

THE HISTORY OF BEENHAM

Neolithic, Bronze Age and Roman finds have been made in the parish mainly on the flat land to the south. Beenham is first mentioned in 956AD as *Benna's Hamme* – meaning 'Benna's enclosure', but is not mentioned in Domesday Book (1086). There may have been two manors. The main one based on Grange House on the flat land to the south and a tiny one based on Beenham House. The church and manor were granted to Reading Abbey on its foundation by Henry I in 1121. The isolated church is the third church on the site. No trace of settlement around it has been found. The earliest settlements grew up on the ridge at Beenham Stocks and at the west end near the 'Six Bells'.

During the Civil War 1642-46 the area was 'no man's land' and many skirmishes took place. A barmaid in an alehouse near the more recent 'Six Bells' was murdered by soldiers.

The original common fields were enclosed piecemeal at various dates with a final Parliamentary Enclosure in 1814. During World War 2 the Great Western Railway's management was dispersed to the area around Aldermaston and the General Manager's office was in Beenham Grange. Beenham Grange is now a scientific establishment and the eastern side of path 17 is now devoted to re-cycling and scrap yards.

See the parish website for more information

NATURAL HISTORY

The geology very much determines the natural history. A few damp areas survive from the ancient marshes that once existed along the Kennet and these are home to willows and wetland plants. The acid soils further up the slopes are a patchwork of woods and coppices. Some of these, particularly in the deep, narrow valleys, are ancient and home to plants like bluebells, wood anemones, old twisted coppice stools and hazel bushes. Deer, particularly muntjak, are regularly seen and there is a wide range of bird species – including red kites. You may hear wolves howling! These, however, are safely enclosed at the Wolf Conservation Trust!



Polypody. A sign of ancient woodland and unusual in West Berkshire. For more detail on the history of Beenham see 'Beenham. A History'. Published by The Beenham History Group in 1999.

A leaflet 'BEENHAM, Footpaths, Bridleways and Byways' showing all the Rights of Way, a Permitted Path and an Access Path can be downloaded from the Parish Website.

www.beenhamonline.org



West Berkshire
Countryside Society
and
Beenham Parish Council

A BEENHAM TODDLE



***This walk is about 2 miles long.
There are two hills and some paths can be uneven
and muddy
Dick Greenaway & Nick Hopton 2013***



Photo: Danny Kidby-Hunter

2. Beenham wolves at the Wolf Conservation Trust.



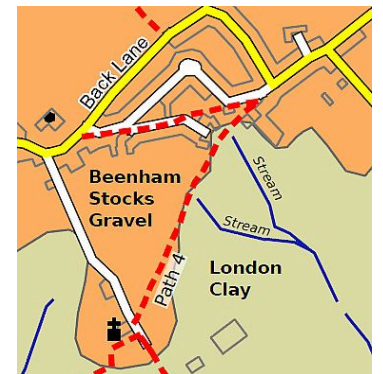
3. Butlers Farm. 16th century.



4. 350 year old oak on Path 19



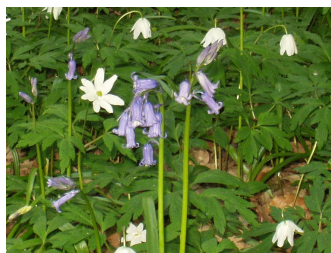
1. Awberry Farm – early 18th century



5. Look for the dramatic valley head carved by water flowing out of the gravel capping on the ridge.



8. Clay Lane is a very ancient route from the Kennet Valley marshes and arable fields to the grazing on Bucklebury Common. Look for horsetail on the banks. A plant unchanged for millions of years. It was used to polish pewter.



7. Old Copse is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and is rich in flowers and tree species



6. St Mary's church is the third on the site. Tower rebuilt 1794, the rest of the church 1860-71