Transitional Hunting Landscapes: Deer Hunting and Foxhunting in Northamptonshire, 1600-1850

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Abstract

Between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries the sport of hunting was transformed. The principal prey changed from deer to fox, and the methods of pursuit were revolutionized. The traditional explanation of the hunting transition has aligned it with change in the landscape. Disappearing woodland and increased enclosure led to decline of the deer population. Attention turned to the fox out of necessity.

This thesis questions the traditional explanation. It centres on Northamptonshire because the county contained the archetypal landscapes of both the 'old' and the 'new' forms of hunting. Although often thought of as a county of classic midland open-field systems and parliamentary enclosure, Northamptonshire also contained three royal forests. Where the royal forests had once been the prime hunting grounds, by the nineteenth century this mantle was worn by the grassland of the 'shires'. The elite hunted the fox in Leicestershire, Rutland and Northamptonshire. To hunt anywhere else was to hunt in the 'provinces'.

In Jacobean England, the major pleasure to be gained from the pursuit of the deer was observing the skill of the hounds. The major pleasure to be gained from 'modern' fox hunting was the thrill of a fast gallop across country. If seventeenth-century hunting was about the hound, then nineteenth-century hunting was about the horse. The thesis contends that the partially wooded landscape that typified royal forest largely survived across the period 1600-1850, but it was not the landscape for a horseback pursuit at breakneck speed. The defining feature of the shires landscape was mile after mile of grass to gallop across. The earlier landscape survived, but was no longer what was required.

This thesis suggests that the many changes that hunting underwent in this period were directly related to the transformation of the hunting horse. The near-thoroughbred horse became the mount of choice for those who hunted in the shires. The fast horse, the fast hound, and the fast prey came together with the availability of extensive rolling pasture. It was, quite literally, the thrill of the chase that led to the hunting transition.

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Abbreviations

BRO   Buckinghamshire Record Office
HCPP   House of Commons Parliamentary Papers
LRO   Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland
NA   National Archives
NRO   Northamptonshire Record Office
OS   Ordnance Survey
VCH   Victoria County History

Chapter 1
Introduction

Whittlebury in Northamptonshire lies at the heart of what used to be the royal forest of Whittlewood. The village pub is called 'The Fox and Hounds' and about one hundred yards along the road a handsome sign has the name 'Whittlebury' surmounted by a depiction of fallow deer. This juxtaposition illustrates how central hunting has been to the local identity. The sign represents the reason that the forest was originally there: to preserve the king's deer for hunting. The name of the pub speaks of the local importance of foxhunting in later centuries.

This work is concerned with the transition from one form of hunting to the other, and the manifestation of that transition in a changing landscape. Northamptonshire has been chosen as the study area because it contained the archetypal landscapes of both the old and the new forms of hunting.

Northamptonshire is perhaps more often thought of as a county of classic midland open-field systems and parliamentary enclosure, but it contained no fewer than three royal forests. Whittlewood, Salcey and Rockingham originally formed part of a band of forests running from Oxford to the south to Stamford to the north (see Figure 1.1). From the time of the Conquest to the early modern period the Northamptonshire forests went in and out of favour as royal hunting grounds, but the machinery of deer preservation continued regardless. Of the venison supplied to Charles I for Christmas 1640 by far the largest consignment came from Rockingham forest; the next largest came from Whittlewood, which tied for second place with the New Forest.[1]

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[1] J.C. Cox, *The Royal Forests of England* (London, 1905), pp. 78-9.
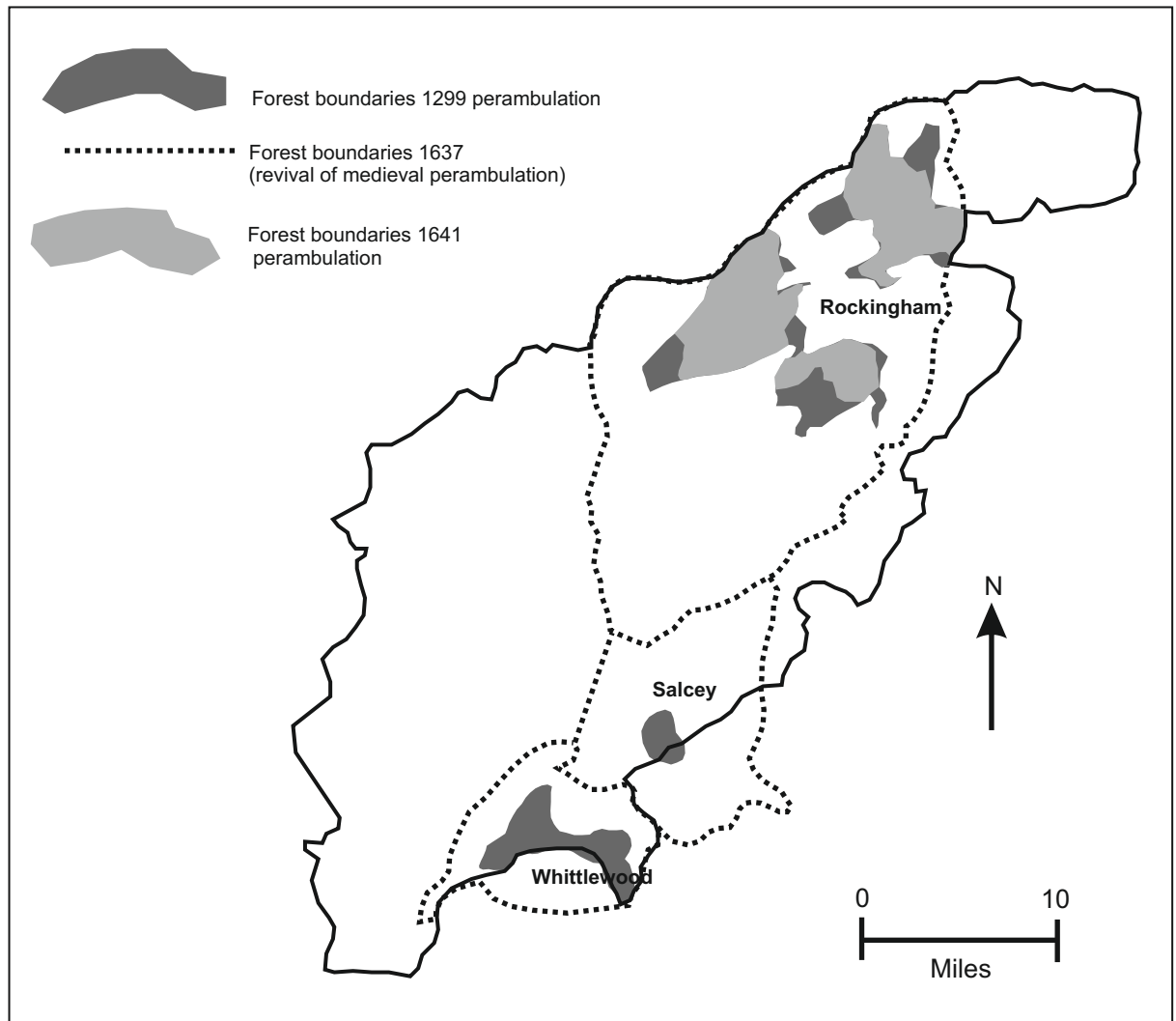
Figure 1.1: The Northamptonshire Forests

By the nineteenth century the sport of hunting had been totally transformed. Foxhunting had replaced deer hunting in terms of both popularity and prestige; where the royal forests had once been the prime hunting grounds, this mantle was now worn by the grassland of the 'shires'. The great and the good hunted the fox in east Leicestershire, Rutland and west Northamptonshire (see Figure 1.2). To hunt anywhere else was to hunt in the 'provinces'.

Hunting either the deer or the fox was a sport that was intimately connected with the landscape. Both required there to be suitable habitat for the preservation of the prey animal, plus the terrain to chase it across. The traditional explanation of the decline of deer hunting and rise of foxhunting has tied it to change in the landscape. Disappearing woodland and increased enclosure led to a loss of habitat that decimated the deer population.[2] Attention turned to the fox simply because it was more numerous and could run fast. Economic pressures shaped the landscape and effectively overrode the recreational requirements of the elite. The elite reacted by making a virtue out of a necessity and inventing the sport of 'modern' foxhunting.

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[2] See literature review, below, for a more detailed rehearsal of this argument.
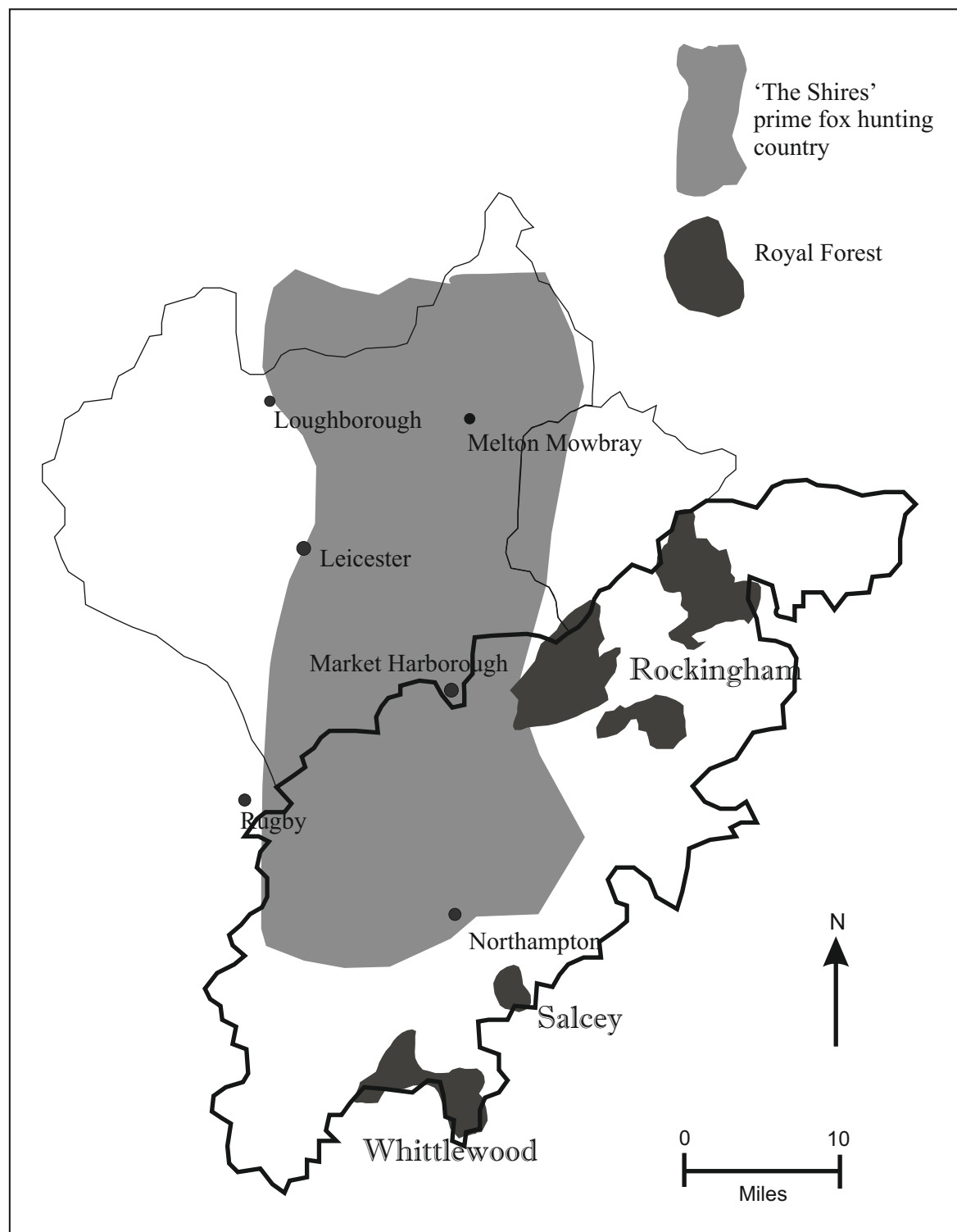
Figure 1.2: The Shire Hunting Country

One of the primary aims of this work is to question this account of the hunting transition. While there are few surviving figures for deer population in the Northamptonshire forests, those that do exist illustrate a recovery in deer numbers following a mid-seventeenth century crisis.[3] This pattern is repeated for other forests across the country.[4] Even without taking into account the number of deer that were kept in deer parks, if the will to hunt deer remained there were certainly still deer to hunt. But, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, to talk of 'hunting' invariably implied foxhunting. If the growth of the new sport was not due to declining deer populations, what did cause it? What was happening in the landscape in this period of transition and what effect did it have? If deer hunting simply 'went out of fashion' why was this so, and what made foxhunting become such an aspirational pastime? In attempting to answer these questions, this study will examine the landscape of the forests and parks of Northamptonshire over the period 1600 to 1850. It will also look for other developments that may have helped to effect the change; for example, the growth of horse racing as a sport and the consequent revolution in the type of horse bred in England. These subjects will cover a wider geographical area.

Carr suggested that there were in fact two hunting transitions in the eighteenth century: from deer to fox for the elite, and from hare to fox for the gentry. This thesis is not explicitly concerned with hare hunting, but it would be wrong to ignore the subject altogether. Some consideration is therefore given to the methods

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[3] Although Whittlewood was reckoned to have been particularly hard hit by depredations of deer population, in 1828 it was still estimated to have a stock of around 1500 and could support the taking of some 120 bucks and 110 does per year. NRO, G3982.

[4] E.P. Thompson gives figures for Windsor forest that show that, while deer levels never regained their pre-Civil War numbers, they certainly had recovered significantly by the eighteenth century due to both breeding and restocking. E.P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: the Origin of the Black Act* (London, 1975), pp. 55-6.

and techniques of this sport, and the landscape it required (and, to some degree, to whether Carr's suggestion is born out by the evidence).[5]

Why is it important to investigate the hunting transition? For a great many years there was a tendency to consider the agricultural and landscape history of this period overwhelmingly in terms of economics. Some historians followed nineteenth-century agriculturalists in thinking in terms of 'improvement', with the belief in the continued progress towards perfection. While this approach has been questioned by more left-leaning historians, they still tended to think primarily in terms of economic ambitions. Landscape changes were motivated by the desire to make money, or at least the desire to flaunt it once made. Accordingly the history of the royal forests in the early modern period has been largely ignored, and when it has been considered it has been as an anachronistic backwater in chronic decline. Little or no attention has been paid to the forests in the context of a hunting and recreational landscape.[6] Similarly any effects that the rise of foxhunting as a sport had upon the shaping of the landscape in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been largely ignored.[7]

Increasingly modern society is having to reconsider land usage and decide how land no longer required for production is to be used. We are in the process of changing from a mindset of ownership, exclusion and exploitation to one of access and preservation. In short, we are beginning to think of the English countryside less

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[5] R. Carr, *English Foxhunting: a History* (1976; London, 1986 edn), pp. 24-5.

[6] We will see the predominance of economic analysis of landscape use when we examine the historiography of the forest, below.

[7] Finch has questioned the ignoring of foxhunting in shaping the midland shires in two fairly recent papers: J. Finch, 'Grass, grass, grass: fox-hunting and the creation of the modern landscape', *Landscapes*, 5 2 (2004), pp. 41-52; J. Finch, 'Wider famed countries: historic landscape characterisation in the midland shires', *Landscapes,* 8 2 (2007), pp. 50-63.

as a factory and more as a leisure resource.[8] Hunting with dogs is now banned

(although it remains a contentious issue). Perhaps it is now possible to put aside a

moral judgement of the sport and consider what impact it has had on the landscape

over the centuries. Whether we approve or not, the hunting of deer and the hunting of

foxes have been important features in the recreational life of the nation, and ones

that, as we shall see, extended beyond the social elite. The time seems right to

examine the historical relationship between preservation, leisure and the landscape in

the context of one of its most widespread recreational uses: hunting with dogs.

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[8] For a wider discussion of rights of access and new ways of using the landscape, see M. Shoard, *A Right to Roam* (Oxford, 1999).

Literature Review

The transition from traditional deer hunting to modern foxhunting has not been at the forefront of any works that the present author has discovered. Where some account has been given, the argument could be generally summarized thus: forests, the traditional hunting preserves, came increasingly under pressure from 'improvement', which usually meant disafforestation and enclosure and even ploughing up for conversion to arable. The wooded parts of the forests came to be regarded more highly for the economic potential of their timber reserves than for their provision of deer habitat. The deer population was the victim of these two developments, and both hunting and preservation became concentrated in deer parks in the course of the sixteenth century. The aftermath of the Civil War saw greater depredations on deer herds as parks were broken and raided. According to some sources this was a blow from which the deer population never recovered. Subsequently, when the nobility and the gentry once more turned their attention to hunting, deer were somewhat thin on the ground. An alternative prey had to be found, and the fox fitted the bill on several counts: one of the foremost being that it could be pursued at speed on near-thoroughbred horses across the enclosed pastures of the midlands.[9]

Forests

The traditional account has the fate of deer hunting inextricably linked to the fate of the royal forests and, given that the forests came into existence as a hunting

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[9] Carr, *English Fox Hunting*, pp. 22-4; D. Landry, *The Invention of the Countryside: Hunting, Walking and Ecology in English Literature, 1671-1831* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 5-6; M. Brander, *Hunting and Shooting: from Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London, 1971), pp. 55, 60-1. E. Griffin, *Blood Sport: Hunting in Britain Since 1066* (New Haven and London, 2007), pp. 108-10.

reserve, perhaps this is not surprising. What accounts are there of the forests

themselves?

In his foreword to B. Schumer's *Wychwood*, H. Fox traced three main phases

in woodland historiography.[10] The first was primarily concerned with the history of

royal forests, and, in particular, their legal and administrative aspects; this tradition

started with Manwood's *Treatise of the Forest* in 1598 and continued through to J.C.

Cox's *Royal Forests of England* in 1905. (R. Grant can perhaps be considered as a

late contributor to this tradition with his 1991 work.)[11] These works tended to

concentrate on the medieval forest. The next phase, arising in the 1950s and 1960s,

had historians concentrating on woodland as a negative type of land use, as a

resource to be 'destroyed, tamed, converted into "more profitable" use'.[12] Fox

considered Hoskins and Darby to have been the most notable proponents of this

view. The third phase, to which the Schumer work belongs, emphasized the

management of woodland and its preservation as a valued economic resource. Fox

had Pettit's *Royal Forests of Northamptonshire* as part of this tradition, with

Rackham as its most prolific contributor. This later phase is probably of most use to

the current thesis.

Rackham, in both *Trees and Woodland in the British Landscape* and *Ancient*

Woodland, considered the use and the structure of forests and parks in the course of

describing the ecology and history of wood and wood pasture.[13] Rackham refuted

arguments that associated decline in woodland with the early modern period (much

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[10] B. Schumer, *Wychwood: the Evolution of a Wooded Landscape* (Charlbury, 1999).

[11] R. Grant, *The Royal Forests of England* (Stroud, 1991).

[12] Schumer, *Wychwood*, p. viii.

[13] O. Rackham, *Trees and Woodland in the British Landscape: the Complete History of Britain's Trees, Woods and Hedgerows* (1976, London, 2001 edn); O. Rackham, *Ancient Woodland: its History, Vegetation and Uses in England* (London, 1980).

the same period in which other authors trace a decline in the royal forests), and he minimized the roles of early industry and shipbuilding as destroyers of woodland. The view of the crisis in woodland that Rackham contradicted was expressed in Albion's *Forest and Sea Power*. This 1926 work argued that timber production was in such extreme crisis by the time of the Napoleonic wars, it jeopardized Britain's security. Through lack of supply, the navy was unable to build sufficient new ships or even to repair existing ones. The shortage was due to no suitable policy of management for the royal forests, and a general denuding of all woodland by the demands of charcoal-consuming industries.[14] Rackham contended that woodland was managed, and that the resources required by industry were constantly renewed. Any crisis in shipbuilding was a crisis of supply logistics rather than production. Rackham pushed the decline of woodland and royal forest later, to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when the belief grew that plantations of conifers were the most economically effective way of producing timber.

Although Rackham acknowledged the importance of factors other than the prospect of financial gain in determining land use, he concentrated on the role of woodland and wood pasture as producers of timber and providers of grazing. This is particularly true in *Ancient Woodland*: deer were recognized as important beneficiaries of grazing, but more regard was given to their role as a source of venison rather of exercise and entertainment. There was little or no analysis of woodland or wood pasture as suitable landscapes over which to run hounds or ride horses.

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[14] R.G. Albion, *Forests and Sea Power: the Timber Problem of the Royal Navy, 1652-1862* (1926; Annapolis, 2000 edn).

Pettit's *The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire* looked at the forests with which the current study is concerned in the early modern period.[15] Pettit's stated aim was to produce a synthesis of the various approaches to the study of forests (forest law, hunting and poaching, supply of wood and timber, and landscape). On his own admission, however, the main thrust of his work was economic: particularly the economic exploitation of woodland and the emergence of woodland management. A more recent work by Foard, Hall and Britnell also concentrated on part of the study area. *The Historic Landscape of Rockingham Forest* was the result of a project which aimed to identify the areas most characteristic of the forest in the medieval and post-medieval period with a view to preserving them.[16] The authors acknowledged the importance of the recreational interests of the king and lesser lords as a force for conservation; this caused much of the woodland to be managed for the preservation of deer in the medieval period. They suggested, however, that by the early modern period the management of the forest itself as a hunting preserve had ceased to be important. They argued for continual decline in the area of woodland in Rockingham forest, and they used a series of digital maps derived from historic maps and documents to support this assertion.

J. Birrell commented that once historians had acknowledged hunting as the reason that the forests came into existence they tended 'to put hunting aside' and concentrated more on the economic and political.[17] J. Langton recently questioned the whole approach to the history of the royal forests in the early modern period. In

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[15] P.A.J. Pettit, *The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire: a Study in their Economy 1558-1714* (Gateshead, 1968).

[16] G. Foard, D. Hall and T. Britnell, *The Historic Landscape of Rockingham Forest: its Character and Evolution from the 10th to the 20th Centuries* http://www.rockingham-forest-trust.org.uk/RF%20pdfs/Rockingham%20Forest%20Project%20final%20report.pdf (2003) (accessed 30/8/2010).

[17] J. Birrell, 'Deer and deer farming in medieval England', *Agricultural History Review*, 40 (1992), pp. 112-26.

Forests and Chases of England and Wales c.*1500*-c.*1850*, he condemned the overall

neglect of the subject, and the concentration on economics by the studies that do

exist. He talked of a 'highly variegated neglect of forests as specially administered

hunting grounds' and counterposed evidence of the survival of forest as hunting

preserves. Such forest preservation reaffirmed feudal rights and so served the

interests of 'the people who mattered'.[18] In some ways this echoed an assertion

made by C.R. Tubbs in 1968 about the New Forest; he contended that, as the Crown

became less interested in the production of deer and more interested in the

production of timber, the forest law increasingly came to serve the interests of the

forest officers and the holders of common rights rather than those of the Crown. [19]

We must acknowledge that the forest was never just about hunting. Forests

also contained settlements, agriculture and industry, often with their own distinctive

characteristics. The timber and the wood that the woodland areas of the forests

contained were economically valuable resources. It is possible, however, to accept

the importance of all these aspects and yet acknowledge the importance of the deer

and of hunting as well.

Deer Parks

Any study of hunting landscapes must include deer parks as well as forests.

Deer parks were intimately connected with forests as far as function was concerned,

and were often linked geographically too. Deer parks were enclosed forests in

miniature and were mainly, although not exclusively, concerned with the

preservation and the hunting of deer.

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[18] J. Langton, 'Forests in early-modern England and Wales: history and historiography' in J. Langton and G. Jones (eds), *Forests and Chases of England and Wales* c.*1500*-c.*1850* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 1-9.

[19] C.R. Tubbs, *The New Forest: an Ecological History* (Newton Abbot, 1968).

E.P. Shirley's *Some Account of English Deer Parks* is, as the title suggests, a general history of deer parks and of the keeping of deer. It also contains a gazetteer of known parks.[20] It was published in 1867, but remains the one work attempting to encompass parks from all areas and all ages. It is still much used as a source by modern historians. Other authors who have dealt with deer parks have tended to concentrate on particular periods or on particular parks.

In the article 'Deer and deer farming in medieval England', Birrell looked at the great wave of park creation in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and argued that the park as a location for the production of venison had been ignored and underrated in agrarian history.[21] She further suggested that most of the hunting that took place in these parks was conducted by servants with the minimum of ritual and ceremony and aimed at harvesting venison, rather than providing sport and entertainment. Rackham agreed with Birrell as to the value of the medieval deer park as a resource for its owner. He also talked of its wider significance as a landscape feature; he suggested that by 1300 something like one quarter of England's woodland was within parks. Moving into the early modern period, Rackham asserted that although the park tradition declined in the late middle ages, historians had neglected its revival in Tudor times. He suggested that these later deer parks were more used for ceremonial hunts than their predecessors. He also traced a link between sixteenth-century deer parks and later landscape parks.[22] P. Stamper also detected a fresh phase of park creation or enlargement that began towards the end of the fifteenth century. This was, he asserted, part of a growing fashion for large 'amenity' parks among the lesser

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[20] E.P. Shirley, *Some Account of English Deer Parks* (London, 1867).

[21] Birrell, 'Deer and deer farming', pp. 112-26.

[22] Rackham*, Trees and Woodland*, pp. 153, 158.

gentry. Unlike their predecessors, such parks were more likely to be an adjunct to the Lord's house.[23]

Writing about the history of landscape parks in *Polite Landscapes*, Williamson suggested that the resurgence of deer park creation in the sixteenth century was a significant precursor to the emergence of the landscape park. He emphasized the difference between medieval and early modern deer parks; the latter were no longer merely deer farms and hunting reserves predominantly located in 'distant places'; there was an increasing tendency for them to be located immediately adjacent to the great house, with the wild irregularity of the park providing a contrast to the geometric order of the gardens around the house. Williamson suggested that, by the second half of the seventeenth century, the ease with which a park could be created was a vital factor in determining where a gentleman might build his home.[24]

Recently there has been something of a resurgence of interest in the subject of medieval deer parks. The 2007 work *The Medieval Park: New Perspectives* contains a number of papers both examining conceptual issues, and providing particular case studies. The book aimed to reflect the range of functions and activities that the park provided for and so deliberately named 'park' rather than 'deer park' as its subject. Many of the papers do address the thorny subject of how significant hunting was to the history of the park, and the methods which were employed in its pursuit. The book provided a platform for debate among its various contributors, but was far from presenting a consensus view.[25] S.A. Mileson contributed further to this debate in his 2009 work, *Parks in Medieval England*. Mileson came down firmly on the side of

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[23] P. Stamper, 'Woods and parks' in G. Astill and A. Grant (eds), *The Countryside of Medieval England* (Oxford, 1988), p. 146.

[24] T. Williamson, *Polite Landscapes: Gardens and Society in Eighteenth Century England* (Stroud, 1995), p. 24.

[25] R. Liddiard (ed.), *The Medieval Park: New Perspectives* (Macclesfield, 2007).

the argument that put hunting at the centre of the function of the medieval park. He also found evidence that the types of hunting included pursuit from horseback as well as the shooting of driven deer.[26]

The literature of deer parks also contains studies of particular parks. These have unfortunately not included any in Northamptonshire, but accounts of parks outside of the present area of study can furnish some useful points for comparison. Subject parks include Clarendon (probably the largest royal deer park at some 4,500 acres), Leicestershire, Oxfordshire parks in general, and Woodstock park in particular. [27] The studies tackle questions such as the continuance of hunting (or not), and the role of parks in providing both ornament and other forms of entertainment. The continuity, or lack thereof, between deer park and landscape park was a theme pursued for the parks associated with Rockingham forest in the Foard, Hall and Britnell study. They identified a number of parks created out of both the woodland and the open fields in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They asserted that only a handful of landscape parks were created directly from deer parks, however, and only one was created afresh in the woodland. They suggested that this lack of continuity was because landscape parks were required to be in a different location; that is, surrounding the great house.[28]

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[26] S.A. Mileson, *Parks in Medieval England* (Oxford, 2009).

[27] A. Richardson, *The Forest, Park and Palace of Clarendon, c.1200-c.1650: Reconstructing an Actual, Conceptual and Documented Wiltshire Landscape* (Oxford, 2005); T. Beaumont James and C. Gerrard, *Clarendon: Landscape of Kings* (Macclesfield, 2007); L. Cantor and A. Squires, *The Historic Parks and Gardens of Leicestershire and Rutland* (Leicester, 1997); F. Woodward, *Oxfordshire Parks* (Oxford, 1982); J. Bond, 'The park before the palace: the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries' in J. Bond and K. Tiller (eds), *Blenheim: Landscape for a Palace* (Gloucester, 1987), pp. 55-66.

[28] Foard, Hall and Britnell, *Historic Landscape of Rockingham Forest*, pp. 36-7.

Hunting

The hunting of both deer and fox has largely been ignored as a subject of serious study by historians, and the transition between the two has received only the most cursory attention.

There are two relatively recent works that deal with the subject of medieval hunting. J. Cummins's *The Art of Medieval Hunting* is primarily concerned with the techniques of medieval hunting, with the descriptions mostly derived from English and European literary sources.[29] R. Almond's *Medieval Hunting* is also concerned with hunting technique, but the main argument of the book is to suggest that medieval hunting was not an elitist and exclusively male sport as often portrayed, but one enjoyed, in different forms, both by the lower estates and by women.[30] Both Cummins's and Almond's works deal with hunting with hawks as well as hunting with dogs.

The history of hunting then takes a leap forward in time so far as books are concerned. The next available works are those concerned with modern foxhunting. R. Carr's *English Foxhunting* provides a good general history of the sport.[31] D. Itzkowitz's *Peculiar Privilege: a Social History of Foxhunting* was written from a sociological perspective and was primarily concerned with the question of why tenant farmers were so amenable to permitting the often physically destructive pursuit of the fox to take place on their land.[32] Both books drew heavily on C.D.B. Ellis's *Leicestershire and the Quorn Hunt* for their description of the landscape of

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[29] J. Cummins, *The Hound and the Hawk*: *the Art of Medieval Hunting* (1988; Edison, 2003 edn).

[30] R. Almond, *Medieval Hunting* (Stroud, 2003).

[31] Carr, *English Fox Hunting*.

[32] D. Itzkowitz, *Peculiar Privilege: a Social History of Foxhunting, 1753-1885* (Hassocks, 1977).

modern foxhunting.[33] Ellis's work, although it concentrated on a particular part of
Leicestershire, was an effective account of the 'ideal' foxhunting terrain.

