



The Buckingham Society

Campaigning for a better Buckingham

Newsletter June 2023

View From the Chair – Ian Orton



Welcome to the summer edition of the Buckingham Society's newsletter. The Society has been very active over the past few months on a number of fronts.

In addition to continuing our ongoing work on planning and transport-related matters and participating in ongoing discussions about the scope and content of the latest iteration of the Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan along with Buckingham Town Council (BTC) and

other interested parties, we have either launched, or are in the process of launching a number of other initiatives.

The Society has become increasingly conscious of the need to improve our communications with members. As a first step we have launched a new Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/buckinghamssociety>) to supplement our website (<https://buckinghamssociety.org.uk>). This contains a variety of interesting articles about the Buckingham Society, Buckingham and the surrounding area and is updated on a regular basis by Ed Grimsdale. Please feel free to visit the Facebook page and comment on the articles posted there. Even better, try posting an article yourself. We are also exploring ways in which members can contact the executive committee as well as connect to other members more easily.

The Society continues to attract new members. During the current year we have added between 25 and 30 new members to our ranks and hope to recruit more going forward. Some of our new members attended our first tree walk of the year at the Tomkins Arboretum at Winslow in May. Once again Michael Hunt, the Society's dendrologist provided expert commentary and guidance.

Another initiative which may help boost our membership is a local history group. There is considerable interest in local history in the area. Any talk or event that has a local history focus is always extremely well attended. The talk given by Bill Robins on the activities of the Strategic Special Operations Executive, for example, filled the university's Vinson Auditorium. If you are interested in the putative local history group, please let us know.

We also have a number of events to look forward to. We will be participating in the Celebrate Buckingham Day along with other local groups and societies. This will be held on 17 June in Bourton Park. This year we will be presenting our Heritage and Design Awards for the first time since 2019.

You should soon be receiving details about the annual Summer Lecture and Garden Party which will be held on 20 July at the university. This is always the Society's social highlight of the year and I look forward to meeting as many members - both new and old - as possible.

Members' contributions to Buckingham recognised by Buckingham Town Council



Buckingham Town Council (BTC) has recognised the community work done in the town by Mary Simons and Tony Mayston, two of our members, by making them Friends of Buckingham at the recent Mayor Making Ceremony held on 2nd June.

Mary Simons, left, a current member of the Society's executive committee, received hers for her work in developing Buckingham's Traders Association, the Fair-Trade Steering Group and the Pontio Group.



Tony Mayston, left, the Society's treasurer for many years, received his in recognition of the many contributions he has made to the town over the years as a school governor, a trustee for Buckingham Community Centre, and his involvement in the Buckingham Community Plan.

Planning – Carolyn Cumming

23/01121/APP; 23/01122/ALB; and 23/00698 4 West Street

These all relate to refurbishing the premises into a Greek restaurant and take-away. The Heritage officer does not object to internal alterations. But the controversial area is the signage. Although the drawing of front elevation suggests "no changes", when you look at the drawing displaying the proposed signage, there is a very significant change, which does affect this important Grade 2 listed building; namely a very large aluminium composite panel in ultramarine blue. (height of panel 0.55m.). Heritage acknowledges that

amendments are needed on the size of the panel and that there should be no trough lighting. The premises are part of a larger, terraced group of brick buildings, comprising shop and offices, which trace their origin to the early part of the 18th century. Although probably a town house of some stature when first built.

23/01418/ALB The New Inn

The New Inn is to change its appearance and signage to reflect the corporate colours of Red Oak Taverns. The main bone of contention is the excessive lighting, in particular change in style of lanterns in doorways.

M & Co. High Street

Future use may be a wine bar run by an organisation called the “Cosy Club”. They are currently seeking an alcohol licence to operate a 24 hour service. There are several Cosy Clubs up and down the country. The nearest one to Buckingham is at The Centre, Milton Keynes – if you want to check it out!

22/03990 19 Bridge Street

Two ground floor flats have been approved subject to a number of conditions, which have not yet been fulfilled. In particular, the external landscape. Formerly a mature garden, the applicant has proposed replacing it with a car park, its only concession to greening a tiny area of hedging on the street boundary. The planning officer concurs with the Society and TC views that this is totally inadequate and in no way suitable for a site adjacent to the Conservation Area and listed buildings.

