

# **Binfield Badger Group**

**Protecting badgers across Berkshire**

Charity Number: 1075886



## **Newsletter No. 119**

## **December 2019**



by Valerie Harrison, [www.riedesigned.co.uk](http://www.riedesigned.co.uk)

❖ *The Committee of the Binfield Badger Group* ❖  
*wishes all its members a Happy Christmas*

- Group News & Public Meetings in 2020 see page 2
- Check out our New Website! see page 3
- Badger & cattle vaccination – a way forward? see page 6



*Binfield Badger Group*

*Affiliated to the Badger Trust*

[www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk](http://www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk)

Page 1 of 16

## GROUP NEWS AND DATES FOR OUR MEETINGS IN 2020

### Public Meetings in 2020 – 16 April and 29 October

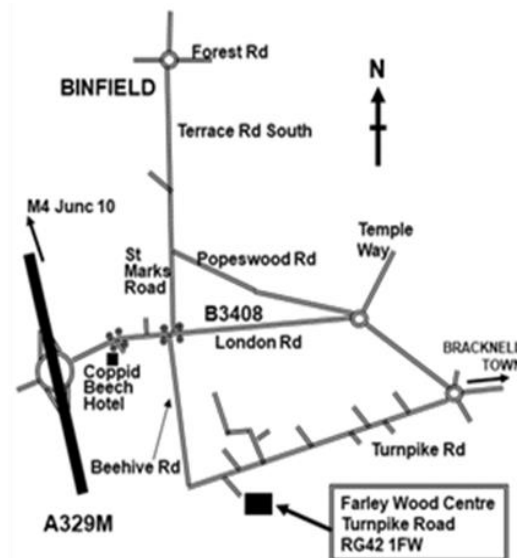
Our next **Public Meeting and AGM** will be on **Thursday, 16 April**. Our speaker will be announced in our March Newsletter, but we always have an interesting and informative evening. Remember to tell your friends – there is no entrance fee - everyone is welcome.

Doors open at 7.00pm and the meeting is at:-

**Farley Wood Centre, Turnpike Road,  
Binfield, RG42 1FW.**

The meeting will start at **7.30pm**.

**Please remember to put the date in your new  
2020 diary!**



### We talked “All Things Badger” at our October Meeting

Anyone who had sensibly decided to ignore the witches and ghosties and come along to our friendly meeting on the 31<sup>st</sup> will have been treated to an entertaining, illustrated talk given by John, our Joint Chairman. Having been involved with the Group since its early days in the 1980's, John had a wealth of badger knowledge to impart as well as recounting many personal experiences observing and sometimes going to the rescue of our black and white friends – some with amusing outcomes.

He recalled how the Binfield Badger Group had been officially formed by concerned local residents in 1986 as a result of development on land where an ancient and historic badger sett existed. In late 1988, John joined the committee and helped design and build a hide at the copse on North Lawn (now Adrian's Hide). He remembered the first night it was used on 8 June 1990 and, of course, still has his notes taken on that watch!



