

## Benson Through The Ages - A Timeline History of Bensington

- Pre History** Flint axes and tools found in area of modern Benson  
Enclosures and crop-marks believed to date from 2000BC  
Bronze sword recovered from Thames
- 43 AD** Benson in front line of tribal conflict between Catuvellauni, Atrebates and Dobunni. Roman invasion of Emperor Claudius.
- 300-400** Roman settlements around Benson
- 571** Cuthwulf, brother of the West Saxon King, Ceawlin, captures Benson from the Britons
- 635** West Saxon King Cynegils gives Dorchester to St Birinus
- 661** King Wulfhere of Mercia captures Benson & Dorchester
- 730** King Aethilbald of Mercia has royal villa at Benson - or Banesinga
- 779** King Offa of Mercia defeats West Saxons in battle at Benson
- 887** Ethelred, Ealdorman of Mercia, grants lands in Readanora - modern Pyrton - to the Bishop of Worcester
- 900** Wallingford chosen as border strongpoint against Viking raids
- 996** King Ethelred grants land in Benson (Bynsingtun)
- 1065** Oxford severely damaged during the Earl Tostig rising.
- 1066** William of Normandy wins Battle of Hastings and finally crosses Thames at Wallingford, assisted by Saxon Wigod Lord of Wallingford. Wigod's daughter marries Robert D'Oiley, newly appointed Norman Lord of Oxford. William probably uses the Icknield Way to reach Berkhamsted, where he is acclaimed King.

- 1086** Benson recorded in Domesday Book as richest royal Manor in Oxfordshire
- 11-1200** Norman church built to replace old Saxon building
- 1142-52** Benson in middle of Civil War. Empress Matilda holds fortress of Wallingford and besieged by King Stephen. King's camp probably at Benson
- 1189** King John grants the Manor of Benson to Robert de Harcourt
- 1244** De Harcourt leaves on Crusade, and King Henry III gives Benson to his brother, Richard, Earl of Cornwall, on his marriage to Sanchia. The Manor is farmed out to 25 local tenants for £80 per year.
- 12-1300** Church is enlarged, with north and south aisles built
- 1301** Bensington included in Honour of Wallingford in grant of land from King Edward I to Roger Bigod, Earl of Norfolk.
- C1310** Piers Gaveston holds honour of Wallingford and Manor of Benson, Great Tournament held at Wallingford.
- 1316** Turners Court mentioned in a grant made by Robert Briton to William Le Marshall. Later part of Alice the Duchess of Suffolk's Estate.
- 1377** Poll tax return shows Benson as having 206 people aged over 14
- 1389** John Rede, Steward of the Manor, examined for failing to provide proper accounts to the Bailiff, William Shadeston
- 1396** John James (& wife Christina) have watermill at Bensington
- 1438** Value of Benson Manor reduced to less than £24 per year. The Mill reported as being ruined.
- 1536** King Henry VIII makes Henry Norres Lord of the Manor.

- 1537** Henry Norres executed, following accusations of being Queen Anne Boleyn's lover.
- 1540** Bensington now attached to Honour of Ewelme.
- 1550** Edward Sibley vicar of St Helen's until 1560
- 1551** Sir Francis Knollys of Rotherfield Greys becomes Lord of Benson.
- 1554** Dorchester Abbey closed, Benson under patronage of Christchurch College.
- 1588** Arthur Lawrence vicar until 1591
- 1591** William Cox vicar until 1618.
- 1618** James Whitehall now vicar, to 1625
- 1620** John Blacknell of Abingdon buys Crowmarsh Battle Farm for £2,250 and Fifield Manor for £2,060. He dies in 1639 and bequests 20s per annum to the Poor of Benson.
- 1625** John Hurlocke is vicar of St Helen's.
- 1628** Benson's link with crown ends when King Charles I sells the Manor to a syndicate of London land speculators. Rent about £28. Later part of the Verney estate.
- 1634** Thomas Terrent replaces Thomas Davies as vicar.
- 1638** Sir Christopher Clitheroe now Lord of the Manor
- 1642** King Charles I establishes his capital at Oxford. Benson now in war zone, with Parliament forces in Henley and Reading, but Royalist troops frequenting the Red Lion. King Charles issues orders from his "Court at Benson".