E. Griffin made a recent contribution to the limited list of works that deal
with hunting in a book that covers a longer historical period than many.[34] The book
has a narrative rather than a thematic structure. It begins with the Norman Conquest
and takes the reader through to the twenty-first century and the effective banning of
the sport by the Hunting Act. Griffin pursued two main arguments over the thousand
years that the work spanned. Firstly, she suggested that social conflict had always
underlain hunting. This theme reoccurred throughout her account of the forest laws
and the game laws which both, in different ways, sought to restrict hunting as a
privilege for the elite. Social conflict was also to be found in the emergence of the
movements in the twentieth century whose efforts ultimately led to the banning of
the sport in the twenty-first. Griffin reflected the changing nature of anti-hunting
sentiment, tracing the transition from the opposition of those who wanted to hunt but
were not permitted to, to the opposition of those who believed that no one should be
allowed to hunt.

The other theme that the work pursued is an ecological one: the way in which
the very act of hunting put the chosen prey and its habitat under pressure, and how
hunting in turn adapted to changed circumstances. Griffin, like many predecessors,
explained the switch from deer hunting to foxhunting in terms of declining deer
population. Economic pressure led to continued reduction in the physical forest; the
long term effect of this combined with the short-term effect of the civil war in
denuding deer populations in both forest and park, and led to the ultimate decline in

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[33] C.D.B. Ellis, *Leicestershire and the Quorn Hunt* (Leicester, 1951).

[34] E. Griffin, *Blood Sport: Hunting in Britain Since 1066* (New Haven and London, 2007).

deer hunting. The hare did not afford enough excitement as a replacement prey, but the fox was found to fit the bill. And so an animal previously dismissed as vermin came to be treasured as the quintessential quarry. This in turn caused pressure on the fox population. Griffin examined the steps that were taken to deal with this, including the provision of fox coverts. There is much in Griffin's work that is speculative, particularly in the accounts of early hunting. This aids the narrative flow, but at the expense of some necessary discussion. Thus, although developments in the landscape play a crucial part in the account of hunting's adaptation to ecological pressures, there is an uncritical acceptance of the arguments that this thesis suggests would bear closer examination.

There have also been several papers on the subject of hunting in the last ten years, stimulated by the controversy surrounding the banning of hunting with dogs. Finch looked at foxhunting's effect on the midlands landscape, Partida at the depiction of hunting landscapes in Northamptonshire maps. Middleton questioned whether the mid-eighteenth century innovations in hunting technique were really such a break from the past, while Bevan accepted the chronology of the birth of modern foxhunting but asked whether enclosure had really been the driver.[35]

There are a number of works about hunting that survive from earlier in the last century when hunting was not quite such a contentious subject. Some of these cover earlier hunting as well as modern foxhunting. Many are the work of keen foxhunters, however, whose enthusiasm for the subject often seems to have exceeded their historical grasp. As well as lacking detached objectivity there is a tendency for

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[35] Finch, 'Grass, grass, grass'; Finch 'Wider famed countries'; T. Partida, 'The early hunting landscapes of Northamptonshire', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 60 (2007), pp. 44-60; I.M. Middleton, 'The origins of English fox hunting and the myth of Hugo Meynell and the Quorn' *Sport in History,* 25 1 (2005), pp. 1-16; J. Bevan 'Agricultural change and the development of foxhunting in the eighteenth century', *Agricultural History Review*, 58 1 (2010), pp. 49-75. The Bevan paper is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 3.

the authors to interpret past hunting practice in terms of modern foxhunting
techniques. For example, Sabretache's *Monarchy and the Hunt* draws heavily on the
J.P. Hore's nineteenth-century *History of the Royal Buckhounds*, but not only does
Sabretache accept some of Hore's probable misinterpretations, he also adds a few of
his own.[36] Such accounts have been taken at face value by later authors dealing with
the subject of deer. In *Hunting and Stalking Deer* the author, Whitehead, bases his
first chapter on the Sabretache book. He also uncritically accepts accounts of
exceedingly long and unlikely chases. For example, a seventy-mile run during the
reign of Charles II.[37] Some information about the conduct of royal hunts can be
gleaned from general works. Nichol's *Progresses, Public Processes &c of Queen
Elizabeth* and *The Progresses, Processions, and Magnificent Festivities, of King
James the First* deliver descriptions of the ceremonial aspects of hunts organized by
and for these monarchs as well as accounts of how opportunities to hunt were built
into the itinerary as they progressed around their realm.[38]

While hunting *per se* may not have attracted the notice of many historians,
the subject of illicit hunting, and in particular the stealing of deer, has. In *Hunters
and Poachers* R.B. Manning looked at unlawful hunting in the years 1485-1640.[39]
The main aim of the book was to demonstrate that the stealing of deer was never just
about the taking of meat. Such crime was practised primarily by the upper echelons
of society both as an expression of rivalry amongst themselves and as a protest

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[36] 'Sabretache' (Barrow), *Monarchy and the Chase* (London, 1948); J.P. Hore, *The History of the Royal Buckhounds* (Newmarket, 1895).

[37] G.K. Whitehead, *Hunting and Stalking Deer in Britain through the Ages* (London, 1980).

[38] J. Nichols, *Progresses, Public Processes &c of Queen Elizabeth*, 3 vols (London, 1823); J. Nichols, *The Progresses, Processions, and Magnificent Festivities, of King James the First,* 4 vols (London, 1828).

[39] R.B. Manning, *Hunters and Poachers: a Social and Cultural History of Unlawful Hunting in England, 1485-1640* (Oxford, 1993).

against the extension of royal power. It could also be a way of asserting private

property rights and illustrated the seventeenth-century growth of 'possessive

individualism'. Manning was particularly concerned with hunting's cultural role: its

continued importance as an exercise of manly, martial power, and how it was used in

a highly ritualized form by the monarchy as an expression of authority. The theme of

hunting and poaching as an expression of social and political rivalries has more

recently been continued in Daniel Beaver's *Hunting and the Politics of Violence*

before the English Civil War. Beaver took four incidents of attacks on parks, forests

and chases in southern England in 1642 and used them to investigate the themes of

the political transformation that followed the Civil War, and its possible origins in

the expression of political ideas and actions in the early years of the seventeenth

century. Usefully for this thesis, one of Beaver's case studies is the conflict

surrounding the enlargement of Stowe park, on the borders of Whittlewood.[40]

In *Gentlemen and Poachers*, P.B. Munsche covered a later period (1671-

1830) than Manning or Beaver, and looked at a wider definition of poaching.[41] He

stated that as the 1671 Game Act, which was his starting point, explicitly excluded

deer, he was not concerned with deer stealing. Nonetheless the book had some

important points to make on the subject. After 1671 the law defined deer as property

as opposed to game and, as such, the offence of poaching deer became one of

stealing and was dealt with with according severity. Munsche also suggested that the

Game Acts of 1671 onwards marked a shift in the control of hunting franchises - who

could hunt what and where they could hunt it - from the Crown and the forest law to

the gentry and the common law.

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[40] D.C. Beaver, *Hunting and the Politics of Violence before the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 2008).

[41] P.B. Munsche, *Gentlemen and Poachers: the English Game Laws 1671-1831* (Cambridge, 1981).

E.P. Thompson's *Whigs and Hunters* is perhaps the best known book dealing with the subject of illicit deer hunting.[42] It looked at the infamous Black Act of 1723 and its origin as a response to the activities of deer stealers, particularly in the forests of Berkshire and Hampshire. Thompson was primarily concerned with putting the act into its social and political context. He interpreted the act as a manifestation of the changing emphasis on private property rights and the protection of status under the Whigs. Thompson's work predated Manning's by nearly twenty years, and there are some interesting points of agreement and disagreement between the two. Manning portrayed deer stealing as a survivor of an essentially medieval culture; Thompson had it as a reaction to the rise of possessive individualism (although Manning actually cites protection of property rights as a motive for some poaching). There was also some disagreement as to the social class of poachers. In his conclusions Manning suggested that deer stealing had moved a long way down the social scale by the early eighteenth century, while it was central to Thompson's argument that lesser gentry and yeomen farmers were the prime movers in any poaching activity. Both, however, agreed that it was the lack of deer that led to the decline of poaching by the mid-eighteenth century; thus repeating the customary account of the cause of the hunting transition that the current study seeks to question.

Man, Animal, and the Natural World

There are a number of works concerned with the relationship between man and the natural world in our time period: some look at the general social, cultural and ideological context, some look specifically at the culture of the hunt. The works have been produced by authors working in a range of disciplines.

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[42] Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters*.

In his seminal work, *Man and the Natural World*, K. Thomas sought to trace the 'profound shift in sensibilities' that occurred in England between the sixteenth and the late eighteenth century in man's attitude towards animals, plants and the landscape.[43] For Thomas, the Tudor age was marked by a 'breathtakingly anthropocentric spirit': animals existed for man's benefit and were inevitably subordinate to his will. There was no problem in justifying the pursuit and killing of animals for pleasure and entertainment. The main dispute in the Tudor and Stuart era was between those who believed that all humanity held dominion over animals and those that tried to confine this dominion to a privileged group. But the Tudor period also saw the beginning of a systematic study of nature that laid the foundations of modern botany, zoology, ornithology and other life sciences. Thomas contended that the resulting classification of the natural world somehow reshaped man's view of it and proved ultimately destructive of many popular assumptions. A move towards a more scientific study led to the gradual rejection of the man-centred symbolism that had been so essential to earlier natural history.

For Thomas, some of man's changing attitude to animals coincided with a changing physical relationship with them. With industrialization and migration to the towns people were no longer so intimately connected with, and economically dependent upon, agricultural animals. Certain favoured animals remained close to human society, however, and this was especially true of the horse and the dog. The period also saw the rise of the phenomenon of pet ownership. This in turn had the effect of changing man's perception of animal intelligence: he began to believe that animals could have individual character and personality, and this further broke down

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[43] K. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (1983; London, 1984 edn).

the rigid barrier between man and animal that previous theorists had tried to raise. Thomas traced the emergence of a cult of the countryside that ran in parallel with the shifting attitude in the treatment of animals. He suggested many reasons for this: the fact that much wealth was still agriculturally based, but also that the towns and cities were becoming far less pleasant places to be.

In *The Animal Estate* H. Ritvo in some sense took up where Thomas left off.[44] Her work was concerned with the change in the way animals were regarded between the early eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. She took a less optimistic view of this transition than Thomas, describing a move from a situation where animals were regarded as responsible enough to be capable of guilt in crimes to one where they were regarded as the property of their human owners and only 'trivially different' from less mobile goods. Ritvo tied her transition into the Enlightenment and suggested that as nature became less threatening so did animals, and this led, effectively, to them being treated with less respect.

Ritvo is a sociologist rather than an historian, and was not solely concerned with the position of animals. She argued that examining the interactions between humans and animals could clarify the 'underlying seldom-stated assumptions' of English society about how men treated other human beings. Other authors have also approached the history of mans' relations with animals with an inter-disciplinary focus. In *A View to a Kill in the Morning*, Cartmill took an anthropological approach to the question of man's relationship with nature. The book covered the period from ancient Greece up to the twentieth century and used attitudes to hunting as an exemplar of the attitudes to animals and animal suffering. The author employed these

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[44] H. Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: the English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Harvard, 1987).

changes as a way of illustrating changes in the view of human nature and human development.[45] D. Landry used English literature, and particularly poetry, to trace the development of 'the countryside' as a concept. She focused on how two aspects of enjoying the countryside, hunting and walking, came to be antithetical. Landry saw the invention of modern foxhunting as being central to this process, and contended that 'the seeking of recreational pleasure as well as profit from the land has a long, if neglected, history'. She also examined the role of field sports in countering the drive for agricultural improvement. [46]

Horses

Bovill described the early nineteenth century as being the time of 'the cult of the horse'.[47] A comparison of the traditional methods of hunting the deer with the methods of modern foxhunting reveals the far more important role of the horse in the latter than in the former. It seems likely, therefore, that the horse played some significant role in the hunting transition. The late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries saw considerable effort put into the creation of the thoroughbred horse. J. Thirsk has speculated that this might even been the origin of the efforts to improve livestock that became so symbolic of the eighteenth century.[48] The introduction of thoroughbred blood into the hunting horse was to have a profound effect on its performance.

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[45] M. Cartmill, *A View to a Death in the Morning: Hunting and Nature through History* (1993; Harvard 1996 edn).

[46] Landry, *Invention of the Countryside*.

[47] E.W. Bovill, *The England of Nimrod and Surtees* (London, 1959), p. 1.

[48] J. Thirsk, 'Agricultural innovations and their diffusion' in J. Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 578.

If this literature review has so far bemoaned the shortage of serious historical studies of hunting and hunting landscape, then it must positively lament the lack of works on the history of the horse. In her short work *Horses in Early Modern England, for Service, for Pleasure, for Power* Thirsk reckoned it remarkable that, given the 'age-long dependence' of man on the horse, and the expanding equine role in a growing economy, such little interest had been shown by historians in the subject.[49] Thirsk went on to explore the growth in the demands made upon the horse. So far as use for pleasure was concerned the early-modern period saw the aristocracy acquiring horses for the *manége*, for racing and for pulling their carriages, as well as for their established roles in hunting and hawking. But it was the use of horse in war (for 'service') that led directly to state intervention in an attempt to improve the quality of English horses. Henry VIII passed laws governing the minimum size of stallions grazed on forests, chases, wastes and commons to prevent the unregulated breeding of undersized horses. Elizabeth reinforced earlier legislation requiring the owners of deer parks to keep equine breeding stock there. Meanwhile the use of horses was spreading down the social scale as their employment for agriculture, industry and transport grew. Thirsk suggested that quite humble people owned riding horses towards the end of the seventeenth century, as well as horses used for other purposes. The widening requirements ensured that there was a market for most types of horse, from the highest-bred racehorse to the most workaday pony.

The use of horses for transport and communication was a theme of Crofts's *Packhorse, Wagon and Post*. The author investigated the history of the carriage of goods, people and information in the Tudor and Stuart period. From its pages we glean facts and figures about the performance, in ground-covering terms, that could

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[49] J. Thirsk, *Horses in Early Modern England, for Service, for Pleasure, for Power* (Reading, 1978), p. 5.

be expected of an early-modern horse. We also learn that the quality of the average

horse for hire left something to be desired. An interesting aside was the speed and

stamina that could be expected of a man on foot, which was considered to be

superior to that of a horse over very long distances. This is a significant point when it

comes to considering the role of the unmounted man in traditional hunting.[50]

In *The Horse Trade of Tudor and Stuart England* P. Edwards was concerned

specifically with the horse trade and how it was organized. His account is in accord

with Thirsk's and Crofts's descriptions of the expansion and growth in transport and

communications in the period of the Tudors and Stuarts. Of particular interest is

Edwards's geographical analysis of where horses were bred and where they were

reared. We learn that the east midlands was an important rearing area. Young horses

were brought in, broken to harness and then worked for a year or so as part of their

training before being sold on. The nation's premier fair for the buying and selling of

cart and carriage horses was Northampton. Edwards also described the great

improvement to the quality of English horses in the sixteenth and seventeenth

centuries brought about by selective breeding.[51]

Edwards's 2007 work, *Horse and Man in Early Modern England*, was, in

many ways, the complement to his earlier work. The newer book focused on the

demand for horses, while *The Horse Trade of Tudor and Stuart England*

concentrated on the supply. Edwards examined the different uses that horses were

put to in this period: from warfare, through high-status pursuits such as hunting, the

manége and the racecourse, to the lower status occupations for horses supplying the

power for agriculture, industry, and the carriage of goods. Edwards examined the

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[50] J. Crofts, *Packhorse, Wagon and Post: Land Carriage and Communications under the Tudors and Stuarts* (London, 1967).

[51] P. Edwards, *The Horse Trade of Tudor and Stuart England* (1988; Cambridge, 2004 edn).

changing attitudes to horses over this period, echoing the earlier work by Thomas.

He also tracked the improvements made to the standard of English horses across his

period of study.[52]

      As we have seen, one of the principal motivations driving the sixteenth-

century attempts to improve horses was the desire to breed horses for war. By the

seventeenth century the incentive was to produce faster horses for racing. W.

Vamplew's book on the history of horse racing concentrated on the nineteenth and

early twentieth centuries but gave some account of racing's early history and, unlike

many accounts of the history of the turf, attempted to put the growing sport into its

social and economic context. Vamplew described racing in the eighteenth and early

nineteenth centuries as a national sport organized at a local level. Over this period the

sport developed from matches between pairs of horses to sweepstakes between

several horses. As horse racing became increasingly professionalized so heavyweight

owners gave up the saddle to lightweight jockeys. This process culminated with the

coming of the railways which made it far easier to travel horses long distances to

compete. It also made it possible for people to travel long distances to watch.

Eventually it became an economic proposition to enclose racecourses and to charge

admission.[53] A more recent work on horse racing by M. Huggins also concentrated

on the sport in the nineteenth century. He was primarily concerned with the social

aspects of racing, and in particular how the middle classes participated. He was

particularly interested in the way betting developed over the century.[54] It is

unfortunate that there are no comparable works on horse racing that concentrate on

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[52] P. Edwards, *Horse and Man in Early Modern England* (London, 2007).

[53] W. Vamplew, *The Turf: a Social and Economic History of Horse Racing* (London, 1976).

[54] M. Huggins, *Flat Racing and British Society 1790-1914: a Social and Economic History* (London, 2000).

the eighteenth century. The history of horse racing has an important relationship with the transition in hunting practices. It was the main motivation for the breeding of fast horses the riding of which, for many, was the principle pleasure derived from modern foxhunting.

A recent book by Landry looked explicitly at the importation of eastern horses from which the English thoroughbred, the ultimate racehorse, was bred. *Noble Brutes* was concerned with the impact of these animals on English culture. Landry described the new way of riding these animals, 'the English hunting seat', and viewed its development as a conscious break from European standards of horsemanship. The English emphasis was on fast, forward riding, not on the 'collection' required for riding in the *manége*. The book's emphasis on the break with the past that new horse breeding represented is useful to a thesis that argues for the role of the horse in the transformation in the sport of hunting.[55]

Conclusion

As this review has shown, there is hardly a lively ongoing debate about the transition that occurred in hunting practice and hunting prey between the years 1600 and 1850, or the relationship of this transition with changes in the landscape. Nevertheless, the available secondary sources do raise several interesting questions that this study can seek to answer: what were the different methods used for hunting deer and hunting foxes and what can these methods tell us about the landscape features required for each type of hunt? Can the transition be related to changes in the landscape? Did a decline in forests and change in parks lead to a significant decline in the numbers of deer, and can this be proved or disproved from the figures

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[55] D. Landry, *Noble Brutes: How Eastern Horses Transformed English Culture* (Baltimore, 2009).

available? Leading on from this question, is there actually evidence that foxhunting grew in popularity because there were no longer enough deer to chase? This study looks particularly at Northamptonshire in attempting to address these questions, but draws evidence from elsewhere in England too.

Sources

The nature of the subject matter means that the sources used are fairly eclectic in nature. There is no single large body of source material than can be used for the research.

Printed Sources

The *Calendars of State Papers* are a valuable source for general information about the administration of the royal forests and for the involvement of individual monarchs with hunting, and for how their hunting establishments were organized. Manwood's *A Treatise of the Lawes of the Forest*, originally published in 1598, gave an account of what the forest law was considered to be in the early modern period, and so provides a framework by which to interpret events in our forest areas.[56] Parliamentary papers have proved a useful source. A commission investigated the state of the royal forests in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, including Whittlewood, Salcey and Rockingham. Reports based on the surveys of the forests appeared in the *Commons Journal*. A select committee of the House of Lords produced a lengthy report on the state of the horse trade in 1873 (occasioned by a shortage of cavalry and artillery horses), which provides valuable information on the breeding and rearing of horses in the nineteenth century.

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[56] J. Manwood, *A Treatise of the Forrest Lawes* (London, 1598).

Transcriptions, copies and commentaries of some of the medieval manuscripts on hunting are now available in printed form. This makes works such as Gaston Phoebus *Livre de Chase* and Edward of Norwich's *Master of Game* readily accessible.[57] Books about hunting, horses and related activities, were produced in increasing numbers from the late sixteenth century onwards, and original copies of these books survive. These works have proved to be a rich source of information about both the practical considerations of hunting in the early modern period, and of contemporary attitudes towards it. Cockaine's *A Short Treatise of Hunting* (1591) was entirely concerned with the sport. Gervase Markham produced a plethora of works in the early seventeenth century concerned with hunting, horsemanship, and husbandry (many derived from the work of other authors). Richard Blome and Nicholas Cox produced separate works entitled *The Gentleman's Recreation* in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, and both gave lengthy attention to the subject of hunting.[58] This period also saw the appearance of works entirely dedicated to the subject of horses and horsemanship, such as Thomas Blundeville's *The fower chiefyst offices belongyng to horsemanshippe* (1566), Michael Baret's *An Hipponomie or the Vineyard of Horsemanship* (1618) and, most famously, the Duke of Newcastle's *A new method, and extraordinary invention, to dress horses, and work them according to nature* (1667).[59] These themes continued to be reflected in the eighteenth-century literature. In addition to reprints of the seventeenth-century

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[57] Gaston Phoebus, *Livre de Chase,* commentary by W. Schlag (London, 1998); Edward of Norwich, *The Master of Game*, W.A. and F.N. Ballie-Grohman (eds) (1909; Pensylvania, 2005 edn).

[58] T. Cockaine, *A Short Treatise of Hunting* (London, 1591); R. Blome, *The Gentleman's Recreation* (London, 1686); N. Cox, *The Gentleman's Recreation* (London, 1674).

[59] T. Blundeville, *The fower chiefyst offices belongyng to horsemanshippe* (London, 1566); M. Baret, *An Hipponomie or the Vineyard of Horsemanship (*London, 1618); W. Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, *A New Method, and Extraordinary Invention, to Dress Horses, and Work Them According to Nature* (London, 1667).

works already mentioned, new books on the subjects of hunting and horsemanship appeared. Some were completely original, such as Arthur Stringer's *The Experience'd Huntsman* (1714) and Peter Beckford's *Thoughts on Hunting in a Series of Familiar Letters to a Friend* (1781), and some drew heavily on earlier works, for example, Thomas Fairfax's *The Compleat Sportsman; or Country Gentleman's Recreation* (1758). It is a potential problem with the earlier sources on both hunting and horses that many are unashamedly derivative. The reader cannot always be confident that they are describing actual practice, rather than some ideal to which to aspire.

As we move on to look at 'modern' foxhunting, printed sources become much more prolific. The sport was so popular that there was an eager audience for writings on the subject. From the early nineteenth century onwards various authors published a range of works describing their outings with various packs of hounds around the country, these writers were invariably 'gentlemen', and many adopted pen names such as 'Nimrod' 'the Druid' and 'Brooksby'. Charles Apperley, writing as 'Nimrod', was the earliest of these writers. He became the hunting correspondent of *The Sporting Magazine*, and for a while made a good living from this occupation. Later he fell out with the magazine's owners, and, running out of money, was forced to flee his creditors and live in Calais. Apperley published books based on his experience in the hunting field and on the race track, some derived from his contributions to the magazine. These contain not only information on hunting methods, but, critically for this study, descriptions of the landscape over which they hunted. His example was followed by other writers, who continued to provide hunting commentary throughout the nineteenth century. Because Northamptonshire was part of the venerated shire hunting country, many of these works covered the

county, or at least the 'fashionable' parts of it. Some masters of hounds felt moved to

join in the literary success of these writers, which gave rise to books such as Cook's

Observations on Fox Hunting and Delmé Radcliffe's *The Noble Science.*[60] Other

nineteenth-century authors concerned themselves with producing 'histories' of the

particular hunts that they followed. Thus we have works such as Nethercote's *The*

Pytchley Hunt, Past and Present and Dale's *The History of the Belvoir Hunt.*[61]

Another source for information on modern foxhunting is nineteenth-century fiction.

Authors such as Whyte-Melville and Surtees wrote novels that were entirely

concerned with hunting, while Trollope included detailed hunting scenes in many of

his novels. The depiction of foxhunting proved to be profitable for nineteenth-

century artists, and so we have visual sources in the form of prints and paintings to

consult.

Although horses did not quite rival hunting as a popular subject, the

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did see some original works produced on the

subject, including Osmer's *A Dissertation on Horses* (1756) and *A Treatise On The*

Diseases And Lameness Of Horses (1766), Lawrence's *History and Delineation of*

the Horse (1809), and Youatt's *The Horse, with a Treatise on Draught* (1831).[62] The

burgeoning popularity of horse racing resulted in various calendars of races being

produced, which not only recorded the races being run and their results, but also the

breeding of the equine participants. Weatherby's produced the first thoroughbred

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[60] J. Cook, *Observations on Fox Hunting* (1826; London, 1922 edn); F.P. Delmé Radcliffe, *The Noble Science* (London, 1839).

[61] H.O. Nethercote, *The Pytchley Hunt Past and Present* (London, 1888); T.F. Dale, *The History of the Belvoir Hunt* (London, 1899).

[62] W. Osmer, *A Dissertation on Horses* (London, 1756); W. Osmer, *A Treatise on the Diseases and Lameness of Horses* (London, 1766); J. Lawrence, *History and Delineation of the Horse* (London, 1809); W. Youatt, *The Horse, with a Treatise on Draught* (London, 1831).

stud book in 1791, tracing lineage of thoroughbred horses back to the late

seventeenth century.

Sources Not in Print

A range of records held at Northampton Record Office (NRO) and the

National Archives (NA) contain information of use to this study.

The NRO holds many estate records. Particularly helpful in this context are

records of the Grafton Estate, which relate to the forests of Whittlewood and Salcey,

the running of the Grafton hunt, and to the breeding of racehorses, all of which are

important to this thesis. The Brudenell, Finch Hatton and Westmoreland records

provide information about their interests in Rockingham forest. Together with some

of the nineteenth-century Broke of Oakley records, they illustrate what was often a

contentious relationship between the holders of forest lands. This often caused a

close interest to be taken in the subject of the forest law and the history of the forest.

It is of note that the disputes in this period were between rival families, and not

generally between holders of forest lands and the Crown.

Foxhunters often kept diaries of their exploits, some of which have found

their way into the NRO. Henry Dryden was a follower of hounds, while Charles

King kept a 'Chace Book' as part of his professional life as a huntsman. A whole

series of Althorp Chace Books cover the period from 1773 to 1808, and provide

insight into the early days of what became the Pytchley Hunt. The correspondence of

Herbert Hay Langham gives information about the running of the same hunt a

century later. The diaries generally are not as helpful as published works on

foxhunting. The authors are writing for themselves, not a wider public, so there is no

attempt to explain the technicalities of the hunt, or give detailed descriptions of the landscape over which it took place.

A number of maps are held that are potentially useful to the study. These include maps of forest areas, estate maps and enclosure maps for individual parishes within the forest areas. The earliest map of Whittlewood dates from 1608, and shows the royal forest in some detail. Similarly early maps survive for portions of Rockingham. The survey of the royal forests commissioned by parliament in the last quarter of the eighteenth century produced detailed maps of Whittlewood and Salcey, but the Crown interest in Rockingham was so dispersed that the commissioners did not consider it worth the expense of producing a map.

Some of the forest records supply information on the number of horses kept on the forests' common grazing in the eighteenth century. For Whittlewood, figures from annual drifts survive, with details on the numbers of horses and cattle depastured in the forest. From Rockingham there are records of the grazing for horses associated with various forest offices. The take up of grazing rights for horses by commoners, and its value, has not really figured in analyses of forest economies (unlike the rights for cattle), so these figures might represent a previously unexploited source. Similarly, the information provided by stud books from the Grafton estate, which give details of local residents using the services of the Grafton stallions in the second half of the eighteenth century, do not seem to have previously been used in any analysis of the significance of horse breeding.

Chapter 2
Early Modern Deer Hunting

The transition that this thesis traces began at a time when the pursuit of the deer was still considered to be the most worthy form of hunting, and the iconic landscape for this pursuit was royal forest or private park. Accordingly the concerns of this chapter are the forests and parks of Northamptonshire, the methods and techniques of the early modern deer hunt, and the relationship between the two.

The Northamptonshire Landscape

Northamptonshire lies firmly within that area of England described as the 'central province' by Roberts and Wrathmell. There has been broad agreement among landscape historians as to the defining characteristics of the area that ran in a band north east to south west, from the North Sea to the English Channel. It is the landscape of the medieval open fields, overlain in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries by the straight, thin hawthorn hedges of parliamentary enclosure. This is the landscape typified as 'champion' or open.[1] Many early writers followed Camden's example in describing Northamptonshire's open and populous nature in terms of the number of churches you could see from a single vantage point.[2] Morton went so far as to recommend certain viewing points, the best being between Great Billing and Overstone, from which you could see forty-five churches (including two in Buckinghamshire).[3] The county is characterized by gentle undulations, rather than precipitous climbs; to see so many distant churches from a single vantage point

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[1] B. Roberts and S. Wrathmell, *Region and Place: a study of English rural settlement* (London, 2002).

[2] W. Camden, *Britannia or a Geographical Description of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1722), p. 511.

[3] J. Morton, *Natural History of Northamptonshire* (London, 1712), p. 22.

would require a landscape of open fields, with few trees and hedges to block the view.

A large swathe of Northamptonshire most definitely did not conform to the expectation of champion countryside, however. This was the band of royal forest that traversed the county from south west to north east. Although the bounds of the forests were much reduced by 1600, Rockingham, Whittlewood and Salcey still occupied a significant portion of the county, and they still contained a significant area of wood and wood pasture (as did the adjoining disafforested areas). Northamptonshire had a contemporary reputation of being a tree-less landscape, but early writers were keen to defend it from this, which Norden reckoned did 'most of all to blemish the shire'. He observed that many places were 'well stor'd', especially around the forests.[4] A century later, Morton concurred: in woodland resources, the county was 'not so destitute as 'tis commonly imagined.'[5]

According to Roberts and Wrathmell's model, a woodland area could expect quite a different development to a champion area. The process could be summarized thus: the average inhabitants of the woodland areas might have comparatively smaller landholdings than those of the champion areas, but they had access to more resources in the form of rights to wood and grazing. There was also more free tenure and greater independence from manorial control. Woodland dwellers were able to make a reasonable living by mixing agriculture with crafts and industry. Land that was held was more likely to be held in severalty, free from communal regulation of cultivation, and woodland settlements were more likely to be dispersed than nucleated. Where woodland areas lay within a royal forest, additional factors came

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[4] J. Norden, *Speculi Britannie Pars Altera or a Delineation of Northamptonshire* (London, 1720), p. 39. (This was originally prepared in 1591.)

[5] Morton, *Natural History*, p. 12.

into play. Even if the woodland lay in private hands, the owners were restricted in how they could exploit the wood and the timber. Anyone attempting the cultivation of arable crops, or indeed unenclosed coppice, in or near the forest was subject, without recourse, to the predations of the protected royal deer. Royal interest in preserving beasts for the chase, meanwhile, was tempered by the desire to raise revenue through fines for assarting and other infringements of the forest law.

