

## **Biddenham and The Great Hedge Survey 1994 and 1995**

The work surveying the Biddenham hedges arose out of the Rio Earth Summit in June 1992 individual signatory countries were encouraged to set up biodiversity action plans culminating in Agenda 21 which was a non-binding, voluntarily implemented action plan of the United Nations with regard to sustainable development.

This was also a product of the Earth Summit (UN Conference on Environment and Development) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992.

Locally the Wildlife Trusts and the Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity set up a programme of hedge surveys in each parish to identify the state of these important wildlife corridors

Work was undertaken in Biddenham by local botanist David George to complete a thorough survey and submit it to The RCC and the Wildlife Trusts

The map and documents identify the village hedges surviving in 1995

Some relict hedges survived building work by representation being made when development started in the loop. These survive on the golf course and near the river

Others though surviving have been removed more recently or fire damaged

New hedges have been planted eg at Church End and others gapped up as at Biddenham Turn.

This was possible under the County Council tree warden scheme operating in the village from 1991

The village Brownies also surveyed some hedges in near The Baulk in the 1990's

Biddenham had been mostly spared wholesale removal but there had been some clearance going on over many years. Government agricultural policy post war encouraged hedge removal indirectly as farmers were urged to become more efficient and up their productivity which small fields with all the turning were not encouraged. Obviously in livestock country further west this was less of a problem and many old enclosure field patterns survive today.

Hedges were originally outliers of patches of woodland where at the outer edge a ditch had been established. Clearance of the woodland sometimes left the bank and hedge now at the edge of an enclosed field as a livestock barrier

The enclosure movement caused long term major changes to the British countryside. In East Anglia the end of open field farming occurred much earlier than in other parts of Britain and much of the field pattern here had been established by the C18. East Anglia and Bedfordshire has always been an area where hedges were not needed or encouraged especially where there was danger of shading a brussel sprout plant. During the 1980's and 90's many hedges including here in Biddenham suffered further damage from stubble burning another practice outlawed.

The Biddenham loop was always our largest area of prime farming land and by the time of our survey was being farmed in hand by one landowner as mostly large fields with only ditches or small banks to designate field boundaries for rotational purposes.

David George when he set out to do his survey was faced by some lengthy surviving hedges in the loop but mostly open space and more importantly the Biddenham now Great Denham parish boundary hedge which still survives into the C21. This hedge of course follows

The survey was carried out before the Deep Spinney and Loop developments thus the record survives as a unique survey of hedges in the original parish of Biddenham

