they work hard feeding their young. Other regular bird table visitors include coal tits, goldfinches, chaffinches, and great tits.

## Forthcoming events

Annual Lecture and Garden Party: Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> July. Barry Smith, Stowe Head Gardener, will talk about the garden’s wonderful trees, followed by drinks and canapes at Ondaatje Hall. Tickets £10 for members and £12 for guests. Details to follow.

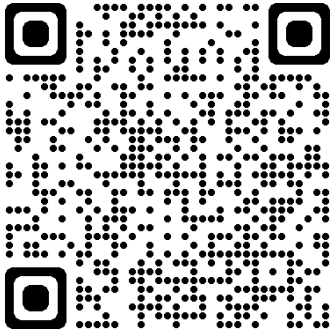
Autumn Walks: Michael Hunt – Stowe or Winslow. Details to follow

Annual General Meeting: 24th November 6.00pm – 8.30pm. Warren Whyte will give a talk “Sir George Gilbert Scott and his work in Buckingham”.

## Executive Committee:

Vacant	Chair
David Child	Treasurer, transport, web site and planning
Carolyn Cumming	Planning
Roger Edwards	Activities lead
Ed Grimsdale	Planning and Society Historian
Gill Jones	Membership secretary
Belinda Morley-Fletcher	Secretary
Roger Newall	Planning
Ian Orton	Green and Open Spaces, planning
Russell Popee	
Anthony Ralph	Planning
Kathy Robins	Newsletter Editor, Planning
Mary Simons	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)