



# The Buckingham Society

*Campaigning for a better Buckingham*

## Newsletter October 2021

### A word from our Chair – Roger Edwards

*Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,  
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun,  
Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves  
run*

*To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,  
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;  
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells  
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,  
And still more, later flowers for the bees,  
Until they think warm days will never cease,  
For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy  
cells.*



Picture by Roger Newall

Yes, of course it has become a bit of a cliché but that doesn't mean it isn't still a delightfully evocative poem, and how better to start an autumn reflection than by using a verse from John Keats' ode "To Autumn". Keats was a lover of the autumn, writing to a friend, "*How beautiful the season is now – How fine the air. A temperate sharpness about it.... I never liked the stubbled fields as much as now – Aye, better than the chilly green of spring. Somehow the stubble plain looks warm – in the same way as some pictures look warm – this struck me so much in my Sunday's walk that I composed upon it*".

I am writing this looking out of the window onto a lovely sunny day, and it does seem that this time of year, with the low sun, long shadows, leaves starting to turn but still a pleasant temperature has a certain magic all of its own. Provided of course that we forget that winter lurks around the corner.

And how fortunate we are to live in a part of the world where we are able to appreciate the splendour of the "mellow" season. Plenty of open spaces to walk through, a wide variety of glorious trees to admire as well as hedgerows full of their own bounty of fruits and the glories of a place such as Stowe on our doorsteps.

So, let's put aside for a while concerns about the rising cost of living, shortages in the shops, petrol queues and how many jobs we have had and take a bit of time to appreciate and celebrate Buckingham in autumn. What a beautiful place to live.

This will be my last "Word from our chair" item in our newsletter as I will be standing down from the chair of the Society at the AGM in November. I have enjoyed writing these pieces over the last five years and, if you have done, thank you for reading them.

## Planning – Carolyn Cumming

### **Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan**

Members will probably now have heard that the long-awaited Local Plan (begun in 2013) was found 'Sound' by the Planning Inspector and officially adopted by the Buckinghamshire Council last month. The Plan will hold good for all developments until the new county wide Local Plan that the Council are beginning work on sees the light of day. In many ways, it is not a good plan for Buckingham. It has failed to implement any meaningful solutions to traffic problems in and around the town; most notably the need for a western link road connecting the A421 and the A422, which had been considered a priority when considering further development in Buckingham by both our own Neighbourhood Plan and the Buckingham Transport Plan. And, instead of implementing the allocation site on the Brackley Road, (Site M in the Neighbourhood Plan), both Phase 3 off Moreton Road and Walnut Drive in Maids Moreton are considered developable. (300 dwellings). In addition, the site off Osier Way is also included as an allocated site. (420 dwellings). Sadly, despite all these additions (coupled with the St Rumbold's Fields development), there is still no provision for an extra school.

### **Oxford/Cambridge Arc**

There are no clear plans as to exactly what is planned for this concept, but the area covers some 22 local authorities, who, following the National Infrastructure Report (6 years ago) have been directed by Government to develop a huge swathe of land between Oxford and Cambridge as an "economic powerhouse", alongside a million new houses. There are powerful lobbyists on both sides of the argument as to whether this is achievable, or desirable. According to 'Stop the Arc', this would concentrate 25% of all new development on 9% of England's land resource.

The Government issued a consultation during the summer seeking views on how to develop the Arc. This was formulated to produce positive answers: e.g. *"How important is it that the Spatial Framework focuses on making sure new development reduces existing flood risk and is resilient to future flooding"?*

An alternative survey on the Government's consultation for the Spatial Framework was issued by 'Stop the Arc'. They were quick to publish the results and claim this revealed that out of every 100 people, 93 would vote against the Arc, 4 would vote for it and 3 are 'Don't Knows'.

Buckinghamshire Council decided to withdraw from the Leaders' Group, (along with the University and the LEP for Bucks), expressing serious concerns that the Policy was being

decided by Government with no allowance for local democratic decision making and other local authorities determining where development planning should take place within the County.

### **Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan**

Now that the VALP has been adopted, there will be some clarity as to the direction the revised version of our Neighbourhood Plan will take. A lot of work has already been undertaken on gathering evidence for housing need and Design Codes, the latter with the support of the Society. We reported in the June issue that the Design Codes had been adopted by the Town Council. However, strictly speaking, they cannot be adopted until they are considered formally as supplementary to the Codes that Buckinghamshire Council are currently piloting. The Council has been selected as one of 14 local authorities to participate in a national pilot to test the new National Model Design Code while adapting them to suit the local area. Details about this scheme can be found at: <https://bucks.place>. The Society and the Town Council would like to incorporate some specific design codes into the plan to ensure new development contains measures that will help to achieve a 'net zero' environmental impact.