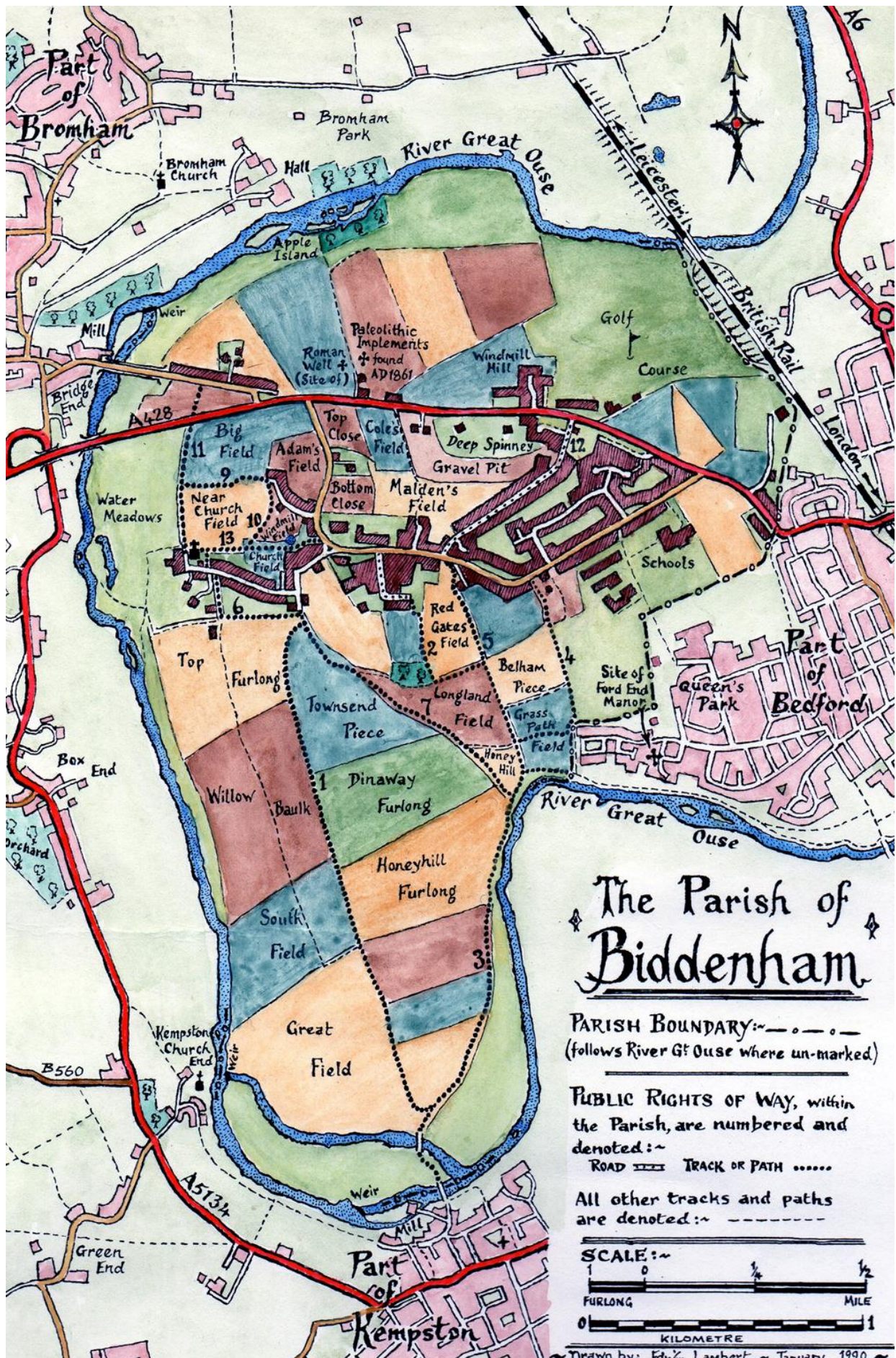
In 1997 the government enacted hedge protection legislation to try to change things and those intending to remove hedges had to get permission from DFRA first.

David often assisted by Jane walked and surveyed nearly all the hedges in Biddenham as the map reveals and a form was filled out for each longer hedge or rolled up in the case of shorter hedges.

The only ones missed were a very few on inaccessible private land.  
At the end it was possible to sum up and totla typical hedge species in the village

The four maps on the next pages show firstly a field map of the parish as it may have been 100 years ago. It was drawan by Eddie lambert in 1990. It shows develoment only at Biddenham Turn. The fields are shown without referance to boundaries but with names  
The other two maps are the hedge maps plotted on an OS map by David George and show the extent of hedges in 1990  
The final map is the situation in 2020 showing the great contrast today and the growth of houses leading to hedgerow loss but not to such a great extent as deep Spinney and The loop were largely not hedge countryside. Looses will be noticed near Biddenham Turn/Gallows Corner and parts of the 1999 St Mary's development

CHJ 03/05/20



Part of Bromham

Bromham Park

Bromham Church

Hall

River Great Ouse

Apple Island

Leicestershire

British Rail

London

Golf Course

Windmill Mill

Deep Spinney

Gravel Pit

Red Gates 2 Field

Belham Piece

Grass Path Field

Site of Ford End Manor

Queen's Park

Part of Bedford

Schools

Malden's Field

Top Close

Coles Field

Adam's Field

Big Field 11

Near Church Field 9

Church Field 10

Water Meadows

Top Furlong

Willow Baulk

South Field

Great Field

Honeyhill Furlong

Dinaway Furlong

Townsend Piece

Longland Field

Honey Hill

Bottom Close

Roman Well & (Site of)

Paleolithic Implements found AD1861

Box End

Orchard

Kempston Church End

Part of Kempston

Green End

A428

A5134

B560

6

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