

Binfield Badger Group

Protecting badgers across Berkshire

Charity Number: 1075886



Newsletter No. 115

December 2018



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

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GROUP NEWS AND DATES FOR OUR MEETINGS IN 2019

Public Meetings in 2019 – 25 April and 31 October

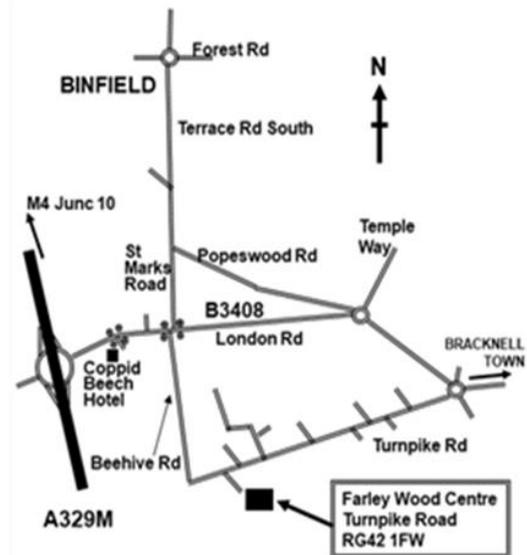
Our next Public Meeting and AGM will be on **Thursday, 25 April**. Our speaker will be announced in our March Newsletter, but we always have an interesting and informative evening. Remember to tell your friends – there is no entrance fee - everyone is welcome.

Doors open at 7.00pm and the meeting is at the **new venue –**

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

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

**Please remember to put the date in your new
2019 diary!**



A Talk on Wildlife's Ever-changing Landscape - At our last meeting in October, we had the pleasure of an illustrated talk by local naturalist, Brian Clews. His engaging talk was on Britain's Mammals and the effects of increased development on species and their habitats - a subject close to the hearts of many Berkshire residents, with so much countryside fast disappearing under bricks and mortar!

Group Surveys - A huge thank you to everyone who has been out sett surveying in Berkshire this year - a fantastic effort with many hours generously given.

- Since January 2018 our survey teams have found 160 active new setts (a mixture of mains, outliers, etc)
- A further 44 existing setts have been checked and records updated.

We need to know where our badgers are so we can best protect them. We'd love to see still more new faces getting involved; no experience necessary, just a willingness to learn!

Our upcoming Sunday BBG group survey (including training) sessions next year are :-

20th January; 17th February; 17th March; 21st April



Other survey options are –

- Adhoc surveying – we often have members out surveying in-between Group sessions if you want to join up with others. Join our Whatsapp survey volunteers group, keep an eye on Facebook or email setts@binfieldbadgers.org.uk if you want to know more.
- Independent surveying - (once you're trained) for groups of at least 2 - email us for a prioritised map tile at setts@binfieldbadgers.org.uk



Wounded BadgerPatrol – We were of course relieved that our Berkshire badgers were not in the firing line of the cruel Cull this year. However, we were heartened by the willingness of some of our members to turn out on some dark, damp Autumn nights and join patrols in neighbouring Wiltshire to help save badgers there. Thank you!



Badgers without Borders – Those of you who came along to our meeting on 25 October will know that we have started thinking about what the Group should be doing proactively to prepare us for and mitigate against the risk of the cull coming to Berkshire in coming years. We decided to share ideas with other neighbouring badger groups and in late November, we met up for an informal but productive evening with some members from the Bucks and Oxon groups, as well as representatives from BBOWT and the Green Party.



Ideas we discussed included - building the strategy for a vaccination project; coming up with an overall plan of all our anti-cull related activities, ie how to engage with the farming and landowning community and how to educate and spread awareness about badgers, bTB and the cull amongst the wider Berkshire community.

Watch this space for updates as plans progress, but there will be a host of ways in which members can help Berkshire's badgers be that out in the field, at home from your sofa or out and about in our communities. Do get in touch if you would like to volunteer in any way.



Sett Guardian Scheme – In our last issue and at our October meeting, we told you that the Group is keen to establish a 'sett guardian' scheme with local residents in a range of Berkshire locations. We are delighted to have heard from 12 possible volunteers already.

If you're interested in conservation and would like to help, please email setts@binfieldbadgers.org.uk for further details. All you need is a couple of spare hours a month, the ability to get along local footpaths and bridleways, and a means of emailing us photographs of the sett if you have any concerns.



Planning Issues – An ongoing threat to badgers is the lasting damage that planning schemes can do and we continue to work to ensure that the needs of wildlife are seriously considered by both planners and developers alike.

