

HISTORY OF THE TOWN

Originally the town nestled in the natural loop of the Great River Ouse, but developed past this boundary and is now the thriving town you see today.



The County town of Buckinghamshire from the 10th century, Buckingham prospered as a medieval market town, with charters from Mary Tudor in 1554, and Charles II in 1684, establishing market days and two annual fairs, which still take place today.

In the early 18th century Buckingham was in decline and following a disastrous fire, much of its centre had to be rebuilt. In spite of the coming of the canal and the railway, Buckingham was little altered until well into the 20th century. Today, it retains much of its traditional market town charm.

Buckingham has many interesting and historical buildings and features, though only two of the main buildings are open to visitors to look at internally – The Old Gaol and The Chantry Chapel.



HISTORY OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

In the Domesday Survey Buckingham appears as county town at the head of the Buckinghamshire section. The Manor of Buckingham is recorded as being held by Walter Giffard, whose family continued to hold it until the reign of Henry VIII.

Around 1521, the term 'manor' in relation to Buckingham dropped out of use and instead the lordship of Buckingham was referred to as the 'borough'. The borough was then incorporated by the charter of Mary I in 1554, under which the borough was to be governed by a bailiff and 12 principal burgesses.

Following The Municipal Corporations Act 1835, Buckingham became a municipal borough and the bailiff and burgesses were replaced by a Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors.



However in 1974, as part of local government reorganisations the borough was dismantled, as the two major authorities Buckinghamshire County Council and Aylesbury Vale District Council had become established. The town was carved up and a lot of the assets previously owned by the Borough Council were sold, which included the Town Hall that dominates the town on the junction of Bridge Street and West Street, known as Cannon Corner.

Then in 1974, Buckingham Town Council was formed due to the need to deliver services to residents at a local level.

BUCKINGHAM'S HISTORIC CHARTER FAIR

Buckingham has enjoyed its Charter Fairs for over 450 years. They provide an opportunity for townfolk and those from the surrounding area to “let their hair down” on a couple of weekends before the onset of winter.



The Charter Fairs were granted by Royal Charter – in 1554, Mary Tudor granted the free Borough of Buckingham, and a further Royal Charter by Charles II in 1664 also permitted the town to have its market – another tradition that continues to this day.

Originally, the Charter Fair would have been mainly a hiring fair where men could apply for work. These would have been huge events, attracting people from a wide area and accompanied by pedlars, stall holders, fortune tellers, wire-walkers, fire-eaters, roundabouts and other entertainments.



Today, the Charter Fair is brought to us by the Guild of Showmen – a professional body bound by a strict code of rules governing their operation. Changes in the rides and stalls from year to year mean that careful planning is needed before the fair is brought into town. As well as working closely with the Nichols brothers who

currently manage the Buckingham Charter Fairs on the Guild's behalf, the Town Council arranges the road closures and puts up no parking notices.



The road closures ensure that obstructions, including some street furniture and the odd parked car, can be removed in time for everything to be sited. All rides and stalls arrive in a pre-set order and within a tight time span, to avoid clogging up the by-pass and other approach roads. Everything is then set up, power cables are run, rides are levelled and safety-checked, and stalls are assembled and stocked.

Buckingham's Charter Fairs are part of our long heritage, continue to be enjoyed by huge numbers in the area, and do bring benefits to our historic town.

Please note there are also road closures for the Remembrance Day Parade and Christmas Parade; look on our website, Facebook, Twitter or in our *Buckingham Town Matters* newsletter for details.