- 1643** Prince Rupert attacks a force of Parliamentary troops, probably near Rokemarsh, pursues them, and John Hampden is fatally wounded in Battle of Chalgrove. Siege of Reading. Ralph Verney, Benson's Lord of the Manor goes into exile for ten years
- 1643/45** Increased deaths possibly due to typhus outbreak spread by troops
- 1646** Wallingford, the last Royalist garrison falls after siege by Oliver Cromwell.
- 1653** Verney family recover their estates, but sell off properties after enclosing land.
- 1692** Lordship acquired by James Paul
- 1709** The Crown Inn given new façade, innholders believed to be Richard & Jane Tanner.
- 1714** Henry Cremer vicar until 1720, then Edward Smallwell
- 1726** Lordship acquired by Stapleton family
- 1730** Richard Bartholomew innholder at The Crown.
- 1732** Francis Gastrell replaces Henry Jones as vicar.
- 1736** London Road now a turnpike, part of Turnpike between Henley & Abingdon. Post and Stage coaches make Oxford to London possible in a day. Trade in Benson booms.  
Abraham Gregory vicar until 1745.
- 1750** Paulo Tookie takes over as vicar from George Periam.
- 1759** Extensions to Red Lion Inn finished, with new façade.

- 1773** A Post-Chaise "with three Oxford Persons on board" is reported attacked by a highwayman near Benson.  
The White Hart, the Castle and the Crown are Posting Inns.
- 1777** Willim Judgson replaces Samuel Long as vicar.
- 1781** St Helen's eight bells cast by Janaway's of Chelsea.
- 1783** Benson Weir collapsed
- 1785** William Pleasant innholder at The Crown.
- 1788** Benson Poundlock constructed. Mr Ashby has the mill
- 1792** Thomas Newton moves into Crowmarsh Battle Farm and introduces new farming techniques. Commences buying land.
- 1795** St Helen's Church Clock installed, made by John Thwaites of Clerkenwell, at a cost of £116.
- 1800** Average wage of labourers in Oxfordshire given as 9s 6d a week.
- 1801** First national population census shows Benson's population as 822
- 1806** Thomas Newton now holds 5.4% of Benson Land and attempts to have an Enclosure Act passed in Parliament
- 1807** JMW Turner paints water colour of Benson Church from lock  
The Bensington Driving Club is established at The White Hart.
- 1822** Richard Costar innholder at The Crown.
- 1827** Newton now owns 29% of Benson land and again attempts to obtain an Enclosure Act - which fails. Chief opponents are local farmers - John Franklin, Edward Shrubbs & John Hutchins
- 1828** Charles Henry Cox vicar of St Helen's, replacing John Fawcett.

- 1829** 7 coaches a day running between Oxford and London, plus mail coaches.
- 1831** The National Census shows the Benson population as 1253.
- 1830** Newton publishes intention of trying again for an Enclosure Act and next day there is a riot in Benson. Local opposition to the mechanisation of agriculture - part of the national Swing Riots - leads to destruction of several machines.
- 1831** Eight men convicted in Oxford of breaking threshing machines, four transported for seven years.
- 1832** Rev Cox of Benson estimates population as 1260, with 14 beer shops and inns
- 1834** Benson Fire Pump built.
- 1840** Great Western Railway reaches Cholsey & Moulsoford, coach trade dies.
- 1848** Francis Balston vicar, replacing George L Parsons
- 1851** Benson opens two schools - the National School (linked with the Anglican Church) and the British School (Nonconformist). The National School cost £550 to build.
- 1852** An Enclosure Act for Benson was successfully promoted, but was not implemented until 1863.
- 1854** Only 3 coaches a week between Oxford and London. Benson suffers high unemployment
- 1858** John M Collyns vicar of St Helen's, replacing Samuel H Cooke
- 1860** St Helen's Church rebuilt  
Hale Farm built.

- 1863** Dutton, Allen & co print a partial list of Benson residents - classified into "Gentry" & "Traders", but not including labourers. Benson lists 6 Inns, 6 Beer Retailers and 6 Boot/Shoe Makers. Edward Glanville innholder at The Crown.
- 1865** Benson Lock reported in The Times as being in a poor state
- 1866** PC Poultney appointed Benson's first resident policeman. First train reaches Wallingford's Town Station.
- 1869** a new Vicarage built. Thames Conservancy bought Benson weirs.
- 1870** Benson Lock rebuilt
- 1871** National Census gives Benson's population as 1259
- 1876** Thomas Walker innholder at The Crown.
- 1879** Benson Free Church built in the High St at a cost of £786, to replace earlier Chapel.  
George H Whitaker replaces George C Robinson as vicar
- 1881** A sheep-wash in operation by Benson ferry.  
John Edward Field vicar of St Helen's.
- 1883** Richard Champion selling beer at The Horse & Harrow.
- 1887** A streetlamp is erected in Castle square by public subscription to celebrate Queen Victoria's Jubilee. Weedon Brothers own coalyard at Benson Wharf.
- 1889** Morlands Brewery buy the Castle & the Crown.
- 1894** Benson's first Parish council elected, Mr W Littleboy as Chair
- 1897** Benson Primitive Methodist Chapel established.