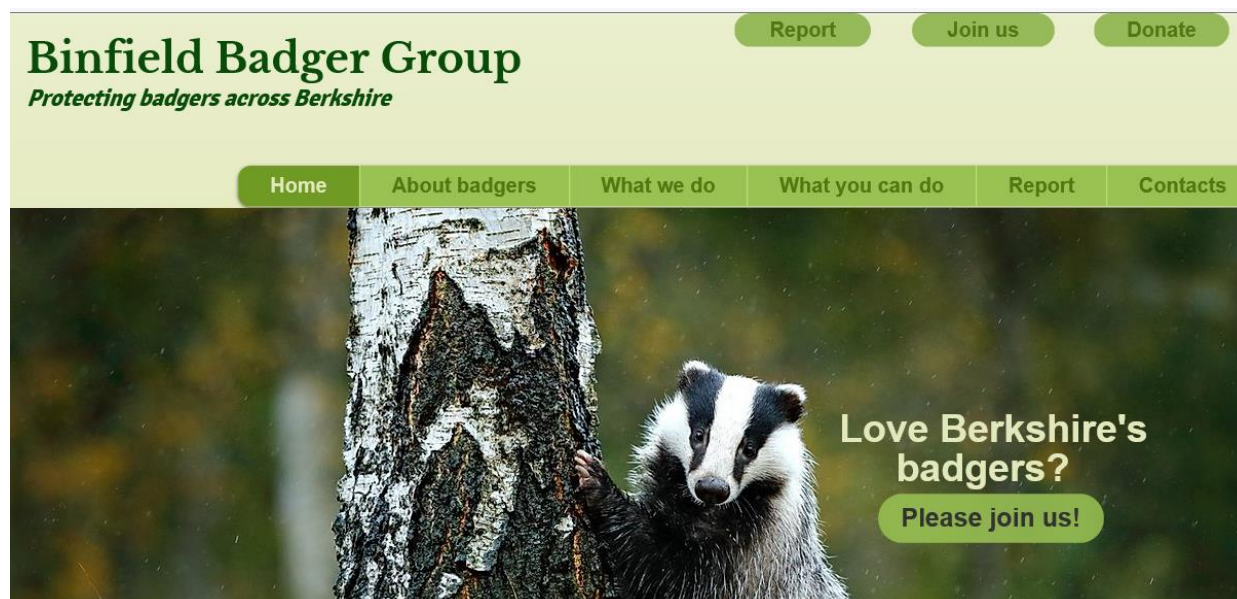
We were transported into the secret, nocturnal life of the badger, learning about their social interaction, scent marking and how the young cubs learn through 'play-fighting' – so amusing to watch when caught on our trailcams which are placed around the copse.

It was a thoroughly enjoyable evening and we are privileged to have such a 'badger expert' in our midst!





## Happy Christmas - Our New Website is now Live!



We have long been aware of the need to update and refurbish our current Binfield Badger Group's website, to make it easier and more enjoyable to use and navigate around. Two of our intrepid Committee members, Karen and Cathy, stepped up to this mammoth task. After many long hours, they have succeeded in producing a fantastic, sparkling new version – a timely Christmas present to all our members!

Go to [www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk](http://www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk) and check it out!



Do you shop on Amazon?

- Karen



If so, then you can support us, at no cost to yourself, through your day to day shopping! All you have to do is shop on **AmazonSmile** ([www.smile.amazon.co.uk](http://www.smile.amazon.co.uk) instead of [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)) and *select Binfield Badger Group as your chosen charity*. Then BBG will receive 0.5% of the value of any purchases you make!

Every item available for purchase on [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk) is also available on AmazonSmile at the same price. Amazon have so far donated over £2 million to charities through their Smile Foundation.

To start supporting us on Amazon, you can either type in [www.smile.amazon.co.uk](http://www.smile.amazon.co.uk) and select *Binfield Badger Group*, or use the link below or this QR code:

<https://smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/1075886-0>

**Help badgers whilst you shop!** With thanks from Berkshire's badgers.



<https://smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/1075886-0>



*Binfield Badger Group*

*Affiliated to the Badger Trust*

[www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk](http://www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk)

Page 3 of 16

## **Winter Copse Maintenance**

**- Andy**

At the start of December, an enthusiastic work party descended on our Binfield nature reserve copse to give it a bit of a Winter tidy. A Sunday morning later and the boundary hedge had been given a much needed haircut, the pond cleaned and shrubs spilling into neighbouring properties trimmed back to a more well-mannered size. Adrian's Hide was even fitted with a new padlock. We've still some work to complete before Spring, but a good start was made and many hands made light work. Thank you to Trevor for the use of his tree cutting kit and to Janeen and family, for stepping in to help.



(For those wondering, we were careful not to do any ground work, nor to do anything too close to the sett entrances themselves, in order to avoid any risk of disturbance. Indeed, at the end of our stint, we even left some peanuts for the badgers as a little Winter treat. I imagine they'll be hoping we come again soon!)



## **Wounded Badger Patrol 2019 – Update**

**- Andy**

This September saw the sixth year of culling. It hardly seems possible. Each year, I imagine this must be the last time that we'll spend Autumn evenings walking the footpaths of Wiltshire, Dorset, Somerset or wherever, whilst cull contractors seek to shoot the local badgers. This year was slightly different in that we feared the cull might come to the most western parts of Berkshire.

