



West Berkshire  
Countryside Society

# UPSTREAM

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2024

## Great Habitat for Great Crested Newts

Ed Munday, Berkshire Project Officer for the Newt Conservation Partnership, explains how their pond creation scheme is helping great crested newts and other wildlife across the county.

The Newt Conservation Partnership ("NCP") is a community benefit society working with landowners across Berkshire to create and maintain high quality habitat for great crested newts. We receive funding from NatureSpace which carries out a Government-approved approach to the conservation of great crested newts called District Licensing. Under this scheme, which launched in 2018, developers can opt to pay into a compensation fund that goes directly into conservation. This benefits great crested newts and a huge range of other wildlife.

We are the delivery partners of the scheme and, working to standards set by our partner organisations Freshwater Habitats Trust and Amphibian & Reptile Conservation, we create at least four new ponds for every one lost to development. Our sites are carefully chosen so that the ponds we create have a clean, unpolluted water source, a high chance of population viability and are within range of existing newt populations to maximize the chance of natural colonisation.

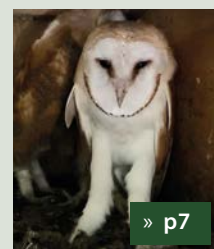
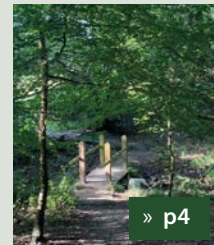
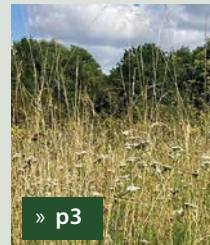
It's a common sense and successful approach to conservation. Rather than persist with often unsuccessful attempts to retain great crested newt populations in heavily urbanized and managed environments, we can ensure better conservation outcomes by creating freshwater habitats in more suitable locations where newt

populations can remain healthy and expand across the countryside. By the end of 2022 65% of our sites and 42% of our ponds have been colonized by great crested newts and 845 hectares of newt suitable habitat created.

We have recently completed work on the Sulham Estate near Reading where we made two new ponds and restored one of the existing ponds that had become heavily overshadowed by vegetation. In addition to its existing network of ponds and thriving newt population, Sulham provided high quality terrestrial habitat including woodland, scrub, rough grassland and a good hedge network, all of which allow newts to move about the landscape in sheltered safety – like all amphibians, newts spend most of their adult life on land, only returning to ponds to breed in the spring.

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West Berkshire Countryside Society

*Caring for our Countryside – Join Us and Help Make a Difference.*

# West Berkshire Countryside Society

The aim of the West Berkshire Countryside Society is to promote the understanding, appreciation and conservation of the West Berkshire countryside... furthering these objectives through practical conservation work and guided walks and talks from local experts. It was formed in 2012 by amalgamating the Friends of the Pang, Kennet & Lambourn Valleys; the Bucklebury Heathland Conservation Group; the Pang Valley Conservation Volunteers & the Barn Owl Group.

Upstream is our quarterly publication designed to highlight conservation matters in West Berkshire and beyond and to publicise the activities of the Society.

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## Conservation Volunteers' Task Diary

For outdoor events please wear suitable footwear and clothing. Most practical tasks start at 10am and usually finish around 3pm, unless otherwise stated, so bring a packed lunch. However, we are more than happy to accept any time you can spare! All tools are provided. A map of each task location can be found on the website diary page by clicking on the grid reference shown for that task. The three-word code after each grid reference is the "What Three Words" listing for the task meeting point.