23/00178/AOP “Site Q” Neighbourhood Plan

There are now over 140 documents on the planning portal relating to this site. Apart from those submitted from the statutory consultees, the majority appear to come from individuals either supporting or objecting to the application.

A close scrutiny of those coming from “supporters” reveal that the authors do not live in Buckingham. Indeed, some just note the house name, or number followed by ‘Buckinghamshire’. It looks like a very dubious publicity campaign by the developer.

As Councillor Fran Davis has noted: “the comments appear to be heavily edited, leaving out anything that may be perceived to be in opposition”. It is also notable that comments from the objectors give a Buckingham address and have experienced at first hand the already heavily congested roads on all sides of the roundabout at the London Road/A421 junction, noting that, despite all the current developments, there is no additional health and education facilities.

As was pointed out in the last Society newsletter, this is a speculative application for development on a site which was designated for employment in the current Neighbourhood Plan. It is not supported by the Economic Development team at Buckinghamshire Council. Buckingham already has committed to substantial housing growth over the local plan period and if this growth is to be sustainable in the long term, the town needs to provide additional employment sites.

The Revised Neighbourhood Plan

Public consultations are scheduled to begin this summer/autumn. Via use of social media, email and traditional press releases.. There will be pop-up stalls at markets, supermarkets and leisure centres. A Saturday consultation event will take place on the 30th September, with pop up banners and activities to explain the ideas created for the revised BNDP.

Buckingham Society Design Awards

The Society would like to recognise examples of good design in the town, whether for conservation of an existing property or for new build. In 2023, there are several candidates. We will be presenting these awards at the annual Civic Day Celebrations on Saturday 17th June.

SECRETS, SILK AND CYANIDE – A Synopsis of the Talk by Bill Robins

The Society Chair, Ian Orton, arranged for Bill Robins to give a re-run of his November 2021 presentation to the Society's AGM. He gave the second talk on 12 April 2023 in the University's Vinson Auditorium. This time the talk was addressed both to the Society and to the Intelligence, Security and Cyber course students of Professor Julian Richards at Buckingham University. We were delighted to welcome the Vice Chancellor Professor James Tooley and his wife Cynthia to the lecture.



The talk covered the clandestine agencies hosted in many of the great houses around North Buckinghamshire during the Second World War. They supported lethal conflicts with the German occupation forces across the European continent. Bill summarised the work of some eleven of them and then focused on the Special Operations Executive (SOE), its wireless stations at Poundon and Grendon Underwood and their role in communicating with agents operating undercover to support resistance movements in Europe. One of the buildings used, Poundon House, is shown here.

Bill covered the work of the women of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY) in support of SOE and outlined SOE's frequently toxic relationship with its sister agency, the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS).



The talk followed the tragic fate of both the French Prosper network and the Dutch SOE network and of two of the women agents operating undercover in France, the gentle wireless operator Noor Inayat Khan and the feisty Violette Szabo.

We learnt of the brilliant work by the SOE Codemaster, Leo Marks, and of the fierce leadership by the redoubtable SOE fighter, Pearl Witherington, and her 2000 resistance fighters as they battled to delay the German troops trying to get to the Normandy beaches to fight the allied landings.

Finally, the talk briefly outlined two opposing views of the morality of these subversive operations and closed by summarising the fate of the North Buckinghamshire SOE sites after the War.

Note: both pictures are the copyright of the Imperial War Museum

Bluebells Akeley Wood – Photograph by Roger Newall



Local Bird Observations - Mary Melliush



The swifts arrived and spring came to Buckingham. This robin's nest was photographed in Upper Wharf, not far from the High Street.

Our gardens, park and wooded areas have fledglings. Adult birds are working hard. Last week I watched a blackbird feeding worms to a youngster. It was fluffy, freckled and almost as large as the adult.

In flight I have seen little egret, heron, buzzard and swallows.

The river has a good selection of ducks. This is good to see after a quiet time with nothing to report.

