

Greenham and Crookham Common: A Timeline

50,000 BC	Crookham - Palaeolithic axe made.
3,000 BC	Crookham Manor - polished Neolithic axes made.
1,700 BC	Bronze Age urn buried near Crookham House.
43-400 AD	Romano-British activity near commons – at Pyle Hill, Bowdown, Chamberhouse Farm, George's Farm. Possible date for construction of Bury's Bank, an earthwork across the common, although this could be Iron Age or even Bronze Age.
1086	Greenham Chapel mentioned in Domesday Book.
1199	King John confirmed granting of manor of Greenham to military order of Knights Hospitallers.
1338	Preceptory founded at Greenham by this date, house for order of Knights Hospitallers.
1540	All possessions of Knights Hospitallers passed to the Crown.
1740	A military camp is recorded on a map at Greenham Heath.
1746	Ownership of manor of Greenham passes to Croft family.
1798-1829	First Greenham Lodge built on new site. Old Greenham Manor house near the chapel, for many years used as a farmhouse, is pulled down and replaced with a new farmhouse.
1859	Fear of invasion by the French may have led to 'The Butts' being built on Crookham Common for rifle practice.
1872	20,000 troops on exercise camp on Greenham Common. A.R. Tull, owner of Crookham House, buys Manor of Crookham.
1873	Lloyd Baxendale buys Greenham Lodge Estate. Crookham Golf Course opens – third oldest 18 hole course in England.
1875	New church St Mary Virgin built on site of old chapel at Greenham.
1878-1881	New Greenham Lodge built, largely replacing older house.
1890	5,000 cavalry arrive on the common for manoeuvres.

1914-1918	Commons used as occasional training area for troops and tanks during World War I.
1923	127 acres of Greenham Estate turned into Newbury & District Golf Club, a rival to Crookham's club.
1937	Death of Harry Baxendale, owner of Greenham Lodge.
1938	Sale of Greenham Lodge Estate - Newbury Corporation buys Greenham Common and the lordship of the manor.
1939	Outbreak of World War II. Sale of Crookham House Estate
1941	Common requisitioned for airfield. An unfenced airstrip and associated buildings put up, mainly on Greenham Common, but also on Crookham Common - the historic golf course closes.
1943	RAF Greenham Common officially becomes USAAF base Station No. 486.
1944	D-Day preparations, including a glider assembly camp on Crookham Common - 101st Airborne Division addressed by General Eisenhower.
1945	Greenham Common reverts to RAF control, being a training centre after the end of World War II.
1946	Crookham and Newbury Golf Clubs amalgamate
1947	Land de-requisitioned, reverting to Newbury Borough Council control.
1948	Part of airfield runway removed to restore common.
1951	Announcement that RAF Greenham Common would be needed again as a US airfield, but with new buildings, longer runways and much bigger jets. Month-long protest by Newbury residents is in vain.
1954	Aerodrome operational, but B47 planes damage runway and it needs strengthening.
1955 & 1957	Ownership of Crookham Common conveyed in two lots to Air Ministry after death of A.S.B. Tull.
1956	RAF Greenham Common operational again.
1958-1964	Airbase part of Reflex Alert Scheme, bombers standing-by for immediate take-off with nuclear weapons.

- 1960 Newbury Corporation sells Greenham Common to Air Ministry with the understanding that the land could one day be offered back.
- 1964 Strategic Wing de-activated, Americans leave Greenham, and its buildings are used for personnel from RAF Welford.
- 1966 President General de Gaulle orders French withdrawal from NATO.
- 1967 USAF returns to take on some of French relocation commitments, air base then up-graded to stand-by base.
- 1972 Ugandan Asians, expelled by Idi Amin, pass through Greenham Common seeking shelter in Britain.
- 1973 First of several International Air Tattoos at airbase, huge air-shows attracting thousands.
- 1976-1978 F111 planes use Greenham Common while the Upper Heyford base undergoes maintenance.
- 1978 Rumours of re-activation of Greenham prove true - USAF plans to base KC-135 refuelling tankers there. Huge public outcry leads MoD to reject this.
- 1979 NATO takes decision to site cruise nuclear missiles in Britain and other European countries.
- 1980 Defence Secretary announces Greenham Common will house 96 missiles. Labour Party, CND and peace groups oppose this, but most in Newbury accept reluctantly.
Richard Noble uses Greenham runway to break several British Land Speed records in his vehicle Thrust 2.
- 1981 Group called Women for Life on Earth march from Cardiff to Greenham, and 4 women chain themselves to fence demanding a televised debate on nuclear weapons. Peace camp starts a week later.
- 1982 Peace camp becomes exclusively for women and children at night. Tents and caravans set up near main gate, and return after evictions. Other camps, named after colours of the rainbow, develop round fence. Blockades, vigils, arrests and Embrace the Base rally attract worldwide attention.
- 1983 Peace women break into base to dance on unfinished missile silos. More actions, including 14 mile human chain linking Berkshire's nuclear sites, and the birth of a baby keep Greenham Common in the news. Conservatives win General Election. Local discontent with peace camps increases, but anti-peace women rallies in Newbury fail to attract large numbers. Vigilante action prevalent.