With this in mind, we teamed up with Wiltshire groups and had the privilege of working with truly courageous people, unfailingly committed to looking after badgers and other wildlife. Patrolling East Wiltshire, we also kept a close eye on West Berkshire. We certainly had some busy nights (and some quieter ones too) but didn't experience any direct evidence of culling in Berkshire. We heard shots in our county, but couldn't verify that they were cull-related, rather than people lamping or poaching.

We're hoping that our Berkshire farmers agree with us that the cull is an ineffective waste of their hard-earned money. Whatever the outcome of the election, let's hope that the Government stops playing politics with the badgers, starts listening to the science and stops the cull immediately.



*Binfield Badger Group*

*Affiliated to the Badger Trust*

[www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk](http://www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk)

Page 4 of 16



## **“Miss/Mr November” – We make the 2020 Binfield Villlage Calendar!**



Karen’s beautiful photo, taken earlier this year at the copse, has been chosen for the 2020 Binfield Village calendar.

Our handsome brock appears along with other beautiful images snapped in and around Binfield. You can pick up a copy at several places around the village, including the Parish Office and the Foxes Den café. Proceeds will go towards the restoration of the Parish Church.



## **More good news - NARS Cosmetics Drops Badger Hair!**

We recently featured a distressing report by PETA on the barbaric badger hair ‘industry’ in China. They have an ongoing campaign against this cruel trade and are pleased to report that another cosmetics company, NARS, has confirmed that it no longer uses badger hair in its makeup brushes. PETA continue to encourage other companies to follow its lead.



It makes for uncomfortable reading, but you can find out about their investigations on their website, along with PETA’s many other campaigns around the world on behalf of suffering animals: [www.peta.org.uk](http://www.peta.org.uk)

**Remember to check carefully before you buy brushes this Christmas!!**



*Binfield Badger Group*

*Affiliated to the Badger Trust*

[www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk](http://www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk)

Page 5 of 16

## BINFIELD BADGER GROUP'S VACCINATION INITIATIVE – UPDATE - Jill - 30/11/19



The Committee have been working over the past few months to define our strategy for vaccination in Berkshire for 2020.

We are hoping to introduce our badger vaccination programme in Spring 2020, which would continue for 4 years and be operated by government (APHA\*) trained and licensed vaccinators and hope to have it partially supported by funding through a grant from DEFRA - although we are having to wait until the new Government announces how this funding scheme will work before we can finalise our plans.

If the project proceeds, it will enable us to offer a service to cattle and dairy farmers and adjacent landowners, to vaccinate any badgers on their land.

Vaccination is safe, humane and socially acceptable. It protects uninfected badgers and reduces the severity and progression of bTB in the few infected badgers. By offering this service to farmers, it will enable them to focus on the full range of cattle-based measures necessary to tackle bTB, whilst we assist with protecting the badger population on their farms.

We are keen to support our county's farmers and are in the process of compiling an outreach letter to seek expressions of interest in this initiative and we'll need volunteers to help carry out this project – **so watch this space for more details!**

*\* Defra run Animal and Plant Health Agency*

**In the meantime.....**

## A SOLUTION TO THE BADGER CULL?

- Mailonline - 28/11/19

UK scientists have developed a tuberculosis vaccine for cows that could help stop the spread of the deadly disease among cattle. The new vaccine, which could stop the spread of tuberculosis in cattle, is offering wildlife groups hope that it could see the end of badger culls.

- The new vaccination is a variant of the BCG vaccine given to humans against TB.
- It was created by the University of Surrey by removing a proteins from BCG.
- This prevents cows recording a false positive for TB when given a skin test.
- It's hoped a new vaccine will help stop badger culls as it limits the spread of TB.

Researchers from the University of Surrey have created a strain of the BCG vaccine that they say prevents the spread of TB and is compatible with a compulsory skin test that is designed to determine whether a cow has the disease or not. This will please animal welfare groups who have called for the development of a compatible vaccine as a way to stop the need for badger culls.