German prisoners – Ed Grimsdale

Transcribed, edited and annotated from The Buckingham Advertiser 27th September, 1947

International Harmony in Music

German Recitalists at the Congregational Church

Interpreter Assists at Evening Service

MINISTER ON CHURCH'S PEACE OPPORTUNITIES

Two brilliant German musicians from the P.O.W. camp at Shalstone gave the first recital of music in Buckingham Congregational Church following the dedication of upright Bechstein piano at Buckingham Congregational Church on Sunday evening.

The Programme

Siegfried Handke (piano) formerly Harpist in a Heidelberg Orchestra

Hubert Fahrner (violin) playing on a violin given to him by the YMCA in Canada

Corelli - Adagio and Allegro

Handel - Largo

J S Bach - Loure

Mozart - Finale of Sonata in A for Violin and Piano

Beethoven - 'Moonlight' Sonata for piano

— a stirring hymn —

Mozart - Two movements from Sonata in G for Violin and Piano
Chopin- Nocturne
Bach/ Gounod-Ave Maria
Rachmaninov - Prelude in C minor
Svendsen - Romance for violin and piano

The Minister, The Rev. P. Russell Johnson, after welcoming the musicians to the crowded Congregational Church and thanking them for their kindness, spoke of breaking down barriers; our faith breaks down the barriers and reconciles us first to God, through Christ, and then, through Him, to one another. We become friends, we are friends, because we are fellow believers. A common bond unites us, greater than anything which might separate us. We become one family in God. Although the family ties be broken for a while and brother sin against brother, yet we never cease to be brothers. We may not deny our kinship altogether and in due course the love of Christ proves stronger than our enmities and brings into fellowship again.

“What other power in heaven or earth can so break down the barriers that divide and bring the nations into real unity together?” continued the Minister. “The League of Nations failed; but at Madras in 1938, 73 nations met together in complete harmony in the fellowship of the Christian Church, including Chinese and Japanese whose countries had then already been at war for four years. The United Nations Organization, in whose ranks, trust, recovered Germany will one day take her rightful and legal place with all the rest, was at present torn and divided, with its whole future trembling in the balance; but this very summer year Christians from almost every nation—Spain, Russia and Japan being almost the only exceptions—met together in united fellowship at Oslo.”

German Pastor Replies

The address was interpreted and the German Pastor present, at the invitation of the Minister, mounted the pulpit and in the course of a suitable reply, expressed appreciation of the invitation and the hospitality received from the Buckingham Congregational Church. Before the recital, the dedication of the piano, which was purchased, second-hand, a result of a bequest to the church of £50 with an additional anonymous donation took place with suitable prayers for blessing upon those who played upon it and upon their music and upon the donors, and after the recital the German members of the congregation were served with refreshments by ladies of the church in the Sunday Schoolroom.

Memories of John Cornwall – Shared in response to Ed Grimsdale’s last article which included a landgirl’s verses from the 1940’s

I expect you know about the classical concert given by a group of German POWs in the Congregational church (Radcliffe Centre) before they were repatriated? I think they had

been members of the Berlin Philharmonic and were enlisted late in the War. The church was full that evening.



It was the initiative of Rev. Russel Johnston, our minister. He wanted to share the process of peacebuilding. I have the Advertiser report and was present, as was Lorna Pollard who is still alive at 10 Highlands Road. She is over 100 and one of her daughters, Diana, lives with her as her carer.

My parents had always welcomed to Sunday lunch any servicemen who came to church during the War. They joined in the peace-

building effort by hosting a German POW, Helmut Weber, who was offered a Course in Business at Cambridge and kept in touch afterwards.

Perhaps you know about the scheme whereby a party of Dutch teenagers came for a fortnight of respite in the August of 1945. Jan and Pot from Leiden stayed with us. (Another story)

During the War a little girl used to walk from Tingewick to Shalstone, feeling sorry for the prisoners. She passed sweets through the barbed wire fence. The Commandant reprimanded her and she replied, "You've got a big nose!"

A land-girl, Margaret, lived with us. She hated threshing machines, coming home choked with dust.