Our examination of the Northamptonshire landscape needs to assess where the county fits the Roberts and Wrathmell model, and where it departs from it. The model builds on the work of landscape historians of the preceding forty years. These studies tended to dwell on the role of the countryside as a unit of economic production. Leisure and sport as shaping forces were considered as secondary, if they were considered at all. How far would the results of examining the landscape of Northamptonshire, and how it developed between 1600 and 1850, be affected by looking at it in terms of recreation as well as agricultural production?

Early Modern Deer Hunting

Before looking at the royal forests of Northamptonshire, and their provision of a hunting landscape, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the methods and techniques of hunting deer. Who hunted deer, and how did they do it? In answering this question evidence is drawn from all of England, not from Northamptonshire alone.

This is difficult territory: there was not a simple, straightforward set of rules that regulated who could hunt what and where. Instead we have an overlapping, and sometimes contradictory, set of rights, with new sets of rules and means of enforcement arising as old ones declined. Added to this there is the problem that

there are about as many different interpretations of these rights as there are books that attempt to define them. At this point a (greatly simplified) narrative of evolving hunting entitlement up to the beginning of the study period might prove helpful.

The starting point is the Norman Conquest and the beginning of the forest laws. Forests were vast tracts of land where hunting was reserved for the king, his huntsmen and those to whom he granted (usually limited) hunting rights. Within the forest no one was allowed to hunt certain animals, most notably deer, without the permission of the king, even on their own land. Inside and outside the forests the Crown also had royal warrens: areas where it reserved the hunting of the lesser animals (hares, foxes, rabbits and such like). It is worth pointing out that, outside royal forests and warrens, the Crown believed that it had the right to hunt anywhere in the kingdom regardless of actual ownership. The real question was who else was allowed to hunt there. This point is often missed: hunting rights hinged more on exclusivity than permissibility.

What hunting rights did the king's subjects have? The great magnates of the realm might have chases which were large and unenclosed. These were, in effect, private forests where they could reserve hunting to themselves or grant rights as they saw fit. Ownership of a chase gave the magnates exclusive rights to hunt over the land of others in the same way that the Crown held that right in a forest. (Historians often make the distinction that forests were royal and chases were not, but this situation is complicated by the fact that there were 'forests' in private hands and 'chases' in royal ones.)

The Crown might also grant rights of free warren both inside and outside the forest. Free warren gave its holder exclusive rights to hunt the lesser animals within their demesne land. Exclusivity is an important part of this franchise because without

free warren anyone could hunt on the demesne without the owner's leave, punishable only under the law of trespass. Increasingly the monarchy and the wealthy and powerful would make themselves deer parks: enclosed hunting reserves for the enjoyment of themselves and their guests. The Crown supposedly had to grant permission to empark, but this requirement was by no means always observed.

All these private reserves were to some extent 'mini-forests'. The holder of the franchise could prevent anyone else from hunting, and, indeed, pass this franchise on to their heirs. The difference was that there was no dedicated legal system to enforce their rights. Redress against offenders had to be sought through the common law courts. Needless to say, the Crown exploited the ability to grant hunting franchises in the various ways described in order to make money. It is also worth emphasizing once more that in granting these franchises the Crown was, in effect, claiming control of hunting in the whole realm, not just in the royal forests.

Outside of the forests, chases, parks and warrens anyone could, theoretically, hunt anywhere. But in 1389, in the wake of the Peasants' Revolt, the first game law was passed. This stipulated a property qualification of 40 shillings a year for anyone wishing to hunt, even on their own land. Successive game laws tended to make property qualifications stricter. The game law enacted in 1610 required different qualifications for hunting deer and rabbits, for hunting pheasants or partridges, or for possessing hunting dogs and nets. In all, this was part of a process that sought to limit the pursuit of game to gentlemen and noblemen.[6]

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[6] For more details on hunting rights and game laws, see R. Grant, *The Royal Forests of England* (Stroud, 1991), pp. 10-32 and P.B. Munsche, *Gentlemen and Poachers: the English Game Laws 1671-1831* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 8-14.

Who Hunted Deer?

The description above summarizes the situation up until the start of the study

period and tells us who, in theory, could hunt and where there could do it. But this is

not quite the same as who did actually hunt. The forests had come into existence to

act as game reserves and to provide sport for the kings and queens of England, but

the popularity of such royal sport tended to wax and wane with individual monarchs,

and this in turn could affect their policies towards hunting rights and towards the

forests and chases of England.

The beginning of our period sees the death of Elizabeth and the accession of

James. It is part of the 'lore' of many books on the history of hunting that, with one

or two regrettable exceptions, all English monarchs have been ardent devotees of the

chase. Opinions on Elizabeth differ, however. Some portrayed her as a veritable

Diana and others suggested that she was at best lukewarm to the sport other than as a

political tool.[7] The ambiguity seems to arise partly from differing attitudes to the

type of hunting in which she took part. Elizabethan stag and buck hunts tended to be

elaborate park-based pageants, which some maintained were staged more to impress

foreign ambassadors and other visiting dignitaries than to satisfy any 'genuine'

sporting instincts. Even while Mary was still on the throne, the Princess Elizabeth

could inspire elaborate hunting rituals to be laid on for her. In April 1557 Elizabeth

was escorted from Hatfield to Enfield Chase by a retinue of twelve ladies 'clothed in

white satin' and twenty yeomen in green, all on horseback, in order that she might

'hunt the hart'. On entering the chase she was met by fifty archers in scarlet boots

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[7] Rackham had her as 'the mightiest hunter of all English sovereigns', while Pettit believed Tresham's assertion that Elizabeth was not interested in hunting and suggested the Privy Coucil had to look after the interests of the deer in view of Queen's lack of real concern. O. Rackham, *Trees and Woodland in the British Landscape: the Complete History of Britain's Trees, Woods and Hedgerows* (1976; London, 2001 edn), p. 159; P.A.J. Pettitt, *The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire: a Study in their Economy 1558-1714* (Gateshead, 1968), p. 44.

and yellow caps, armed with gilded bows.[8] Sabretache, with the eyes of a mid-

twentieth century foxhunter, had Elizabethan hunts as nothing more than 'colossal

shoots with the crossbow'.[9] James I himself attributed the poor state of game

preservation on the queen's lack of interest; he blamed this on her age and sex and

'having no posteritie' making her 'lesse carefull of conservation of that kind of

Royaltie, which her progenitors kings of this Realme had maintained'.[10] But there are

accounts of Elizabeth hunting deer 'by force' early in her reign; the method preferred

by James himself.[11]

        With James there is no doubt as to his attitude towards hunting. His journey

from Scotland to claim the English throne in 1603 took the form of a prolonged

hunting expedition, with frequent stopovers to pursue stag, buck or hare.[12] Some

portions of the journey were made more enjoyable for the new king by the laying of

a trail with a 'tame deer' so James could hunt along the road as he travelled south.[13]

So many of the early entries in the *Calendars of State Papers* for his reign were

concerned with warrants for the appointment of hunt staff and for the preservation of

deer and game, that the reader could be forgiven for thinking that James regarded his

new kingdom principally as a vast hunting ground. Early in his reign James issued

directives concerning the deer in the forests of Northamptonshire. In August 1603 he

appointed Thomas, Lord Burghley (later first Earl of Exeter), keeper of Rockingham

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[8] J. Nichols, *Progresses, Public Processes &c of Queen Elizabeth*, 3 vols (London, 1823), 1, pp. 11, 17.

[9] 'Sabretache' (Barrow), *Monarchy and the Chase* (London, 1948), p. 67.

[10] 'Proclamation against Hunters, Stealers and Killers of Deare within any of the King's Majesties Forests, Chases and Parks' made September 1609, reproduced in E.P. Shirley, *Some Account of English Deer Parks* (London, 1867), pp. 44-5.

[11] Nichols, *Progresses, Queen Elizabeth*, 1, p. 435.

[12] A. MacGregor 'The Household out of doors: the Stuart court and the animal kingdom' in E. Cruickshanks (ed.), *The Stuart Courts* (Stroud, 2000), p. 86.

[13] J. Nichols, *The Progresses, Processions and Magnificent Festivities of King James the First*, 4 vols (London, 1828), 1, p. 139.

forest, with particular instructions for protecting the 'much decayed and wasted' game and deer there.[14]

James's passion for hunting did not noticeably decline as his reign progressed. In 1624 Secretary Conway wrote to Lord Brooke, explaining that 'the French Ambassador and the Household have taken up all the time the King could spare from hunting.'[15] But while his ministers might pity him for how matters of state interrupted his pleasures, not everyone shared their sympathy. The interference with the business of running the state was remarked on by a number of foreign ambassadors. In 1606 the Venetian ambassador commented that the 'perpetual occupation with country pursuits' though 'possibly not distasteful to those who hold the reins of government' was 'extremely annoying to those who don't'. The same diplomat informed us that the king's subjects were hardly more favourably disposed to their ruler's obsession: 'The people too desire to see their sovereign. The discontent has reached such a pitch that the other day there was affixed to the door of the Privy Chamber a general complaint of the King'.[16] James clearly did not follow the advice he had given his eldest son that, whether hunting or hawking, he should 'observe that moderation that ye slip not the houres appointed for your affaires.'[17]

Next to the monarchy the group most commonly associated with hunting, and particularly with the hunting of deer, was the aristocracy. Accompanying the monarch as he or she hunted was a duty expected of the court aristocracy, and Elizabeth's elaborate hunting spectacles could hardly have taken place without their support. Even when the queen could not personally be present she could rely on her

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[14] *CSPD Addenda 1530-1625*, p. 427; *CSPD 1603-1610,* pp. 32, 161.

[15] *CSPD 1623-1635*, p. 295.

[16] Cited in MacGregor 'The Household out of doors', p. 86.

[17] King James, *Basilicon Doron* (1599; Menston, 1969 edn), p. 145.

lords to host hunting extravaganza to keep the visitors amused. An account by the

private secretary of Frederick, Duke of Wirtemberg, related how his master had been

entertained after visiting the queen at Reading in 1592: 'It had pleased her Majesty to

depute an old distinguished English lord … to amuse him [the Duke] with shooting

and hunting red-deer'.[18]

James also relied on the accompaniment of an enthusiastic aristocratic

coterie. Another Venetian diplomat described a hunt in 1618 where the King was

accompanied by 'a number of cavaliers riding the quickest horses'. After personally

slitting the deer's throat, his hands covered in blood, James was 'wont to regale some

of his nobility by touching their faces. This blood it is unlawful to wash off, until it

fall off its own accord'. Any courtier lucky enough to receive this treatment was

considered to have 'a certificate of his sovereign's cordial good will'.[19]

The nobility also hunted of their own accord. John Smyth, in his *Lives of the*

Berkeleys, wrote about the dedication to the chase of Henry, Lord Berkeley (whose

life began under Henry VIII and ended under James). When living in London with

his mother as a young man, Berkeley occupied himself with 'daily hunting in the

Grays Inne fields and in all those parts towards Islington and Heygate with his

hounds'.[20] Later he spent every summer in 'a progress of buck hunting' around his

various parks from Leicestershire to Gloucestershire, a practice he kept up for some

thirty years.[21]

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[18] Cited in Shirley, *Deer Parks,* p. 40.

[19] Cited in MacGregor, 'The Household out of doors', p. 99.

[20] J. Smyth, *The Berkeley Manuscripts: Lives of the Berkeleys*, J. MacLean (ed.), 3 vols, (Gloucester, 1883), 2, p. 281.

[21] Smyth, *Berkeleys*, 2, p. 285.

There are numerous examples of the Crown granting warrants to the nobility to allow them to hunt in royal preserves. In our study area, for example, a warrant issued to John, Lord Mordaunt (later first Earl of Peterborough) in July 1623 permitted him to hunt and kill a specified number of deer in the forests of Rockingham, Whittlewood, Salcey and the parks of Grafton and Ampthill.[22] The aristocracy kept their own packs of hounds and hunted both on their own lands and in royal forest and park. The hunting of deer was clearly an important part of the aristocratic lifestyle.

So far we have drawn a picture of hunting which accords with the expectation that hunting was a pastime of the privileged, with the pursuit of deer and game restricted to the monarchy and those that the king or queen authorized to hunt. But we should be wary of this interpretation, and contrast the situation in England with that in France, and other parts of Europe, where hunting was restricted to the monarchy and the court aristocracy. Carr reckoned that the right to hunt had, in fact, spread steadily downwards and quoted *Moryson's Itinerary* claiming that, at the end of the sixteenth century, 'every gentleman of five hundred or a thousand pounds rent by the yeere hath a Parke'.[23]

This brings us on to the consideration of such gentlemen. To what extent did English gentlemen hunt? Deer parks were, in many ways, an aspirational statement: a means of demonstrating one's wealth and status by setting aside a large acreage of ground mainly for entertainment and pleasure. Parks also demonstrated the gentry's ambitions to imitate their social superiors' interest in hunting. Not all contemporaries approved of the fashion: *Holinshed's Chronicles* bemoaned the amount of early

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[22] *CSPD 1623-1625*, p. 11.

[23] R. Carr, *English Foxhunting: a History* (1976; London, 1986 edn), p. 19.

sixteenth-century land 'employed upon that vayne comodotie which bringeth no manner of gaine or profit to the owner', claiming that some twentieth part of the realm 'is employed upon Deere and Coneys already'.[24]

There is ample literary evidence that hunting was considered to be a fit and proper pastime for a gentleman. As described in Chapter 1, many books were published in the early modern period which were either entirely concerned with hunting or had large sections dedicated to the sport. There were two separate works entitled *The Gentleman's Recreation*; neither was entirely dedicated to hunting, but both gave it prominence as a gentlemanly pastime. These works, and similar ones, were revised and reprinted into the eighteenth century.[25]

We should also note that hunting was not an exclusively rural pastime. It was perfectly possible to be an urban resident and participate. When Henry, Lord Berkeley hunted while staying with his mother in London he had 'the company of many gentlemen of the Innes of Court'. Smyth also adds, rather intriguingly, 'and others of lower condition that daily accompanied him'.[26] This leads us on to consider another point: whether a passion for hunting had spread yet further down the social scale. Theoretically anybody below a certain level would have been forbidden from hunting legitimately by the forest laws or by the game laws, and this has been taken as evidence by some that it was a pursuit of the elite. But such an interpretation ignores the need for many people to help out with the process of hunting, some performing quite menial tasks. Yeomen could also share a common culture with gentlemen because their sons frequently became servants in the households of peers

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[24] W. Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Ireland and Scotland* (London, 1587), p. 205.

[25] N. Cox, *The Gentleman's Recreation* (London, 1674); R. Blome, *The Gentleman's Recreation* (London, 1686); G. Markham, *Countrey Contentments* (1615; New York, 1973 edn).

[26] Smyth, *Berkeleys*, 2, p. 281.

and gentlemen. Their role required them to become proficient in the occupations and pastimes of their masters, and able to entertain master and guests with table talk on such matters. In the *Lives of the Berkeleys*, Smyth reproduces the instructions for how the gentlemen and yeomen servants of the household were expected to conduct themselves.[27] In addition to household servants there would be specialist huntsmen employed and other, more lowly, staff to look after the hounds and the horses.

We get some idea of the personnel required for hunting establishment from the records of the royal buckhounds. In 1604 the officers of the privy buckhounds comprised the master, two sergeants, eleven yeomen prickers, six grooms, and one waggoner. In addition to the privy pack, the royal hunting establishment included a hereditary buckhound pack, a harthound pack, otterhound pack, and pack of harriers. There were also establishments for keeping of the toils, which were nets and other contraptions required for hunting. The *Calendars of State Papers* contain many references to the appointments and remuneration of hunt servants. They also allow us to trace incidences of promotion. For example, Richard Brass was appointed yeoman pricker in November 1603, and in October 1607 became a sergeant.[28] Robert Rayne was one of five yeomen prickers added to the privy pack shortly after James's accession. By July 1609 he was a sergeant and in receipt of a commission to hunt in any grounds, parks, forests, and chases belonging to the king or his subjects in order to train the hounds.[29] We get some clue as to the social standing of the staff of the

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[27] This touched on conduct in the house and without, including the following two example strictures: 'That noe gentleman come into the great chamber without his cloake or livery coate; And when there are strangers, to bee all or most part in the dining chamber after dinner and supper, to shew themselves and doe such service as cause shall require', 'When the lady shall ride abroad, the yeoman usher to discharge his duty Riding abroad in causing the yeomen appointed to ride to keep togeather, without tarrying behind their company and scattering abrode; And when they come through any Town, the yeoman usher to place them by two and two orderly.' Smyth, *Berkeleys*, 2, pp. 365-6.

[28] *CSPD 1603-1610*, pp. 53, 374.

[29] *CSPD 1603-1610*, p. 526.

privy pack from their listing in the pack's 1604 expense accounts: the master was an

esquire, as was the sergeant, but grooms and yeoman prickers lacked this distinction.

The master, Thomas Tyringham, was knighted soon after.[30] The privy buckhounds

must be considered one of the most elite hunting establishments in the country, but

we can glean some insights into the positions of professional hunters in other

households. When a new steward was appointed to the Berkeley household the

huntsmen and falconers were explicitly excluded from the instructions the steward

was given for 'displacing whomsoever he found in his house disorderly'.[31]

Outside the formal hunting establishments the opportunities to participate

could spread down the social scale in other ways. Some tenants owed their lords

hunting services as part of their tenancy. The customary tenants of Sutton Coldfield

owed labour services including two days deer driving for every yardland they held,

and the burgesses of Bishops Castle were required to drive deer three times a year or

find a substitute.[32] Lacking first-hand accounts from those drafted in to help, we have

no way of knowing whether such hunting duty was regarded as an onerous burden or

a bit of light relief (the lucky tenants of Sutton Coldfield were given venison as an

additional reward for their labour), but at least we do know that this was another way

in which people took part.

In considering who did hunt around 1600 we have worked our way down

from monarch to peasant, and have considered legal participation in hunting whether

under the jurisdiction of the forest laws or the game laws. People often disregarded

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[30] J.P. Hore, *The History of the Royal Buckhounds* (Newmarket, 1895), pp. 98, 114.

[31] Smyth, *Berkeleys*, 2, p. 364.

[32] Cited in R.B. Manning, *Hunters and Poachers: a Social and Cultural History of Unlawful Hunting in England, 1485-1640* (Oxford, 1993), p. 18.

the law, however, and we should also consider the question of who stole deer as well as who hunted them.

Illicit Hunting

The *Calendars of State Papers* furnish examples of deer stealing in our Northamptonshire area of study as well as elsewhere. In June 1609 the King wrote to Sir Christopher Hatton complaining of the state of game in Benefield (Rockingham forest) 'being much spoiled by unlawful hunting'.[33] In July 1622 a warrant was made for the Lieutenant of Whittlewood forest to 'search out suspected persons who, in warlike manner, with pistols, swords and bucklers, made spoil of the game in Grafton Parks'.[34] Who were these illicit hunters? In his work on poaching Manning suggested that people from all social groups were involved. He related the range of people to the range of motives for taking part, outlining four major reasons: hunting to provide the commercial market with venison, hunting as an expression of violent feuds between gentry and noble factions, 'skimmingtons' in which a local community would attempt to punish possessors of game rights whom they considered to have overstepped the mark in some way, and hunting as an expression of discontent by those who considered themselves disenfranchised of some existing right to hunt.[35] Manning also made the point that the hunting of deer was a cooperative venture; many poaching gangs comprised men of mixed social standing, often led by a gentleman. Can we find evidence to support Manning's assertions?

The history of the Berkeley family provides some accounts of hunting as an expression of feud and illustrates the mixed nature of such gangs. A dispute over the

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[33] *CSPD 1603-1610*, p. 518.

[34] *CSPD 1619-1623*, p. 432.

[35] R.B. Manning, *Hunters and Poachers: a Social and Cultural History of Unlawful Hunting in England, 1485-1640* (Oxford, 1993), p. 2.

descent of a manor led to an almost comical episode between Henry, Lord

Berkeley's mother, Anne, and his uncle, Maurice. Maurice, together with his brother-

in-law and a 'riotous company of servants and others', entered Anne's park at Yate

and set about wantonly destroying her deer. They decided to end a good night's work

by setting fire to a great hayrick, but, unbeknown to them, there was 'another

company of hunters - in the same park stealing also of this ladies deere'. Perceiving

Maurice's band to be the stronger of the two, the other poachers had hidden

themselves in the hayrick. On overhearing Maurice's incendiary plans, they decided

their best course was to flee. Maurice's band mistook them for keepers and 'fled as

fast another way'. This episode rather neatly illustrates a group out for revenge

encountering another group presumably out for profit or enjoyment.[36] In our study

area, a similar, but lower key, expression of rivalry caused Edward, Lord

Rockingham, to attempt to hunt the Lawn of Benefield without a warrant in the late

seventeenth century. Lady Hatton, writing to inform her husband of the incident,

reported that 'everyone says it was done as an affront to you'.[37] Near to Whittlewood

forest, the seventeenth century saw a feud over the enlargement of Stowe park that

involved the Temple family and their servants in confrontation with the Dayrell

family and theirs. Episodes in the 1630s and 1640s saw the killing of deer in the park

by intruders, and the Temple's attempt to prevent deer that had escaped from the

park being hunted in the purlieus. Beaver used this conflict to illustrate the complex

interrelationship between a politics of honour, status and reputation in this period,

and the role that hunting played in the drama.[38]

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[36] Smyth, *Berkeleys*, 2, p. 268.

[37] NRO, FH4389.

[38] D.C. Beaver, *Hunting and the Politics of Violence before the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 32-54.

Further illustrations of deer stealing behaviour can be drawn from Northamptonshire. Events in Brigstock in Rockingham forest in 1603 demonstrate how people might have expressed their disapproval of some lordly action while simultaneously stocking their larders. Keepers of Robert Cecil's park at Brigstock were intent on pulling down the park pale and driving the deer into the forest. The villagers of Brigstock and Stanion considered this to be a bad idea (presumably mindful of the damage to their crops these extra deer were likely to inflict as well as the loss of common rights that they held in the park) and stood upon the pale to keep the deer back. Nevertheless 400 or 500 deer were put into the forest and so the villagers tried to console themselves with venison. The people assembled apparently killed nine or ten deer and 'carried them by force to their own houses'. The list of deer stealers in the state papers included an underkeeper in Rockingham forest and a sometime keeper in Brigstock park. An incident of gamekeepers turned poachers, perhaps.[39]

The Northampton Quarter Session records provide an example of an individual who killed a fallow deer in Whittlewood, but who was too poor to pay his fine. In 1699 Henry Jerome of Paulerspury was fined £30. Of this, £10 was to go to the poor, £10 to the informer and £10 to Captain Rider (who was the dowager Queen Catherine's tenant in her Whittlewood estates). But the constable was unable to recover goods to the value of £30 and so the unfortunate Henry was remitted to gaol. There is no indication whether he acted alone, or with other, maybe wealthier, people.[40]

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[39] *CSPD Addenda 1530-1625*, p. 317. The CSPD wrongly dates these occurrences to 1590.

[40] NRO, QSR1/173/24. For more examples of poaching in Northampton shire parks and forests, see page 109.

These examples of deer stealing serve to largely confirm Manning's arguments about the range of people involved in such activities, and the range of motives that drove their actions.

Hunting Methods

Before we can explore the relationship of hunting with the landscape, we need to understand what people were actually doing. Hunting in this period was a diverse process: the methods employed depended not only on what was being hunted, but on where, when and why.

In early modern England, two species of deer were considered to be worthy quarry: the red deer and the fallow deer (the roe deer had been hunted historically but its pursuit was not widespread or popular by 1600). There were distinct hunting seasons that were recognized and respected, at least by those hunting within the law. Male deer (red deer stags and fallow deer bucks) were hunted in the summer, generally from mid-June to mid-September. At this time the stags and bucks were fully antlered and in prime condition (described as 'in grease'). Hunting ceased as they entered the rut in the autumn. Female deer (red deer hinds and fallow does) were hunted over the winter. This ceased when the females produced calves and fauns, and during this so-called 'fence month', which occurred immediately before the opening of the male deer season, no deer were hunted at all. The question of 'when' a deer was hunted is likely to determine the sex of the deer being pursued.

As to 'where', the two principal locations were the forest and the deer park. We have already mentioned the popularity of the deer park in the sixteenth century. Private deer parks could be small while royal deer parks could be very large indeed. There were some 1,000 acres of parkland for Henry VIII to enjoy at Grafton in

Northamptonshire; at around 4,500 acres Clarendon Park in Wiltshire was reputedly the largest in the land.[41] But how did hunting in an enclosed space of the deer park differ from hunting 'at large' in the forest, where many more acres were available for the chase?

So far we have largely concentrated on hunting as a source of recreation and entertainment, but it had a practical side too. Venison was both a valuable food source and a valued gift. The Crown regularly sent huntsmen around their forests and parks to harvest the royal deer for these purposes. James's state papers give numerous examples of warrants being issued to permit such hunting. Similarly other owners of deer parks would have their servants take deer as required. We need to establish how the methods of taking deer related to the 'why' of their being taken.

How can we find out how men pursued stag or buck, hind or doe whether in forest or park, for fun or for meat? Fortunately hunting has always been a popular subject in literature. Several notable medieval treatises on hunting survive, both from Europe and from England. These include the *Livre de Chase* in the late fourteenth century and Edward, Duke of York's *Master of Game* in the early fifteenth century. At the end of that century came Dame Juliana Berner's *Boke of St. Albans*, which was concerned with hunting, hawking and fishing. We have already discussed some of the later works on hunting produced in the sixteenth century by Gascoigne and Cockaine and in the seventeenth century by the writers such as Markham, Blome and Cox. The subject of hunting was also likely to make an appearance in contemporary

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[41] *VCH Northamptonshire*, 5, p. 20; T. Beaumont James and C. Gerrard, *Clarendon: Landscape of Kings* (Macclesfield, 2007), p. 10.

plays. Hunting figured largely in Shakespeare, and this has spawned a lively debate on the bard's own attitude to the chase.[42]

It was generally agreed that the highest form of hunting available to the Englishman in the late medieval and early modern period was the pursuit of the mature red deer stag (called a hart to distinguish him from younger and less worthy quarry). The hart should be hunted at large *par force des chiens*. The early modern sources follow the medieval ones in dividing such a hunt into distinct stages: the harbouring (or finding) of the hart, the rousing of him, the chase, the standing at bay, and finally the reward of the hounds (known as the *curée*).[43] Each stage had its own special rituals and considerations.

The importance of selecting the exact animal to be hunted should not be understated. The aim was to find a 'warrantable' hart, that is, one mature and impressive enough to command attention. The sources from Phoebus to Blome largely agree on the methods used to locate such a quarry. The men who were to harbour the hart set off at dawn and took a special hound called a lymer with them (the nearest modern equivalent being a bloodhound). Ideally the searchers would be able to observe the stags as they grazed in the open, select a likely one, and then follow him back to his lair. They would be aided in this quest by their knowledge of how to sex and age a deer through his hoofprints (slots), his droppings (fumes or fewmets), and the marks he left when rubbing his antlers on trees. The harbouring served the triple purpose of finding a suitable animal, locating his hiding place and

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[42] See E. Berry, *Shakespeare and the Hunt* (Cambridge, 2002) and C. Fitter, 'The slain deer and politic imperium: As You Like It and Andrew Marvell's "Nymph Complaining for the Death of Her Fawn"', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 98 (1999), pp. 193-218.

[43] Edward of Norwich, *The Master of Game*, W.A. and F.N. Ballie-Grohman (eds) (1909; Pensylvania, 2005 edn), p. 29.

accustoming the lymer to his scent.[44] The whole technique relied on the hart being a

creature of habit. Blome observed that, during the hunting season, the hart 'retires

from feeding back to his layre, about sun-rising; and for the most part, if not always,

to one and the same place'.[45]

The next stage was the rousing of the hart from his lair. This was

accomplished by the lymerer and his hound accompanied, at some distance, by other

unmounted men bringing couples of running hounds. In the meantime more couples

of hounds would be posted with their handlers in 'relays' along the line it was

predicted the hart would take. The company would keep in touch using horn calls,

and when the hunters saw the hart break (and provided they were happy that it was

the right animal) a signal was given for the handlers of the running hounds to let their

hounds slip. The next stage, the chase, then began as the hounds picked up the scent

and set off in pursuit of the hart. The mounted huntsmen followed the running

hounds at much greater speed and helped to keep the hart to his course. If all

proceeded according to plan, the relays would let the extra hounds go just after the

hart passed in order to quicken the chase and reinvigorate the pack if it was flagging.

Eventually, it was hoped, the hart would be run to exhaustion and turn and

stand at bay. Blome suggested that, if it was early in the season and the hart's antlers

were tender, he be allowed to stand until all the hounds arrived as he was unlikely to

gore those that held him. If later in the season, the hart should be despatched quickly,

by sword or crossbow, lest he injured or killed some of the hounds.[46]

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[44] Edward, *Master of Game*, pp. 148-51; Blome, *Gentleman's Recreation*, p. 82; Gaston Phoebus, *Livre de Chase,* commentary by W. Schlag (London, 1998), pp. 41-5. Phoebus suggested the hart be harboured the day before the hunt, while Edward recommended the morning of the hunt.

[45] Blome, *Gentleman's Recreation*, p. 82.

[46] Blome, *Gentleman's Recreation*, p. 84.

Once the hart was dead, there followed a great 'undoing' as, with due ceremony, the hart was butchered where he lay. The portions were allocated according to a defined custom, with the lymer and running hounds being rewarded with the '*curée*' – portions of the carcass laid out on the animal's hide. The evening might see a feast in which participants in the hunt could relive the day's pleasures in their retelling.[47]

There are several points to note about the progress of the hunt, as described by our sources. We have already alluded to the importance of selecting the animal to be hunted, and pursuing that exact animal. The area in which the animal was to be hunted and the course it was desired that the hunt should take were, as far as possible, both planned in advance, taking advantage of local knowledge and an understanding of how deer behaved (for example, preferring to run with the wind, and liking to retreat to water).[48] The location might be a forest or a park.[49] The role of the hounds was paramount; medieval sources gave no consideration to the horse. Blome complained that, in his day, it was the horse more often than the hound that seemed to hunt the hart, signifying some shift in emphasis and one he did not approve.[50] Even though the horse was becoming more significant it should be noted that many of the hunt servants were on foot. Unmounted men were vital to the sport.[51]

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[47] Edward, *Master of Game*, p. 180; Blome, *Gentleman's Recreation*, p. 84.

[48] T. Cockaine, *A Short Treatise of Hunting* (London, 1591), p. C3.