Date/Time	Venue	Details
January 2024		
Tue 2nd Jan 10:00	Bucklebury Common	Heathland management. Clearing invasive Scots pine and silver birch. Meet at the Crossroads. <b>SU556 691 taskbar.flagpole.sensual</b>
Tue 9th Jan 10:00	Decoy Heath	Clearing invasive willow and birch. <b>SU613 634 spindles.pity.rear</b>
Tue 16th Jan 10:00	Bucklebury Meadows	Working on hedges around the meadows behind the pub/restaurant in Upper Bucklebury. Park in Morton's Lane. <b>SU543 686 chuckling.notion.regaining</b>
Tue 23rd Jan 10:00	Sulham Farm	Woodland management. Park along the track adjacent to Sulham Church. <b>SU645 742 across.influencing.spots</b>
Tues 30th Jan 10:00	Sheepdrove, Lambourn	Continue hedge laying and tidying previous length of laid hedge. Park near the red barn <b>SU349 816</b> . Do not use sat nav guidance to locate this site. <b>SU349 816 connected.ranges.over</b>
February 2024		
Tue 6th Feb 10:00	Paices Wood	Creating scallops to let in more light. Parking is at the top car park. <b>SU586 636 treaties.barman.unfocused</b>
Tue 13th Feb 10:00	Malt House, West Woodhay	Hedge laying and coppicing. Parking is on the track off the West Woodhay Rd. <b>SU404 637 belts.glorified.connects</b>
Tue 20th Feb 10:00	Furze Hill, Hermitage	Woodland and butterfly habitat management, including hedge planting, on this parish wildlife site. Ample parking at village hall – through double gates off Pinewood Crescent. <b>SU512 740 simmer.equipping.casual</b>
Tue 27th Feb 10:00	Bucklebury Common	Heathland management. Clearing invasive Scots pine and silver birch. Meet at the Crossroads. <b>SU556 691 taskbar.flagpole.sensual</b>
March 2024		
Tue 5th Mar 10:00	Hillgreen, Leckhampstead	Scrub clearance, park along the track by the common <b>SU452 767 windpipe.bedroom.comically</b>
Tue 12th Mar 10:00	Rushall Manor Farm	Continuing hedge laying. Parking off road at the Black Barn. <b>SU584 723 telephone.brink.crate</b>
Tue 19th Mar 10:00	Malt House, West Woodhay	Hedge laying and coppicing. Parking is on the track off the West Woodhay Rd. <b>SU404 637 belts.glorified.connects</b>
Tue 26th Mar 10:00	Cold Ash	Maintenance work on the Parish Wildlife site. Park on the access track to Westrop Farm. <b>SU514 701 newsstand.consumed.eruptions</b> Vehicles carrying tools should park in the layby by the allotments on The Ridge at <b>SU514 699</b> .



# Volunteers: Task Roundup

© Andy Hollox  
Late Summer Meadow  
Flowers, Furze Hill

As we completed the summer season, we had reason to celebrate another year of hard work and camaraderie in the countryside at our annual 'social'!

August drew to a close with work to enhance the environment and wildlife. At **Furze Hill**, we scythed the steep grass banks surrounding the playing pitch to enable the grass cuttings to be removed and encourage wildflowers. Sheltered niches were scalloped from banks of bramble and, at a later visit, the meadow's brambles were brushcut to prevent them taking over the flower-rich sward. Another bramble bash at **Rushall Farm**, to enhance the impressive bluebell displays, was followed just a week later with our summer BBQ. So, just a half day's work on this occasion, clearing around the pond and starting to widen a ride opposite the new education centre. A satisfying task with a few hedge-laying materials gathered, then good food!

Sometimes it can be difficult to find appropriate conservation work while the plants and animals are at their most active, so that the onset of autumn is welcomed for the wider variety of activities that become possible. It is a great time for managing woody plants in important wildlife habitats! Two visits were made to **Malt House** for hedge maintenance – the first to produce stakes and binders from the woodland; the second to continue laying the hedge



*Coppice Stool Protection in Progress, Winterbourne Wood*  
© Andy Hollox

started last season. Good progress was made on both occasions and even the parking was (almost) sorted! At **Bucklebury Common**, work continued in removing and reducing the growth of invasive birch, pine and gorse – mainly the smaller trees which cannot be removed mechanically – whilst at **Winterbourne Wood** we coppiced several large hazels using nearly half of the cut material to protect the stools from deer damage. By removing the extensive leafy canopy, the hazels can successfully regenerate, and light is allowed in, promoting a more diverse woodland flora. The rest of the material was used to create habitat piles.