An initial consultation on the revised Neighbourhood Plan is expected to be issued before the end of the year. Please make sure you respond!

### **Planning applications**

Decisions are still awaited on some older applications on which objections were raised. For example: change of use at 19 Bridge Street and 9 dwellings on land next to the old police station.

A ~~some what~~ somewhat bizarre application was received for planting at the proposed new health centre on Lace Hill (**21/03152/ADP** Landscaping around health centre). Apart from the fact that it included a number of unsuitable specimens (e.g. laburnum), its timing appears premature in that the final layout and design of the centre is far from concluded.

## **The Death of Anthony “Tiger” Smith**



The Buckingham Society has lost one of its' longest standing members, Anthony (Tiger) Smith, pictured left, who died at the age of 90 on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August 2021. Anthony was always actively interested in Buckingham and would spot and clear up litter and sometimes report serious matters about which he was concerned.

He was educated in a private school in Chandos Rd, and later at Bloxham School. He was a 'Tiger' on the Rugby Field and 'ran the line' for Buckingham Rugby Club for many years after hanging up his playing boots. He married the late Marguerite, the well-loved Matron of the Royal Latin School. One of Tiger's 'ceremonial' roles was carving one of the twin Turkeys at the RLS Staff Christmas Party.

Tiger's parents owned interests in The Swan and Castle, now The Villiers, and the former Wine Shop that is now the Russell and Butler Estate Agency in West Street.

The image to the left is of the young Tiger Smith in front of the Chantry Chapel in the 400th Charter Fair Celebrations during 1954, when he took the part of King Henry VIII.



## What of the Skeletons of West End Farm? – An update from Ed Grimsdale, Honorary Local Historian

The number of skeletons recovered now appears to be nearly 80. Their original distribution across West End Farm, some in groups, others singly, and significant number face down in the earth with hands tied behind their back suggests the area may have been used as a cemetery in Medieval days. We must await tests before dating the remains but c.1,000 years old seems probable. The people must have been poor as only a couple of contemporaneous buckles have been recovered from the area of the dig.

1000 years ago, Buckingham was a frontier settlement fortified by twin Wessex Burhs, as built to slow down Scandinavian invaders and thus, offer some protection to richer settlements such as Oxford. Within 'England', Buckingham marked the border between Mercia and Wessex.

Buckingham's peasants suffered in life and their skeletons have suffered uncertain times in the two or three years since they were discovered. They were found during groundwork preparing a site for an old people's retirement facility. The find effectively put a sudden stop to it. The bones were taken away by the Buckinghamshire County Archaeologists for initial assessment but the pandemic and 'working from home' slowed progress. Since the 1990s, such experts are dependent on cash from those developing sites to fund their own work and to allow samples to be sent to scientific centres renowned for their specialist skills and expensive equipment, unavailable locally.



Undesignated sites (not protected by listing or scheduling) such as West End Farm where the scale, quality and significance of the buried archaeological 'treasure' are unknown and unquantified, can impose large risks in lost time and uncertain extra expenses on developers. In this case, the project changed hands, and the second developer, Brio Retirement Living, changed the plans, with the intention of creating a retirement village. Such hiccups, unfortunately appear to have disrupted the cash flow necessary to allow the archaeologists to proceed. Sadly, eventually Brio put a stop to work on the site and the project stalled, probably forever.

By now the poor skeletons had been removed to Network Archaeology Ltd. Fortunately, that firm has one of its two offices in Buckingham, so one hopes the bones rest easy in North Bucks. Brio, I fear, do not want to invest any more cash into a dead project. The legal position may not be clear, and, for moment, there are many loose ends that need tying up. Cllr Robin Stuchbury has questioned the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health, Gareth Williams, and the Leader of Buckinghamshire Council, Martin Tett: both understand the potential importance of the

West End Farm and, I sense, are ready to work to overcome obstacles and find resources to support the proper examination and analysis of Buckingham's great find. I feel a renewed optimism, but we must be patient: the job needs to be done well because this, once in a generation opportunity, may throw an extraordinary new light on an era in Buckinghamshire's past about which we know so little.

## The Railway Board – Roger Edwards



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!