Current areas of concern include the massive disruption to ancient setts in the vicinity of the M4 'Smart' motorway project; possible development near Sand Martins Golf Course; development at Clare's Court, Maidenhead; and many others throughout Berkshire.

If you hear of a development that you think has implications for badgers, please do email us at badgers@binfieldbadgers.org.uk



GET YOUR CHRISTMAS THINKING CAPS ON!!



KIDS' REINDEER QUIZ -

How much do you know about reindeer? Let's see! :

1. *What is another name for a reindeer?* Elk; Caribou; Moose
2. *Do male or female reindeer grow antlers?* Male; Female; Both
3. *Rangifer tarandus is ***** for reindeer?* Greek; Latin; German
4. *Which is NOT one of Santa's reindeer?* Steve; Prancer; Donner
5. *How many miles can reindeer travel on their annual migration?* Over 1,000; Over 3,000; 500 miles

(Quiz courtesy of CBBC Newsround)

MYSTERY CHRISTMAS CAROL

The words listed below are from a familiar Christmas Carol. What is it?
 Find and circle all of the words hidden in the grid.
 The remaining letters spell the name of the Christmas Carol.

ALL	MEASURE	H Y E P Y L L O H L M W C G N
ANCIENT	MERRY	T L R R D T L W S E L E A A O
APPAREL	NEW	I L O A T I E E H C K A R Y W
AWAY	NOW	W O F H A O S L M I T T O R Y
BEFORE	OLD	J J E H E S G E L P L H L E Y
BLAZING	OUR	Y O B H A E A E A E E E A E S
BOUGHS	PASSES	U T Y L S S D S T R R R N H H
CAROL	SEASON	L N N O U T S L U H R A G O T
CHORUS	SING	E E S R U E R S E W E U P R D
DON	STRIKE	W I E E S S A I A S O R O P L
FAST	TELL	W C A D N E L T K B S L L O A
FOLLOW	TIDE	I N S I R Y A W A E L I L S D
GAY	TIS	N A O T G N I Z A L B D N O S
HAIL	TOGETHER	D J N T S A F S U R O H C G F
HARP	TREASURE	
HEEDLESSS	TROLL	
HOLLY	WEATHER	
JOIN	WHILE	
JOLLY	WIND	
JOYOUS	WITH	
LADS	YEAR	
LASSES	YULE	

(Don't cheat! answers near the back)

(Quiz courtesy of Livewire Puzzles)



The Badger Trust has welcomed the publication of a Government sponsored review of its bovine TB policy by Professor Sir Charles Godfray, which finds farming industry largely responsible for spread of disease.



The long awaited report concludes that it is wrong to over emphasise the role of badgers in the spread of bovine TB to cattle. Also that the farming industry is directly responsible for a significant amount of the spread of the disease in its cattle herds.

To date around 35,000 badgers have been killed under Government cull licences at an estimated public cost of over £50 million and this figure could rise to 75,000 badgers in 30 cull zones by the end of 2018.

Although Professor Godfray concludes in his report that culling badgers can have a 'modest impact' on lowering bovine TB in cattle, his review gives a major emphasis to the current limitations in the regime. He highlights cattle testing, poor biosecurity measures at the farm gate level and the lack of trading and movement restrictions, which may lead to increased levels of TB infection in or between cattle herds.

The Review also states that *'moving to a non lethal control of the disease in badgers is highly desirable'* and calls on the Government to undertake more research on the relative effectiveness of badger vaccination compared to culling.

Responding to the publication of the TB Policy Review, Dominic Dyer CEO of the Badger Trust said

"A combination of incompetence, negligence and deceit at the heart of the Government and the farming industry has resulted in a bovine TB policy which is failing farmers, tax payers and our wildlife.

After 5 years of indiscriminate, cruel and ineffective badger culling, we welcome Sir Charles's TB Policy Review which finally recognises what we have been arguing from the beginning; the urgent need for the Government to focus on finding solutions within the cattle industry to lower the spread of bovine TB.

However it is very disappointing to see the Review continues to state that badger culling can reduce the spread of TB in cattle, despite the fact that the Government has failed to produce any reliable evidence to support this claim. In fact, recent figures from Gloucestershire suggest an increase in the number of herd incidences of 55%.

The Badger Trust fully supports the serious concerns raised by leading vets reported by the BBC, that the Government are manipulating data from the four year pilot culls in Gloucestershire and Somerset -effectively misleading the public and politicians over the effectiveness of the badger cull in lowering bovine TB rates in cattle.