- 1899** A proposal to build a light railway from Wallingford to Benson, via a low iron bridge near the lock, is defeated.  
Henry Lane landlord at Three Horseshoes & blacksmith.
- 1900** Preston Crowmarsh Flour Mill closed down, last millers were the Littleboy brothers.  
Benson's two schools merge, with the British School closing. New Headmaster of the combined school is Mr Palling-Smith.
- 1901** National Census gives Benson's population as 960
- 1902** Crowmarsh Mill taken over by flock manufacturer, closed 1906.
- 1904** Congregationalists build the "Tin Tabernacle" for a Sunday School and Church Club in Watlington Rd.
- 1912** Turners Court purchased by the National Union for Christian Social Service and established as a training centre for agricultural workers.
- 1913** Lock Keeper's cottage built by Benson Lock
- 1915** William Henry Dines & family move into Colne House - became known as Observatory House (where the close now stands) - and Benson becomes a leading site of meteorological experimentation and observation.
- 1917** Ben & Lizzie Pick take over as landlords of the "Horse & Harrow" pub in Roke Marsh, from Mr & Mrs Main.
- 1918** Crowmarsh Ferry falls into disuse, when the last ferryman, a Mr Jones, does not return from the Western Front.
- 1920** War Memorial unveiled.
- 1922** Hale Rd houses built, followed by Port Hill  
Crowmarsh Mill used as electricity generating station, but later closed in 1930.  
All 8 bells at St Helen's are re-hung and 1 is re-cast.



- 1923** Village Hall built opposite the Church, opened by Admiral Millar, at a cost of £1,158 including the land.  
John Roland Pryce new vicar of St Helen's.
- 1924** Admiral Millar funds construction of Scout Hut
- 1925** A Brownie pack opens in Ewelme
- 1926** Benson WI formed. Benson Angling Society formed.
- 1927** First tractor purchased at Crowmarsh Battle Farm
- 1928** Benson Fire Pump retired from service.
- 1929** Severe flooding, Thames at Benson Weir up by 11 feet  
Benson population estimated at 1213.
- 1930** Mains water supply available in Benson
- 1931** KCB (Keep Country Beautiful) petrol station and café opened on London Rd.
- 1932** Benson bypass opened, from Oxford Rd to London Rd.  
The Gospel Mission Hall in Crown Lane opens.
- 1933** George H West vicar of St Helen's.
- 1934** Coal barges stop using Benson wharf, but wharf continues in use as a depot served by lorries.
- 1935** Benson Jubilee Swimming Club formed
- 1937** Work begun on RAF Benson, by John Laing & son.  
The Lamb Inn demolished to allow for new runway. George Pether takes over as landlord at the Three Horseshoes.  
Benson Football Club formed.

- 1939** RAF Benson officially opened on 1<sup>st</sup> April. First RAF squadrons (150 then 103) arrive at Benson, both flying Fairey Battle bombers. The King's Flight moves into Benson - a Lockheed Hudson replaces The Envoy, and is in turn replaced by a DH Flamingo. A Services Canteen opened in the Free Church Hall, closed in 1945. Commercial Bee-Keeping begins, later to become Rowse's Honey.
- 1940** RAF Benson becomes home for 12 OTU (Operational Training Unit). Late in the year, nr 1 PRU moves in from Heston with Spitfires, Blenheims and a Hudson. German bombing raids.
- 1941** German bombing raids on Benson. The PRU gets first PR Mosquito.
- 1942** Airfield extended, Old London Rd closed, KCB closes down. New by-pass opens as main Oxford-Wallingford road. KCB café moved to Mill Lane House, but closes in 1945. The London Road Inn on Beggarbush Hill severely damaged by fire. King's Flight disbanded.
- 1943** Frank Young buys old Wharfe site, develops leisure facilities
- 1945** Parish meeting approves site of Sunnyside. The Field (formerly part of Hale Farm) purchased from Brasenose college. Benson commences period of expansion. Harold Hughes appointed vicar.
- 1946** RAF King's Flight reformed using Vikings. Renamed in 1953 as Queen's Flight. Primitive Methodist Chapel in Chapel Lane closed. Rivermead land offered to Benson Parish Council by Mr Williams. Rivermead Paddling Pool donated by Benson Jubilee Swimming Club.
- 1947** Sunnyside houses built
- 1949** George Henry Palmer is vicar of St Helen's.