*Some of the Tools of the Trade, Sheepdrove*  
© Andy Hollox

The weather was fine and dry for our hedge laying visit to **Sheepdrove** in November. The hedge is now tall and its stems very thick. Chainsaws proved invaluable and a further 30 metres were laid. The hedge provides a protective barrier and a valuable connecting corridor for wildlife. The volunteers were pleased to have their chainsaws and hand tools helpfully carried to the site by a farm vehicle.

Improving access to the countryside is an important aspect of the volunteers' activity. Safer access was achieved at **Upper Bucklebury Meadows** – three fields at the centre of the village owned by the parish and much enjoyed by the parishioners and their pets. We spent a very productive day in September tending previously planted hedging and removing fire-damaged wire fencing and dead trees. We 'corded' large fallen oak branches and cleared encroaching vegetation from footpath access points. Clearing, stacking and coppicing to keep paths open and safe was continued in **Redhill Wood**, and the popular **Eling Way** received two separate visits to cut back overhead and side growth that might impede walkers, cyclists and horse riders – all achieved by an efficient team in record time, early enough on the second day to allow us to carry on



*Crested Coral Fungus, Furze Hill*  
© Margery Slatter

beyond the M4 bridge to tidy the path towards Pinewood Crescent. Another task at **Furze Hill** was needed to clear summer growth away from the line of the safety fence around the 'exclusion zone' which protects the public from dangerous pits of deep water. This enables regular inspection of the fence and access to make repairs where these are needed.

**Compiled by Margery Slatter, with thanks to the Task Leaders**



*Preparing To Fell, Bucklebury Meadows*  
© Andy Hollox



# WBCS Volunteers support the WAG

West Berks Countryside Society (WBCS) has a history of supporting other volunteer groups. Here, we profile the work done to support the Cold Ash Countryside Volunteers with their plans for the Wildlife Allotment Garden (WAG), a 7.4-acre site in the centre of Cold Ash. The land is owned by a charitable trust, of which the Parish Council are trustees.

In 2019, the site had been reduced to a cut-through route plus allotments, with a lot of invasive plants, brambles, and dead wood. Over a third of it was inaccessible. A plan was developed to re-energise the site with the aims of ecological restoration, habitat protection and enabling people to get closer to nature. A group of volunteers was established and, although significant progress was made, there were some tasks that needed more than the volunteers could provide. With a looming deadline to a community tree planting event, it was clear that the volunteers would not be able to clear the area for it. It was at this point that the volunteers turned to WBCS to bring their skills and capacity to bear.

Following the successful event, further changes were planned and undertaken. The initial focus was to open-up the unused land, clearing brambles, derelict sheds and equipment. Once clear, the area was divided up and fenced to provide several discrete areas – livestock

grazing; a tranquil space and orchard; a work area for the volunteers; and space earmarked for an open-air classroom.

The work undertaken has been extensive. A quiet garden has been established, and areas designated as wildflower meadows where various approaches to ground preparation have been tried, from scarifying to full turf removal. Scything and raking, particularly in the wildflower meadow, helps to encourage the diversity of wild plants and is another project that WBCS supports. They also helped with further clearance of unsuitable plants as there were large areas of laurel that needed to be reduced. Bringing their chainsaws, winches, and other capabilities to bear on the issue quickly addressed the problem. Some of the clearance work opened up areas that would have been detrimental to wildlife, so dead hedges have been erected in places.

Clearance of a pond and watercourse involved clearing feeder channels and introducing leaky dams. This has increased the amount of water available for wildlife. Overdue coppicing of hazel stools is now underway and further tree and hedge planting has been completed. Stag Beetle loggeries, bird boxes and bug hotels have been erected and fencing has been replaced around allotments to keep out deer. This has been done in conjunction with the removal of fencing and barbed wire from areas where wildlife is encouraged to roam.

Paths have been redirected and, where required, resurfaced, to provide year-round access for casual walkers. This has included work on Public Rights of Way, linking the site to the wider countryside



Queen's Jubilee Beacon

© Ivor McArdle



Renovated Footpath

© Ivor McArdle

around Cold Ash. Several sculptures have been carefully placed to increase the attractiveness and interest. The site is now home to sheep, goats, and alpacas, which are a great attraction for families. The volunteers meet each Thursday and are often joined by residents for coffee, building further on the aim to engage people in the countryside.