The Badger Trust supports the Godfray Review recommendation for a cost benefit analysis comparing badger vaccination to culling. There needs to be more



research to better understand how badger vaccination can reduce the spread of TB in badgers and possibly cattle. We believe this would be best achieved by a large scale publicly funded national badger vaccination programme in areas of England, which have not been subject to badger culling"

The Chair of the Badger Trust Jo Bates-Keegan said

"We welcome the focus in the Godfray Review on the need for improved TB testing systems for cattle. However we remain concerned that the Review continues to suggest that the standard cattle skin test picks up roughly 8 in 10 infected cattle, whereas according to published research, it is probably as few as 5 in 10 cattle. This is of vital importance in the fight against bovine TB and we urge the government and vets to ensure that farmers are made aware to prevent ongoing spread of disease.

Likewise, we are concerned that the report suggests vaccination should be trialled in areas where culling has taken place. This will not effectively test vaccination against culling, nor will it reduce the heavy cost to the tax payer and farmers alike who are not getting what they are paying for.

The publication of the Godfray TB Review is a key opportunity for the government to move the focus away from badgers and back to the cattle industry, where it belongs and to come clean to farmers about the inadequate test and what needs to be done. It's now time that the Government, veterinary and farming industries take stock and recognise that culling badgers has been a costly diversion.

The government needs to take the recommendations of this report seriously and make immediate changes to policy if they are ever to bring this disease under control"



Photo courtesy of Naomi



Following the publication of the Godfray Review, **Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link)**, the largest environment and wildlife coalition in England, is urging the Government to remove 'badger blinkers' to cut bovine TB and save taxpayer funds. Seven nature charities are warning that badger-blaming is blinding the Government to more effective ways to stop TB and protect both cattle and our native wildlife.

The groups support the review's recommendation on moving to non-lethal measures like badger vaccination, but believe trialling vaccination only in areas which have already been culled would underestimate the potential benefits of vaccination. The charities therefore recommend that vaccine-only trial areas be included so the results will provide a like-for-like comparison of culling and vaccination.



Dr Elaine King, Director of Wildlife and Countryside Link, said: *'Continuing to kill badgers without properly trialling badger vaccination is like playing poker blind, and relying on the flawed cattle skin test to identify TB infection is like playing Russian roulette with half the bullets left in the gun. Unless the Government fully investigates and invests in badger vaccination trials, better cattle testing, and better control of cow-to-cow infection, it will be gambling with our cattle industry's future.'*

Chris Sherwood, Chief Executive of the RSPCA, said: *'Farmers and animal charities want the same outcome - to end the scourge of bovine TB and the devastating impacts it has on farmers and animals. We are urging government to review objectively the factual information and develop a bovine TB policy that is truly fit for purpose. Our concern is that the focus on blaming badgers has stalled vital research and investment to find more effective solutions that would save the lives of cattle and move away from the current futile killing of badgers.'*

Dominic Dyer, Chief Executive of the Badger Trust, said: *'The Badger cull is a disastrous policy that is failing farmers, tax payers and badgers. To date the Government have spent over £50 million of public money undertaking the largest destruction of a protected species in living memory, which could push the badger to the verge of extinction in areas of England where it has inhabited since the Ice Age. Despite this huge slaughter the Government have no reliable evidence that badger culling is lowering bovine TB in cattle. It's time to stop playing the badger blame game and bring this cruel costly and ineffective policy to an end.'*

Rosie Woodroffe, Senior Research Fellow at the Zoological Society of London said: *'Bovine TB is a major problem for farmers, which demands an effective solution. But that solution needs to be embedded in the social, ecological, and economic landscape of Britain's countryside. All the evidence suggests that badger vaccination could potentially contribute to TB control as effectively as culling, but at a lower cost in terms of money, animal welfare, environmental impact, and public opinion. It's fantastic that the Godfray group recognised the importance of properly evaluating badger vaccination. But a proper*



trial should include vaccinating areas that have never been culled, as well as areas with a recent history of culling.'