*'This BCG Vaccine could be a major break through in bringing an end to the cruel costly and ineffective badger cull', says Dominic Dyer, CEO of the Badger Trust.*



The BCG vaccine given to humans CAN be used on cattle but if a skin test is taken of a vaccinated cow it will show as having TB and farmers will be required to kill it. This is due to the fact it is currently impossible to tell BCG vaccinated cows from infected cows using the skin test. An outbreak, or even a suspected outbreak of TB in a cow, can result in the whole herd having to be slaughtered, costing farmers millions of pounds per year.

*'By being able to differentiate between a cow vaccinated against TB & a cow that carries the disease, the Government will be able to introduce a large scale cattle vaccination programme across England. This combined with badger vaccination, improved TB testing for cattle & tighter biosecurity and movement controls, will bring about a significant reduction in bovine TB without the mass slaughter of badgers', Mr Dyer said.*

The new vaccine, developed by the University of Surrey, takes out the proteins in the BCG vaccine that triggers a 'positive' reaction in the skin test while keeping the protection against the disease that BCG offers.

In September, Ellie Brodie, senior policy manager at The Wildlife Trusts, said: *'Evidence shows that badgers are not the primary cause of the spread of TB in cattle. The primary route of infection is from cow-to-cow contact – so a vaccine for cattle should be a government priority.'*

England's controversial badger cull was introduced in 2013 and is now being enacted in 40 areas in an attempt to reduce transmission to cattle.

*'In order to control the spread of bovine TB, effective vaccination and accurate early diagnosis are critical', said Johnjoe McFadden, from the University of Surrey. 'This new vaccine provides protection against bovine TB and will help in the fight against this deadly disease which infects over 50 million cattle worldwide and is economically devastating to farmers.'*

Researchers tested the new vaccine on guinea pigs and found that TB infected guinea pigs tested positive for the disease using the skin test, whilst guinea pigs vaccinated with the new drug did not.

This potentially allows farmers and veterinarians to protect their animals with the new BCG vaccine, whilst still maintaining a diagnostic test that will detect TB.

Professor McFadden said they now need to demonstrate that the skin test and vaccine work in cattle. *'If they do, then it will be possible to vaccinate cattle against TB yet retain the value of skin test for diagnosis.'*

The findings have been published in the journal Scientific Reports.





## KIDS' PAGE

Put your wellies on and get out and enjoy a bracing Winter walk – there's still lots of things to spot on the way! Keep your eyes peeled for these:-



### Squirrel's Drey

A football-sized nest, often built with twigs and leaves and nestled next to a tree trunk



### Deadwood

Home to woodlice, stag beetles and millipedes. What else can you find?

## Tracks hunt sheet

Woodland Trust  
naturedetectives



☐ badger



☐ deer



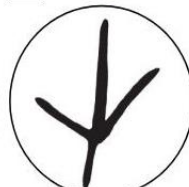
☐ dog



☐ duck



☐ fox



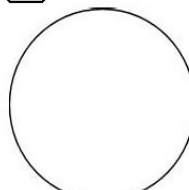
☐ heron



☐ otter



☐ squirrel



☐ \_\_\_\_\_



Start your own adventure at [naturedetectives.org.uk](http://naturedetectives.org.uk)



### Badger sett

Large, badger-sized tunnels, often dug into slopes. Their entrances look like capital Ds on their side.

Courtesy of the Woodland Trust - <http://www.naturedetectives.org.uk>



Binfield Badger Group

Affiliated to the Badger Trust

[www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk](http://www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk)

Page 8 of 16



## WHO NEEDS TINSEL? - plastic-free Christmas decorations - Woodland Trust

As the festive season arrives, it's time to decorate! But, as we become more aware of the need to reduce our use of plastics, here's few ideas to get you started:



### Transform a pine cone into a cheeky robin red breast!

You can make this fun bauble with a pine cone and some scraps of felt. Cut out a red circle for the robin's breast, a yellow triangle for its beak, and some small black and white circles for eyes. Stick them to the pine cone with strong glue. Then loop some string around it and hang it on your Christmas tree.