The next stage is to finish off the outdoor classroom which will be available to local schools and clubs. And it's not just for children! There are already plans to hold bodging sessions for which some of the equipment is being prepared, the first being a shave horse.

WBCS can, and does, provide strong support to other volunteer groups. This maximises the benefits the society and other groups can bring to the countryside.

**Ivor McArdle**



Derelict Area Before Clearance

© Ivor McArdle



Orchard in Bloom

© Ivor McArdle



Sheep, Goats and Alpacas graze the meadows

© Ivor McArdle

If you'd like to discuss whether WBCS can help a group of volunteers in your area to achieve their goals, please contact [enquiries@westberkscountryside.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@westberkscountryside.org.uk)



Continued from page 1.

While we were working on site in July, one of the estate ponds was full of great crested newt larvae (known as efts) so, hopefully, it won't be too long before they find their way to the newly dug ponds!

Ponds are an important part of our history and culture and are a unique wildlife resource, but because of their small size their significance is often underestimated. Research over the last 10-15 years has shown that, because of their abundance, variety

and inherent naturalness, ponds play a role in the landscape out of all proportion to their scale.

Ponds have been part of our landscape for hundreds of millions of years and during this time many plants and animals have become well adapted to the still water conditions they provide. Ponds support more plants and animals than other aquatic habitats with two thirds of all Britain's freshwater plants and animals found somewhere in permanent or temporary ponds, including many of the 4,000 species of freshwater invertebrates, most of Britain's larger wetland plants, and all our native amphibians which are pond specialists.

We want to create a thriving freshwater habitat network across Berkshire. All the costs of pond creation and management are fully



Pond Just Finished (aerial view)  
© James Gillies



Monitoring  
© Mike Bull Naturespace

funded with generous compensation being paid to landowners to maintain newt habitat for at least the next 25 years and we are looking for landowners across the county to discuss potential sites for pond and habitat creation.

If you know of suitable sites, or landowners who may be interested, contact Ed Munday: [emunday@newtpartnership.org.uk](mailto:emunday@newtpartnership.org.uk) or have a look at our website: [www.newtpartnership.org.uk](http://www.newtpartnership.org.uk)

## Beavers on our Doorstep

Reinstating natural processes to create wildlife-rich landscapes – rewilding – is still in its infancy in our area, but opportunities to reinstate keystone species are on the horizon. These species, such as the Eurasian beaver, have such a large impact on their environment that other species are dependent on their presence. Their loss causes major disruption to an ecosystem. In 2022, Defra gave beavers legal protection as a native species in England.

Beavers were once widespread but were hunted to extinction in Britain in the 16th century. They are now found living in the wild on a few rivers in Scotland

and England and have been introduced into enclosures in several English counties. There is a growing body of evidence from reintroduction sites that beaver dams slow the passage of water through landscapes, cutting flood risk downstream and conserving water in times of drought. The new wetlands they create can become havens for other wildlife, including dozens of bird and insect species.

The North Wessex Downs AONB has contributed to the funding of a beaver reintroduction project at the Ewhurst Estate near Basingstoke. Once settled in, the 2 beavers released here will become a cornerstone of wider conservation efforts which aim to restore biodiversity on the estate. Where beavers are resident and breeding, the evidence is plain: felled trees with the bark stripped off; lodges along the banks; and footprints in the mud. Where they have built dams in small streams, the entire riparian zone is transformed.



Eurasian Beaver  
© Ralph Schick/Pixabay

The upper reaches of the Thames tributaries may be suitable for the reintroduction of beavers, after which natural colonisation may play its part. This is happening with other species: the patchwork of woodlands in the Chilterns is already seeing steady recolonisation by goshawks (which prey on grey squirrels, pigeons and crows); and otters are increasingly spotted on the Thames, even moving into Oxford city. Perhaps beavers will once again become a common sight on the rivers and streams of West Berkshire!