[49] Edward, *Master of Game*, p. 148.

[50] Blome, *Gentleman's Recreation*, p. 83. The importance of the horse in early forms of hunting is discussed in depth in Chapter 5.

[51] Edward, *Master of Game*, p. 165.

Plate 2.1: Unharbouring the Stag (from Blome, The Gentleman's Recreation)

Fallow deer could also be hunted in this way, although a buck was generally accounted not so worthy a quarry. Blome reckoned that if you could hunt a hart or a stag then 'you can't hunt a buck ill'. The main difference lay in the start of the hunt when the huntsman did not harbour a buck, but rather 'lodged' him. Both terms referred to tracing a male deer back to his lair, but a buck was not unharboured with a lymer in the same formal way, but rather roused with the hounds who were to chase him. This lodging did not apparently require the same degree of skill and woodcraft that the harbouring did, as the hunter could simply follow the buck back to the lair. Blome expected the buck to be more commonly hunted in a park than 'at large' and asserted that the greatest skill was to keep the hounds from running counter (following the scent backwards) or changing to another beast 'in regard of the plenty of fallow deer which are usually in the same ground'.[52]

There were other methods of hunting too. Bow and stable hunting was popular under Elizabeth, but much derided by some later writers on hunting. The aim of such a hunt was to have a large number of harts running past a standing where hunters were waiting with bows at the ready to shoot them. Greyhounds were then loosed to chase and bring down wounded deer. The 'stable' was a group of men strategically placed to ensure that the deer ran the intended course, past the standings. Fewterers were required to take charge of the greyhounds, the swift hounds who hunted by sight rather than by scent, and carters were needed to pick up the deer carcasses and transport them to the place of the *curée*. Here the hounds were rewarded, and the venison and deer skins divided among the hunt's participants.[53]

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[52] Blome, *Gentleman's Recreation*, p. 85.

[53] Edward, *Master of Game*, pp. 188-96.

This form of hunting clearly demanded less exertion from the occupants of the standings than did hunting *par force*, and was consequently popular as a form of entertainment. In Elizabeth's time it could be made even easier; when she hunted at Cowdray in Sussex some thirty deer were driven into a paddock to be shot from the standings. Elizabeth accounted personally for three or four of them. Later that evening the queen retired to a turret to watch sixteen more bucks being brought down by greyhounds.[54]

There is some question as to what degree the *par force* method was pursued in the Elizabethan period even by the social elite. There is evidence that they preferred less physically demanding methods, as so many allusions to hunting contain references to bows or crossbows. When Smyth talked of Katherine, Lord Berkeley's first wife, accompanying her husband hunting, he described the activity as 'delighting her crosbowe'.[55] In 1580 William, Lord Burghley, wrote to Leicester to thank him for a hound he had sent him, and talked of 'a stagg, wch myself had strychen with my bow.' James was fairly contemptuous of hunting other than by *par force des chiens*, however, commenting that 'It is a thievish forme of hunting to shoote with gunnes and bowes' (although there are accounts that he did occasionally 'lower' himself to hunt in these ways).[56] It is worth considering that perhaps renewed royal interest led to something of a revival in hunting *par force*.

Blome also gave a description of the coursing of deer with greyhounds which, he said, was 'a great esteem with many of the gentry'. Coursing of deer could take place in paddock, forest or purlieu. The 'paddock' comprised a formal purpose-built

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[54] Shirley, *Deer Parks,* p. 40.

[55] Smyth, *Berkeleys*, p. 285.

[56] James, *Basilicon Doron*, p. 144.

structure. It was most commonly taken out of a park, and needed to be about a mile

long and a quarter mile wide, with 'the further end broader than the nearer'. The

whole was enclosed within pales or a wall. At the start of the paddock were boxes for

the greyhound, a box for the 'teaser' hound, and a pen for the deer. At the far end

there was a ditch. The teaser (a mongrel greyhound) started the deer running, then

the greyhounds (usually two, but sometimes up to four) were slipped. Money was put

on the outcome, with the winner being the hound that made the deer swerve (so long

as this was past the 'pinching post' that was the halfway mark) or that first jumped

the ditch after the deer. Some remnants of these deer coursing paddocks survive: for

example, the 'pady course' at Clarendon Park, and the viewing stand at Lodge park,

near Northleach in Gloucestershire.[57] In forest or purlieu two methods were

apparently used. Deer were either coursed 'from wood to wood' or upon lawns in

front of the keeper's lodge. In the first method some hounds were thrown into the

wood to bring out the deer, and the handlers waited to let the greyhounds slip when

some 'worthy' deer emerged. If coursing on a lawn, notice was given to the keeper to

lodge a deer fit for the course.[58]

    In addition to the methods of hunting deer so far described, there were many

variations on these themes, incorporating features from one or more of the methods.

An account of hunting in the deer park at Kirtling, near Cambridge, in the mid-

seventeenth century has 'the keeper, with a large cross-bow and arrow, to wound the

deer, and two or three disciplined park hounds pursued till he dropped'.[59] This seems

to have been a method adopted when the aim of the exercise was the taking of meat

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[57] For a description of Clarendon Park's pady course, see A. Richardson, *The Forest, Park and Palace of Clarendon, c.1200-c.1650: Reconstructing an Actual, Conceptual and Documented Wiltshire Landscape* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 80-2.

[58] Blome, *Gentleman's Recreation*, pp. 96-7.

[59] Shirley, *Deer Parks*, p. 49.

rather than the provision of entertainment. There were also variations on hunting *par force*: the Duke of Saxe-Weimar describes hunting at Theobalds with James where the king surveyed a herd of deer, selected the one that he wanted to hunt, and the huntsman set dogs on and pursued that animal. (The duke was somewhat contemptuous of this exercise because, in the whole hunt, only two animals were caught.)[60] This method accords with the description of buck hunting in a park from horseback given by Thomas Cockaine.[61] In 1669, the Grand Duke of Tuscany described a hunt in the company of Prince Rupert where deer were driven into nets by dogs and then released. According to Manning, nets were a favourite tool of poachers too. One of the culprits in a 1538 investigation of deer stealers in Kent found that one man was employing a net-maker in his house. Nets could be used to entrap running deer, or to steer them in a desired direction. Other methods included the use of stalking horses to approach the deer, with bowmen firing from behind the horse, the use of fire to drive deer, and even the use of a long-gun with multiple shot.[62]

From these descriptions it can be seen that the hunting of the deer was far from homogenous in method. Some animals were pursued 'at large', but probably more were hunted within the confines of a park. Some animals were pursued on horseback, but all methods seem to have involved the participation of unmounted men. Most animals were pursued with dogs, but there were ways of taking deer without canine assistance. Some hunts involved elaborate ritual and considerable organization and manpower, but where the taking of meat was the primary aim of the exercise the process seems to have been far more low-key and pedestrian.

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[60] Shirley, *Deer Parks*, p. 46.

[61] Cockaine, *Short Treatise*, p. 10.

[62] Manning, *Hunters and Poachers*, pp. 25-6.

The Landscape of Deer Hunting

From the methods described, we can see that what deer hunting required was a landscape of the 'find' more than a landscape of the 'chase'. All of the advice on the hunting of deer available in early modern England concentrated on the finding and flushing of the beast rather than on his pursuit. The best surroundings for the preservation of both red and fallow deer was considered to be a mixture of wood, wood pasture and open rough grazing (or lawns). These provided the deer with shelter, grass to graze, and browse to help them through the winter.

Unlike later sources for modern foxhunting, our deer hunting sources contain next to no descriptions of the actual pursuit of the prey (other than for some royal occasions which tended to emphasize pageantry rather than place). Consequently we have no detailed description of the terrain over which such hunts were conducted. Even without explicit descriptions of the chase, we can infer from the available evidence that the pursuit of the deer was very different from the pursuit of the fox in a modern hunt. We can deduce that chasing deer was a much slower affair from the fact that the men on foot were expected to keep up with the action. The men would doubtless be running rather than walking, but could not be expected to match the 20-30 miles per hour at which a modern horse could gallop. Such a slow chase could be effected in a variety of landscapes. The mixture of woodland, wood pasture and open lawn that would have been found in a Northamptonshire forest were all amenable to being navigated on foot and on horseback at the required pace. And the chase could continue over the open fields if necessary.

To summarize, what was required from a deer hunting landscape was the certainty of finding a suitable beast to pursue. This ability to select was important because there were separate seasons for male and for female deer, but also because

only males over a certain age were deemed fit to hunt. While it may be true that, by the early modern period, hunting in a park was more common than hunting at large, the forest retained its importance as a breeding ground from which to stock the parks.[63] From the study of the personnel involved, and the methods and techniques that they employed, we have a much clearer idea of what we are looking for when we come to examine the landscape of the Northamptonshire forests in the context of being a hunting landscape.

The Northamptonshire Forests

In his introduction to the Northamptonshire forest setting, Pettit stressed the duality of forests' position within the county. On the one hand, the forest areas had much in common with the rest of Northamptonshire: arable agriculture was practised predominantly in open fields, cultivated in common, and settlements tended to be nucleated, rather than dispersed. On the other hand, the forest areas contained large tracts of woodland, which did set them apart from the rest of the county.[64] So already we see that our forest areas did not conform entirely to either typical champion or woodland landscape types as summarized previously.

None of the county's forests lay in particularly favoured areas. Whittlewood and Salcey were situated on a low (400 ft) watershed between the Ouse and the Nene; their surface geology comprising cold, intractable clays. Rockingham forest occupied a more extensive area, lying between the Nene and the Welland. Heavy clay soils again predominated. Pettit suggested that, in many ways, woodland was the

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[63] The *Calendars of State Papers* for the reigns of James I and Charles I contain numerous examples of John Scandiver transporting live deer around the realm at the behest of the monarch. For example, see *CSPD 1619-1623*, pp. 377, 488, *CSPD 1623-1635*, pp. 408, 423.

[64] P.A.J. Pettit, *The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire: a Study in their Economy 1558-1714* (Gateshead, 1968), pp. 3-5.

best use for these forest lands, and that this explained the persistence of woodland in areas where land has been disafforested and alienated. But all of the forest areas were to some degree amenable to arable cultivation and to pasture; they were far from being tractless, uninhabited wastes. Recent work by Jones and Page found evidence that arable cultivation predominated in the Whittlewood area in the Roman period, and that woodland subsequently recolonized the area (and possibly was encouraged to do so by the establishment of the area as a royal hunting ground well in advance of the Norman Conquest).[65]

By 1600 the extent of Northamptonshire's royal forest was much reduced from its thirteenth century peak, but the influence of forest status extended beyond recognized boundaries. Villages lying outside the forest perambulation still benefited from common rights to grazing, fuel and other forest resources, while holders of purlieu land were still restricted as to their rights to pursue deer that strayed onto their lands from the forest.

Salcey was by far the smallest of the three forests. At the beginning of the seventeenth century it occupied a total of 1,847 acres, comprising 1,100 acres of coppice surrounding the open pasture of Salcey Lawn. For administrative purposes the forest was divided into four 'walks', with the lawn itself comprising one of them. Six villages enjoyed common rights in the forest, including the large Buckinghamshire village of Hanslope.

Whittlewood was considerably larger than Salcey. Its total area exceeded 6,000 acres. Around 1600 over 4,500 of these acres were woodland. Administratively the forest was divided into six walks, with two of these, Shrob and Handley, being

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[65] R. Jones and M. Page, *Medieval Villages in an English Landscape: Beginnings and Ends* (Macclesfield, 2006), p. 61.

detached from the main body of the forest. The villages enjoying common rights within Whittlewood were divided into seven 'in-towns' and nine 'out-towns', with the former entitled to a longer period of access to forest resources than the latter. Some of the forest villages lay in Northamptonshire and some in Buckinghamshire.

The largest of the three forests was Rockingham. Based on the 1641 perambulation, it was estimated to be some fifteen miles long and five miles wide. Such was its size it was divided into three 'bailiwicks', which were further subdivided into walks. Cliffe Bailiwick was sometimes treated as separate forest in its own right, and twelve villages enjoyed common rights within it. The other two bailiwicks, Rockingham and Brigstock, were more closely linked together both physically and administratively. Ten villages had common rights in Rockingham bailiwick while only three villages had such rights in Brigstock Bailiwick. Rockingham forest also differed from the forests towards the south west of the county in that more of the woodlands tended to lie in private hands, whereas in Salcey and Whittlewood woodland was royal demesne.

Were the royal forests of Northamptonshire still fulfilling their original purpose as hunting reserves at the beginning of the seventeenth century? To answer this question we must assess whether the landscape of the forest was still suitable for the preservation and nurturing of deer, and whether hunting was still actively pursued in these areas. We should also examine the changes that occurred in the forests in all these areas across the period 1600-1850. Is there evidence of shrinkage of deer habitat and population across this period?

Although the purpose of this study is to look beyond purely economic explanations of landscape use, it would be foolish to ignore this aspect altogether. Wood and timber certainly had value, and, as Rackham observed for the country at

large, and Pettit observed for Northamptonshire in particular, early modern man was adept at woodland management.[66] We must examine how economic exploitation was combined with preservation of deer, and whether the two uses proved incompatible.

The Forest Landscape

In his *Treatise of the Forrest Lawes*, Manwood described the landscape required for a forest to fulfil its function. It must comprise 'a territory of woody ground, stored with great woods of coverts for the secret abode of wild beasts, and also with fruitful pastures for their continual feed'.[67] Much more recently Rackham characterized the forest landscape as being primarily wood pasture: rough grazing with many trees.[68]

An eighteenth-century copy of a large scale map of Whittlewood in 1608 provides the opportunity to assess the forest's provision of 'woody ground' and 'fruitful pasture', and its alignment with modern notions of a forest.[69] The map shows the woodland within the forest area occupying one large area with the smaller outlying section of Shrob Walk (Handley Walk was omitted from the map altogether). Closer examination of the Whittlewood map reveals the woodland divided into coppiced compartments (variously called 'coppice', 'copse' or 'sale').

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[66] Rackham, *Trees and Woodland*; Pettit, *Royal Forests.*

[67] J. Manwood, A *Treatise of the Forrest Lawes* (London, 1598), f. 1.

[68] Rackham, *Trees and Woodland*, pp. 164-83.
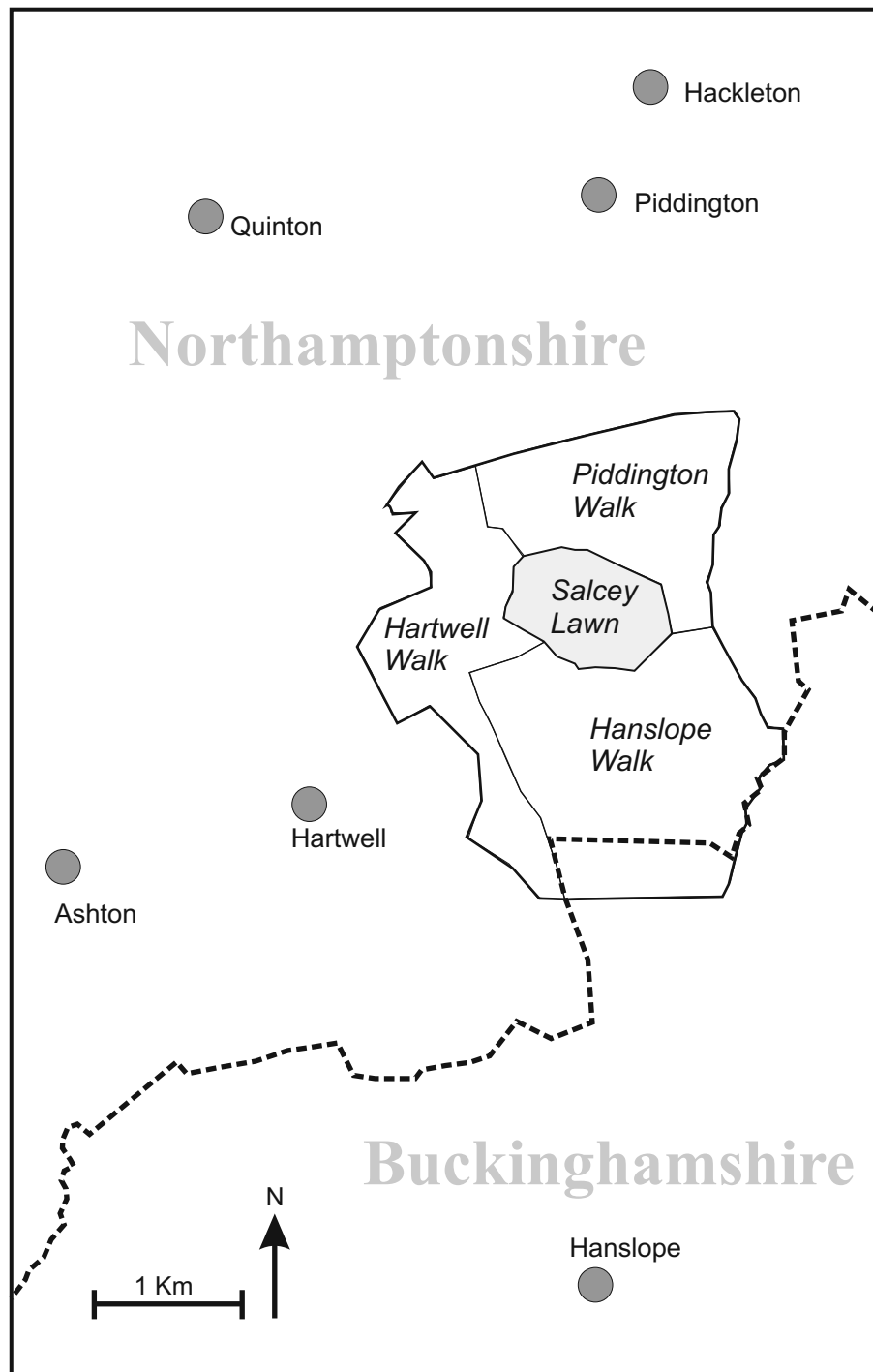
[69] NRO, map 4210.
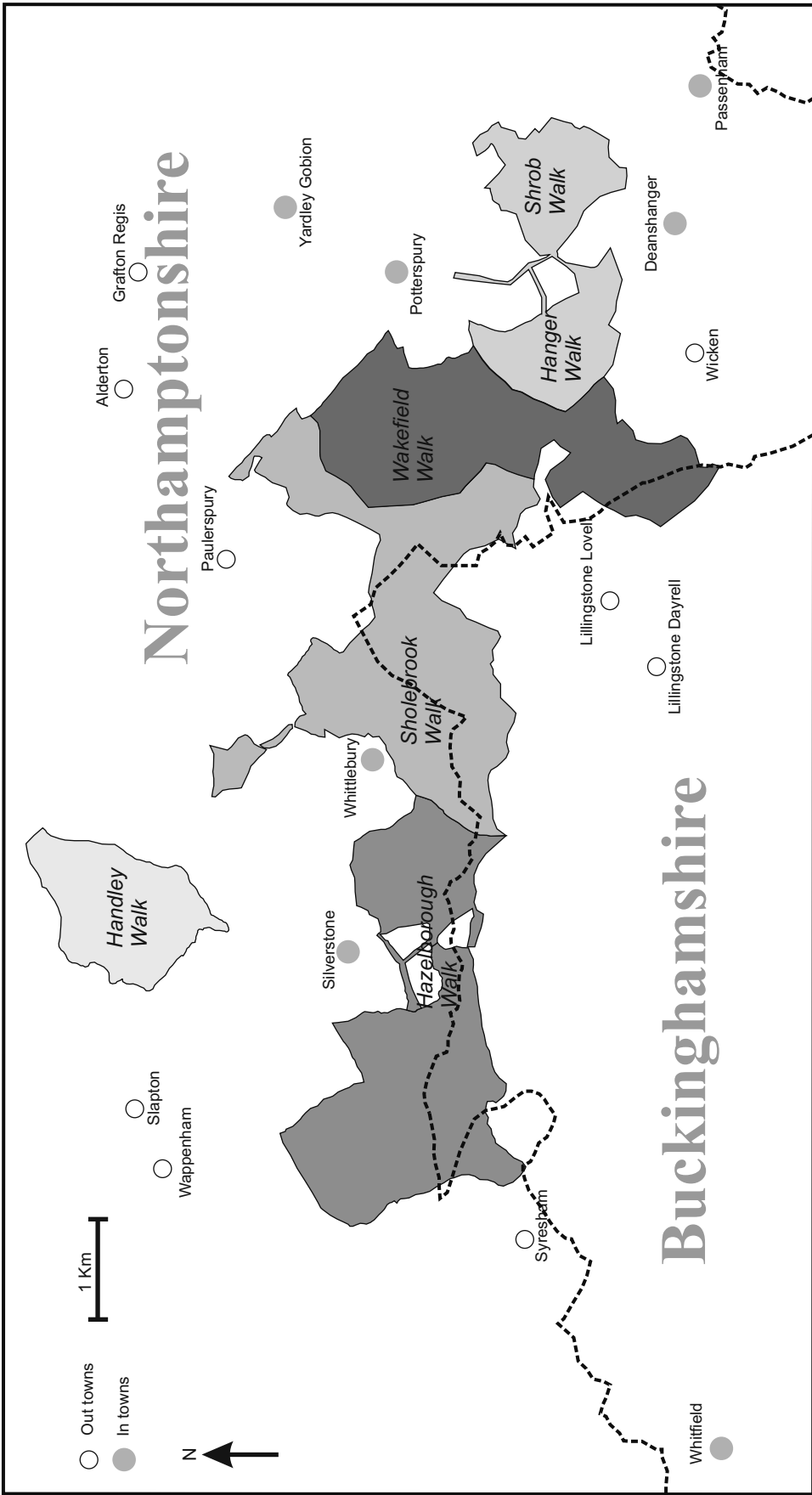
Figure 2.1: Salcey Forest

Figure 2.2: Whittlewood Forest
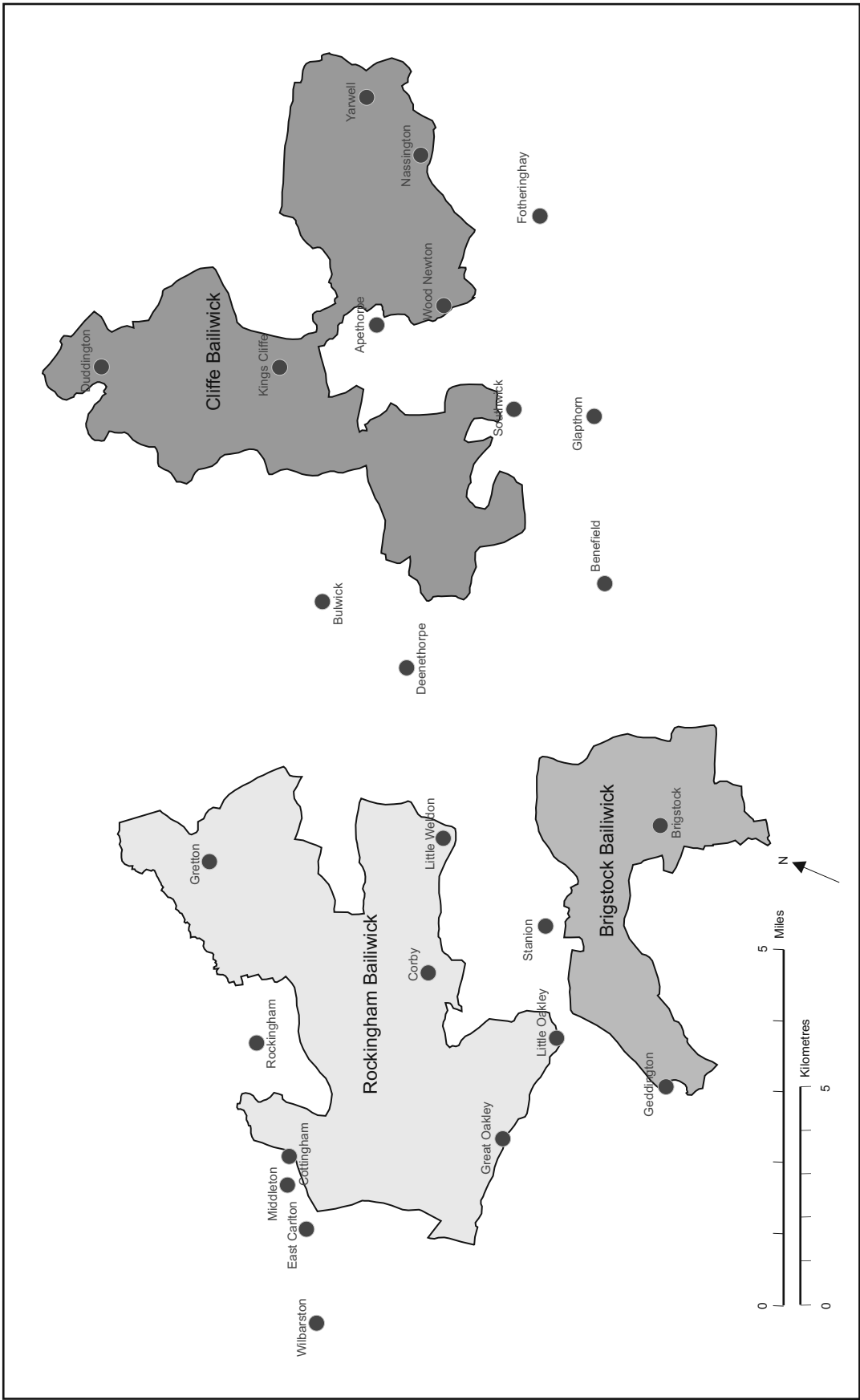
Figure 2.3: Rockingham Forest

Coppicing involved cutting the trees down to their base on a regular cycle and then harvesting the shoots that grew when they reached a certain thickness. Low coppice was typically interspersed with 'standard' trees that were allowed to grow to maturity, and then harvested for their timber. The map gave the name of the coppices and listed their acreages, which ranged from 20 to 100 acres with an average of around 50 acres. Coppices were vulnerable to grazing animals when they were newly cut and their shoots (known as 'spring') were young and tender, and so the coppices were worked in rotation. The chief regarders and preservators of the Northamptonshire forests were instructed that keepers be inhibited 'from putting any horses, beasts, sheep, colts, calves, swine or other cattle into any coppices until the spring of the said coppices be of eight years' growth'. They were also told that they should 'suffer no deer to come into coppices whereby the spring may be hurt or hindered'. Each compartment was protected by a bank topped with a fence to protect the tender shoots from hooved predators. The aim was to have the spring protected 'with the least expense of wood'; this end being accomplished by 'entrenching and ditching the coppice and setting a hedge on top of the banks.'[70] Once the coppice wood reached a certain maturity, the compartment could be opened up to admit deer and animals of those with common grazing rights in the forest. The coppices were interlinked by a series of broad rides. These provided grazing for both deer and commonable beasts. Rides were of sufficient importance to be maintained around an area of assarts within Hazelborough Walk, and between Hanger Walk and Shrob Walk. Morton observed that, in Whittlewood, fourteen towns were allowed a right of

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[70] Articles of instruction for the chief regarders and preservators of the Queen's Majesty's woods in the forests of Rockingham, Salcey and Whittlewood, reproduced in Pettit, *Royal Forests*, pp. 194-6.

common for their horses and cows 'in the open coppices and ridings' on 'account of the injuries that may happen to be done to them by the excursions of the deer'.[71]

Plate 2.2: Copy of 1608 Whittlewood Map, and Detail of Wakefield Lawn

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[71] Morton, *Natural History*, p. 11. Neeson described the importance of the provision of tethered grazing on the grass 'joynts' that ran across open fields. J.M. Neeson, *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure and Social Change in England, 1700-1820* (1993; Cambridge, 1996 edn), p. 95.

The Whittlewood map also shows that, at this time, the forest contained three lawns: Wakefield Lawn at 244 acres, Shrob Lawn at 150 Acres, and Sholebrook Lawn at 100 acres. The lawns provided dedicated pasture for the deer, and were, according to Morton, 'secluded by rails from the forrest cattel'.[72] The map depicts Wakefield Lawn as surrounded by a paled fence and Sholebrook as partly surrounded (Sholebrook Lawn is called 'Sholebrook rayles' on the map). Shrob Lawn has an enclosing line, but not pales; this might imply that it was surrounded by ditch and bank, as were the coppices (also indicated by an unbroken line). All three lawns had lodges situated on them. Although Hazelborough Walk did not have a lawn, it had Black Hedges Lodge and Wappenham Lodge at the far west of the forest. Similarly Hanger Walk had Briary Lodge.

Whittlewood was surveyed in the late eighteenth century and a new forest map appeared in 1787.[73] The map depicts the forest in yet more detail than its predecessor. It shows, for example, the amount of paling used not just around the lawns, but around much of the outer perimeter of the wooded area of the forest. Gates are shown where roads enter into the confines of the forest. This suggests that, by the eighteenth century at least, Whittlewood did not conform to the open character described by Manwood as definitive of a forest.[74] The map was produced as part of a survey prepared for the commissioners appointed to look into the state of the nation's forests. The subsequent report (presented to the Commons in 1792) confirmed these observations. The majority of Whittlewood forest was surrounded by a 'ring mound' which was topped by a wooden fence maintained at the expense of the Crown. This had been regarded as the forest boundary 'beyond the memory of the oldest man'.

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[72] Morton, *Natural History*, p. 11.

[73] NA, MR1/359.

[74] Manwood, *Treatise,* p. 2.

The only exception was Hazelborough Walk which was 'in places open' so that 'the

deer and common cattle often stray into the village of Silstone [Silverstone], and

other adjacent places'.[75] Grafton estate records from the nineteenth century confirm

the continued existence of a physical barrier on the forest perimeter. In trying to

preserve the offices of the forest's 'page keepers' from potential treasury cuts, the

Duke of Grafton explained that the long and narrow shape of the forest meant that it

had a greater quantity of 'outward boundary' than if it had 'a more compact shape'.

He went on to talk of the 'outward mound', which required constant vigilance to

preserve it from the 'pilfering and other depredations' to which it was exposed. If the

boundary was not maintained by the page keepers it would soon 'lay the forest open'

(with the doubly deleterious results of farmers' cattle getting in and forest deer

getting out).[76]

The 1787 map and subsequent report also identified the 'plains' in

Whittlewood more clearly than the 1608 map. Plains were open areas of rough

grazing (in contrast to the enclosed lawns) and their depiction on the map is

suggestive of wood pasture. Winter Hill in Hazelborough walk is shown as enclosed

coppice on the 1608 map, with the remark 'common of late', by 1787 it was once

again open and shown as wood pasture. The large plain called Holy Brook was

previously coppice, according to the report, but had become a plain 'open at all

times' to compensate the commoners for the land that the second Duke of Grafton

had enclosed as a pleasure ground known as the 'pheasantry'. Hanger Walk had a

small plain called 'Hanger Hollows'. The survey that accompanied the 1787 map

gave the acreage of each walk and subdivided the total by landscape type. In the case

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[75] *Commons Journal*, 47, p. 141.