Newbury District Council draws up new by-laws. Last Air Tattoo.
Turnpike School asks peace women to give talk.
16 cruise missiles arrive, another large demo leads to fence being pulled down in several places.

- 1984 RAGE (Ratepayers Against Greenham Encampments) formed.
First cruise convoy testing, major eviction of tents at main gate. 10 million women, 10 days protest.
More cruise weapons come to Greenham Common.
- 1985 Right of peace women to vote challenged, but later re-instated.
- 1986 GAMA completed with 6 flights of Ground Launched Cruise Missiles. Dwindling numbers at peace camps, frequent bailiff evictions and complaints of bullying.
- 1987 Split between Yellow Gate and Blue Gate peace women. Presidents Reagan and Gorbachev sign INF (Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces) treaty to rid Europe of cruise.
- 1988 Revelation that commoners' rights may make building on the base illegal.
Russians come to inspect Greenham's missiles under treaty terms.
MoD attempts to pay commoners for the extinguishment of some rights.
- 1989 First cruise missiles leave to be destroyed.
A peace woman is killed in a traffic accident outside main gate of the base.
Small group of commoners refuse to give up their partial rights.
- 1990 'Commons Again' forms as pressure group for return of common land.
House of Lords rules MoD by-laws prohibiting trespass on base are illegal.
- 1991 Final cruise missiles leave Greenham Common for destruction.
- 1992 USAF leaves Greenham Common in low-key ceremony.
- 1993 MoD puts airbase up for sale. Newbury District Council draws up future plans.
Sir Peter Michael proposes a trust and management company, a public-private partnership for Greenham.
- 1994 Blue Gate peace camp disbanded.
English Nature notifies part of Greenham & Crookham Commons as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). MoD decides to return land to people of Newbury.
First businesses move into New Greenham Park, built-up area of base.
- 1995 Runway begins to be removed.

- 1996 Radiation scare over 1958 accident leads to scientific survey of land – no evidence of raised radioactivity at Greenham.
- 1997 A linked deal with the MoD allows the Greenham Common Trust to purchase the airbase for £7 million and Newbury District Council to buy back the open common land for £1. First piece of perimeter fence removed.
- 1999 Greenham and Crookham Commons Bill promoted in Houses of Parliament to restore land in ownership of West Berks Council as common land open to public.
- 2000 Commons officially open to the public except for areas covered by INF treaty. Last surviving peace camp at Yellow Gate disbands on 19th anniversary of first protest.
- 2001 Stock fencing erected around 380ha of Greenham and Crookham Common. Commoners' livestock once again graze the heaths and grasslands.
- 2002 Greenham and Crookham Commons Act passed to restore land at Greenham and Crookham Commons as common land open to the public, make provision for the conservation of the natural beauty of that land, grant public access over that land in perpetuity and restore and extend commoners' rights. Also constituted the Greenham and Crookham Common Commission for the management of that land and conferred powers on West Berkshire District Council and on that Commission with respect to that land.
- 2006 Exmoor ponies graze commons.
- 2008 West Berkshire Living Landscape Project agreement signed (28th March). A partnership between West Berkshire Council and Berks Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT). Project area of 2600 ha. includes Greenham & Crookham Commons in the core area along with Thatcham Reedbeds and Bowdown Woods. The vision- 'To protect, expand and enhance this unique and diverse landscape of West Berkshire; creating an environment richer in wildlife'