**Margery Slatter**



Beaver Dam  
© MJ Richardson/Geograph





WBCS Volunteers at Work in the Countryside © Andy Hollox

# The Wonderful Work of Volunteers

Volunteering is a vital part of thriving economies and societies. Work done by volunteers accounts for almost 1% of the UK's GDP, or almost £20 billion every year. Around one in five adults in the UK volunteer at least once a month. Research has shown that volunteering is associated with improved health and mental well-being, including increased longevity; meaningful social connections and peer support; and a sense of collective purpose and achievement.

Volunteers have become an essential element of most nature conservation activities due to a lack of resources, and also the advantages of engaging and interacting with local communities where conservation takes place. Many of the Society's volunteers also work with other local groups, performing activities as wide ranging as species data collection, livestock monitoring, supporting education charities and further work to conserve the countryside – some



BBOWT's Snelsmore Scrub Bashers © Adrian Drew

of which also supports Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT).

## Pete Hughes of BBOWT reports:

'The Trust now has more than 1,700 volunteers across the three counties and would not be able to do its work without them. Volunteers help with every part of the Trust's work from scrub bashing, stock-watching and bird-ringing at nature reserves, to helping run Nature Tots events and staffing reception at the charity's headquarters in Oxford.

BBOWT is extremely grateful to all its volunteers for the fantastic contributions they make that help the Trust to create more wildlife everywhere for everyone.

Jan Legg, one of Berkshire's longest-serving and most dedicated conservation volunteers, was presented with a **Lifetime Achievement Award** in 2023 for nearly 50 years of service helping monitor birds at Trust nature reserves. Since 1967, he and other members of the Newbury Ringing Group have ringed approximately 250,000 birds

of 114 species. Jan now monitors and looks after 32 nest boxes at BBOWT's Greenham Common reserve, 64 at the Trust's Snelsmore Common and more at other sites. This work is invaluable to the Trust to maintain precious habitat for rare and vulnerable ground-nesting birds such as nightjars, skylarks and Dartford warblers at Greenham, Crookham and Snelsmore commons.

**Outstanding Contribution Awards** were also made to individuals and groups, including:

Brian Crathorne who volunteers with BBOWT's Berkshire Mid-week Team, the East Berkshire Field Team and the Reserves Surveying Programme, giving several days each week to help the Trust. His skills have also helped with the installation of several gate posts around the county this year!

Nigel Williamson who regularly joins and leads volunteer groups three or four times a week. He's part of the West Berkshire Field Team, leads

BBOWT's hedge-laying volunteers in the area, leads the Padworth Common volunteer group, counts the cattle at Greenham Common, volunteers with the West Berkshire Living Landscape volunteers and helps at Snelsmore Common.

The Snelsmore Scrub Bashers who contribute to the habitat management and overall upkeep of the Common. This year was one of the best years yet for nightjars on the reserve and the return of Dartford warblers was proof of the hard work the team puts in month after month.

However, with many threats to wildlife continuing to increase in the area, BBOWT has also recently launched its biggest-ever fundraising appeal, the Nature Recovery Fund. The campaign aims to raise £3 million over the next three years to help tackle the nature and climate crisis locally, bring wildlife back and benefit climate and people.'

Find out more at: [bbowt.org.uk/nature-recovery-fund](http://bbowt.org.uk/nature-recovery-fund)

If you would like to volunteer in the West Berkshire countryside, there are many opportunities. Anyone interested in BBOWT groups should visit their website and follow the links [www.bbowt.org.uk](http://www.bbowt.org.uk)

Or join us, the West Berkshire Countryside Society, any Tuesday as advertised in this magazine, or contact: [enquiries@westberkscountryside.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@westberkscountryside.org.uk)

Margery Slatter

# Barn Owl Group Update

The 2023 Barn Owl Season began with an expectation, based on preliminary monitoring by experts in the field, that breeding might be a few weeks later than normal due to the unusual spring weather conditions. Most groups therefore began surveying around the end of June. This threw up a few surprises as a number of groups found their barn owls had bucked the trend and decided to breed early and, indeed, some were ready to ring. Several of the instances of early breeding were situated towards the east of our area, with the west being typically a few weeks later.



We have seen a good increase in the number of barn owl boxes monitored this year, largely due to us welcoming a new estate to the group, which had previously installed 21 boxes. Sadly, there was no

evidence of breeding found during the first inspections. However, all the boxes which had hosted jackdaws or squirrels since installation were cleared out and will hopefully have an improved outcome next season.