Reasons to be Cheerful – Ian Orton

I am currently rereading a book called "Factfulness: Ten Reasons We're Wrong About The World - And Why Things Are Better Than You Think" which was written by the late Hans Rosling, a Swedish academic, physician and public speaker, along with Ola his son and Anna Rosling Ronnlund, his daughter in law.

As its title implies, "Factfulness" provides an antidote to the dystopian worldview shared by most of our fellow citizens about human progress, especially over the past twenty years or so. The reality, as shown by statistics compiled by the United Nations, the World Bank and other supranational organisations, is that life for most individuals, as measured by a wide range of socio-economic indicators, has improved considerably over the past two decades. Far from living in a dystopian world the reality is that we have probably never had it so good.

But that isn't the image that is presented almost on a daily basis by the media in all its forms. Our world still seems to be typified by perpetual conflict, disease, famine, falling

incomes, rising inequality and a host of other horrors. So why is there such a big gap between perception and reality?

Dr Rosling and his co-authors identified ten instincts that distort our perspective. Many of these reflect the way in which our brains have evolved - or perhaps more pertinently haven't evolved - over millennia.

The reality is that although we are now much richer our brains are still hardwired to function in almost the same way as when we were hunter gatherers. Then life was much more precarious and of shorter duration.. In this environment instinct (fast thinking) based on experience was much more important in determining behaviour rather than a rational analysis of facts (slow thinking).

Fearing the worst and reacting accordingly was often a good course of action to increase the odds of surviving a potentially catastrophic event, such as being attacked by a hungry wild animal or a neighbouring tribe. More likely than not any delay caused by an attempt to analyse the situation rationally would have resulted in death or a severe maiming.

Although life has changed immeasurably over the ensuing millenia instinct or fast thinking still plays an important role in how we interpret the world and react to events.

One aspect of this is the extent to which our attention is captured by sensational one-off events that seem to appear suddenly. From nowhere. Small changes tend to be overlooked even though the cumulative effect can be very beneficial.

This is often accentuated by a negativity instinct which makes us notice the bad rather than the good.

Granted the selected reporting of journalists may have a role to play here. But most journalists and the media firms that employ them are just responding to demand. The reality is that bad news sells. Good news does not.

Journalists who reported trains that didn't crash or crops that didn't fail would quickly lose their jobs. Stories about gradual improvements, however, rarely make the front page news even when they occur on a dramatic scale and impact the lives of millions. The world is far from perfect, even in Buckingham. There is so much that needs to be done to make it better (which is one of the reasons the Buckingham Society exists).

Nonetheless, life is much better now than it was twenty years ago for the majority of people who live in Buckingham, even with the advent of "the climate emergency" and the aftermath of Covid. Furthermore, given the continued advances in technical progress and homo sapiens unerring ability to adapt to new circumstances it will continue to get better notwithstanding the odd war, outbreak of disease or natural disaster.

Forthcoming events

Friday 16th to Sunday 18th June Buckingham Literary Festival at the Vinson Centre, The University of Buckingham.

Saturday 17th June Celebrate Buckingham Day from 11am – 3pm in the Paddock in Bourton Park. There will be a Buckingham Society table and the Society's Design and Heritage Awards are to be presented at 12.00.

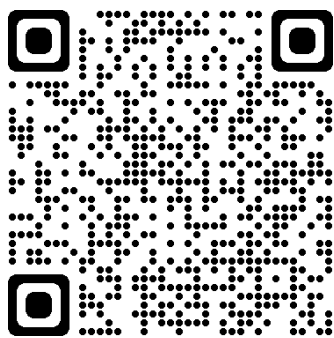
20th July at 6.30pm – Summer Lecture by Dan Winter, Head Gardener Evenley Wood Garden, followed by the Annual Garden Party.

28th July – Launch of the Swan Trail. Buckingham Town Council are introducing a second temporary public art sculpture trail which will run throughout the summer holidays of 2023.

Executive Committee:

Ian Orton	Chair, Green and Open Spaces, planning
David Child	Treasurer, transport, website, and planning
Carolyn Cumming	Planning
Ed Grimsdale	Planning and Society Historian
Gill Jones	Membership secretary
Belinda Morley-Fletcher	Secretary
Roger Newall	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 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