[76] NRO, G4050/2.

of all the walks, the acreage of coppices and their internal rides greatly predominated

as shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Land Use within Whittlewood, 1787

	Coppices and Ridings within them	**Plains and open ridings**	**Lawns and lodge yards**	**Inclosures to the lodges**
Hazelborough	587	220	0.5	31
Hazelborough (Bathursts)	418	155	-	-
Sholebrook	1095	150	83	57
Wakefield	1083	313	245	172
Hanger	456	40	-	16
Shrob	252	7	-	35

When the 1787 map is compared to the 1608 map, the continuity in land use

is striking. One major change is the disappearance of Shrob Lawn, now

indistinguishable from the surrounding farmland, although Shrob Lodge and the

walk's coppices persisted into the late eighteenth century. In the remaining walks the

coppices are identifiably the same. Priesthay Wood and Monks Wood have also

disappeared from Hazelborough Walk, but consultation of later maps shows that

these actually remained as woodland, although no longer part of the forest. Similarly

the tongue of forest protruding southwards from Wakefield Walk, although no longer

appearing on the forest map, remained as woodland.

The later evidence is provided by Bryant's large scale map of

Northamptonshire, dating from 1827.[77] It shows the county woodland in sufficient

detail for us to assess how much of the Whittlewood depicted in the earlier maps

survived. The Bryant map reveals very little reduction in the area of woodland across

[77] Bryant Map of Northamptonshire, 1827.

the two centuries. At the west of the forest, the woodland nearest to Syresham village

has gone. But besides this area, every coppice shown on the earlier maps is

identifiable on the later one, although it has sometimes acquired a new name along

the way. A similar network of rides separating the coppice compartments is also

evident. Wakefield Lawn and Sholebrook still appear as large enclosed areas. One

major change occurs to the detached portion of the forest, Handley Walk. This was

not included on the 1608 map, and by the time of the Bryant map had disappeared

from the landscape. The Bryant map actually contained more woodland in some

areas than either of the forest maps. The forest maps were only concerned with

depicting land that was part of the forest; woodlands in private hands, for example

Bucknells Wood to the west of Silverstone village and Earls Wood to the south, were

omitted altogether.

The series of maps show that, as far as the distribution of woodland is

concerned, there was a great deal of continuity in Whittlewood between 1608 and

1827. Was there similar continuity in the management of the forest? At the time of

the 1608 map the woodland was under the direct control of the Crown. In 1629

Handley Walk was granted to Simon Bennet for £6000, including the underwood,

timber, soil and all rights, and the walk was disafforested. By 1635 the trees were

felled and the land converted to arable. Handley stood apart from the rest of the

forest in ways additional to the purely locational. It had previously been enclosed,

and common rights extinguished, and was often referred to as 'Handley Park' rather

than Handley Walk. The other walks remained in Crown (or government) hands until

1665 when the underwood was granted, together with the Honor of Grafton, as part

of Queen Catherine's jointure. In 1672 the underwood was granted in reversion to

Henry, Earl of Arlington. On Catherine's death in 1705 it was inherited by Charles,

second Duke of Grafton: the grandson of Charles II and Arlington. The wardenship of Whittlewood was also settled on the Duke of Grafton, and henceforth the history of much of Whittlewood became part of the history of the Grafton estate (although the Crown reserved the timber and the deer, and in the early eighteenth century granted the timber and underwood of seven coppices in Hazelborough walk to the Earl of Bathurst).[78]

The next significant event in the history of Whittlewood was disafforestation. This came earlier to Hazelborough Walk (1826) than to the rest of the forest, and enclosure followed hard on the heels of disafforestation. The enclosure award confirmed that the soil and the timber of Hazelborough Walk, together with 'herbage and feed' for the deer, belonged to the Crown. The largest allotment was therefore made to the King (some 517 acres) with the next largest (some 386 acres) going to the fourth Duke of Grafton, in compensation for his right to the underwood and his forest offices (Grafton had already bought the rights in Hazelborough previously granted to the Earl of Bathurst). The enclosure document stated that the main aim of the enclosure was to enable improvement to the woodland such that the production of timber could be increased (the report to the Commons made 34 years previously had identified Hazelborough Walk as the poorest part of the forest as regards timber production). The three remaining forest walks were disafforested and enclosed in 1856.[79] The fifth Duke of Grafton benefited from this, receiving the freehold of Wakefield Lodge and park. The estate also made extensive purchases of the land in the eastern portion of Whittlewood, including both woodland and arable land.[80] This

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[78] NRO, G4104; *Commons Journal*, 47, pp. 142-3.

[79] NA, MR1/1653.

[80] *VCH Northamptonshire*, 5, pp. 18-37. The process of disafforestion can be traced in the various bills that were produced and the related correspondence that survive in the Grafton papers. An eighteenth-century memorandum cautioned about how complex such a process would be, and the

marks a point where the landscape of Whittlewood did begin to change. Examination

of the 6-inch OS maps for Whittlewood show that by the 1880s the woodland was

considerably reduced, with the straight roads and field boundaries characteristic of

nineteenth-century enclosure taking their place. When reminiscing about his

foxhunting experiences with the Grafton, J.M.K. Elliott remarked that the forest in

the 1850s was 'nearly double its present size' (the 'present' being the 1890s).[81]

The earliest map that can be found for Salcey Forest dates from 1787, when it

was surveyed along with Whittlewood.[82] In 1712 Morton had the extent of Salcey as

about a mile in breadth and almost a mile and a half in length. Its three walks were

divided into 24 coppices 'which are cut down each in their turn'.[83] This description

accords well with the forest depicted on the late eighteenth-century map. The

commissioners reported to the Commons on Salcey in 1790. When they reported on

Whittlewood two years later they commented on how similar it was to its near

neighbour. Salcey had one lawn, lying at the heart of the forest, with an

accompanying lodge. There were four other lodges, occupied by the three keepers

and the one page keeper, and each lodge had a certain amount of land with it. As

with Whittlewood, the coppices were separated by rides. The forest map also shows

several plains, again depicted as wood pasture; some of the rides are very broad and

appear as wood pasture too. Salcey was also enclosed on its outer boundary 'the

greatest part of which is fenced by proprietors', while the 'residue' was fenced 'with

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various rights that had to be taken into consideration (including common rights of the in towns and out
towns, and the disposition of tithes connected to the underwood). The working out of these
considerations can be viewed in this useful packet of papers. NRO, G3999, G4000.

[81] J.M.K. Elliott, *Fifty Years' Foxhunting with the Grafton and Other Packs of Hounds* (London,
1900), p. 65.

[82] NA, MPE 1/938

[83] Morton, *Natural History*, p. 11.

post and rail' at the expense of the Crown. Earlier, but less direct, evidence of forest

enclosure can be found in a series of accounts for Salcey. Itemized bills for

labourers' work include payments for hedging and ditching around newly-cut

coppices. There were separate and distinct entries for lengths that comprise part of

the 'forest hedge'. This is presumably because the Crown or proprietors of the

adjacent land were expected to pay for such lengths.[84] Comparison of the 1787 map

of Salcey with Bryant's map shows even less change in the forest to 1827 than can

be seen in Whittlewood.

Like Whittlewood, the underwood of Salcey passed from the Crown first to

Queen Catherine, and then to the Dukes of Grafton. In 1660 the wardenship of the

Forest was granted in reversion to George Montagu and his male heirs for ever.[85]

Salcey was disafforested and enclosed in 1826, at the same time as Whittlewood's

Hazelborough Walk.[86] As with Whittlewood, the main aim of the enclosure was

stated to be the improvement of the woodland. Again the largest allotment (1174

acres) went to the Crown, with a mere 152 acres this time going to the Duke of

Grafton. Comparison with the first series 6-inch OS maps from the end of the

nineteenth century show very little reduction in woodland. In fact Salcey forest

remains very much the same size and shape to this date. The only major change is

that the extreme west portion of the forest is separated from the remainder by the M1

motorway.

Rockingham was far larger and more complex in its structure than either

Whittlewood or Salcey. Map evidence must be pieced together from a broader range

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[84] NRO, G2464.

[85] *Commons Journal*, 46, p. 98-9.

[86] NA, MPEE 104.

of sources, as maps survive from different dates for various portions of the forest. A seventeenth-century map covering the area between Northampton and Stamford shows the entire expanse of Rockingham forest, but not in the same detail as the 1608 Whittlewood map.[87] Although the Rockingham map suggests that the woods were divided into coppiced compartments separated by rides it gives neither names nor acreages. For more details, we must look to maps of the individual bailiwicks. An early, and very attractive, map was commissioned by Sir Christopher Hatton in the 1580s.[88] It was intended to show his Northamptonshire estates, but in the process covered Rockingham Bailiwick. Benefield Lawn, later praised by Morton for being 'spacious and faire', was shown enclosed by paling. It had a further small close within it and small area of woodland called 'Wormestalls'. A lodge lay at the heart of the lawn. Benefield Lawn was depicted as being surrounded by woodland, with names suggesting coppices. From the map some of the coppices appeared to be enclosed and some open. To the west, immediately beneath Rockingham Park, lay Rockinghamshire, a more open area containing some pockets of woodland. Further west still there were two small plains below the village of Gretton, but otherwise the area comprised woodland down to the open area of Kirby Pasture. A copy of a seventeenth-century map of the same area also survives.[89] This usefully has marked on it the forest boundary, indicating that Kirby Plain lay outside the forest. The depiction of the woodland showed a mixture of small trees and large, which presumably signified coppiced and standard trees. A map of Cliffe Bailiwick, dating from the reign of James I, depicts coppices and rides in some detail although it only

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[87] NA, MPE 459.

[88] NRO, FH272.

[89] NRO, BRU Map 126.

shows the crown's woods and omits the private woods and the purlieus.[90] For

Brigstock Bailiwick, a later map (1810) of lands encompassing Geddington Chase

reveals some interesting details as to type of woodland.[91] The mapmaker showed the

woodland in sufficient detail to allow us to distinguish thick tree covering from

something appearing more akin to wood pasture. There was also a large area of what

looks to have been rough grazing, identified as Upley Hills. None of the maps show

paling around sections of the forest, as Whittlewood and Salcey had. Was the forest

of a more open character, or were such details deemed unimportant by the

mapmakers? Certainly some of the maps portray forest gates.

Plate 2.3: Benefield Lawn from Hatton Map (NRO, FH272)

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[90] NA, MR 1/314.

[91] NRO, Map 5965.

Plate 2.4: Benefield Lawn from Copy of 17th Century Map (NRO, BRU Map 126)

As the structure of Rockingham forest was more complex and dispersed than its Northamptonshire companions, so was its disposition. More of the forest fell into the hands of a greater range of people at an earlier date than either Whittlewood or Salcey. The large royal parks of Great and Little Brigstock were granted to Sir Robert Cecil in 1602. Later, as Earl of Salisbury, he was successful in obtaining a license to disafforest and enclose the parks for agriculture (causing considerable consternation among the villagers of Brigstock and Stanion who lost their common rights in the park and were faced with the predation of the newly homeless deer). Elsewhere in Brigstock Bailiwick the soil and the underwood of Farming Woods were granted to John, Lord Mordaunt in 1628. A few months later, and by then Earl of Peterborough, he was granted the timber too. Peterborough's entire interest in Farming Woods was passed to a London merchant in 1650. The underwood and soil

of Geddington Woods were granted to Edward, Lord Montagu in 1628, to be joined

by the timber later in the same year. Geddington Woods were disafforested in 1676

and became known as Geddington Chase, but the rights of common were maintained,

along with the deer.[92]

Large sections of Rockingham Bailiwick were alienated even earlier. Corby

Woods were granted away from the crown, together with the manor, in 1553,

eventually passing to the Earls of Cardigan by the late seventeenth century.

Cottingham Woods were granted to Sir Christopher Hatton in 1572, his rights

including timber, underwood, soil and freedom from the forest law. In 1583 Sir

Christopher added Gretton Woods, Little Weldon Woods and Benefield Lawn to his

estates (to which we doubtless owe the happy event of his commissioning a fine set

of maps in the 1580s). Pipewell woods were added to the Hatton holdings in 1629.[93]

In Cliffe Bailwick, Cliffe Park was granted to the Earl of Essex in 1592, but

by 1598 was in the Cecil's hands. Henceforth it stayed with the Earls of Exeter.

Morehay and Westhay were granted on a lease to the Earl of Berkshire during

James's reign, but then the underwood and keepership were granted to the Earl of

Westmoreland in 1628 (who also paid for the termination of the lease) to be joined

later the same year by the timber. By 1700 Morehay had passed to Exeter. Sulehay

and Shortwood went to the Earls of Westmoreland, being granted first to their

ancestor, Sir Walter Mildmay, in 1571.[94]

From this account we can see that much of the forest lands fell victim to

Charles I's efforts to raise money in 1628. Where the other Northamptonshire forests

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[92] Pettit, *Royal Forests*, pp. 189-91; *Commons Journal*, 47, p. 190.

[93] *Commons Journal*, 47, p. 189.

[94] *Commons Journal*, 47, p. 191.

came under the influence of the Dukes of Grafton, there were more noble families

vying for the lands of Rockingham with considerable rivalries often developing. The

Hattons in particular caused contention with their exercise of the forest keepership.

An entire notebook is filled with the results of Sir Richard de Capell Brooke's

historical research into where the reality of the Hatton's rights might differ from the

ones that they claimed.[95] The 1792 report to the House of Commons about

Rockingham Forest reveals friction between the commissioners and the landholders

too. Hatton and Westmoreland both refused to supply the commissioners with much

of the requested information, and both families claimed greater rights over wood,

timber, soil and deer than the commissioners thought they were entitled to. After the

report some attempts were made to resolve the situation by selling the remaining

Crown rights in sections of the forest, but the continuing disagreement as to the

extent of these rights is demonstrated by the contentious correspondence between the

surveyor general and the tenth Earl of Westmoreland, which resulted in the obtaining

of Barristers' opinions.[96] Unfortunately for this study, no survey and map was made

of Rockingham for the purposes of the report to the Commons because the

commissioners considered that the Crown did not have enough interest left in the

forest to justify it.

Given the extent of alienation in Rockingham forest it is more surprising that

comparison of the early maps with the Bryant county map shows similar levels of

woodland survival as Whittlewood and Salcey. This picture is supported by the series

of maps in *Rockingham Forest: an Atlas of the Medieval and Early Modern*

Landscape. The atlas provides equivalent medieval and early modern maps,

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[95] NRO, Brooke vol. 163.

[96] NRO, W(A) box4/parcel VIII/no 1.

produced using digital mapping tools and based on data from a range of sources. Reproductions of the Victorian 6-inch OS maps are also provided. A comparison of the medieval and early modern maps reveals a considerable diminution in the amount of wood pasture, but continuity in the amount of woodland. When we look at the 6-inch OS maps from the 1880s, however, we find a considerable reduction in woodland.[97]

The reports to the Commons contained detailed information about the coppice rotations in the Northamptonshire forests. Whittlewood and Salcey were both cut every twenty-one years, while in Rockingham the cycle was sixteen or eighteen years depending on the bailiwick. All of these were quite long rotations by commercial coppice standards according to Rackham, who suggested that five, seven or fifteen years were more the norm.[98] Pettit suggested that, in practice, the coppice rotation could be longer still. Looking for evidence of efficient management and economic exploitation of Crown woodlands, Pettit found the Northampton forests sadly wanting in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. Not only were coppice compartments sometimes left for fifty years or more before cutting, they were consigned entirely to nature so far as regeneration was concerned. 'Proper' management would have involved the selection, and promotion, of suitable species such as oak and ash. Failure to select and thin led to much 'waste' in the form of thorns competing too successfully with more profitable species. This was not helped by the accepted system of the purchasers of the wood being responsible for cutting it and carting it away. According to the Elizabethan instructions the buyer must carry

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[97] The medieval maps represent the landscape in the early fourteenth century. The early modern mapping shows the landscape as it was *c*.1750. G. Foard, D. Hall, T. Partida, *Rockingham Forest: an Atlas of the Medieval and Early Modern Landscape* (Northampton, 2009), pp. 73-158.

[98] Morton, *Natural History*, p. 11; Rackham, *Trees and Woodland,* pp. 63-4.

the wood out of the coppice by midsummer day, else the woodward could claim half
the wood himself as a fee for carrying it 'outside the coppice gate'. Pettit assumed
that the purchaser of the wood might not take such care for the preservation of the
coppice as the person responsible for it. The standard trees fared little better, often
being left too long before felling, so that they became 'dotards' – too old to be
commercially useful. These suggestions are born out by the mid sixteenth-century
surveys of the wood, and early seventeenth-century surveys of timber, both aimed at
improving royal revenue from the forests. For example, from a total of 2,420 acres of
coppiced woodland in Whittlewood (2,025 forest acres), the 1564 survey had 955
acres as saleable, and 500 acres as 'waste'. According to the 1608 timber survey,
with a total of 120,000, Northamptonshire had more trees 'certified' than any other
county save Hampshire (300,000). Of these, 10,000 were deemed available for sale
(equal with Hampshire). In fact only £1,410 were realised from the 'extraordinary'
sales of Northamptonshire timber in 1609.[99] Pettit blamed the unprofitability of both
wood and timber in the Northamptonshire forests partly on the continuing need to
manage the forests for deer. In this he largely echoed the findings of the 1790s
reports on the Northamptonshire forests. These conclusions were also repeated in
Pitt's survey of the agriculture of the county, where he found in Whittlewood 'for a
large tract together, a mere thicket of blackthorns' which would have been
'impenetrable were it not for the rides but by art'.[100] But 'neglected' coppices
overrun with low woodland and thorn would provide both covert and browse for
deer. We can conclude that, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the
Northamptonshire forests were still providing a suitable environment for the
preservation of deer.

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[99] Pettit, *Royal Forests*, pp. 98-101.

[100] W. Pitt, *General View of the Agriculture of Northamptonshire* (Northampton, 1809), p. 148.

Did the alienation of the underwood make an appreciable difference to the management of the forest landscape in the Northamptonshire forests? We get a picture of the importance of the woodland in estate management from the letters of Daniel Eaton, steward to the third Earl of Cardigan from 1725 to 1732. The constant references to valuing coppices, arranging labour to cut them and collecting payment from the purchasers, illustrate that the Brudenell woodland was far from neglected.[101] A similar level of concern with woodland management is evident in the Grafton estate records, in valuations of Salcey woodland from 1743-1762, and of sales of coppice wood from Whittlewood in the years 1798-1815.[102] The reports to parliament gave some detail as to coppice management in the 1780s and 1790s. The coppices were cut and then enclosed to deny access to deer and to the commoners' horses and cattle. In Salcey after seven years deer were admitted by means of 'creeps' and 'deer leaps', while horses and cows were still excluded for a further two years. In Whittlewood deer and common cattle were all admitted after nine years. In Rockingham, with its shorter cutting cycle of 16-18 years, deer were admitted after four years and common cattle after seven years.[103] Nineteenth-century records from the Grafton estate suggest that not that much had changed in the theory of coppice management by that date, even if the implementation had improved. Coppices were still being cut every twenty-one years, after which they were enclosed by a 'strong, black thorn hedge' to defend them from the deer and the cattle for nine years.[104]

This survey of the royal forests of Northamptonshire has illustrated two major points: the first one regarding the character of the landscape compared to other

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[101] J. Wake, D. Champion-Webster (eds), *The Letters of Daniel Eaton to the Third Earl of Cardigan 1725-1732*, (Kettering, 1971).

[102] NRO, G2464-G2471; NRO, G4050/2.

[103] NRO, B(O)327/27.

[104] *Commons Journal*, 46, p. 98; *Commons Journal*, 47, pp. 142, 194.

forests and the second concerning the survival of woodland within the forests. The

landscape of Whittlewood, Salcey and Rockingham neither fitted entirely a

seventeenth-century nor a twentieth-century description of an archetypal royal forest.

Manwood repeatedly stressed the open nature of the forest ('the territory itself doth

lie open and not enclosed', 'a Forest doth lie open, and not enclosed with hedge,

ditch, pale, or stone-wall') but our evidence suggests that, in the case of Whittlewood

and Salcey at least, the forests were enclosed around their perimeters, as well as

internally.[105] This is confirmed by estate records as well as the map evidence and

parliamentary reports. Rackham characterized the forest landscape as comprising

mainly wood pasture, with some enclosed coppice in what he calls compartmented

forests. The Northamptonshire forests certainly had open plains and ridings, but they

were dominated by coppices, enclosed and then opened in rotation. Our map

evidence illustrates that this landscape survived largely intact over our period; there

was no great diminution in the area of woodland in any of the three forests. The

Northamptonshire forests provided as much potential deer habitat in 1800 as they did

in 1600.

The Forest and the Deer

The traditional explanation for the hunting transition has been the decline of

deer and the disappearance of deer habitat.[106] So far our examination of the

Northamptonshire forests has detected no great change in the wooded landscape over

the period 1600 to 1850. Woodland within the forest was not much depleted across

our period of study.

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[105] Manwood, *Treatise*, pp. 2, 3.

[106] This account has most recently been repeated in E. Griffin, *Blood Sport: Hunting in Britain Since 1066* (New Haven and London, 2007).

Proving continuity in deer habitat is the not the same as proving continuity in deer population, however. The traditional explanation asserts that the deer suffered depredations in the Civil Wars from which they never recovered. Is there evidence from Northamptonshire that would support this view? The surviving evidence is eclectic and tends towards the qualitative rather than the quantitative. There were few attempts to assess actual deer population.

Early writers on the county certainly commented on the deer as well as the woodland in the forest areas. According to Leland the 'fairest game of the forest was seen at Benefield Lawn', although he also asserted that there was 'no redde deere but fallow in Rockingham Forest'.[107] Norden, on the other hand, stated that 'Deere, Red and Fallowe, both in Parks, Forests and Chases are so plentiful as noe shire yieldeth like'.[108] The sixteenth-century maps commissioned by Christopher Hatton included depictions of deer in the woods, lawns and parks. This is echoed by the copy of the seventeenth-century map of Gretton Woods and surrounding area.[109]

There is evidence of a long tradition of deer preservation in Northampton's royal forests. When James ascended the throne of England, he made the state of the nation's deer one of his foremost concerns. He perceived that the deer population had suffered in the last years of Elizabeth's reign, and took steps to ensure the preservation of the favoured royal prey. Various warrants were issued to this end, and included Northamptonshire in their scope. In 1604, Thomas, Lord Burghley, in his role as warden of Rockingham forest, was commanded to enforce a restraint on the killing of deer there for three years. In 1609, Christopher Hatton, as keeper of

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[107] J. Leland, *The Itinerary of John Leland the Antiquary,* 9 vols (Oxford, 1768-9), 1, p. 21.

[108] Norden, *Delineation*, p. 29.

[109] NRO, FH272; NRO, BRU Map 126.

Benefield Lawn, was instructed to enforce a restraint on the killing of deer at

Benefield and the woods of Gretton and Whedon for five years.[110]

Stuart preoccupations with preserving deer find echoes in the state papers for

the early years of the commonwealth. The papers confirm that deer had suffered in

the 1640s: the 'great spoil committed by soldiers and others' is acknowledged. In

Northamptonshire there was specific concern about 'divers disorderly and dangerous

persons' within the counties of Northampton and Buckingham who had 'abused the

officers of Whittlewood Forest and provoked others to do so' and had 'coursed,

killed, and destroyed the deer'.[111]

The concern for the wellbeing of the nation's deer became more marked at

the Restoration. Charles II's early years were punctuated with nationwide restraints

on warrants for deer. In 1660 the Earl of Exeter begged authority to grant no

warrants for deer under his charge in his walk in Rockingham, estimating that there

were but 'twenty brace' left. Similarly Edward, Lord Rockingham, as keeper of

Corby woods, requested a restraint on warrants, the deer being 'much decayed'.[112]

The king wrote to Christopher Hatton in 1660 and commanded that Hatton 'forbiare

the deere for the officers of the said forest or upon any other warrant until further

orders'.[113] There is evidence, however, that the deer population in some parts of the

Northamptonshire forests were healthier than in other areas of the kingdom. The Earl

of Exeter was annually granted a license to hunt in Rockingham forest in the summer

months (the buck season).[114] In October 1662 Sir John Robinson was granted a

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[110] *CSPD 1603-1610*, pp. 161, 518.

[111] *CSPD Interregnum*, pp. 300, 367.

[112] *CSPD 1660-1661*, p. 187.

[113] NRO, FH2858.

[114] For example, *CSPD 1661-1662,* p. 627.

warrant to kill deer in Farming Woods (in Brigstock Bailiwick), 'provided he leave sufficient of the Royal disport'.[115] Various warrants were being granted for deer in the western bailiwicks of Rockingham, whilst elsewhere in the kingdom warrants were continually suspended.[116]

A deposition of a keeper in Rockingham Bailiwick estimated in 1674 that there were around 400 deer in the six walks combined.[117] This does illustrate some lasting deterioration in the population, but was still considered sufficiently sustainable for the keepers to serve a brace of bucks and does to the crown annually from each of the walks (and presumably other venison was being taken from this portion of the forest too).

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, Morton was able to talk in glowing terms of the deer population of the Northamptonshire forests. He claimed that Wakefield Lawn 'shews sometimes seven or eight hundred deer, generally three or four hundred in any fine day'.[118] In 1711 the Earl of Westmoreland asked for some restraint in killing of deer in his part of Cliffe Bailiwick because a hard winter some three or four years previously had had a bad effect on the population, especially the males. Then he estimated that they did not kill less than one hundred deer per year, not including the venison used in his house or disposed of among neighbouring gentlemen, or killed in the purlieus of Blatherwick and Bedford. The deer population evidently regained its strength, because a 1714 account of deer that could be 'safely killed' amounted to some 172 bucks and does plus 20 brace for the queen and the

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[115] *CSPD 1661-1662*, p. 530.

[116] For example, in July 1664 instructions were issued to the rangers of Rockingham forest to serve warrants for fee deer, while in June another three-year restraint on the killing of deer had been issued in Waltham Forest. *CSPD 1663-1664*, pp. 654, 623.

[117] *Commons Journal*, 47, p. 205.

[118] Morton, *Natural History*, p. 11.

forest officers' fee deer.[119] The 1714 warrant for deer for George I's table from the

Board of the Green Cloth expected thirteen brace from Rockingham, which was the

largest number of all the royal forests (next came the New Forest and Windsor Great

Park at eight brace each, Whittlewood was expected to serve four brace, and Salcey

two).[120]

Daniel Eaton's letters to his master, the third Earl of Cardigan, made frequent

reference to the state of the deer on the Cardigan estates. Eaton was mostly

concerned with the welfare of the deer in Deene park, but his interest did extend to

deer at large in the woods (especially where they were causing damage to the

coppice). In May 1725 he reported looking at woods in the charge of Thomas Bell,

and finding 'a great number of deer in all of them', there were in fact 'a great many

fine deer' in all the woods that he rode through.[121] Thirty years later Daniel Eaton's

son, also called Daniel and steward to the fourth Earl of Cardigan, kept a series of

records of the bucks killed each summer in Deene park and in the woods he calls 'the

Purlieus'. Although the number taken in the park constantly exceeded the number

taken in the woods by quite some margin (for example eighty-three in the park

against twelve in the woods in summer 1763), these figures do demonstrate that there

was a sustainable population still living in Rockingham forest at this time.[122]

The parliamentary reports of the 1790s made some attempt at estimating the

strength of the deer population. In Whittlewood there were calculated to be some

1,800 deer 'of all sorts' in the forest. In Salcey the figure was given as 1,000. There

was no attempt to assess the population of Rockingham, mostly due to the lack of co-

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[119] NRO, W(A)VI 2/25; W(A)VI 2/23.

[120] NRO, W(A)VI 2/26.

[121] Wake, Champion-Webster, *Letters of Daniel Eaton*, p. 20.

[122] NRO, Bru.I.xiii.2-17.

operation from the landholders and the keepers there. The report does remark on the fact that the Hattons never entirely removed the deer from Benefield lawn, despite having enclosed it for pasture, and that the Earls of Westmoreland similarly maintained the deer in their woods although they had been granted permission to remove them.[123] There are records of the deer killed in the Hatton portion of Rockingham forest in 1789 to 1790. This amounted to thirty-seven bucks and thirty-one does in Over walk, and thirty-two bucks and twenty-four does in Gretton walk.[124] George Finch Hatton was anxious to preserve the deer in his charge, and in 1819 posted a notice in an attempt to prevent the gathering of nuts in the forest because it disturbed the deer.[125] In 1828, the Duke of Grafton estimated the total number of deer in Whittlewood as 1,500, of which 230 were killed annually. A list of the duties of the lieutenant of Whittlewood, made in 1832, admitted that the number of deer in Sholebrook Walk, for which the lieutenant was directly responsible. 'cannot well be ascertained', but estimated them to be around 350 head, of which eleven brace of bucks and eight brace of does were killed annually.[126]

Our investigation of the deer population in the Northamptonshire forests certainly illustrates some decline in numbers in the mid-seventeenth century, but equally striking is the effort made to preserve and promote the deer. This runs in parallel to the continuity of woodland that we have already discovered in the forests in this period. Even where the interests in the forest now lay in private hands, and the Crown's involvement was limited to receiving a few brace of bucks and does every

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[123] *Commons Journal*, 47, pp. 189, 193.

[124] NRO, FH2457.

[125] NRO, B(O) 313/21. In response, the de Capell Brookes apparently encouraged their tenants to gather nuts, R. Moore-Colyer, 'Woods and woodland management: the bailiwick of Rockingham, Northamptonshire *c*.1700-1849', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 9 3 (1996-7), p. 254.

[126] NRO, G3982, G3999/3.

year, steps were being taken to preserve the deer in the forest as well as in the parks.

It is also noticeable that contemporaries were only too well aware of the potential

conflict between the preservation of the deer and the profitable exploitation of the

wood and timber. Daniel Eaton could remark in the same letter how the deer

damaged the underwood in his master's purlieus and how well the deer looked.[127]

The reports to parliament made in the 1790s all recommended that the forest be

improved either by containing the deer within a limited part, or by removing them

altogether. But it was not until disafforestion in the mid-nineteenth century that such

action was finally taken. The draft bills for the disafforestation of Whittlewood

contained clauses pledging that the Crown would remove the deer from the forest

within two years of the passing of the act.[128] The book *Old Oak*, containing

memories of nineteenth-century Silverstone, suggested that the enclosure of the

forest and the removal of the deer was a far from universally popular move: 'it was a

dark day for Silson when the Forest passed into the hands of private individuals'

when 'the deer were all caught up to be killed, or sent away to stock private

demenses'.[129]

Northamptonshire Deer Parks

When examining the history of deer hunting in Northamptonshire the role of

the county's deer parks cannot be overlooked. The parks were enclosed at different

times and in different circumstances, and possibly to meet different ends. Some of

the parks were medieval creations that had survived to the early modern period,

others were created in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. With the eighteenth

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[127] Wake, Champion-Webster, *Letters of Daniel Eaton*, p. 20.