### Pom pom garlands are fun to make from natural wool in bright, festive colours.

Loop the wool over three fingers until you have a nice thick bunch. Carefully remove the loop from your fingers and place it on a flat surface. Cut a small length of wool and tie it around the middle of the loop – your loop should now look a bit like a bow. Make sure the knot is nice and tight and cut off the excess. Finally, cut each side of the bow and fluff up your pom pom.



### Pine cone garlands in traditional colours.

You'll need plenty of pine cones for this craft. Look out for them on a winter walk and collect a few to take home. Inside, the warm, dry air will open them up. Remember to gently tap the cones over some newspaper to let any bugs escape before you paint them. Paint the pine cones with your favourite colours and let them dry. Then attach them to ribbon or string and drape the garland around your Christmas tree or along a shelf.



Reducing the amount of plastic we use is a great way to help our environment and introducing kids to these ideas will help instil great values about protecting our planet. The Woodland Trust's family membership is from £5 per month. Your donation will help protect the UK's native woods and trees for wildlife and people.



## Less of the 3Rs and more of the 3B's – BADGERS, BROCKS & BLAIREAUX! - Andy



As the first half term at HawleyHurst school drew to a close, the pupils' 'green' focus turned towards badgers. As well as celebrating iconic creatures, such as pandas and polar bears, the school encourages pupils to understand their local environment and value the natural wonders on their doorstep. What better animals to learn about therefore than our black and white friends?

In both the Junior and Senior Schools, badgers were considered in a range of subjects and from a variety of perspectives. They were even talked about in French. (Badger is 'un blaireau', for those collecting new French vocabulary!)



Outside the classroom, pupils leafleted just about every parent, encouraging them to slow down when driving at night and to **'Give Badgers a Brake'**.

On the last Friday of half term, the whole school had a 'black and white' mufti day, with the Juniors also taking part in badger-related fun and games.

**A big thank you to everyone, staff and pupils, for all their work; it was great to see.**





**“A planned development of 199 new homes in Calcot will destroy badger homes, if councillors grant planning permission.**

Bellway Homes, one of the UK's largest housebuilders, wants to build 199 homes on land to the west of Dorking Way.

There will be 80 affordable housing homes, 56 of which will be social rent and 24 shared ownership. The remaining 119 will sold privately.



But two badger setts are on the site, which would be destroyed by the development. That's according to the Binfield Badger Group, who are strongly objecting to the plans.

Because badgers are a legally protected species, Natural England must give consent to the developer to destroy the two setts.

Michael Butler, principal planning officer at West Berkshire Council, downplayed destroying where the badgers live.

