## **ABOUT THE RESERVE**

This Local Nature Reserve beside the River Avon is mainly made up of three maturing broadleaved woodlands – Conham River Park, Hencliff Wood and Bickley Wood.

Once part of the old Kingswood Forest, most of the site is oak woodland. Some semiimproved grassland can be found at the top of the slope and there are small areas of floodplain meadow, hedgerows and scrub along the riverbank. Some small areas of ash, wild cherry and sycamore have developed in the old quarries and on some of the grassland and scrub areas.



 $\triangle$  This map is dated 1610. It shows few signs of the intense industrial activity that was to take place here in the following centuries.



#### WOODLAND WILDLIFE

Local Nature Reserves are natural sites that have a legal status. Reserves help to protect wildlife habitats near towns, making an important contribution to the UK's biodiversity. Bickley Wood is an SSSI (Site of Specfic Scientific Interest) because of its important geology. Look out for these common plants at Avon Valley Woodlands:



△ The Blackthorn's common name comes from its dark bark. The bitter sloe fruits are an important food plant for birds.



△ Wildflowers such as bluebells, celandines and wood anemones. These are flourishing as dense woodland is opened up to let more light reach the ground.



△ The familiar sight of the abundant Herb Robert – a member of the geranium family and one of many common wild flower species.



 $\triangle$  Bramble can be found throughout the woodland. If managed, it forms part of a scrub layer that protects wildlife and birds.

## **ALL NEW AND BEAUTIFUL**

This is the diary extract of a holiday-maker, 23 June, 1836. His delight in reaching the natural environment of the Hanham Gorge after industrial Bristol is striking:

**66** The first two miles as far as Crew's Hole was flat, stale and unprofitable but from the turn of the river beyond this place all was new and beautiful, the banks of the stream assuming a bolder and loftier aspect, and being clothed with a richness of verdure contrasting strikingly with the tameness and sterility which so generally prevailed between Crew's Hole and Bath Bridge. The scenery of this charming route was agreeably diversed in many places by the works now in progress for the formation of a railway, intended to connect the cities of Bristol and Bath.



# THINGS TO LOOK FOR



△ The red Pennant sandstone on the quarried slopes of Bickley Wood SSSI.





 $\triangle$  The berries of the 'wild service' trees in Hencliff Wood, commonly known as 'chequers'.



### **GETTING THERE**

Many new facilities, especially at Conham River Park make parts of the Reserve fully accessible to wheelchair users and buggies.

On foot: Several public rights of way link up

By bicycle: From Bristol along the River Avon Trail

**Bus:** Services are available along Memorial Road. Then follow the footpaths.

**Car:** Parking is available at Castle Farm Road for walks around Bickley Wood and Hencliff Wood. For walks around Conham and the Panorama Walk please use the car park at Conham River Park. Both sites are signposted along Memorial Road.

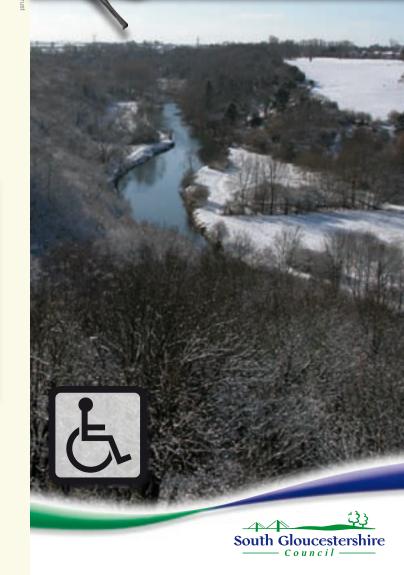
Conham car park: Grid reference ST 629 721. Post code BS15 3AW

Castle Farm Road car park: Grid reference ST 641 707. Post code BS15 3NN

# rid reference ST 641 7

# Avon Valley Woodlands





△ This Monkey Puzzle Tree is one of two that marked the entrance to Conham Hall, nr. Conham River Park.