[128] NRO, G3999.

[129] J.E. Linnell, *Old Oak: the Story of a Forest Village* (London, 1932), p. 13.

century came the era of the 'landscape park' and in Northamptonshire, with so many noble seats, there was an enthusiastic embracing of this fashion. Some of the landscape parks were carved from agricultural land, but many were adapted from existing deer parks. Just as many parks were created or transformed in this period, so many disappeared; they were disparked and their acres absorbed into the agricultural landscape, often leaving their mark in the form of field names and farm names.

How were these parks actually used? With increased interest in the subject of deer parks, some fundamental questions have been asked about their purpose. There is debate as to what extent they were 'venison larders', a means of farming deer to have fresh meat available over the winter months, and to what extent they were arenas of entertainment. There is an accompanying discussion of whether the activities that took part within the confines of the park could actually be defined as 'hunting' at all.

We have first to establish some sort of chronology for the creation of deer parks. Writing about Northamptonshire, Steane had 'a sprinkling' of medieval deer parks through the county, belonging to magnates and the Crown. He was also in no doubt that 'parks were on the increase in the Tudor and early Stuart period'.[130] Speaking more generally of England as a whole, Rackham had the 'heyday' of the deer park as 1300, with a decline in the later middle ages, although he also detected a 'Tudor revival'.[131] Williamson agreed with Rackham's chronology although he pointed out that, despite a sixteenth-century revival, deer parks did not recover to

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[130] J.M. Steane, *The Making of the English Landscape*: *the Northamptonshire Landscape* (London, 1974), pp. 208-9.

[131] Rackham, *Trees and Woodland*, pp. 152, 158.

'anything approaching medieval levels'.[132] For comparison, recent work on Suffolk

parks clearly indicated two peaks of park creation in that county: one in the decades

around 1300, and one in the decades leading up to 1600.[133]

Writing in 1712, Morton had no doubt that Northamptonshire was

exceptionally well-endowed with deer parks: ''tis observed that there are more in

Northamptonshire, than in any other county in England, than in all Europe

besides'.[134] Over a century later, Surtees remarked that 'there are more deer parks in

Northamptonshire, than in any other county of equal extent'.[135] In the sixteenth

century, Norden had gone to the trouble of listing the deer parks in the county,

classifying them by whether they belonged to the queen, to her nobles, to knights, or

esquires. He named a total of 24 parks.[136] Saxton's sixteenth-century maps of

Northamptonshire were the first to depict the parks in the county, and make some

attempt to portray their size and shape as well as their location. Later map makers

followed his example, and it is possible to use these maps to trace the development

of parks in the county (the maps should not be taken as definitive sources, however,

Saxton omits the Brudenell's park at Deene, although we know from other sources

that it was in existence at the time he made his map). Figures 2.4 to 2.6 plot the parks

shown on Saxton's and subsequent maps, and show the distribution of parks at the

beginning, middle and end of our study period of 1600-1850. The dashed lines

represent the bounds of the forests at their greatest extent.

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[132] T. Williamson, *Polite Landscapes: Gardens and Society in Eighteenth Century England* (Stroud, 1995), p. 23.

[133] R. Hoppitt, 'Hunting Suffolk's parks; towards a reliable chronology of imparkment' in R. Liddiard (ed.), *The Medieval Park: New Perspectives* (Macclesfield, 2007), p. 147.

[134] Morton, *Natural History*, p. 12.

[135] R.S. Surtees, 'The Pytchley, (1833-1834)' in *Town and Country Papers* (Surtees Society, 1993). p. 90.

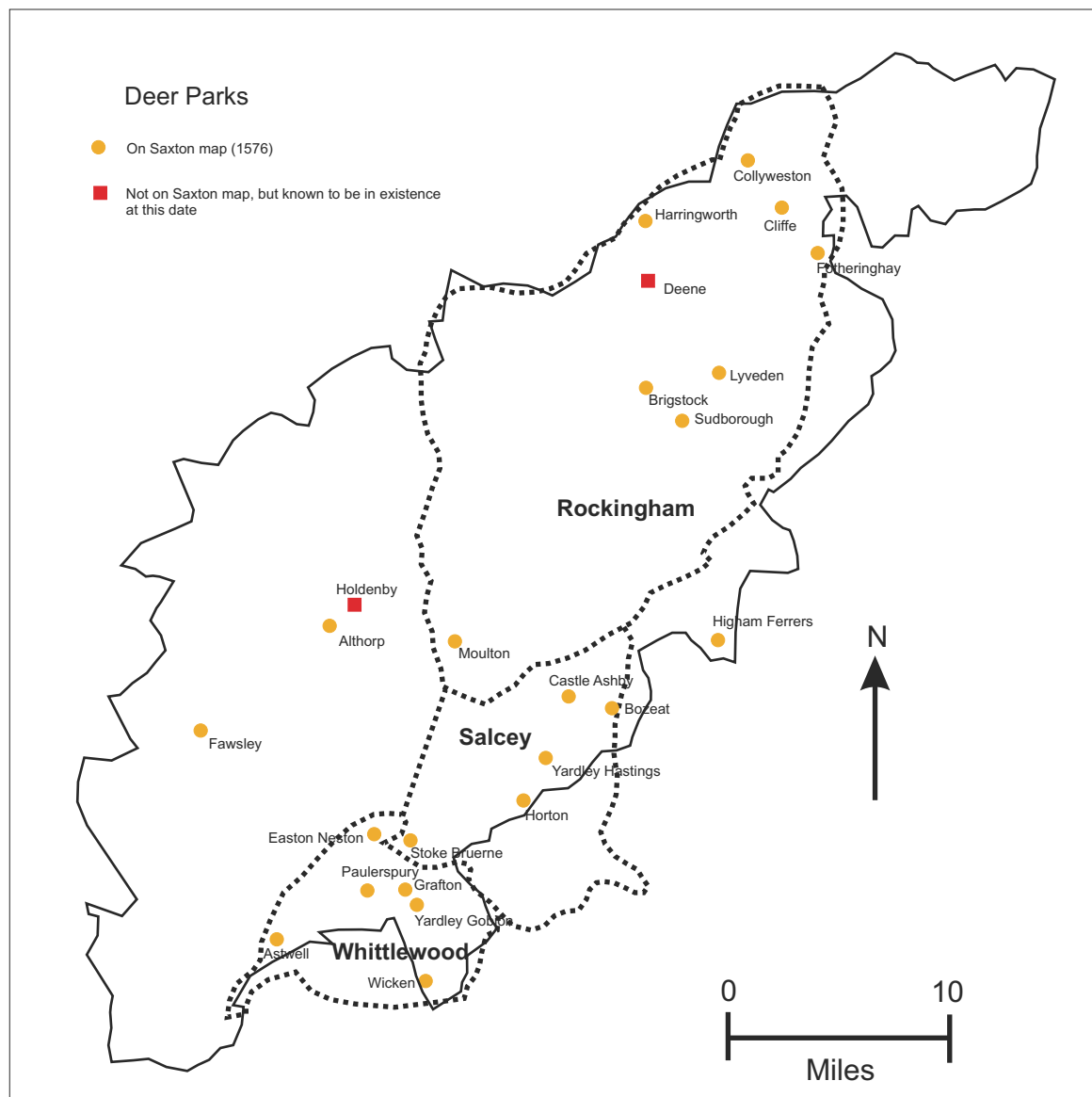[136] Norden, *Delineation*, p. 29.

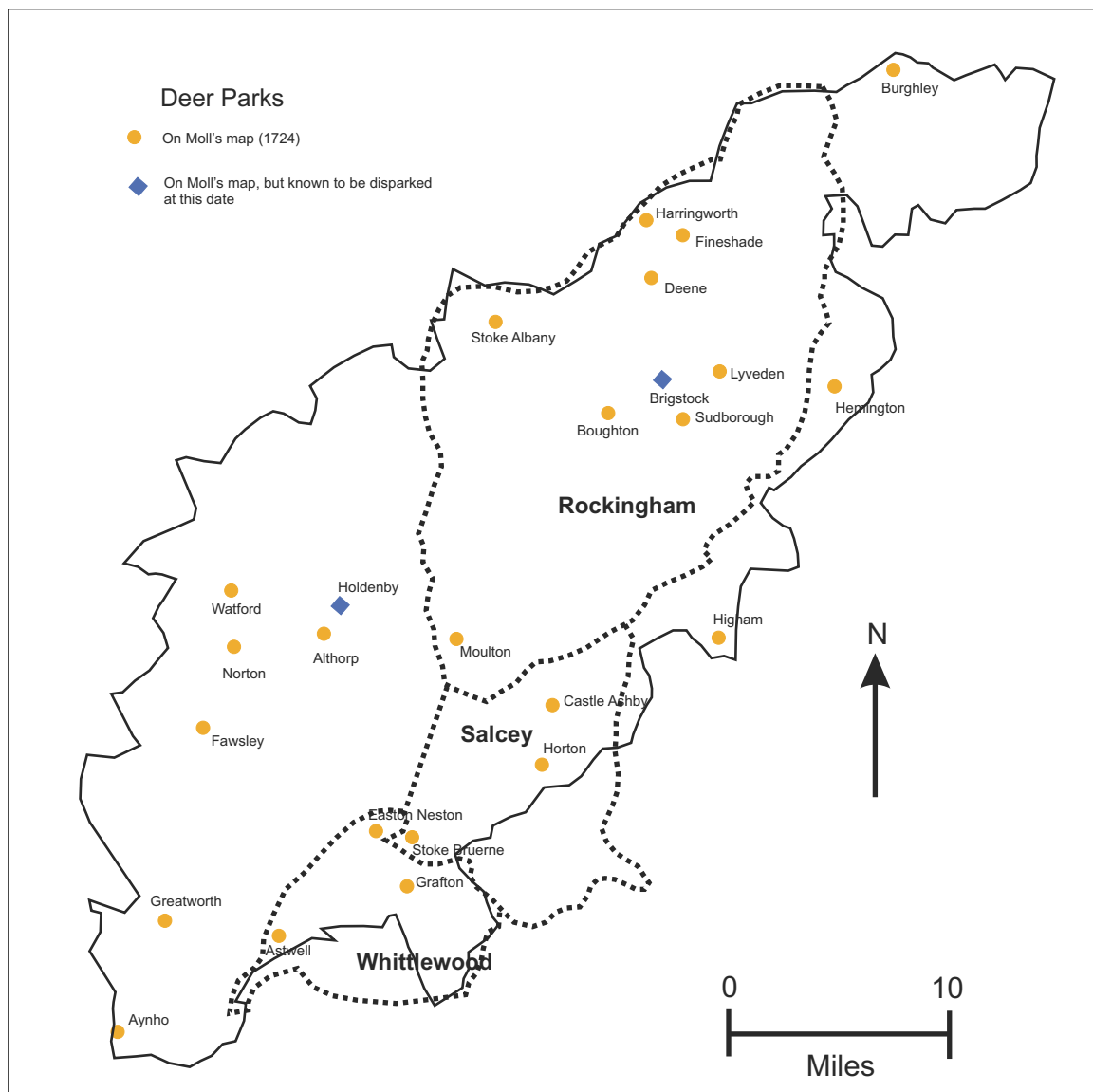*Figure 2.4: Distribution of Deer Parks: Saxton Map*

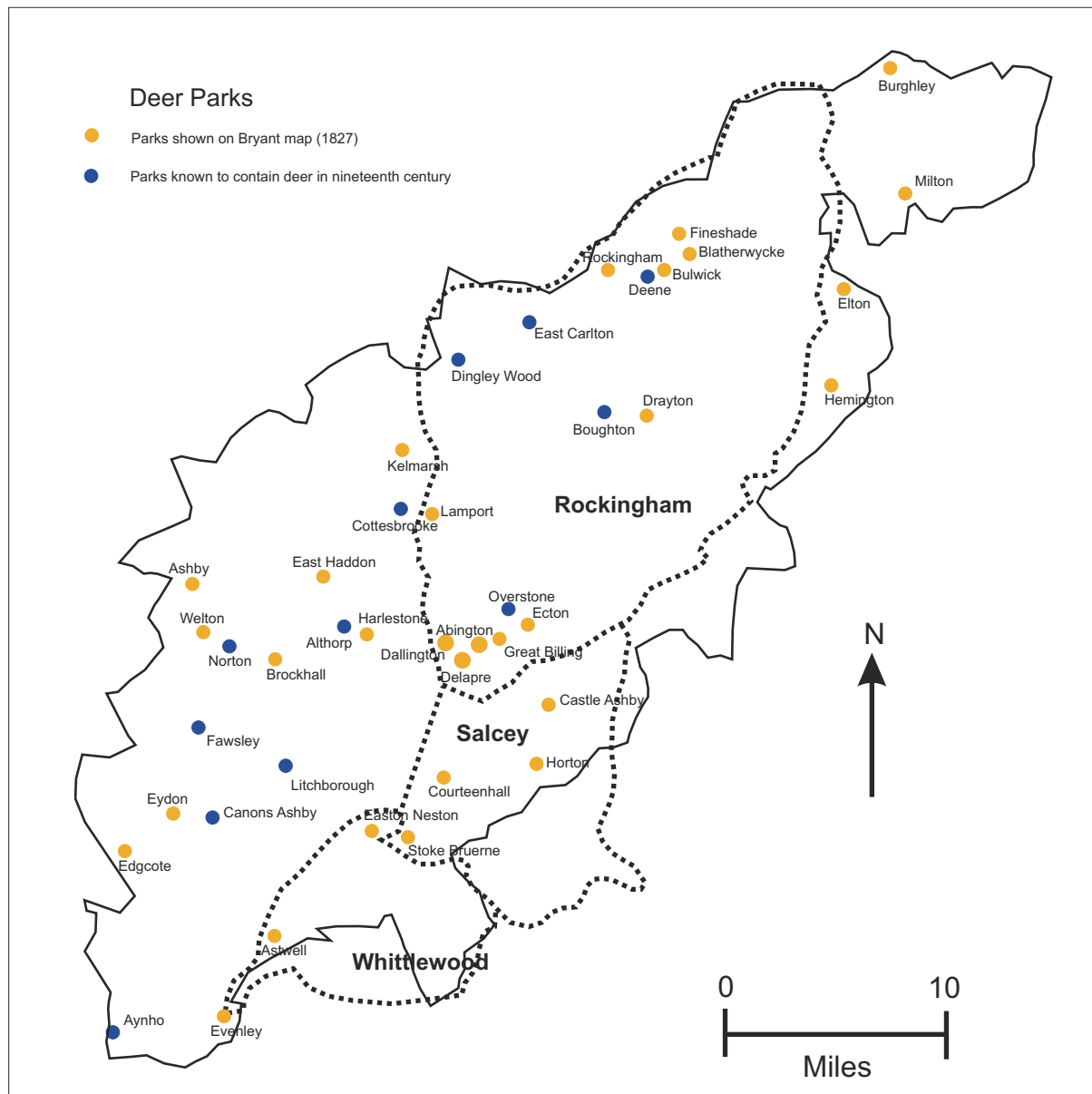*Figure 2.5: Distribution of Deer Parks: Moll Map*

Figure 2.6: Distribution of Deer Parks: Bryant Map

There is some discussion among historians about the relationship of parks and the principal residences with which they were associated. Shirley, the nineteenth-century historian of deer parks, suggested that early parks were distant from the house because they were 'carved from waste and wilderness'.[137] This view was echoed by Williamson, nearly a century and a half later, who maintained that most medieval parks lay in remote locations, far from the home of the owner. Williamson had changes in the location of parks starting in the late middle ages, with more and more being established 'immediately adjacent to a gentleman's residence'.[138] Liddiard has more recently suggested that we have underestimated the extent to which medieval parks were valued for their aesthetic qualities and viewed as adornments to large residences. Mileson acknowledged this decorative role of parks, but asserted that these considerations could be discerned in a minority, rather than a majority, of cases.[139]

How do the Northamptonshire parks fit into this discussion? Where the location of the medieval deer parks has been traced, there is a tendency for them to be located on or near to parish boundaries. The county contains two sets of adjacent parks (Brigstock great and little parks, and Drayton park, and Grafton, Pury and Plum parks) which meet each other at the parish boundaries. There are several other examples of parks abutting the boundaries. This would confirm the view that parks were created away from manor houses, which most usually lay at the centre of the village. Where parks were associated with castles, they often lay at some remove too. Moulton park was some three miles from Northampton castle, and Higham park was

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[137] Shirley, *Deer Parks,* p. 50.

[138] Williamson, *Polite Landscapes*, pp. 22, 24.

[139] R. Liddiard, "Medieval designed landscapes: problems and possibilities" in M. Gardiner and S. Rippon (eds) , *Landscape History after Hoskins: Medieval Landscapes* (Macclesfield, 2007), pp. 201-2; S.A. Mileson, *Parks in Medieval England* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 96-7.

also three miles distant from the castle with which it was associated. It may well be the case that where large royal parks had palaces within their bounds (such as Woodstock or Clarendon), or castles had their parks up against their walls (such as Kenilworth), the parks could have been managed with their decorative value at least partly in mind. In Northamptonshire, however, it seems that parks were more likely to be distant from the residences with which they were associated.

When we consider the location of the later deer parks, enclosed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there does seem to be significant change. Some parks, such as Holdenby, were made at the same time a new great house was built on the site of an old manor. Others, such as Deene, were added to over some period of time as the house was enlarged, improved, or rebuilt. Morton certainly had no doubt as to the changing location of the county's parks. All of the parks he described as existing at his time lay 'at a convenient distance' from the houses of their owners, while the older ones, by his time disparked, were remote.[140] (This observation is supported by the fact that, as we shall see, few of Northamptonshire's medieval deer parks went on to form the basis of landscape parks in the eighteenth century, while many of the early modern deer parks did exactly that.)

Historians and archaeologists have recovered information about the size of early deer parks from attempts to trace their boundaries on modern landscapes, and from the survival of licenses to empark. Unsurprisingly the largest of the parks were the royal ones, while some of the other parks were very small indeed. Grafton, at its peak, had over 1000 acres.[141] At the other end of the scale, the park at Ashley had 12

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[140] Morton, *Natural History*, p. 12.

[141] *VCH Northamptonshire*, 5, p. 20.

acres when it was emparked in the 1280s, Blatherwycke also had 12 acres. Eastwood had a mere 7 acres 3 roods when emparked in 1267.[142]

In addition to the location of Northamptonshire parks, we must also consider their size and their structure. If we accept that the main purpose of a deer park was the preservation of deer, then we must look at how parks provided deer habitat. To a large extent parks needed to be forests-in-miniature. An ideal layout would provide open grazing, trees for browsing and thicker tree plantations to furnish the cover that the deer desired to rest in. The whole surrounded by a fence or wall that needed to be some 7 to 8 foot high in order to prevent the deer from leaving. As Markham put it when advising how to make a park in the early seventeenth century: 'Nor ought the parke to consist of one kinde of ground only - but of divers, as part high wood, part grasse or champion, and part coppice or under-wood, or thicke spring'.[143] Parks were required to fulfil other needs, however; for example, sixteenth-century statutes required the owners of parks to undertake the breeding of horses within them.[144] This was part of a drive to improve the quality of horses in England, and to ensure there would be sufficient mounts in the advent of a war. The deer might also find themselves sharing their grazing with cows or sheep. The wood cover was likely to be managed as coppice, and, as in the forests we have been examining, sections of it closed off when newly cut to protect the regrowth from the effects of overenthusiastic grazing. So wood was another potential product of a deer park. Markham also had advice on the compartmentation of the park: 'nor must these

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[142] J. Steane, 'The medieval parks of Northamptonshire', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 5 3 (1975), p. 219.

[143] G. Markham, *The Countrey Farme*, cited in Shirley, *Deer Parks*, pp. 234-5. Shirley points out that the *Countrey Farme* was translated from a French source, but the edition claimed that it was 'reconciled' with English practices by Markham.

[144] J. Thirsk, *Horses in Early Modern England, for Service, for Pleasure, for Power* (Reading, 1978).

several grounds lie open – they must be separated one from the other by a strong rale, through which deere or shepe (but no greate cattell) may passe'.[145]

It is possible to recover evidence of the internal structure of the Northamptonshire parks. The set of maps that Christopher Hatton commissioned in the 1580s include two that cover the formation of his park at Holdenby (subsequently a royal park when Hatton died without issue and his nephew sold it to James). The 1580 map shows the manor before the making of the park, the 1587 shows the park in place and railed.[146] Maps of Deene park in the seventeenth century similarly show the internal configuration of the park, and are also embellished with pictorial representation of the animals that inhabited it.[147] Figure 2.7 shows Holdenby park in the 1580s, while Figure 2.8 shows Deene park in 1630.

The eighteenth-century commissioners' reports talked of the lawns of the forest as being 'in the nature of parks'. When we look at Wakefield Lawn and Benefield Lawn on the seventeenth-century maps we see many of the same features as the parks: the enclosing rails, the pasture for grazing, and the trees for browsing. Both parks and lawns were fulfilling the same function: providing a protective environment for the keeping of deer.

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[145] G. Markham, *The Countrey Farme*, cited in Shirley, *Deer Parks*, pp. 234.

[146] NRO, FH272.

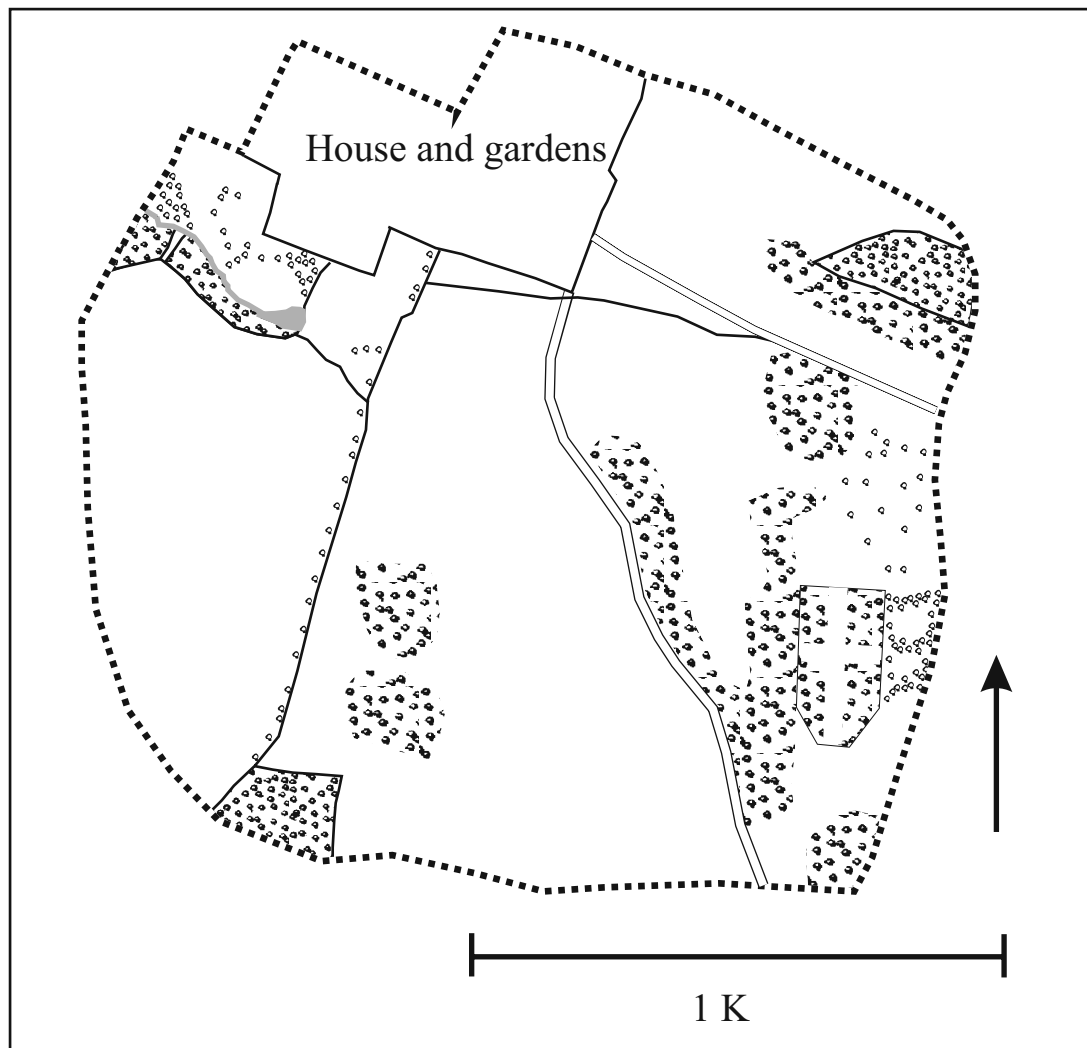[147] NRO, Map 4093; NRO Map 4096.

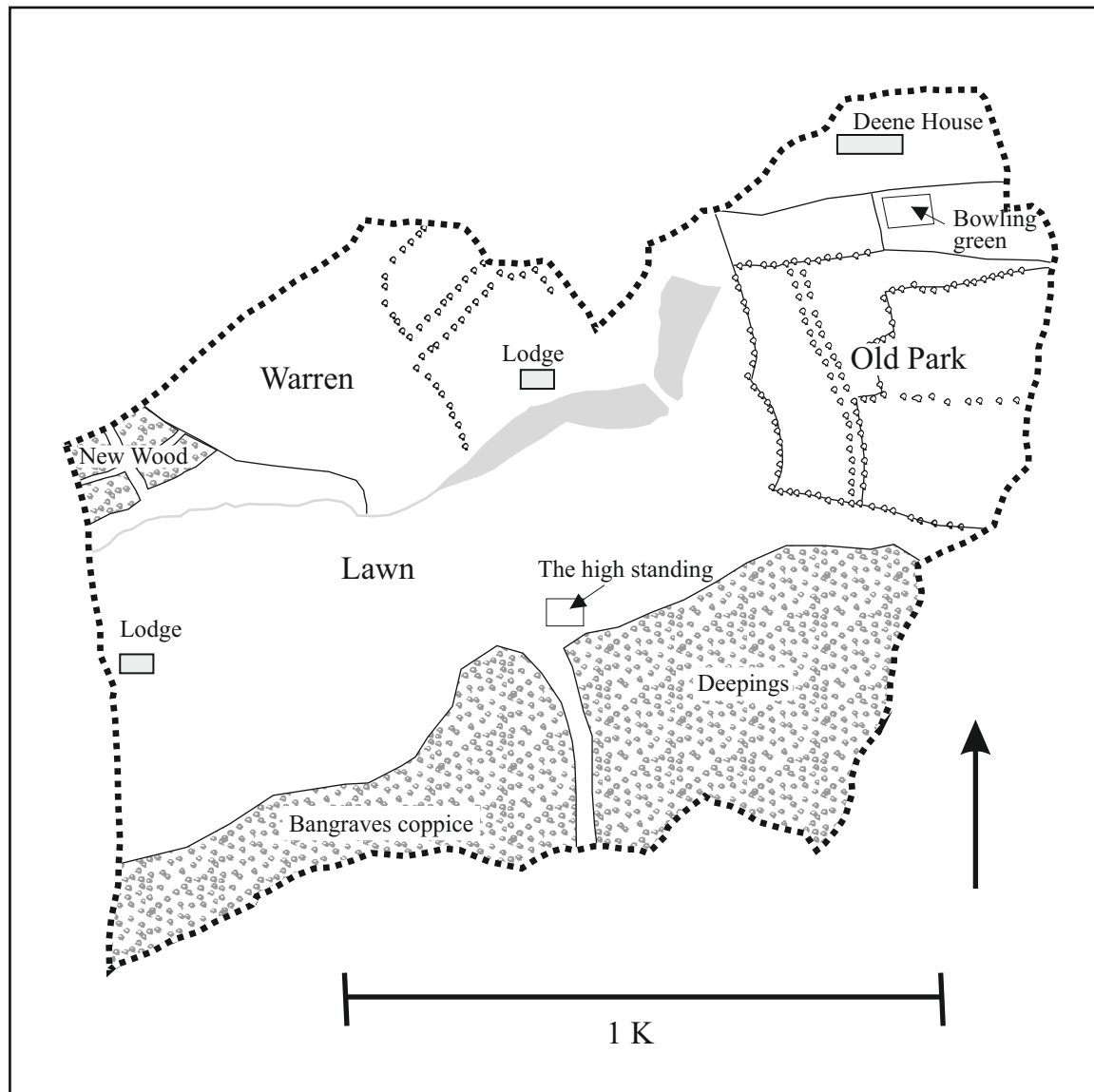House and gardens

Figure 2.7: Holdenby Park

Figure 2.8: Deene Park

Williamson has suggested that the structure of the park in the early modern period was different from that of its medieval precursor, and that this was connected to the change in location already observed. As deer parks were becoming 'essential adjuncts' to the great house rather than distant deer farms, so the density of trees within the park was reduced while the wide areas of pasture became more prominent. This was not for the benefit of the deer, but rather for the owners and their guests so that they could enjoy extensive prospects and appreciate the full size of the park. In this period the 'wild irregularity' of the park provided a 'pleasing contrast' with the geometric order of the formal gardens immediately surrounding the house.[148]

Williamson's argument serves to emphasize the role of the deer park as the precursor of the eighteenth-century landscape park. How many of the deer parks that we have identified as extant in Northamptonshire went on to be incorporated into what is now regarded as a 'landscape park'? The county provides some notable examples, such as Althorp and Boughton. Deene was also rearranged, enlarged and improved to fit in with newer ideals; indeed the enthusiasm for sculpting the landscape extended beyond the bounds of the park, and surviving records show the planting and felling of trees being planned to enhance 'the vista'.[149] Forest lawns, as well as parks, became the foundation of landscape design intended to show off a prestigious house. Thus Wakefield Lawn effectively became the park to the Northamptonshire seat of the Dukes of Grafton. One of the Whittlewood coppices became a 'pheasantry' (the pleasure grounds to the great house) and the holders of common rights in the forest had to be granted year-round access to other coppices in exchange for this. In the late 1700s the third duke was trying to reach a similar

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[148] Williamson, *Polite Landscapes*, p. 24.