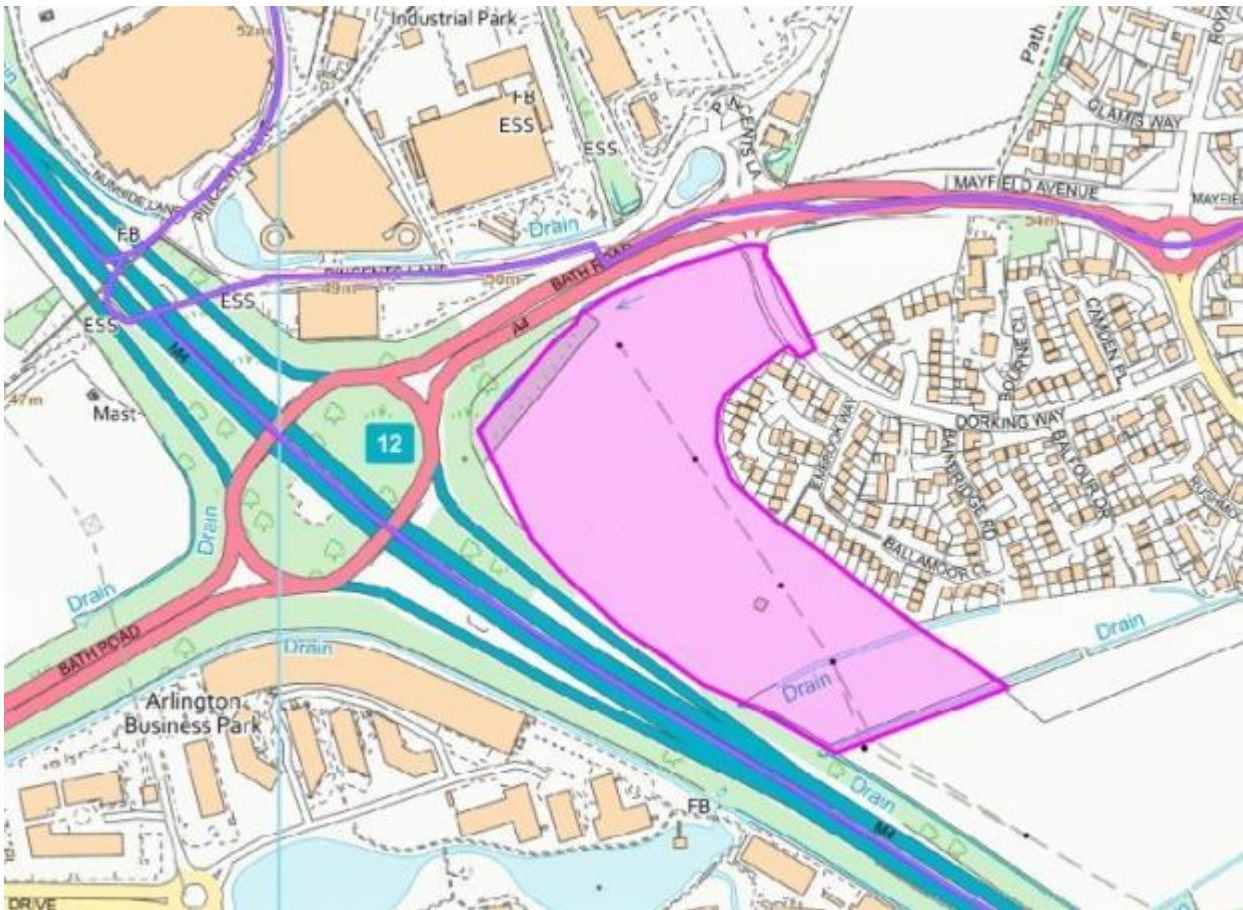
In a report to the council's eastern area planning committee, he said: *“Officer advice is ... that the public benefit of the 199 housing scheme far outweighs the ecological harm caused.”*

The views of the council's ecologist have not yet been published, and Natural England have not objected to the application.

There will be 30 one-bed homes, 56 two-beds, 83 three-beds, and 30 four-beds; and 414 car parking spaces. The only road access is to the north on to Dorking Way, which then leads onto the A4.

The A4 is north-west to the 7.4 hectare site, existing housing is to the east, M4 to the south-west, and open fields to the south-east.





The developer will have to pay £1.6 million community infrastructure levy, which will go towards providing local public services like schools and buses.

Tilehurst, Theale and Burghfield parish councils are objecting to the plans, on the grounds of the impact on schools, traffic and doctors' surgeries.

The council received 41 letters from the public, three of which support the plans, and 38 object. ....”

**Andy, BBG writes** - Throughout the year, we check the local planning portals carefully in an effort to identify those applications which have implications for badgers. It's very encouraging to see that concern for our black and white friends has featured in the Reading Chronicle article on a proposed new housing estate. Let's hope that the panel deciding on the application take a different view to Mr Butler!! (Although we check Council planning websites carefully, applications may be made which we miss or that affect badgers about whom we're not aware. ***Please always contact us at [planning@binfieldbadgers.org.uk](mailto:planning@binfieldbadgers.org.uk) if you have concerns about a plan in your area.***





## SHOCKING WILDLIFE CRIME - 28 BADGERS SHOT ILLEGALLY - BBC – 7/11/19

**An example of the knock-on effect of the Cull?** : A man shot 28 badgers and kept their carcasses in freezers at his home and on an industrial unit. Scott Milne intended to be paid for the animals by claiming they were part of an authorised badger cull.

