



## **Things you didn't know about Bracknell**

### ART AND CULTURE

Bracknell has appeared in several movies, including the 1967 spy spoof *Casino Royale* (1967); in one scene actor David Niven is chased by a milk float around the town. In 1973, Sean Connery starred in *The Offence*, a controversial film about a corrupt detective investigating child abuse. Many reviewers call it Connery's best performance, with the gritty subject matter enhanced by the early 1970s architecture of Bracknell. Most recently, 12 Picket Post Close in Martins Heron near Bracknell was chosen as the location for the Dursley family's residence in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. On a film theme, Bracknell's 18th-century mansion house arts venue, South Hill Park Arts Centre has a cinema showing an excellent programme of independent films. Set in gorgeous gardens and located a five-minute taxi ride from the train station, it also hosts theatre, music, art and comedy. In fact, comedian Lenny Henry often tries out new material here. Other famous local residents include television artist Tony Hart and former Olympic swimming champion Sharron Davies.

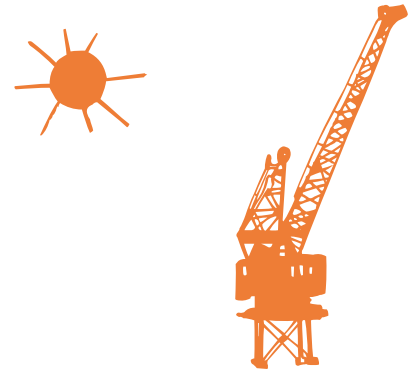
### HIGHWAYMAN'S HAVEN

Bracknell's proximity to the London to Bath coach route made the town a favourite hangout for highwayman Dick Turpin. He was reputed to be a patron of the now demolished Hind's Head pub, which stood opposite the Old Manor in Church Road, a five-minute walk from the station. The Hind's Head had an unsavoury reputation and was a regular haunt of other local bandits. In the 18th century, its publican decided to subsidise his income by murdering rich travellers with the help of a trapdoor beneath one of the beds. When the guests dozed off, they would be catapulted down a shaft and their possessions stolen. These activities ended when a barmaid fell for one of the intended victims and told him of his planned fate. He escaped and the publican was arrested. The 17th-century Old Manor is now a Wetherspoon pub, but it still has secret passages, now sealed, connecting it with various locations across Bracknell.

### ALL ACTION

Bracknell may not be the most obvious place for alpine pursuits, but it has made a name for itself as a centre for skiing and ice skating since 1987, when the UK's first Olympic-sized rink opened in the town. Bracknell Ice Rink is home to the Bracknell Bees professional ice hockey team and, together with the dry ski slope, is a major feature of the impressive John Nike Leisuresport complex on John Nike Way a four-mile bus ride from Bracknell station.

For water-based thrills and spills, Coral Reef water park at Nine Mile Ride, a 15-minute bus ride from Bracknell station, has a water park with water cannons, rapids and flumes for all the family, as well as a spa with saunas, gym and a steam room for adults. The facilities at Bracknell Sports and Leisure Centre in Bagshot Road, a 20-minute walk or a short bus ride from the station, are equally impressive, with three swimming pools, two sports halls, a spa, four squash courts and a six-lane athletic track making it one of the largest community sport and leisure facilities in the south of England.



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### **A DEVELOPING TOWN**

Evidence of settlement at Bracknell can be found at Caesar's Camp, located two miles to the south of the town, which is in fact an Iron Age hill fort built around 2,000 years ago. Nearby, the Devil's Highway was the Romans' main link road between London and Silchester, but Bracknell remained a small village well into the 1800s. The turning point was the arrival of the railway in 1856, which transformed it into a bustling commercial centre.

In 1949, Bracknell and its environs were designated as one of eight new towns to be built within a 30-mile radius of London. Mass development saw the town transformed into a modern metropolis, rich in housing and commerce. Today, Bracknell is home to the headquarters of many major companies, including BMW, 3M UK, Waitrose, Hewlett Packard and Panasonic.

### **BLOOMING BEAUTIFUL**

In the regional finals of highly regarded Royal Horticultural Society competition, Britain in Bloom, Bracknell was crowned winner of the small city category in the Thames and Chilterns area. In addition, the borough received a Gold award and was highly commended for the care and attention to detail of its roadsides and roundabouts.

Bracknell also received two awards at national level, including a Silver Award in the large town/small city category and the Commercial Award in recognition of the tremendous commercial and retail support for the borough's first entry in the national competition.

With such inspiring natural places nearby, it's little surprise the town's flowers are flourishing. Boasting over 50 parks in the borough, one of Bracknell's largest open spaces is Lily Hill Park, just a three-minute walk from the station. It has impressive parkland, woodland, and formal gardens, and is now the focus of a £1.2m restoration project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Guided walks are led by the park's project officer, Richard Scrivener, on the last Saturday of every month. The Look Out Discovery Centre, located opposite Coral Reef in 2,600 acres of Crown Estate woodland is a good starting point for exploring Bracknell Fores. The centre has interactive science displays, information on walks and orienteering routes, as well as bikes for hire.