[149] NRO, Bru.I.xiii.24a

accommodation so that common animals could be excluded from the approach to his residence and the way would not be so dirty.[150] In their survey of Rockingham forest, Foard, Hall and Britnell classified parks made from the sixteenth century onwards as 'landscape parks'. They had only a few of these, for example Rockingham and maybe Blatherwycke, created directly from medieval deer parks. For the most part parks were required to be adjacent to the great house, and so were created anew.[151]

For this thesis, however, the most important point about the landscape parks in Northamptonshire is that they continued to be places where deer were kept. Deene Park may have had canals, avenues and waterfalls added, but Daniel Eaton's letters in the 1720s continually reflected concern and interest in the park's deer.[152] In the middle of the century his son drew up detailed plans on the best way to manage the park to support deer. This included the number of does and bucks to be kept, as well as the number of sheep and horses thought to complement the keeping of the deer (through the different grazing habits of each animal).[153] When listing the Northamptonshire parks still in existence in the nineteenth century, Shirley also included the number and type of deer that the park supported.[154]

We have established that deer were maintained in Northamptonshire parks, but we need to return to a controversy mentioned at the beginning of this section. Were deer hunted in these parks? Liddiard described this question as one of the

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[150] NRO, G3980.

[151] G. Foard, D. Hall and T. Britnell, *The Historic Landscape of Rockingham Forest* http://www.rockingham-forest-trust.org.uk/RF%20pdfs/Rockingham%20Forest%20Project%20final%20report.pdf (2003) (accessed 30/8/10), p. 52.

[152] Wake, Champion-Webster, *Letters of Daniel Eaton.*

[153] NRO, Bru.I.xiii.1.

[154] Shirley, *Deer Parks*, pp. 147-53.

'thorny issues' still causing debate among historians.[155] There is no doubt that deer were pursued within the park pales, and killed, but could this be considered as a sport, or just as a way of harvesting venison? Birrell argued that medieval parks were venison farms more than hunting arenas. She suggested that the harvesting of the venison was mostly carried out by servants and could therefore not be regarded as 'hunting'.[156] Rackham similarly discounted the roles of parks as hunting reserves, putting their economic importance above their recreational worth.[157] N. Sykes granted that bow and stable hunts were staged in parks, but considered them to have been too small to have hosted *par force* hunts. She went on to query whether bow and stable hunting in fact could be really considered as hunting, as it comprised the destruction of contained animals and did not meet the criteria to identify hunting specified by anthropologists such as Cartmill.[158] Pluskowski, on the other hand, had quite a different view of the medieval park, seeing it as 'the ideal aristocratic hunting ground – bounded, controllable, secure and visible'. What the park lacked in space it made up for in controllability.[159]

Many of these views on hunting were informed by the belief that parks were just not physically large enough to hunt in. But such views are predicated on modern notions of what a hunt is. The slower speed of both horses and hounds, and the greater emphasis on the quality of the pursued animal and the skill of following its scent, would require less acreage by far than a modern foxhunt. It was also not unknown for the pursued deer to jump the pale and for the hunt to continue at large.

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[155] Liddiard, *Medieval Park*, p. 4.

[156] J. Birrell, 'Deer and deer farming in medieval England', *Agricultural History Review*, 40 2 (1992), pp. 112-26.

[157] Rackham, *Trees and Woodland*, p. 153.

[158] N. Sykes, 'Animal bones and animal parks' in Liddiard (ed.), *Medieval Park*, p. 51.

[159] A. Pluskowski, 'The social construction of medieval park ecosystems: an interdisciplinary persepective' in Liddiard (ed.), *Medieval Park*, p. 63.

When alternative hunting methods, such as coursing deer with greyhounds and driving deer past stands, are considered there were plenty of ways in which 'sport' could be arranged within the confines of a deer park. Mileson, in his recent study of medieval parks, devoted considerable space to the debate about the primary purpose of the deer park. While acknowledging that parks did have other practical and pleasurable uses, he is unequivocal in his assertion that there main function was as a hunting reserve for deer.[160]

The controversy about the use of deer parks extends to the early modern park. Cantor and Squires described Tudor and Stuart parks as 'amenity parks'; hunting was of 'secondary importance' to their primary aim of enhancing a dwelling.[161] Rackham, who, as we observed, denied that the medieval park was really a hunting reserve, suggested that Henry VIII introduced a 'new function' for parks as places for 'ceremonial hunts'.[162] Our earlier accounts of hunting methods have touched upon the lavish spectacles that the Tudor monarchs staged in their parks and had provided for them by their loyal park-owning subjects.

The subject of park as hunting arena is of sufficient importance to this thesis to merit a more detailed examination. Having established that there was a continuum of park creation and destruction in the county, with an early modern revival in park-making and an enthusiastic embracing of the fashion for the landscape park, we need to address the question of how far deer continued to be hunted in these parks. This is also a good point to ask the parallel question, postponed from our earlier examination of the forest landscape, of how far hunting of deer persisted in the open forest. In the

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[160] Mileson, *Parks in Medieval England*, pp. 16-44.

[161] L. Cantor and A. Squires, *The Historic Parks and Gardens of Leicestershire and Rutland* (Newton Linford, 1997), p. 48.

[162] O. Rackham, *Illustrated History of the Countryside* (London, 1994), p. 61.

case of both forest and park there were still deer to hunt, but at what point did hunting as entertainment give way to hunting as venison harvesting? When were the servants left to despatch the deer while their masters were elsewhere hunting the fox?

Hunting Deer in Northamptonshire Parks and Forests

Northamptonshire seems to have lost its appeal as a royal hunting ground after the passing of Henry VIII. Having created the Honor of Grafton, and enlarged the parks that abutted each other on the border of Whittlewood forest, Henry visited Grafton every August for a few weeks hunting.[163] James visited Grafton once or twice, and similarly hunted in Rockingham on a few occasions, but his favoured hunting locations lay along a corridor from London to East Anglia and included the park at Theobalds, Royston, Newmarket and Thetford. As we have seen, most of Rockingham forest was alienated under the Stuart monarchs, while Grafton was granted first to Queen Catherine and then to the Dukes of Grafton, along with many of the rights in Whittlewood forest. The Dukes of Grafton subsequently abandoned Grafton itself and made Wakefield Lodge their Northamptonshire seat. The post-Restoration state papers refer to the forest of Whittlewood as being 'not fit for his Majesty's hunting'.[164]

Northamptonshire was famously well-endowed with nobility, and there is evidence that they continued to hunt in the county's forests.[165] We have already referred to the 1623 warrant permitting John, Lord Mordaunt, to hunt deer in the

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[163] Hall describes a process of 'vigorous emparking and enclosing' which resulted in an unbroken tract of forest, park and enclosures that ran for 13 miles from Whittlewood to Salcey, and which was available for hunting 'without any interruption by open fields'. D. Hall, 'The woodland landscapes of southern Northamptonshire', *Northamptonshire Past and Present,* 54 (2001), p. 44.

[164] *CSPD 1663-1664*, p. 393.

[165] Norden referred to Northamptonshire as the 'Heralds garden' because of its preponderance of aristocrats. Norden, *Delineation*, p. 2.

forests of Rockingham, Whittlewood, Salcey and the parks of Grafton and Ampthill.[166] The fourth Earl of Exeter was granted annual warrants after the Restoration, and a family letter to Christopher Hatton in London in 1670 confirmed that he took advantage of them (mentioning in passing that 'my lord of Exeter is hunting in the forest').[167] The right to hunt deer in the forest continued to be subject to regulation. As late as 1711 the third Earl of Cardigan was granted the right to hawk and hunt in Rockingham forest with 'his company and servants' but red and fallow deer were explicitly excluded. The Brudenells suffered no such limitation in their own woods; a 1683 letter from a servant to Lord Hatton describes the hunting of deer in Hatton's woods, but also mentions that 'Lord Cardigan has hunted his purlieus very much this season'.[168] Accounts surviving from the 1680s confirm that the Hattons still employed a huntsman. Between August 1681 and May 1682 he received payments for dog food and for travelling expenses, another item covered oats for the huntsman's horse and for the deer and fawns. Money was also received for work that the huntsman had done with hounds belonging to a Mr Pulkins.[169]

There is also plenty of evidence from the seventeenth century that deer were being taken illegally from the Northamptonshire forests. In 1643 Thomas Spenser, a shepherd, was in trouble for being found carrying a dead buck away from Gretton Woods on a horse in the company of a Michael Brewer. In his defence, Spenser claimed that they had found the buck already dead.[170] In 1672 a gentleman named William Good instructed two men (a labourer and a mason) to enter the Hatton's

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[166] *CSPD 1623-1625*, p. 11.

[167] NRO, FH1433.

[168] NRO, FH2954.

[169] NRO, FH2646.

[170] NRO, FH3141.

woods called Bangrave to shoot a buck. With the assistance of Good and his servant,

they then carried the buck to Good's house. William Good claimed that he had

Hatton's consent to 'hunt, kill and carry away' any deer as a consequence of a lease

that he had. As the deer was killed on a Sunday, and carried to Good's house at 9 pm

there must be some doubt as to the veracity of his claims.[171] Fifteen years later

Robert Lichfield, a Brigstock carpenter, claimed that Mr Thomas Barton asked him

to fetch a buck from a coppice in Farming Woods that Barton had killed the day

before; Lichfield receiving a share of the animal for his trouble.[172] In 1701 William

Gleatherer of Oakley Magna saw a gentleman course and kill a deer with a

greyhound near Pipewell Woods. This Mr Smith was in the company of a grazier, a

clerk, a labourer and another gentleman. In his defence, the grazier, Daniel Hull,

claimed that he did not know that the closes in which they were coursing were within

the bounds of the forest.[173] It is worth noting that nearly all these incidents involved a

group of men of mixed social status, including one or more gentlemen, and echo our

earlier description of the poaching of deer.

There is little or no information in our local sources about how deer were

being hunted, and whether they followed the organization and ceremony prescribed

by books such as Markham's and Blome's. The nearest we come is a seventeenth-

century record of the eighteen different calls that 'the huntsman shall blow' formally

recorded and preserved in the Hatton papers.[174] As we enter the eighteenth century

the records regarding deer become more concerned with how many deer were taken

and how venison was distributed. We also learn that, while dutiful servants were

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[171] NRO, FH3842, FH3843.

[172] NRO, FH2056.

[173] NRO, FH2829.

[174] NRO, FH4248.

tending the deer and killing them as required, their masters might be otherwise occupied. Among the principal concerns of the letters from Daniel Eaton to his master, the third Earl of Cardigan, in the 1720s are deer, woodland, horses and hounds. But it is also clear from the letters that the hounds are kept for hunting foxes, not deer. When Cardigan was absent from Deene, Eaton kept him informed of the training of the hounds, which included teaching them not to chase sheep or deer. He also described runs after foxes that the hounds had had. Cardigan's huntsman was Jack Kingston, but when deer were taken they were killed by the park keeper, John Peak.[175]

    Davis's 1787 survey of Whittlewood, made in preparation for the report to the parliamentary commissioners, described the forest purlieus whose proprietors could hunt deer from sunrise to sunset, and the free hays, where the proprietors could hunt day or night, but remarked that 'neither of the above customs are now exercised, there being annual tributes of venison paid in lieu of such rights'.[176] The attention of the forest rangers, the Dukes of Grafton, had already turned to foxhunting. The second duke was one of the subscribers to the Charlton hunt in 1738 (the Charlton was based in Sussex and claims are made that it was the first 'modern' fox hunt).[177] He also had his own pack of hounds, which were originally kept at Croydon.[178] The pack was later moved between Wakefield Lawn and Euston Park (in Suffolk) before eventually settling down to become a Northamptonshire pack.[179] One man's reminiscences of hunting with the Grafton hounds provides a rare insight into the

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[175] Wake, Champion-Webster, *Letters of Daniel Eaton*, pp. 9, 13, 32, 38.

[176] NRO, NPL3044.

[177] S. Rees, *The Charlton Hunt: a History* (Chichester, 1998).

[178] B. Falk, *The Royal Fitzroys: Dukes of Grafton through Four Centuries* (London, 1950), p. 97.

[179] NRO, YZ2586.

mechanics of controlling the forest deer. In recounting an incident in the 1830s of the foxhounds running riot among the forest deer at Wakefield lawn and Lady Coppice, the author introduced us to Clarke, the royal keeper, who had 'a pack of bloodhounds with which to hunt the deer'.[180]

From our survey of the forests and parks of Northamptonshire, we know that the Earls of Cardigan and Dukes of Grafton had ample deer to hunt, if the fancy so took them. The traditional explanation for the transfer of hunting ambition from the deer to the fox, that of lack of habitat and shortage of prey, clearly does not hold water for Northamptonshire at least. If there was not a negative reason for the hunting transition, maybe there was a positive one. If it was not so difficult to hunt deer, maybe the change came because it was much more desirable to hunt fox.

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[180] Elliott, *Fifty Years' Hunting*, p. 11.

Chapter 3

Foxhunting

The origins of foxhunting in its modern form lie in the second half of the eighteenth century. The new sport did not emerge in its finished form overnight, however. Although its birth is generally traced to the 1750s, its gestation occupied the first half of that century, and it reached maturity in the nineteenth century. Foxhunting in the early eighteenth century occurred across England, but by the early nineteenth century its focus was Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland. These counties were known to foxhunters as 'the shires', and their principal hunts, the Quorn, the Belvoir, the Cottesmore and the Pytchley, were the 'shire packs'.

Northamptonshire boasted some enthusiastic aristocratic proponents of the sport of in the eighteenth century. As we have seen, Charles Fitzroy, second Duke of Grafton, was an early adherent of the sport. He had his own pack of foxhounds (started some time between 1710 and 1715) which he moved between his Northamptonshire and Suffolk estates and Croydon. He also hunted fox with the Charlton, being one of the initial subscribers, and kept a hunting box in Richmond from where he could hunt with the royal buckhounds and Robert Walpole's beagles. Augustus Fitzroy, who became third Duke of Grafton in 1757 aged 22, shared his grandfather's enthusiasm. Augustus's political career, and brief spell as prime minister, was reputedly destined to failure because it took second place to his passion for hunting and horseracing (and for his mistress, Nancy Parsons, whom he scandalously installed at Wakefield Lawn).[1] The third Duke kept up the practice of moving hounds between Wakefield Lawn and Euston Park, but Croydon had, by

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[1] B. Falk, *The Royal Fitzroys: Dukes of Grafton through Four Centuries* (London, 1950), pp. 75, 97-98, 112, 121.

then, been given up as a bad job. The sport that the second Duke pursued there had

relied on foxes being transported from Whittlewood on the venison cart and this had

never been a great success.[2] The fourth Duke, George Henry Fitzroy, shared his

father's interests in both hunting and horseracing. He succeeded to the mastership of

the Grafton hunt in 1811 and continued in that position until his death in 1844

(although for his last six or seven years all actual duties were performed by his

nephew, Colonel George Fitzroy). The pack then passed to Charles Fitzroy, third

Baron Southampton, who resided at Whittlebury and hunted the hounds at his own

expense for the next twenty years. He was succeeded by the fifth and sixth Dukes,

who took the pack back to Wakefield Lawn. After the death of the sixth Duke, in

1882, the pack was presented to the country, and the association of the Fitzroys with

the Grafton hunt came to an end.[3] The Grafton hunt was never counted as a 'shire'

pack, but it did figure among the second rank of hunts when the sport was at the

height of its popularity.

The Spencers were another of Northamptonshire's noble families who

showed early enthusiasm for foxhunting. Charles, fifth Earl Sunderland and later

third Duke of Marlborough, was only in possession of Althorp for four years before

inheriting his dukedom and Blenheim Palace. In this brief period he made his impact

on Althorp by building the magnificent neo-Palladian stables in 1732-1733 to house

his hunters, and by commissioning John Wootton in 1733 to paint two gigantic

hunting pictures, in addition to life-size portraits of horses and hounds.[4] Charles was

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[2] One fox reputedly escaped the hounds in Croydon three times, and returned to his forest home each time. NRO, G3948/2.

[3] Falk, *Royal Fitzroys*, pp. 227-235; J.M.K. Elliott, *Fifty Years' Foxhunting with the Grafton and Other Packs of Hounds* (London, 1900), pp. 1-8, 21-37.

[4] G. Worsley, *The British Stable* (New Haven and London, 2004), p. 137; G. Paget, *The History of the Althorp and Pytchley Hunt 1634-1920* (London, 1937), p. 36.

succeeded at Althorp by his brother, John, who kept on Tom Johnson as huntsman (Johnson later went to hunt the famous Charlton hounds). John died young in 1746 and Althorp went to his son, also John, who became the first Earl Spencer. It was this John who bought new hounds around 1765, moved them to kennels at Pytchley and took over the already-established Pytchley hunt. Between September and November the hunt was based at Pytchley and chased foxes in the lands to the east of the Northampton to Market Harborough road. The hounds were then moved to Althorp, where they hunted the lands to the west. In the new year they moved back to Pytchley again. Up until the end of the eighteenth century the Althorp country contained a large portion of what later became the Grafton hunt country, and they hunted as far south as Whittlewood forest. Earl Spencer continued to hunt until the year before his death in 1783. He was succeeded in the mastership by his son, John George. Although the second earl was more famous for his passion for books than for hunting, he nevertheless kept the mastership of the Pytchley until 1797, when he handed it over John Warde. This was not the end of the Spencer family's involvement with the Pytchley, however, as the earl's son, Viscount Althorp, took the pack from 1808 and hunted them until he retired at the end of the 1818 season, having suffered a bad fall the previous November.[5] The hunt ceased once more to be the private property of the Spencer family and adopted the organization typical of 'modern' fox hunts. The Pytchley came to enjoy a high reputation as one of the venerated 'shire' packs.

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[5] Paget, *Althorp and Pytchley Hunt*, pp. 37, 41; H.O. Nethercote, *The Pytchley Hunt Past and Present* (London, 1888), pp. 10-13, 30; C. Spencer, *The Spencer Family* (London, 1999), pp. 50-184.

From the collection at Althorp

Plate 3.1: The Stables at Althorp

From the collection at Althorp

Plate 3.2: The Althorp Hunt – The Run by J. Wootton

In the east of the county the Fitzwilliam hunt was founded at Milton. The Fitzwilliams came later to foxhunting than the Fitzroys or the Spencers. A pack was established in 1769 by the fourth Earl Fitzwilliam. He was succeeded as master in 1833 by his son, the fifth earl, and the pack stayed under the control of the Fitzwilliam family for the rest of the nineteenth century. The Fitzwilliam country encompassed parts of Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire as well as Northamptonshire.[6]

There were other hound packs hunting fox in Northamptonshire at the early stages of the sport's development. Justinian Isham's diary, covering the first decades of the eighteenth century, made several references to hunting fox with 'Mr. Andrews'.[7] A letter dated 1783, written to Lord Craven and passed to the Spencers, talked of Lumley Arnold of Ashby Lodge, whose pack of hounds were interfering with the Pytchley sport.[8] These packs did not belong to a great family and were not the foundation of a famous nineteenth-century hunt, and so have disappeared from the record. In 1730 the third Earl of Cardigan formed his hunting confederacy with the noblemen with whom he habitually hunted. Under the terms of this agreement the expenses of horses and hounds were met jointly by the members (the third Duke of Rutland, the Earl of Cardigan, the fourth Earl of Gainsborough, John, Lord Gower and Emanuel, Lord Howe). The experienced hounds were to be kept at Croxton Park (midway between Melton and Grantham) for October and November, Cottesmore in Rutland for December and January, and Thrawson (Thrapston?) for February and

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[6] *VCH Northamptonshire*, 2 (1906; London, 1970 edn) pp. 373-375.

[7] NRO, IL2686.

[8] Cited in Paget, *Althorp and Pytchley Hunt*, p. 37.

March.[9] The letters that survive from Cardigan's steward, Daniel Eaton, betray a constant concern with the hounds, and Justiniam Isham's diary describes a visit to Deene in 1710 to inspect the kennels.[10] But Cardigan's confederacy did not survive to form the basis of a later hunt.

By the time that modern foxhunting had arrived at its finished form in the nineteenth century, Northamptonshire as a hunting country was divided between the Pytchley in the centre, the Grafton underneath the Pytchley, and the Fitzwilliam to the east. Of these, only the Pytchley was counted as a shire pack, and not all of its territory was equally valued by the hunt followers. For the Pytchley it was only the area bordering Leicestershire and Warwickshire that was considered to be 'shire' country.

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[9] J. Wake and D. Champion-Webster (eds), *The Letters of Daniel Eaton to the Third Earl of Cardigan* (Northampton, 1971), p. 153.
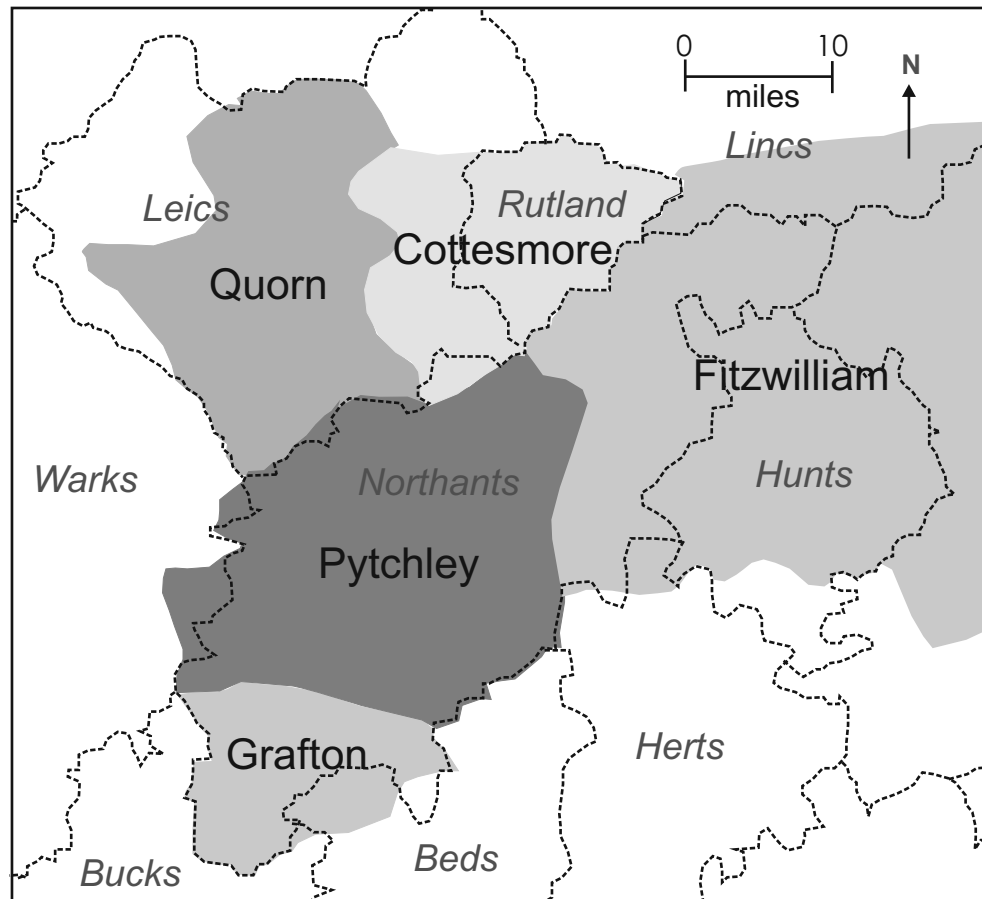
[10] Justinian Isham's diaries, NRO, IL2686.

Figure 3.1: East Midlands Hunt Countries around 1850 (Modern Hunt Names Used)

The Development of Foxhunting

Foxhunting as practiced in the eighteenth century had not reached its modern form, but nevertheless its methods and status already marked a significant departure from the sport's traditional position in the hierarchy of the chase. Foxes had long been treated as quarry, and they figure in the hunting sources that we used in our investigation of deer hunting. There is a contrast, however, in the estimated worth of the fox in the eyes of the hunters. Medieval sources gave little space to the fox and did not have a very high opinion of the sport provided by it. They expected it to be accomplished on foot with the aid of nets and hays (Surtees found evidence that the royal foxhunt of Edward I used a horse only to carry this equipment).[11] Most sixteenth and seventeenth-century writers gave it scarcely more credence. Sir Thomas Elyot, in giving advice on pastimes suitable for young gentlemen, did not 'dispraise' the hunting of foxes with running hounds but observed that 'it is not to be compared to the other hunting in commodotie of exercise'. He recommended that it be 'used in the deepe wynter when the other game is unseasonable'.[12] Markham, writing in the early seventeenth century, covered foxhunting together with badger hunting and maintained that these provided chases of 'a great deal less use or cunning' than hunting stag, buck or hare. He rated the scent of fox and badger as being too 'hot' to be attractive and suggested that few dogs would hunt them 'with all egernesse'.[13]

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[11] R.S. Surtees, *Town and Country Papers* (R.S. Surtees Society, 1993), p. 216; Edward of Norwich, *The Master of Game*, W.A. and F.N. Ballie-Grohman (eds) (1909; Pensylvania, 2005 edn), pp. 64-7; Gaston Phoebus, *Livre de Chase,* commentary by W. Schlag (London, 1998), pp. 60-1.

[12] T. Elyot, *The Book Named the Governor* (London, 1531), f. 72.

[13] G. Markham, *Countrey Contentments* (1615; New York, 1973 edn), p. 33.

Foxes were vermin, and in the early modern period the parish often gave a reward for their destruction.[14] Although included among the 'beasts of the chase' by early hunting writers, they received no legal protection, either from the forest laws or the game laws. Hunting the fox seems to have been viewed more as an occupation suitable for the lower section of society. There is evidence, however, that some were beginning to see the fox as a good and entertaining quarry for the gentleman. At the end of the sixteenth century, Cockaine's *A Short Treatise of Hunting* contained more advice on hunting the fox than any other prey. He was full of praise for the potential excitement of the sport: 'and this tast I will give you of the flying of this chase, that the author hereof hath killed a Foxe distant from the covert where hee was found, fourteene miles aloft the ground with hounds'.[15] The virtues of foxhunting were also described by Blome towards the end of the seventeenth century. He recommended the hunting of the fox, alongside the hunting of stag or buck, as providing entertainment for horseman of a 'warlike nature'. Blome gave an historic account of how foxhunting was carried out by 'country people'. They would join together with dogs of all kinds and try to beat the fox out of woods and coverts, where it would be coursed by the dogs and taken by nets. But, in Blome's judgement, 'the knowledge of foxhunting had lately achieved much greater perfection', and foxhunting had become a 'very healthful' recreation.[16]

James, Duke of York, was an early enthusiast of the sport. Writing from Newmarket in March 1684, James reported that he had 'been twice a fox hunting and

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[14] This practice apparently persisted into the eighteenth century. The last payments for dead foxes occur in the parish constable accounts as follows: 1786 (Old), 1769 (Marston Trussel), 1777 (Boddington, Crick and Wicken), 1782 (Stanion). Wake, Champion-Webster (eds), *Letters of Daniel Eaton,* p. xlvi.

[15] T. Cockaine, *A Short Treatise of Hunting* (London, 1591), opposite B. 3.

[16] R. Blome, *The Gentleman's Recreation* (London, 1686), pp. 86-7.

had very good sport both times'. There are more references to James foxhunting in

the *Calendar of State Papers*.[17] The foundation of the Charlton Hunt, which is

regarded as one of the harbingers of modern foxhunting, has been attributed to

Charles II's illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth.[18] Writing in a 1714 hunting

manual, Stringer asserted that the sport of foxhunting was 'much used by Kings,

Princes, Noblemen, and Gentlemen'.[19]

Initially foxhunting derived many of its methods from deer hunting. For

example, hounds were deployed in relays rather than by the modern method of using

the whole pack to draw for, and put up, the fox. Cox advised his readers to send only

the 'sure Finders' to draw, and then add more hounds to the chase as 'you dare trust

them'. He warned against casting too many hounds at once because 'Woods and

Coverts are full of sundry Chases, and so you may engage them in too many at one

time.'[20]

The Birth of Modern Foxhunting

Although foxhunting had significant early adherents in Northamptonshire,

and an area of the county came to be part of the fashionable 'shires', the modern

form of foxhunting is commonly judged to have started with the foundation of the

Quorn hunt in Leicestershire. Hugo Meynell moved to Quorndon Hall near

Loughborough in 1753 and commenced the hunting of foxes, and the breeding of

foxhounds possessed of increased speed and stamina. Meynell was a man of fashion

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[17] J.P. Hore, *The History of Newmarket and the Annals of the Turf*, 3 vols (London, 1886), 1, p. 48.
CSPD, March 1682-3.

[18] S. Rees, *The Charlton Hunt: a History* (Chichester, 1998), p. 2.

[19] A. Stringer, *The Experience'd Huntsman* (Belfast, 1714), p. 159.

[20] N. Cox, *The Gentleman's Recreation* (London, 1674), p. 111.

and reputation, and his involvement with the sport was reckoned to have

counteracted some of the negative views of the 'country bumpkin squire' that

became common among the elite earlier in the eighteenth century.[21] It has been

countered that many other individuals were breeding improved hounds at this time,

but two factors set Meynell apart: the country he hunted, and the time of the day he

started his hunts. The eastern part of the hunt's territory took in an increasing area of

Leicestershire laid down to pasture, the area that was to become the prime shires

hunting country in the nineteenth century. Meynell commenced his sport at 11 am, in

contrast to other huntsman who would commence at dawn. His rationale was that the

fox would run faster after being given time to digest his night's meal and recover

from the associated exertions.[22]

Many of the methods that Meynell laid down became the distinguishing

features of modern foxhunting: the major one of these being the speed at which the

sport was conducted. As we have seen, the hunting of foxes from horseback was well

established by the mid-eighteenth century, but it originally involved rising before

dawn and picking up the fox's scent as he returned to his lair after a night's hunting.

Once hounds scented a fox, they would follow him relentlessly, albeit slowly, and

the pursuit of a single fox could last all day. A phrase used to describe this was

'walking the fox to death'.[23] A modern foxhunt met at 11 or 12 am, when the fox was

more likely to make a run for it and provide those following the hounds with the

opportunity of a good, fast gallop. It was a feature of modern foxhunting in the

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[21] See Chapter 5 for a discussion of fashion and hunting. Meynell was a friend of Johnson, and Boswell's *Life* contains an apposite quote of Meynell's: 'The chief advantage of London (said he,) is, that a man is always *so near his burrow*'. J. Boswell, *Life of Johnson* (1791; Oxford, 1998 edn), p. 1014. Meynell was also a friend of the third Duke of Grafton; Falk, *Royal Fitzroys*, p. 157.

[22] C.D.B. Ellis, *Leicestershire and the Quorn Hunt* (Leicester, 1951), p. 10.

[23] The Druid (H.H. Dixon), *Silk and Scarlet* (London, 1859), p. 243.

shires, and an essential argument of this thesis, that most of the followers were more interested in the riding than the hunting.