Milne, 42, from Helland near Bodmin in Cornwall, admitted wilfully killing 28 badgers and possessing 37. He also admitted failing to store firearms securely. He was given an 18-week suspended sentence at Bodmin Magistrates' Court.

They found several shotguns and rifles along with ammunition in two cars. At a unit on an industrial estate in Roche they found a number of freezer units containing 29 badgers. A vet examined all of the dead animals and found 28 had injuries consistent with being shot. Milne had a licence for badger culling issued by Natural England, but these animals had been killed outside of the cull period.

He told police he intended to submit them for payment when the cull period re-opened. His licence has since been suspended.

Badger culling areas were introduced by Natural England as part of government efforts to control tuberculosis in cattle.

Andy writes:- Many of us for some time now have believed that the Government sponsored badger cull has led to an increase in wildlife crime. Strong anecdotal evidence has suggested that baiting has increased, with unscrupulous operatives illegally selling live cage-trapped badgers for rather more money than the carcasses will fetch under the cull.

In Scott Milne's case, he felt able to shoot badgers illegally outside the cull license period, intending later, it would seem, to pass them off as legally culled animals for which he would receive payment. Whilst the BBC report does not state what money this deception would have netted Mr Milne, it does comment on the sentence he received from the court:

- An 18 week suspended prison sentence
- 150 hours' unpaid work
- Deprivation of his guns, ammunition and badger corpses.

We might expect the last of these as the natural consequences for mis-using and mis-storing guns and the illegal killing of badgers. However, we might also question whether the first two penalties have adequately addressed the wildlife crimes committed. No prison time will be served unless a court orders it at some future point. 150 hours' unpaid work equates to a little over 5 hours per badger; not even a full day's work.

Whilst I think prison is an ineffective way of dealing with offenders, we do need to have penalties that function as a deterrent. Have the gun licenses been lost in perpetuity, I wonder? In addition to the unpaid work, would substantial fines that were put towards conservation work have been more appropriate? In any event, a rather more robust response is needed if we are to give our damaged eco-system the protection it deserves and to which these animals are entitled.





## **Did you know that badgers are victims of hunting too?**

With the hunting season now upon us, the Badger Trust recently teamed up with the League Against Cruel Sports for a week-long campaign to increase awareness and to help **#stopbadgercrime**.

### **• What happens?**

Terriermen will often be out early in the morning prior to a hunt meet, blocking up badger setts to stop the quarry – usually a fox – from escaping down the hole and ruining the chase. If a fox does escape into a badger sett during the hunt, the terriermen will often dig it out in order for the chase to continue. Digging out is not only cruel, it's illegal, as badger setts are protected by law (there is a separate act for Northern Ireland).

### **• How can you help?**

As part of our awareness campaign, we are urging you to be a badger champion. How you react when the worst happens can help us catch the individuals involved.

*If you see someone actively interfering with a badger sett:*

1. call 999 and ask for police assistance;
2. ensure you get a reference number for your call;
3. report the incident here on our website using our online form

*If you discover a badger sett that's already blocked:*

1. call the police on their non-emergency number – 101;
2. ensure you get a reference number for your call;
3. report the incident here on our website using our online form

**In all cases, keep yourself safe and do not approach or disturb the scene.**

### **• Why report incidents?**

At the Badger Trust we have an experienced Crime Team dedicated to monitoring and tracking badger crime across England and Wales. They work closely with the police to follow ongoing investigations and assist as needed. This ensures that no case slips through the cracks, giving the best chance to achieve more wildlife crime prosecutions.

The League Against Cruel Sports also has Animal Crimewatch, a confidential hotline where you can report cruelty to animals in the name of 'sport' by telephone, email, or using its online form: <https://www.league.org.uk/forms/animal-crimewatch-report>

Information you provide could help investigators bring offenders to justice, and support vital campaigning work calling for changes to the law to improve the lives of thousands of animals.

### **• How can I help to raise awareness?**

- tell your friends;
- like and share our posts on facebook, twitter and Instagram;
- use our campaign hashtag **#stopbadgercrime**

As badger champions, together we can stop badgers becoming victims of cruel hunting activity. Thank you for your support.

