

BENSON

NEAR WALLINGFORD



Once the wealthiest royal Manor in Oxfordshire.

The village of Benson, which is situated near the River Thames in South Oxfordshire, was once known as Villam Regiam (The King's Town) and has had Royal connections since Saxon times. The village was the subject of much conflict between the kings of Wessex and Mercia.

In 571, Cathwulf (brother of the West Saxon King Ceawlin), captured Benson from the Britons. In 661, King Wulfhere of Mercia captured Benson.

In 730, King Aethilbald of Mercia had a royal villa at Benson (known then as Banesinga), and in 779, King Offa of Mercia defeated the West Saxons in battle at Benson.



In the Domesday book of 1086, Benson was listed as the wealthiest royal Manor in Oxfordshire. The value to the Lord was £85, there were 32 villagers, 29 smallholders and 5 slaves. Other resources were listed as two mills and two fisheries. However, by 1438, the value of Benson Manor had been reduced to £24 and the mill was reportedly in ruins.



St Helen's Church, Benson : Thomas Stevenson

In 1536, Henry VIII made Henry Norres Lord of the Manor, but the following year, had him executed, following accusations of Norres being the lover of his wife, Anne Boleyn.

The Manor of Benson (Bensington) remained in Royal ownership until 1628, when Charles I sold the Manor to a syndicate of London land speculators.

During the English Civil War, and Charles I issued orders from his



Benson : Bill Nicholls

'Court at Benson'. The village was in a prime position between the site of the Battle of Chalgrove Field (which took place on 16th June 1643) and Wallingford Castle.

In more recent years, Queen Elizabeth II has visited RAF Benson at least 3 times: in 1956, (when she also visited Wallingford and Abingdon), 1989 (for its 50th anniversary) and again in 1995, when the Queen's Flight moved to RAF Northolt.



Offa of Mercia (Benefactors Book, St Albans Abbey)

Further information

www.bensonbulletin.com
www.visionofbritain.org.uk
www.domesdaymap.co.uk