Philip Mansbridge, Director of IFAW UK, said: *'No one is in any denial that bovine TB is a real issue and it requires real solutions – for our farmers, cattle and wildlife, but it's a fact that if every single badger in the UK was killed, we would still have rampant bovine TB. The continued killing of tens of thousands of badgers is not only pointless and barbaric, it is also serving only to divert farmers and the Government from focusing on bovine TB control measures that would actually make a difference. Badgers are, in real terms, just a tiny part of a very complex and multi-layered disease control issue, so this inaccurate and consistent 'badger blaming' simply needs to stop.'*

Defra figures show a total of 19,537 badgers were killed in 2017 as part of the Government's badger culling programme. The Badger Trust estimates that with 11 additional cull licences granted in 2018 over 40,000 badgers could be killed this year, meaning that by the end of this year as many as 75,000 badgers are likely to have been killed since the current cull programme began in 2013. Research clearly indicates that the vast majority of new bTB cases are the result of transmission between cattle, and the Government itself has recognized that most new TB cases in high-risk areas were probably due to undetected infected cattle remaining in herds.

Experts rightly believe reducing infections in herds should be the Government's main focus. At the same time badger vaccination offers a far more humane, and potentially much more successful and cost-effective answer to reducing infection among badgers. Small-scale studies suggest vaccination could reduce badger TB infection by more than 75% and without a single badger being killed. By contrast, the indiscriminate killing of badgers has been shown to increase the prevalence of bTB among surviving animals in some circumstances, increasing the risk of spreading infection.



Current policy in England relies heavily on an outdated cattle skin test; government scientists have estimated that it typically detects just 50% of infected cattle. This potentially leaves one in two infected cows undetected, spreading bTB invisibly to other cattle and to local wildlife. The poor sensitivity of the skin test represents a massive flaw in the Government's eradication strategy which the Godfray review has failed to emphasize, citing as it does outdated studies that suggested the test detects more than 8 in 10 (81%) of infected cattle.

We agree with the Godfray review's recommendation that Government should invest in improving the testing regime by combining existing tests and introducing new tests to increase early detection of infected cattle. The gamma interferon (IFN γ) blood test increases detection when used in combination with the standard skin test and is already available. We believe this test should be deployed far more widely than it currently is.

The wildlife charities are calling on the Government to suspend its culling policy while it explores its effectiveness along with that of alternatives. Five years after its badger culling policy was initiated, the Government has failed to provide any credible evidence for its efficacy.

Wildlife and
Countryside



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Badgers in Britain don't truly hibernate. As the year unfolds however, they do slow down and their metabolism can take on some torporous characteristics. We'll see less of them during winter months and when they do emerge, they'll be staying closer to their setts. All of this naturally means they'll be spending more time underground in their chambers, keeping warm. And this means getting the underground conditions right, especially the bedding.

Anyone who's seen a badger bumbling backwards with a collection of straw, grasses and such like to take into the sett would be forgiven for thinking that badger beds are a ramshackle affair. Far from it!



Building themselves a cocoon of straw, grasses and other green material in their chamber, a badger can generally create an all-enclosing duvet to stay nice and warm. The doyen of research, Professor Timothy Roper, has found that each chamber may contain up to 15Kg of material. That's a lot of bedding! Some badgers are even careful to make sure they don't run out of fresh material over the winter, storing significant quantities at the far end of blind tunnels.

Badgers are also capable of other feats of engineering to ensure a good day's sleep. Thus, in moist conditions they might lay a damp-course of twigs on which to rest their natural mattress, thus ensuring a free flow of drying air.

There's also more to badger bedding than keeping warm and dry. Some of the green material appears to have insecticidal qualities, helping to keep down fleas, ticks and lice that otherwise breed happily in the warm conditions underground.



But not all vegetable matter dragged into the sett is necessarily used for matters slumberous. There's significant evidence that a proportion of it gets finely chopped up by the badger and stored in a heap such that it will rapidly ferment, reaching temperatures up to 38 degrees. The badger then positions this heap such that it can lie nearer or further from it, using it like a radiator.



It's certainly worth remembering as we watch badgers clumsily strewing material as they convey it back to the sett that there's an awful lot going on underground!



QUIZ ANSWERS



Kids' Reindeer Quiz:

1. In America a reindeer is known as a **caribou** - they're the same species.
2. Reindeer are the only deer where **both** the males and females have antlers.
3. 'Rangifer tarandus' is **Latin** for reindeer.
4. **Steve** isn't one of Santa's reindeer, but Prancer and Donner are, along with Dasher, Dancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid and Blitzen - and not forgetting the most famous, Rudolph!
5. It's more than **3,000 miles**, or 5,000 kilometres. When the North American herds travel each year to the Arctic, they go further than any other land mammal.