The line lasted until 1964 when passenger services were stopped. Final total closure took place in 1966 with the last train arriving on April 4<sup>th</sup> carrying Her Majesty the Queen who

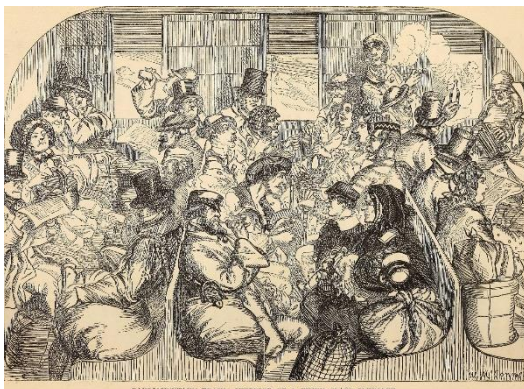
had come on a visit to Buckingham. That visit, along with other important events in the life of Buckingham's railway, is celebrated in a new information board that has been installed by the Buckingham Society on the remains of the former station along the Railway Walk next to the University of Buckingham's car park in Station Road.

Funded with the help of the Buckingham and Villages Community Board, the information board was unveiled by Franz Rothe, a lifelong Buckingham resident who first suggested the idea in a letter to the Advertiser a few years ago. The Buckingham Society hopes that people strolling along the Railway Walk, which follows the former railway line, will find the board of interest.

The picture shows Franz, Roger Edwards, Chair of the Buckingham Society, and James Tooley, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Buckingham.

## Another Railway Related Piece from the Bicester Herald, 18th August, 1869 - Ed Grimsdale, Honorary Local Historian

### CHILD PRECIPITATED FROM A TRAIN



On Thursday, August the 5th, a remarkable occurrence took place on the railway between Padbury and Buckingham. The down Parliamentary train left Winslow at nine p.m. Soon after the train left [Padbury] station, Mary Ann Wheeler, a child about 6 years of age, who was proceeding with her grandmother from Winslow to Buckingham, began to play with the door of the carriage and to look out of the window, when suddenly the door sprang open, and the child fell out onto the line. The train at the

time was going at the rate of about thirty miles an hour, and it was with difficulty the grandmother of the child was prevented by her fellow passengers from springing from the carriage, also. At soon as the driver could be communicated with the train was stopped, and Mr.J.Plant, of Wolverton, Mr. J. Kent, of Wolverton, and Mr. Stanley, of Banbury, went back along the line expecting to find the body of the little one completely mutilated.

### THE UNEXPECTED OUTCOME

But, to their intense astonishment they met the child running alone as fast as she could, trying to overtake the train, not at all hurt, but in great tribulation because she had lost her hat. The child was forthwith restored to her anxious relative.

## The Post Office

After 17 years in Buckingham, Sunil and Rita Gandhi left the Post Office at the Gingerbread House for the last time on Monday October 11<sup>th</sup>. Throughout those 17 years Sunil and Rita

provided a simply brilliant service to all their customers, as could be seen from the great tributes posted on Facebook where people queued up to sing their praises. Always ready with a smile, a kind word and good advice, Sunil and Rita will be missed.



To mark the occasion of their leaving, at the suggestion of Buckingham Society member Una Robinson, the Society presented Sunil and Rita with a framed print showing a series of pictures of notable Buckingham buildings. The print was taken from an original painting by Buckingham Society member Peter Bowtell.

The picture shows Una with Rita and Sunil and Society Membership Secretary Gill Jones.

## The Summer Lecture and Garden Party 31<sup>st</sup> August

The annual lecture was held in the lecture theatre of the Vinson Building, the University of Buckingham. It was wonderful to see so many people after Covid restrictions. The speaker was Annabel Page, Project Officer for Natural Flood Management at the River Thame Conservation Trust.

Annabel gave us an illustrated and very detailed presentation of the work she is doing in conceiving environmental strategies for river improvement projects for the River Thame Conservation Trust.

The Trust now operates in both the Thame and the Upper Ouse River catchments. Her talk focused on Nature-Based Solutions to catchments management, and the Rivers Trust's current Natural Flood Management project which, it is hoped will be taken up and help reduce the flood risk to Buckingham.

For more information follow: [enquiries@riverthame.org](mailto:enquiries@riverthame.org)



The lecture was followed by a drinks and canapes at Ondaatje Hall, kindly made available to us by James Tooley, the University Vice Chancellor.

## Local Bird Observations - Mary Mattieson

My patch of river for birding is about half a mile in either direction from the Fisher's Field bridge. This year again we are lucky to have 30-40 swifts floating in the sky above us. Tawny Owls are heard at night. They call keewick and a soft repeated hooo, more frequently heard around October when males are seeking territory. They hunt silently and like old broadleaf trees for nesting.





A fortnight ago an egret (left) was seen in flight and I have seen them feeding near the town bridge, heron feed there too. I miss the swallows but they can be seen on nearby farms. In the last decade I added red kites to the list.