▷ The black triangularshaped coping stones on the walls on Ferry Lane. These were cast from copper slag – a byproduct of brass and an example of waste material cleverly re-used.



 $\triangle$  These and other ruins near the 100 steps housed a copper smelter that was advanced for its time.



For information on the Reserve use the search at: **www.southlgos.gov.uk** Two health walks and an audio guide relating to Conham River Park, its history and the bats you are likely find there is available from local libraries. **BECOME A FRIEND** 

Much of the Avon Valley is owned by South Gloucestershire Council and is managed in partnership with the Friends of Hanham Nature Reserve. For information on events and workdays © 01454 863592 improvement@southglos.gov.uk. Join in the fun!



This information is also available in other languages, in large print, Braille or audio tape. Please phone © 01454 868004 if you need any of these or any other help to access Council services.

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# **A RICH HERITAGE**



There are many clues to the site's past. So much took place here before the woodlands became well established. There were 12 small quarries busily extracting Pennant sandstone between Conham River Park and Hanham Mills. Hanham stone was useful not only for building the railway but for paving, kerbs and gravestones as well as for general building. The river provided power and a means of transporting the stone to Bristol and Bath.



John Chiddy, 31 March 1876. It is said that Chiddy bravely removed a huge spherical rock from the track, averting a disaster. This incident is remembered in a mounted stone at Memorial Cottage. Even Pit Road was renamed Memorial Road to remember the tragic accident.

# **HISTORIC HANHAM**

Long before the industrialisation of the area in recent centuries, the Romans built a road through Hanham. It is thought that the remains of a Roman villa lie beneath Castle Farm Estate. In the 1950s, a hoard



Coal mining also took place here with trucks called 'drams' taking coal down to barges waiting on the river. The slightly acidic spoil heap left over has now been vegetated with acid-loving plants including gorse. This provides an interesting variation in plant life within the Reserve.

Derelict buildings in the woodlands include a powder house at the bottom of Hencliff Wood. This housed the dynamite for the guarries and nearby railway. The thick walls of some old smelter works near the 100 steps are still standing, along with the boundary wall of nowdemolished Conham Hall. These days, small thickets provide a good habitat for small birds and mammals.



## WILD SERVICE TREE

The Wild Service or Chequerberry Tree (Sorbus torminalis) is a native European deciduous tree which grows to about 25 metres tall. It is now relatively rare, but there are several between Hencliff Wood and Conham River Park. The tree's small berries are called chequers, and English pubs called Chequers are traditionally named after this tree rather than the board game. The berries were used to treat colic (torminalis means 'good for colic'). Old Chequers pubs would supply the berries to patrons to neutralise the effects of beer. The tree grows best on limestone and at woodland edges and in hedgerows where shade is only partial.

Conham from Conham Ferry – the oldest river ferry crossing on the Avon.

Chris

Church

The Batch

Hanham

Hanham Green Castle Inn



Bickley

Wood



Ring the bell to call the ferry. The tea gardens were established by Mrs Beese in 1846. www.beeses.co.uk © 0117 977 7412

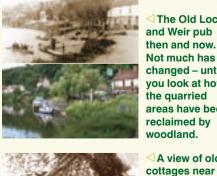


🛆 After a drink at Beeses, explore Eastwood Farm Local Nature Reserve. You can get close to wildlife on a 1.5 mile circular stroll along the riverbank.

of 4th century coins were found in Westfield Road.



A further transport development in the area was the building of the Kennet & Avon Canal - completed in 1810. Hanham Lock is No.1 of over 100 locks.





Bicklev

Farm

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The Old Lock

and Weir pub then and now.

Not much has

woodland.

changed - until

you look at how the quarried areas have been

A view of old

Hanham lock c. 1900. Hanham is listed in the

**Domesday Book** 

place of ancient

kings/would-be

as 'Hanum'