**The Badger Trust Team**





## BADGER OF THE MONTH! – BASILDON BADGERS FC

The Binfield Badger Group are proud to sponsor Basildon Badgers FC's '**Berkshire Badgers Trophy**', which is awarded each month to the young player who has shown special effort and qualities while playing for their team. Here is the worthy trophy winner for September:



Here is Hector in the Badgers' U7 group.

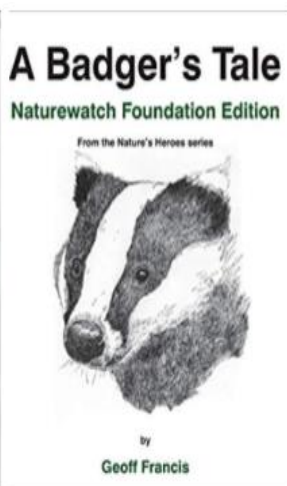
He takes part week in week out and is one of their longest serving players, having started aged just 3. He's been trying really hard and is focussed in training.

His coaches felt that his improved attention should earn him Badger of the Month for September.



## And finally... 'A Badger's Tale' is released

- Naturewatch Foundation



As part of their longstanding campaign to end badger baiting, Naturewatch Foundation is proud to have sponsored the publication of a wildlife crime novel. '**A Badger's Tale**' celebrates the value of the badger to the British countryside and also raises questions about what happens to it at the hands of humans.

Chris Packham, TV presenter and author, was delighted to judge a children's illustration competition to select a series of fantastic images that feature throughout the book written by author and artist Geoff Francis, supported by No More Dodos.

The wildlife crime mystery novel is a challenging story about a rejected young boy who finds sanctuary and purpose with a clan of badgers, only to find it threatened by a gang of hunters. Alongside a pertinent tale, the story includes additional information to educate teenagers on the natural history of the badger, illegal persecution, law that protects them, and aims to recruit help and understanding among younger people. The wellbeing and survival of badgers lie in the hands of the younger generation – the next carers of our countryside. *Please consider buying a copy of this inspiring book as a Christmas gift.*



Binfield Badger Group

Affiliated to the Badger Trust

[www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk](http://www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk)

**Chairpersons:** John Fennell and Jill Hoblin

**Secretary:** Judith Darnell, Woodley

**Treasurer:** Karen McCoy, Sonning

**Membership Secretary:**

Judith Darnell, Woodley  
Binfield Badger Group  
PO Box 3805, Bracknell  
RG42 1HH

**Group email:** Mike Coon, Maidenhead

**Talks** John Fennell, Binfield

**Copse maintenance:** Cathy Holwill, Reading

**Newsletter:** Judith Darnell, Woodley

**Vaccination:** Jill Hoblin, Newbury

**Sett/RTA Records & Surveys:**

Karen McCoy, Sonning

**Rescues:** *Currently Vacant*

**Planning:** Andy McCoy, Sonning

**Website:** Karen McCoy and Cathy Holwill

**Committee Members:** Carol and Trevor Samuel, Maidenhead

**Your MP:** [www.writetothem.com/](http://www.writetothem.com/)



**Badger Trust, P.O. Box 708, East Grinstead, RH19 2WN.**

Phone - 08458 287878 or 08458 BTRUST

Web - [www.badger.org.uk](http://www.badger.org.uk)



#### EMERGENCY NUMBERS:

(cut out and keep)

RSPCA 24 hour emergency call out number 0300 1234 999

Police emergency only (use 101 for non-urgent) 999

Thames Valley Police Wildlife Liaison 08458 505505

Harper Asprey Wildlife Rescue, Camberley 01344 623106

Leatherhead Wildlife Aid, Surrey 09061 800132

Aylesbury Wildlife Hospital Trust, Haddenham, Bucks 01844 292292

**PLEASE PASS THIS NEWSLETTER ON TO A FRIEND WHO MAY LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT THE GROUP - HELP THE BADGERS BY INTRODUCING A NEW MEMBER – YOU CAN NOW JOIN ONLINE.**

**A FULL COLOUR VERSION OF THIS NEWSLETTER CAN BE FOUND ON OUR WEBSITE**