Just as surveying started, we had a dramatic story from one site. Our group leader received a text from one of her landowners to say he had 3 chicks on the floor under his nest box. They had flouted the late season rule and managed to find their way out of a rectangular box high up in his barn, just beyond the reach of our usual ladders. They were fast asleep on the floor but obviously exposed to any passing cat or fox. The rescued chicks were put into a cardboard box in the shed until they could be ringed - 3 males aged 45 to 51 days and all a healthy weight. Just as ringing was completed, help arrived with ladders long enough to put the chicks back into the box. Unfortunately, over the following days they escaped again and, despite everyone's best efforts, with 2 of them being taken into specialist care, they didn't make it. However, the 'silver lining' was that two more-sensible



siblings went on to successfully fledge from this box.

With final checks now completed, this year has shown an improved position over last year with 103 barn owl chicks fledged from our boxes. This number is more in line with the long-term average and is fantastic to see. 40 of the boxes checked contained barn owls, giving an average brood size of between 2 to 3 birds. We also have a report of one second / late brood. This box currently has two barn owl chicks which have been ringed. We are hopeful they will go on to fledge later in the year and boost our final number further. (See table for more details).

In addition to barn owls, there has been the usual bevy of stock doves and 8 kestrel chicks reported. There have also been wasps and hornets making use of our boxes with nests being reported in several of them this year...

... and, to finish with something a bit more unusual, a beautiful buff tip moth found sheltering on the side of a box!

**Samantha Boyes**  
West Berkshire Barn Owl Group

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>No. barn owl boxes checked</b>	188	187	187	175	185	188	214
<b>No. BO chicks estimated to have fledged</b>	114	107	108	54	127	96	103
<b>No. boxes with fledged chicks</b>	40	41	41	30	48	36	40
<b>% boxes successful</b>	21.3	21.9	21.9	17.1	25.9	19.15	18.7
<b>Average brood size</b>	2.85	2.61	2.63	1.8	2.65	2.67	2.58

## Walkers! Your Society Needs You!



Many members will be aware that there are a number of excellent self-guided walk leaflets available to download from our website. It is now some time since most of these were checked and updated.

**Could you walk one of the routes and check for changes?**

If you would like to take on this challenge, please pick a walk that interests you and report back, or contact me at [editor@westberkscountrysidesociety.org.uk](mailto:editor@westberkscountrysidesociety.org.uk) Thank You!



**Don't forget our website!**  
**[www.westberkscountryside.org.uk](http://www.westberkscountryside.org.uk)**





# Stroll or Stride at Crookham and Greenham Commons

A 3 mile (5km) walk from the car park at Crookham Common. **SU523 645 direction.loves.divider**

A 3.25 mile optional addition (10km in total) can be followed. Additional parking, café and toilets at Greenham Control Tower

**1. Crookham** is the southern portion of Thatcham parish. It is a very dispersed hamlet, spread out across **Crookham Common** which rises to 387ft above the River Kennet. It was owned by Reading Abbey in the 13th century and in the 14th century almost all the inhabitants died in the Black Death. In Victorian times, Crookham was the venue for organized prize fighting and, later, for one of the oldest inland golf courses in the country, first laid out in 1873.

**Head west and take the left hand of the two paths at the end of the car park near the information board, keeping straight ahead at every junction until it exits onto the Old Thornford Road. Turn left and walk downhill.**