Kingfishers disappeared after the river pollution incident but they are now back, as are the fish. During the winter redwing and fieldfare visited the green area near the playground on the new Hamilton estate. I regularly hear a woodpecker but have not heard a cuckoo for ages.

My garden feeding station is visited by many small birds, goldfinch, blue tit, great tit, coal tit, nuthatch, chaffinch, the blackcap in late winter, even the occasional bullfinch and a rare greenfinch. Wren, robin, sparrow, dunnock and long tailed tits are on my list. Larger birds include blackbirds, starlings, collared doves and pigeons. The last mentioned are greedy birds but have an attractive call with a neat full stop at the end.

I see thrush and wagtail along the riverbank. The occasional goldcrest (right) can also be spotted. My walking companion heard one as we turned out of the churchyard into Church Street. She has good hearing and we watched it in the bushes but had no clear sighting.



Under both bridges bats can be seen on summer evenings. My treasured memory is of an otter, we looked at each other for a few seconds very early one morning and then he swam away under the bridge.

## Celebrate Buckingham 4th Sept 2021



At last, the sun shone, the grey skies so prevalent this summer were banished, and it was Celebrate Buckingham Day. Based on the Civic Day celebrations started several years ago by the Buckingham Society, this was the much expanded, Town Council version. Many organisations from around the town set up stalls in Bourton Park to advertise themselves and the populous turned out to watch the new mayor, Margaret Gately, robed for the occasion, open the proceedings, to listen to music from the Winslow Concert Band and the Buckingham Ukulele Group and to have fun.

The Buckingham Society had a Roll the Dice to Win a Pig game which proved very popular. The prize was, of course, a voucher donated by our local butcher Smith and Clay.



## An Opportunity to Volunteer for Tree Planting

Volunteers are required for a tree planting session at Heartlands Park on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2022 10.00 am – 1.00pm, for the planting of 10 large black poplar trees and approx. 200 smaller specimens in recognition and celebration of the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee.

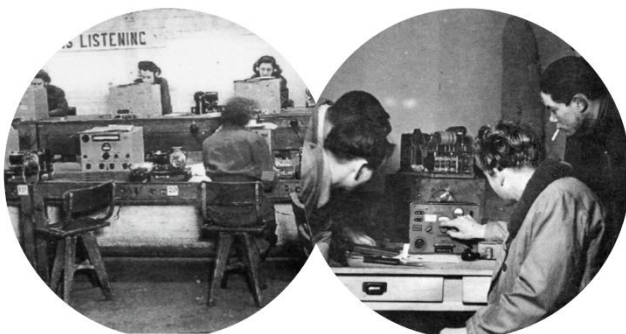
Parking is available at Buckingham Athletics Football Ground and Cornwalls Meadow (Waitrose). If possible, please bring your own spade or gardening fork, but some tools will be available.

Contact: Nina Stockill 01280 816426. Email [committeeclerk@buckingham-tc.gov.uk](mailto:committeeclerk@buckingham-tc.gov.uk)

## Dates for your Diary

25<sup>th</sup> November Annual General Meeting the auditorium Vinson Building  
6.00pm Drinks Vinson Building Foyer  
6.30pm - Annual General Meeting in the auditorium the Vinson Building  
7.15pm - A presentation by Bill Robins “Secrets Silk and Cyanide”

### SECRETS, SILK AND CYANIDE



During the Second World War, many of the great houses around North Buckinghamshire supported venomous secret wars, conducted lethally beneath the titanic battles around the globe. Much about them has stayed in secret archives since 1945. Historians are now unwrapping

more.

Bill Robins will present an overview of the key agencies behind these operations and what they did around North Buckinghamshire. He will then focus on the Special Operations Executive (SOE), its stations at Poundon and Grendon Underwood and their vital role in communicating with agents operating undercover to support resistance movements in Europe.

He will cover the vital work of the women of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY) in support of SOE and will cover SOE’s frequently toxic relationship with its sister agency, the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). Finally, he will talk about

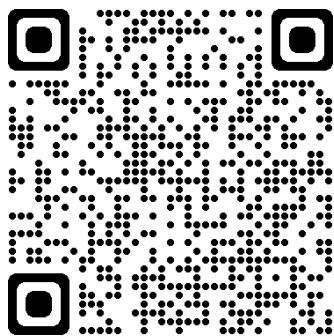
some of its triumphs and disasters and about a few of the courageous women and men who lived and died for it.

**The Speaker:** Major General Bill Robins designed and operated military and intelligence communications for the UK armed forces, other government departments and our allies during the Cold War and its messy aftermath

### 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)