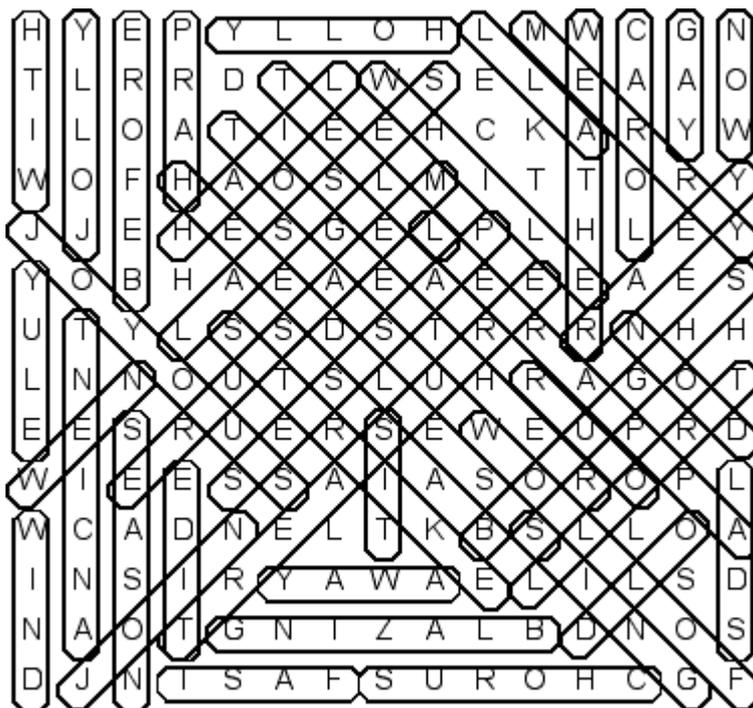
If you scored: **0-1, it's a shame 'deer'; 2-3, try again 'deer'; 4-5, you reign 'deer'!!**

(Quiz courtesy of CBBC Newsround)



Mystery Christmas Carol

This is the solution to the puzzle:



The Mystery Christmas Carol is: **DECK THE HALLS**

(Quiz courtesy of Livewire Puzzles)



The Badger Boy illustration competition - Deadline Extended!

The date by which to submit your artwork, to win a chance to have it published in a mystery novel is now - **15 APRIL 2019!**

Here's the link again :- <https://badgerboy.co.uk/>



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www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk

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AND FINALLY We're Proud to Sponsor the Basildon Badgers FC's Trophy

A year ago, we featured **Basildon Badgers FC**, a Berkshire children's football club. One of our members, Rob Greasley and a founder of the team, told us the club's name comes from the frequency with which badgers are seen in the Upper Basildon area, snuffling around fallen apples on the village green.



Since being set up in 2015, the club has now become affiliated to the Football Association and takes part in competitive fixtures. They now have three sides, with teams at Under 7, 8 and 10 level.

The Binfield Badger Group are proud to sponsor the club's new '**Berkshire Badgers Trophy**', which, starting this season, is awarded each month to the young player who has shown special effort and qualities while playing for their team.

Here are the worthy trophy winners for October and November :



Jovan Miljus - he is in year 3, trains with year 4 children and played in the monthly mixed tournament (years 4 to 6).. He was chosen for the award as he continues to show strength and resilience



Yasmin Lenaghan - she is in year 5 and plays in the team's oldest group of children. She was chosen for the award for perseverance and improvement.



Chairpersons: John Fennell and Jill Hoblin

Secretary: Judith Darnell, Woodley

Treasurer: Karen M^cCoy, 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:

Adrian Pearce, Wokingham

Newsletter: Judith Darnell, Woodley

Vaccination: Jill Hoblin, Newbury

Sett/RTA Records & Surveys:

Karen McCoy, Sonning

Rescues & Surveys: Adrian Pearce, Wokingham

Planning: Andy McCoy, Sonning

Website & Facebook: Zoe Egan, Windsor

Your MP: www.writetothem.com/



Badger Trust, P.O. Box 708, East Grinstead, RH19 2WN.
Phone - 08458 287878 or 08458 BTRUST
Web - www.badger.org.uk

Postal Address:

Binfield Badger Group
PO Box 3805,
Bracknell,
Berkshire
RG42 1HH

E-Mail:

badgers@binfieldbadgers.org.uk

Facebook:

fb.me/binfieldbadgers

Website:

www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk



EMERGENCY NUMBERS:

(cut out and keep)

BBG Rescue Network (leave message if no answer)	07913 259564
RSPCA 24 hour <u>emergency</u> 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