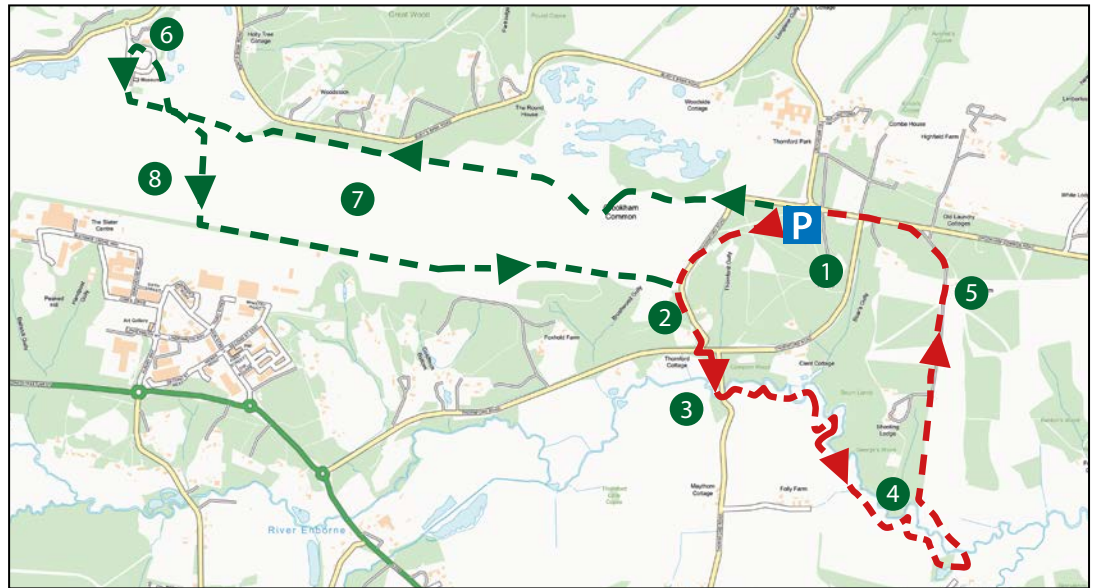
**2. Old Thornford Road** originally ran over the commons to Greenham before the air base at Greenham Common interrupted its course.

**Emerging onto Thornford Road, turn left and walk along the grass verge for about 100 yards, crossing the road toward the clearly signed ford.**

**3. Headley Ford** is too deep for cars, except in the driest weather. The numerous warning signs are the result of a fatal accident when a car was washed downstream.



**Cross the footbridge to the right of the ford, turning left**



**through the hedge, to the left of the large oak tree, and follow the well-used footpath round the edge of the field for a mile. After a kissing gate, the track winds beside the river to a footbridge.**

**4. The River Enborne** marks the county boundary between Berkshire and Hampshire. The river rises near Inkpen and West Woodhay villages and is formed by a series of brooks rising from springs below the chalk hills on either side.

**Crossing the bridge, follow the path heading diagonally across the field to the metal gate. Turn right uphill towards the road. Just before it, the path to the left will follow the road in parallel and take you back to the car park.**

**5. George's Farm** is the site of modern gravel extraction, necessitating archaeological investigations which revealed evidence for the 'ritual' deposition of pottery vessels during the Middle Bronze Age and a scatter of pits dated to the Late Bronze Age. Iron Age and Roman phases saw the establishment of a fixed field system with boundary ditches.

**For the longer walk, park at the Control Tower and take the wide paths which cross the Common, joining the shorter walk route at the Old Thornford Road.**

**6. Greenham and Crookham Commons** form the largest area of lowland heath in West Berkshire – a threatened habitat full of special wildlife, important for rare ground-nesting birds, like nightjar, woodlark and lapwing.

**7. The heathland** is on top of a flat gravel plateau laid down at the end of the last ice age, and since then used by pre-historic hunter/gatherers; as common land by farmers; and later gaining significance

as a military air base. General Eisenhower watched some of the 10,000 sorties flown from here during the D-Day landings. In the 1980s, nuclear cruise missiles were stored at the base. The demonstrations against these marked the start of the Peace Women movement in 1981. After decades of military occupation, the Commons were officially reopened for public use on the 8th of April 2000.

**8. The infrastructure of Greenham Airbase** is still evident in some of the remaining buildings such as the Control Tower. The site of the runways can clearly be seen, including this extraordinarily wide tarmac area which looks as though it might have been used for turning large planes.

**On reaching the car park at the top of Crookham Hill, take the path at the west end of the car park closest to the information board and follow this to return to the Control Tower visitor centre.**

**Kate and Tony McDonald, and Margery Slatter**

Many more interesting local walks are available on our website: [www.westberkscountryside.org.uk](http://www.westberkscountryside.org.uk)