- 1950** Landlord at The Lion - Bill Friend.
- 1951** Meteors are first jets based at Benson with 541 Squadron.
- 1952** Meteors replaced by Canberras with 540 Sq. Prince Philip goes solo from Benson in a Chipmunk.  
Reg & Doris Foster take over at the Three Horseshoes.
- 1953** Dr Andrew Millar moves to Benson as first resident doctor.  
The PRU leaves Benson for RAF Wyton, and RAF Benson becomes part of Transport Command with Valettas.  
Sunnyside Rec opens with Grand Carnival  
The Lamb and Flag pub in Brook St closed by Ushers Brewery,  
Bert & Margaret Taylor landlords at The Crown, The Razeys take Over at The Swan.  
Frank Young sells site of old wharf to Ron Banks.
- 1954** Queen's Flight gets first helicopter - a Dragonfly. Later replaced with Whirlwinds in '59 and Wessex in '69.
- 1955** The Navy arrives at RAF Benson! RNVR Sq. moves in with Attacker jet fighters, later replaced with Sea-Hawks. Moved out in '57.
- 1957** Surgery in Mill Lane opens - first purpose built surgery in Oxon  
RAF Benson given Freedom of Entry to Borough.
- 1958** Queens Flight receives DH Herons, replaced in '64 with Andovers.  
St Helen's Crescent built, work starts on St Helen's Ave.
- 1959** The Gospel Hall is demolished. Benson lists 18 Clubs & Societies  
RAF Benson training with Twin Pioneers.  
Deborah & Brian Reecheal take over at Horse & Harrow.  
Benson population about 2300.
- 1960** Birmingham Yard workshops demolished.  
Work starts on Sands Way.
- 1961** Cedars estate opens

The Swan closed by Ushers Brewery.

- 1962** The Benson Veteran Cycle Club established.  
RAF Benson gets Argosy freighters.  
The Chicken-In-The-Basket Restaurant opens on site of old Riverside Café, owners Mr & Mrs Binks.
- 1963** College farm redeveloped. Richard Carpenter now vicar.
- 1964** Gerald Howard replaces Mr Fletcher as Head of Benson School
- 1965** St Helen's Way & St Helen's Ave developed followed by Westfield/Blacklands Rds in 1966/67. Landlord at Horse & Harrow was Johnny Bunn.
- 1967** The only major fatal crash of the Queens Flight - a Whirlwind helicopter crashes after departing Benson.  
Alfred Barton vicar of St Helen's.
- 1968** "Tin Tabernacle" in Watlington Rd - land sold for housing.  
Benson Tennis Club formed out of old Sunnyside Club.
- 1971** Protests over proposed development in Benson lead to formation of Bensington Society and later to the Conservation Area.  
Benson Weir reconstructed and reduced in height for better control of flood water
- 1972** Infants School opened in Westfield Rd.  
Alan Hastings takes over as Benson Lock Keeper.
- 1975** Benson Area Play Scheme (BAPS) born., Jasmine Lorimer 1<sup>st</sup> leader  
BAPS runs until 1996.
- 1977** Benson Sorting Office closed. Denis Beavis landlord at Crown.  
New mechanism provided for Church Clock.
- 1979** Benson Table Tennis Club formed.
- 1982** The Millstream Day Centre opens.

- 1985** Martin Peters replaces Gerald Howard as head of Benson School  
Horseshoe Lane developed.
- 1986** Work started on new Millstream Surgery  
The Castle Inn closes, last proprietor Diane West.  
Phil Nottage restores the Three Horseshoes, later taken over by  
Vivi & Guy Robinson and Garry Arnold.
- 1988** New Benson Parish Hall opened at Sunnyside
- 1990** The Horse & Harrow pub at Rokemarsh closes, last landlord  
was Jim Austin.
- 1991** Turner's Court closed
- 1993** White Hart converted to flats. Andrew Hawken appointed vicar.
- 1994** Passey's Yard closed. Forge Close built on site of old Gurney's  
Garage.
- 1995** Large part of Benson declared a Conservation Area  
The Queen's Flight reorganised into 32 Sq and moved to Northolt.
- 1996** New Sports Pavilion opened.  
Benson Bulletin lists 36 Clubs & Societies
- 1998** Benson Lock bridge becomes part of Thames Path  
Benson Environmental Survey Team (BEST) formed.
- 1999** The Sun pub closed. Saxon Court built on old Rivers site.
- 2000** Paul & Maureen Henderson publicans at the Crown.
- 2009** Gurney's Garage closes
- 2010** Publican of Crown - Wayne Marshall - dies after argument in bar.

Benson Post Office closes in August when Postmistress retires.