The modern foxhunt followed a well-defined procedure. It started with an 'earth stopper' blocking fox holes in the designated coverts the night before the hunt visited. The idea was to prevent the fox going to earth when he returned from his night's hunting, and force him to lay up in the undergrowth. The next morning, the hunt would assemble at a pre-arranged venue. The meet itself was a social occasion, typically taking place in a town square or the front lawn of some local large house. The master was in charge of the hunt, and usually owned the pack, but he would likely employ a huntsman actually to hunt the hounds. To help keep the pack in order, there would be two 'whippers-in'. Everyone else on horseback was collectively known as 'the field'.

When the field was assembled, and had taken some time to socialize at the meet, the hunt would move off to the covert where the earths had been stopped. The huntsman would then draw the covert, which involved sending the hounds into the undergrowth in the attempt to put up a fox. This could be a lengthy procedure, and so gave the field more opportunities for conversation. The aim was to have a fox off and running before the hounds could get him. To 'chop' a fox - kill it in covert - was considered a great disaster. Once the fox had 'broken cover', the hounds and the hunt would set off in pursuit; the faster the fox ran, the better. The chase then continued until the fox was caught and killed, or until he got completely away (although there might be a 'check' where the hounds temporarily lost the scent, and a 'cast' to direct them in finding it again). The hunt would then proceed to another covert and repeat the process.

This was the form of hunting that came to grip the country in the nineteenth century. Meynell continued to hunt the parts of Leicestershire both to the east and west of the river Soar, but it was to the east that the popular country lay. By the beginning of the nineteenth century keen foxhunters were basing themselves in Melton Mowbray, from where they could also reach the meets of the Cottesmore and Belvoir hunts and gallop across the favoured Leicestershire grasslands for six days a week. The shire counties came to be the winter playground of the country's elite. Their antics were widely reported in press and in picture. Many aspired to join the 'fast set' in the shires, while others contented themselves with following the same sport in the 'provinces'.

The change in pace in the pursuit of hounds was an innovation that occurred under Meynell, and gave rise to 'hard riding' as an integral part of the sport, but such horsemanship was not at Meynell's instigation. It was a Mr Childe of Kinlet Hall in Shropshire who was credited with setting the trend as he followed Meynell's hounds, a trend that was enthusiastically adopted by other hunt followers.[24] In contrast, Dick Christian described Meynell himself as being like a 'regular little apple dumpling on horseback'.[25] Meynell apparently had his work cut out in restraining the more enthusiastic of his followers and preventing them from 'ruining' the sport by riding into the hounds. As one follower of Meynell reported to Cook, 'his indignation in the field was sometimes excessive'.[26]

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[24] Nimrod, *Chace*, p. 21. Nimrod lists another dozen or so men in his footnotes whom he considers to be among the first followers of this new fashion.

[25] Druid, *Silk and Scarlet*, p. 358.

[26] J. Cook, *Observations on Fox Hunting* (1826; London, 1922 edn), p. 128.

A key feature of the developing sport was the ever-growing size of the field, particularly in the fashionable shire hunt countries. As modern foxhunting developed, it became an increasingly 'public' rather than a private sport, and, in the case of the shires, people travelled from other parts of the country to take part. In the early decades of the nineteenth century meets came to be fixed and regular, and their locations were published in advance. Many of the hunt costs were met by subscribers. This public face both reflected the burgeoning popularity of the sport and fed it, and the fields of mounted followers grew ever larger. It came to matter less and less what the personal preferences of the master of foxhounds might be, because they perceived that they had to satisfy their followers.

In 1781 Beckford had voiced concern about the role of the field, holding the opinion that the 'greater number' of those that rode after hounds were not sportsmen and had little knowledge of how to help, rather than hinder, the huntsman in his work. Beckford also observed that the 'steam of many horses', when carried by the wind, could seriously interfere with the scent that the hounds were following.[27] The early Althorp Chace books listed the followers of the hunt at each meet. It is not clear if they were attempting to list the entire field, or those of sufficient status that were known to the author, but the lists are quite short. For example, on Saturday October 16th 1773, Lord Spencer, Mr Bouverie, Mr Bryant, and Mr Samwell were listed. On November 3rd, the book noted seven regulars and added that 'some other gentlemen' attended. By 1774 the phrase 'and several others from Northampton' began to appear, but this would still tend to indicate that the fields were small compared with

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[27] Peter Beckford, *Thoughts on Hunting in a Series of Familiar Letters to a Friend* (1781; Lanham, 2000 edn), pp. 118, 140.

what was to come.[28] By the 1830s, Surtees could describe a meet of the Beaufort hunt that had a field of 400 or more mounted followers. He also talked of sitting on his horse on a Northamptonshire hill and observing 'a tail of riders of at least two miles, scattered in all directions, and increasing in every instant'.[29] This can be contrasted with accounts of earlier hunts, where much smaller groups would follow the hounds. Stringer, writing in 1714, worried about the damaging affect that competitive horsemen riding 'upon the very heels of the hounds' had in forcing the hounds to overshoot the scent. But he talked of twenty or thirty horses being in the way when the hounds were cast back, clearly a very much smaller field than could be expected in the next century.[30] One of the witnesses who reported to the select committee of the House of Lords on horses in 1873 commented that you could, by then, see some 300 to 500 riders in a hunting field.[31]

Another distinguishing feature of modern foxhunting was that people travelled to take part. This tendency developed slowly towards the end of the eighteenth century and reached full expression in the nineteenth. Surtees reckoned that in 'Beckford's time' (the 1780s) people did not leave home to hunt 'except for Leicestershire and, perhaps, Northamptonshire.' The situation was more one where 'either gentlemen kept hounds at their own expense, or a few friends joined, and kept a pack among them.'[32] Improvements in road travel facilitated travelling for recreation. In the eighteenth century this probably had its greatest impact in the movement to London for the 'season' and the growing popularity of the spa resorts.

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[28] NRO, ML4428.

[29] Surtees, *Town and Country Papers*, pp. 82, 98.

[30] Stringer, *Experience'd Huntsman*, pp. 27-8.

[31] *BCPP*, 1873, XIV, p. 252.

[32] Surtees, *Town and Country Papers*, pp. 145-146.

Towards the end of the century, foxhunting began to be popular enough to travel for.

Dick Christian talks of the 'company' staying at Loughborough in 'Mr. Meynell's

time', but then moving to Melton Mowbray so they could hunt several days a week

with the Quorn, the Belvoir and the Cottesmore.[33] This was the beginning of

Melton's position as a fashionable winter resort.

Private coach travel had begun to become popular in the sixteenth century,

and public coaches had become well established since the seventeenth.[34] Gerhold

found that there was a sharp increase in the effectiveness of road travel in the 1750s

and 1760s following a long period of relatively little change. This he attributed to the

combination of turnpike roads and steel springs allowing greater speed without

increased cost.[35] Steane included a map showing the network of turnpike roads that

criss-crossed Northamptonshire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He also

identified Northampton's importance as a place where major east-west and north-

south stage coach routes intersected. Steane connected this fact with the pre-

eminence of the town's horse fairs for the trading of carriage and coach horses.[36] The

final quarter of the eighteenth century witnessed further decreases in travel times and

a 'huge increase' in the number of coach services, including routes between

provincial towns as well as routes from London to the provinces.[37] The early

nineteenth century saw another dramatic improvement in coach travel associated

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[33] Druid, *Silk and Scarlet*, p. 67.

[34] J. Crofts, *Packhorse, Waggon and Post: Land Carriage and Communications under the Tudors and Stuarts* (London, 1967), pp. 109-132.

[35] D. Gerhold, *Carriers and Coachmasters: Trade and Travel before the Turnpikes* (Chichester, 2005), p. 171.

[36] J.M. Steane, The *Making of the English Landscape: the Northamptonshire Landscape* (London, 1974), pp. 252-257.

[37] T. Barker, D. Gerhold, *The Rise and Rise of Road Transport, 1700-1990* (Basingstoke, 1993), p. 54.

with Macadam's and Telford's innovations in road surfaces. Nimrod illustrated the

dramatic increase in speed and safety with a fanciful account of a 1740s traveller

taking an 1830s journey. According to Nimrod 'coach travelling is no longer a

disgusting and tedious labour, but has long since been converted into comparative

ease, and really approaches something like luxury.'[38]

The roads of both Northamptonshire and Leicestershire had been execrable,

as might be expected of heavy clay countries. Celia Fiennes described the road from

Uppingham to Leicester as 'the most tiresome, being full of sloughs'.[39] Watling

Street near Crick was 'deep heavy ground as in all these rich countrys'. [40] Defoe

reckoned the Northampton to Market Harborough road 'in the midst of the deep

dismal roads, the dirtiest and worst in all that part of the country.'[41] By the time

Meynell was hunting his hounds from Quorndon, there was a turnpike road

connecting London to Leicester and Leicester to Loughborough, meaning his

followers could at least reach the hunting grounds with comparative ease. The

appearance of more turnpikes over the second half of the eighteenth century made

the meets of the other shire packs accessible. In Monk's judgement the turnpikes of

Leicestershire were 'tolerably good', although he felt that they suffered from the

passage of 'heavy narrow-wheeled waggons' used for carrying coal and lime.[42] He

hoped for improvement when canals removed the need to haul heavy freight by road.

These hopes seemed to have been fulfilled: in 1835 Nimrod observed that 'the roads

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[38] Nimrod (C. Apperley), *The Chace, the Road and the Turf* (1837; London, 1927 edn), p. 49.

[39] C. Fiennes, *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes* (London, 1983), p. 191.

[40] C. Fiennes, *The Illustrated Journeys of Celia Fiennes*, C. Morris (ed.), (London, 1982), p. 228.

[41] D. Defoe, *A Tour through England and Wales*, 2 vols (London, 1928), 1, p. 87.

[42] J. Monk, *A General View of the Agriculture of the County of Leicester* (London, 1794), p. 53.

about Melton are uncommonly good, particularly that to Leicester.'[43]

Northamptonshire may not have been so lucky. In his *General View* of the

agriculture of the county, Donaldson devoted a none-too-complimentary section to

the state of the county's roads. Although all the great roads that led through the

county were turnpiked, Donaldson complained that these 'show no great ingenuity,

either in the engineer who planned, or in the undertakers or overseers who executed

the work'. The private or parish roads that ran between the turnpikes were even

worse. In many places these were in 'a very ruinous situation' and, in general, so

narrow as to 'admit of only one track'.[44] The traveller John Byng was, however, in

no doubt that the road situation had improved immeasurably over the preceding few

decades. Writing in 1790, at the age of 48, he commented that he was 'just old

enough to remember turnpike roads few, and those bad; and when travelling was

slow, difficult and, in carriages, somewhat dangerous'. In contrast he now found

'quick and easy communication of travell'.[45] Such improvements were particularly

important for foxhunting, because it was a winter sport.

　　　The coming of the railways added further to the popularity of hunting.

Initially the foxhunting fraternity had been appalled at the prospect of railways being

built across their hunting grounds. They thought that foxes, horses and hounds would

not dare to cross the lines. In 1834, Surtees predicted that the railways would render

hunting 'a matter of history.'[46] The actual effect of the railway was quite different,

however. Railway travel effectively opened foxhunting in general, and foxhunting in

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[43] Nimrod (C. Apperley), *Nimrod's Hunting Tours* (1835; London, 1926 edn)*,* p. 133.

[44] J. Donaldson *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Northampton, with Observations on the Means of its Improvement* (Edinburgh, 1794), pp. 48-9.

[45] C. Bruyn Andrews (ed.), *The Torrington Diaries*, 4 vols (London, 1934-38), 2, p. 149.

[46] D. Itzkowitz, *Peculiar Privilege: a Social History of Foxhunting 1753-1885* (Hassocks, 1977), p. 51.

the shires in particular, to a much wider group of participants, and the foxhunting

writers eventually came to recognize the new transport network was a blessing to the

sport. In the 1870s, Brooksby published *Hunting Countries* which was a 'where to

hunt' guide aimed explicitly at the rail traveller. His advice on where to go and

where to stay was made with reference to the railway routes and the railway

timetable.[47]

The railways brought greater mobility to foxhunters in several ways. Those

unable to relocate themselves for an entire winter season could stable hunters in their

favoured country and travel to them as often as required. Eventually they could even

catch a morning train from St.Pancras or Euston and join a shire meet that same day

(similarly foxhunters could travel from the industrial cities of the midlands or the

north). For those who did base themselves in the shires, the cessation of hunting due

to bad weather no longer meant enforced idleness, they could simply return by train

to London until the weather cleared. Foxhunters could also take advantage of railway

travel to reach a far greater variety of meets. Special trains were laid on to transport

horses, men and even the hounds themselves. Brooksby described a meet in north

Warwickshire where 'hounds came by train; so did the master; so did a strong

proportion of the field – from Leamington, Coventry, Birmingham and elsewhere.'[48]

Rugby in particular benefited from its situation on a railway junction, and became a

popular hunting base. Although Rugby was 'far from every kennel' a foxhunter

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[47] Brooksby (E. Pennell-Elmhirst), *The Hunting Countries of England, their Facilities, Character and Requirements*, 2 vols, (London, 1878).

[48] Brooksby (E. Pennell-Elmhirst), *The Cream of Leicestershire: Eleven Seasons' Skimmings, Notable Runs and Incidents of the Chase* (London, 1883), p. 220.

based there could travel to a variety of meets by rail, taking himself and his horses as far as Aylesbury Vale if he so desired.[49]

The Landscape of Modern Foxhunting

Our examination of Northampton's deer-hunting country drew on an eclectic range of sources. There is no such difficulty in establishing the popularity of foxhunting in the late eighteenth and, particularly, the nineteenth centuries. Because foxhunting was so popular, there were many who wrote about it both in published sources and in private diaries. Whereas many of the sources available about early deer hunting apply to the forests and parks of the whole country, the foxhunting sources are more often about Northamptonshire and Leicestershire, because it was the interaction between foxhunting and this specific landscape that shaped the modern sport that the rest of the country tried to emulate.

As we have already observed, Northamptonshire as a county was most noted for its open tracts of champion land. Morton acknowledged that the 'fielden' portion of the county was larger in area than his other divisions of woodland, fen and heath combined.[50] But only a portion of the Northamptonshire champion grounds were part of the famous shires, the quintessential foxhunting terrain: an area roughly contained between Rugby to the west, Northampton to the south and Market Harborough to the north east sometimes identified as 'High Northamptonshire'. This was part of the hunt country of the Pytchley.

In the earlier description of the landscape of the traditional deer hunt we talked of a landscape of the 'find', by contrast the landscape required of modern

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[49] Brooksby, *Cream*, p. 132.

[50] J. Morton, *Natural History of Northamptonshire* (London, 1712), p. 13.

foxhunting was very much one of the 'chase'. The imperative of the foxhunt by the nineteenth was to provide a short, fast and furious chase. We have already observed that killing the fox in covert, without a chance of a gallop after it, was considered one of the worst things that could happen. An early nineteenth-century sporting anecdote tells of a French visitor mistakenly congratulating a master on such an occasion on the speedy dispatch of a fox, an extreme *faux-pas* in the face of a severely disappointed field.[51] While many hunts might boast of the length of a particular pursuit, the most desirable run was short and sharp. Speed had been increasing in the eighteenth century: Beckford recommended a good pursuit lasting between one and two hours, but J. Ortho Paget, commenting on the text a hundred years later, remarked that 'now that horses and hounds are faster than in Beckford's time, we might say not less that thirty five minutes or more than one hour forty minutes, at least, in a grass country'.[52] By contrast with deer hunting, it was not considered a total disaster to change foxes during a pursuit. Ideally the hounds would stick to the same one till the death, but if they changed prey in a covert at least the field would still get their gallop. The main disadvantage was that the new fox would be fresh and it might lead to a longer and faster pursuit than was ideal. Cook commented that all long runs where the fox got away were the result of the pack changing foxes.[53]

This contrast between traditional deer hunting and modern foxhunting is probably one of degree rather than an absolute one. The chase was an important part of the experience of a deer hunt, but not the overridingly important part. The

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[51] Cook, *Observations*, p. 119. This very mistake was repeated two centuries later, when a modern anthropologist suggested to members of the hunt that the 'chopping' of a fox he had just witnessed was a 'good result'. He got much the same reaction. G. Marvin, 'A passionate pursuit: foxhunting as performance', *The Sociological Review*, 51 (2003), p. 55.

[52] Beckford, *Thoughts on Hunting*, p. 125.

[53] Cook, *Observations*, p. 102.

horseback pursuit became ever more significant as foxhunting developed, however. Scarth Dixon, attempting a history of early hunting in 1912, could not conceive that priorities could ever have been any different; his often speculative accounts of medieval or early modern hunting practice were predicated on the belief that its participants would always be looking for a gallop.[54] However misguided this opinion might have been on earlier forms of hunting, it clearly reflected the priorities of the modern form. The change in emphasis in the *modus operandi* of hunting was both cause and effect in the continued swelling of the size of the field of followers. When Meynell was developing his 'science' in Leicestershire he had a preference for the west and north sides of his Quorn hunt country. The mixture of rocky outcrop and woodland that he found in Charnwood provided the type of challenge to hounds that a man more interested in hunting than in riding would enjoy, but his growing band of followers much preferred the grassland to the east of the River Soar, and they pressured Meynell to take his hounds to the grasslands on more days of the week. [55]

The landscape most suited for a large number of horses to gallop across at speed was grass. This is the key to why the 'shires' of Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland became the focus of the new sport in the nineteenth century. The area that became the prime hunting grounds of Northamptonshire had many ancient grass enclosures, and were undergoing a process whereby new enclosure involved conversion of arable to pasture. Morton, writing of Northamptonshire in 1712, observed that 'of our Fielden or Tillage ground a

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[54] For example, he says of George Villiers, second Duke of Buckingham 'Hard riding doubtless appealed to him. One cannot imagine him dropping into the "regulation canter" which represented pace to James I'. W. Scarth Dixon, *Hunting in the Olden Days* (London, 1912), p. 74.

[55] Ellis, reconstructing the early hunt fixtures from Thomas Jones's diary, had Meynell hunting on the Melton area only two or three times a month, and only once a month on the Harborough side. Ellis, *Quorn Hunt*, p. 17.

considerable part is now enclosed, and converted into pasture'. In some places there were 'four or five lordships lying together enclosed'. One of the largest and richest 'knot of pastures' began in the angle where Northamptonshire, Leicestershire and Warwickshire meet: precisely the area that formed part of England's most favoured foxhunting landscape.[56]

Enclosure in Northamptonshire nearly always led to conversion to pasture. Although the county is often regarded as one of the archetypal regions of midlands open-field agriculture, from the fifteenth century onwards it experienced an accelerating conversion from arable to livestock farming. Some parishes were enclosed early, by unity of possession, some later, by agreement; some parishes enclosed one of their three open fields.[57] In his survey of Northamptonshire, Pitt suggested that as much as a quarter of the county (not counting the forest and woodland areas) were 'antient enclosures', given over to feeding sheep and oxen.[58] The open-field parishes that escaped early enclosure were all subject to parliamentary enclosure during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Pitt had another quarter of the county occupied by these 'modern enclosures'. In addition to the enclosed lands, Northamptonshire also boasted what Pitt described as 'natural

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[56] Morton, *Nautural History*, pp. 14-5.

[57] D. Hall 'Enclosure in Northamptonshire', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 9 4 (1997-8), p. 352. Neeson has much of the west and south west of the county enclosed in the sixteenth and seventh centuries, with the rest of the county undergoing parliamentary enclosure in a movement spreading from the south west in the 1750s. This surge bypassed the southern forests, moved through the scarp along the western side of the county and into the central parishes between Northampton and Kettering in the 1760s and 1770s, reaching the Nene Valley, Rockingham Forest and the fens in the 1790s and 1800s. J.M. Neeson, *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure and Social Change in England, 1700-1820* (1993; Cambridge, 1996 edn), pp. 58, 224.

[58] W. Pitt, *A General View of the Agriculture of Northamptonshire* (Northampton, 1809), pp. 36, 111.

grass lands' (he added these to parks, paddocks and plantation to account for a quarter of the county's total land).[59]

The portion of the county that concerns us, High Northamptonshire, shared common features with the Leicestershire Wolds and High Leicestershire, the other areas of 'the shires', in having a large concentration of deserted villages. Historians have taken this as being indicative of the earliest form of enclosure whereby people moved, or were removed, and replaced by sheep. There was some very old pasture indeed in this area.[60] Figure 3.2 shows the correlation between the area we have identified as the prime shire hunting country, and the high ground of the Leicestershire Wolds, High Leicestershire and High Northamptonshire.[61]

Historians have advanced a number of theories about the forces driving the conversion to pasture in this area. Roberts and Wrathmell's model is echoed in Williamson's explanation. He implicated the unattractiveness of arable farming in a region of intractable clay soils after the fourteenth-century population decline and resultant depression of cereal prices. This was not helped by scarcity of manure in open-field parishes where the arable could reach right up to the parish boundary, leaving nothing but fallow to support the livestock. Enclosure and conversion to pasture was easier, and even more attractive, in the marginal and less populous parishes in the upland regions we identified in Figure 3.2 (and it mattered far less if livestock farms were remote from the markets, as the produce could walk there).

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[59] Pitt, *General View, Northamptonshire*, p. 111.

[60] For a discussion of early enclosure in south-east Leicestershire, see J.A. Yelling, *Common Field and Enclosure 1450-1850* (London, 1977), pp. 46-58.

[61] For a description of forces shaping the Wolds, High Leicestershire and High Northamptonshire, see H.S.A. Fox, 'The people of the wolds in English settlement history', in M. Aston, D. Austin, C. Dyer (eds), *The Rural Settlements of Medieval England: Studies Dedicated to M. W. Beresford and J. G. Hurst* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 77-101.
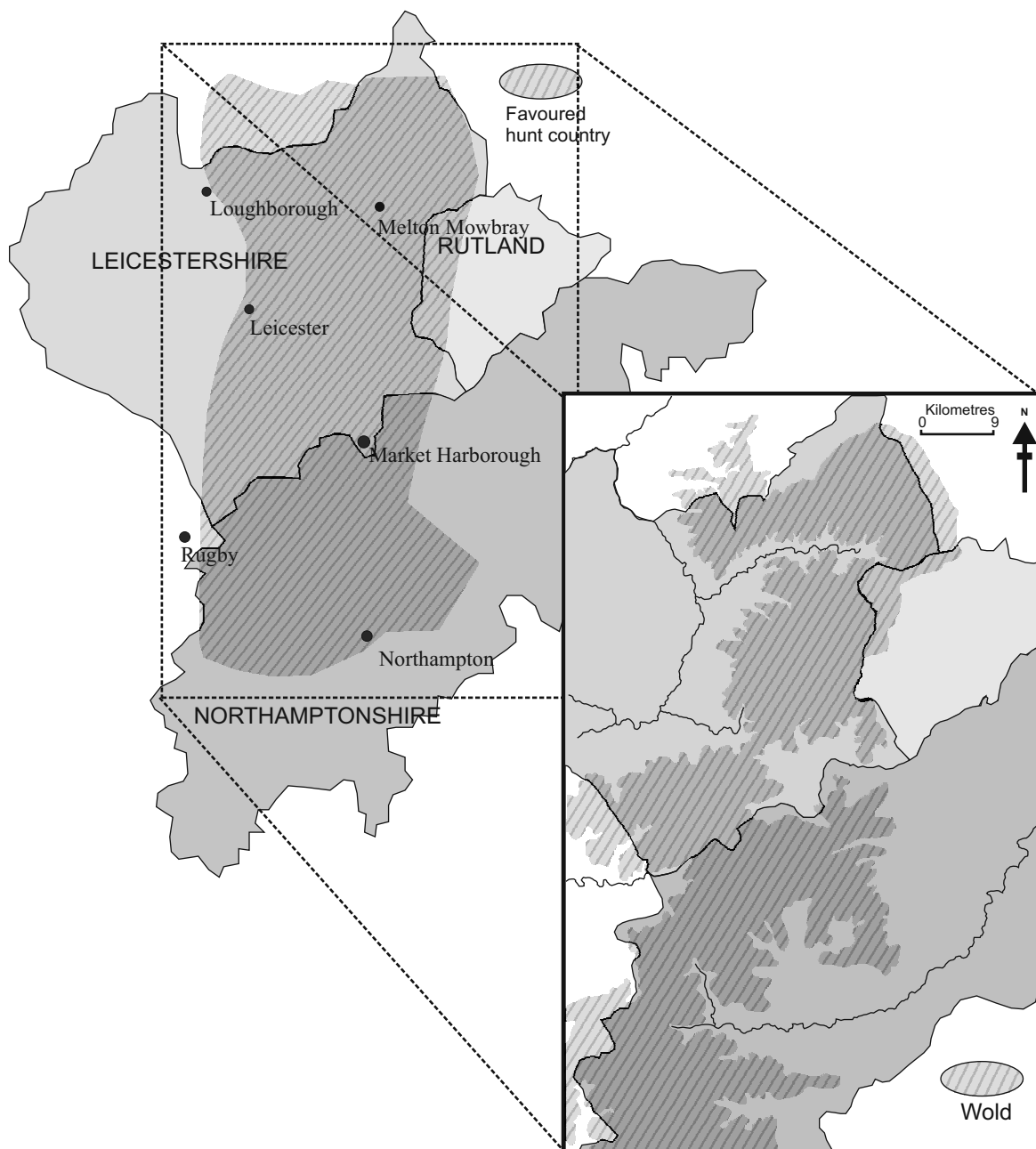
Figure 3.2: Comparison of Wold Areas and Favoured Hunting Country

Foxhunters were to benefit from more and more of the county being put down to grass as the common fields were enclosed: from 'old enclosures', where there was already grass, through the mass parliamentary enclosures that occurred in the later eighteenth century, to the late enclosures of the early nineteenth century.[62] It is also worth noting that grassland not only provided good going and good scent, but also fitted in well with the seasonality of foxhunting; there was little winter wheat to be trampled, and in the cattle-fattening areas there was hardly any stock in the fields.[63] Enclosure and conversion to grass have often been explained in purely financial terms, but as Thomas said of English landowners, 'for centuries they had self-consciously designed a rural landscape which would provide for both profit and recreation'.[64] Maybe the landowners' growing appetite for foxhunting is worth considering as a motive behind the surge of the 'green tide'. But, whatever the reasons, these developments in the Northamptonshire landscape undoubtedly met the requirements of the modern foxhunter. Writing in the 1830s, Surtees remarked that if he wanted to show a foreigner 'the very cream' of hunting country he would take him to the Pytchley hunt's Waterloo Gorse (below Market Harborough) and show him a view of 'grass, grass, grass – nothing but grass for miles and miles'.[65] Cecil seems to have agreed with Surtees as to the worth of Northamptonshire; while acknowledging the fame of Leicestershire, he informed his readers that 'next in

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[62] For example, a letter in the Grafton records mentions the duke paying for the grass seed for a twenty-acre field after the Paulerspury enclosure in 1820. NRO, G3951/23.

[63] According to Moscrop, graziers bought in cattle from March to May, sold them between July and November, but kept some over until a general clearance in January. W.J. Moscrop, 'A report on the farming of Leicestershire', *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*, Second Series, 2 (1866), p. 292; For the seasonality of cattle keeping see R.J. Colyer 'Some aspects of cattle production in Northamptonshire and Leicestershire during the nineteenth century', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 5 (1973), pp. 45-54.

[64] K. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (1983; London, 1984 edn), p. 13.

[65] Surtees, *Town and Country Papers*, p. 90.

superiority the Pytchley Hunt was by many ranked; but with all the advantages which

Leicestershire presents, it is doubtful whether Northamptonshire is not equally

deserving of fame.' As proof, Cecil quoted the opinion of a man who was in turn

both master of the Quorn and of the Pytchley: 'no one can be more capable of

judging on this point than Mr Osbaldeston, as he hunted both countries, and has been

known to declare his opinion in favour of the Pytchley'.[66]

Old enclosure was usually associated with large field sizes, parliamentary

enclosure with small fields.[67] Hall had Northamptonshire's early enclosures

characterized by fields of fifty acres or more. Smaller fields, more suitable for mixed

farming, he associated with the period 1750-1850.[68] It is wrong, however, to assume

that the small enclosures arrived with the surveyor. Some landowners received very

large allotments. Enclosure awards required the new landowners to ring fence their

allotments, but how they internally divided their fields was up to them. Subdivision

waited upon money, convenience, and the results of the land deals that followed

enclosure. Figure 3.3 shows how a portion of the parish of Hellidon, on the south

west corner of the Pytchley country, was divided after enclosure in 1775. Initially all

the fields shown were allocated to separate individuals. The largest single allocation

in this group was 61 acres, but the Hellidon award also contained other large

allocations of up to 133 acres in a single parcel. By 1852, most had been

consolidated into the hands of Robert Cannings. The OS 6 inch map of 1885 also

shows the subdivision of the fields not belonging to Cannings. This pattern was

repeated across the grazing lands of the foxhunting shires.

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[66] Cecil (C. Tongue), *Records of the Chase* (1854; London, 1922 edn), p. 104.

[67] W.G. Hoskins, *Leicestershire: an Illustrated Essay on the History of the Landscape* (London, 1957), p. 93.

[68] Hall, 'Enclosure in Northamptonshire', p. 352.

As the livestock industry of the region gravitated towards cattle rather than sheep, the large grazing grounds of the old enclosures tended to be subdivided too. It was recognized that rotating the stock among smaller fields was a better way to utilize grass. Monk commented that Bakewell, the famous livestock improver, was 'certain that fifty acres of pasture ground divided in five enclosures will go as far in grazing cattle as sixty acres all in one piece.'[69] In 1866, Moscrop quoted a 'first-class' grazier from the Market Harborough district recommending a 24-acre field size for cattle.[70]

The hunting sources confirm this picture of the fieldscape. First-hand hunting sources from the eighteenth century are rare, but some do exist in the form of the Althorp Chace Books: records kept of the Pytchley hounds between the years 1773 and 1808. The earliest of these books concentrated on the area that was hunted from Althorp, which largely coincided with the country that became part of the venerated shires. These accounts give a vivid picture of crossing the Northamptonshire countryside during the formative years of the sport. Reports of each day's sport were full of references to crossing 'great grass grounds', 'old inclosures', 'new inclosures' and the 'open fields' belonging to one or other of the villages.[71] Nearer to Whittlewood, Surtees was told that the enclosures around Fawsley had been 200 acres when Charles Knightley came into possession of the estate early in the nineteenth century. In Surtees's day the boundaries 'could still be traced among the newly planted hedges with which they were divided.'[72]

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[69] Monk, *General View*, p. 45.

[70] Moscrop, 'Report', p. 198.

[71] NRO, ML4428.

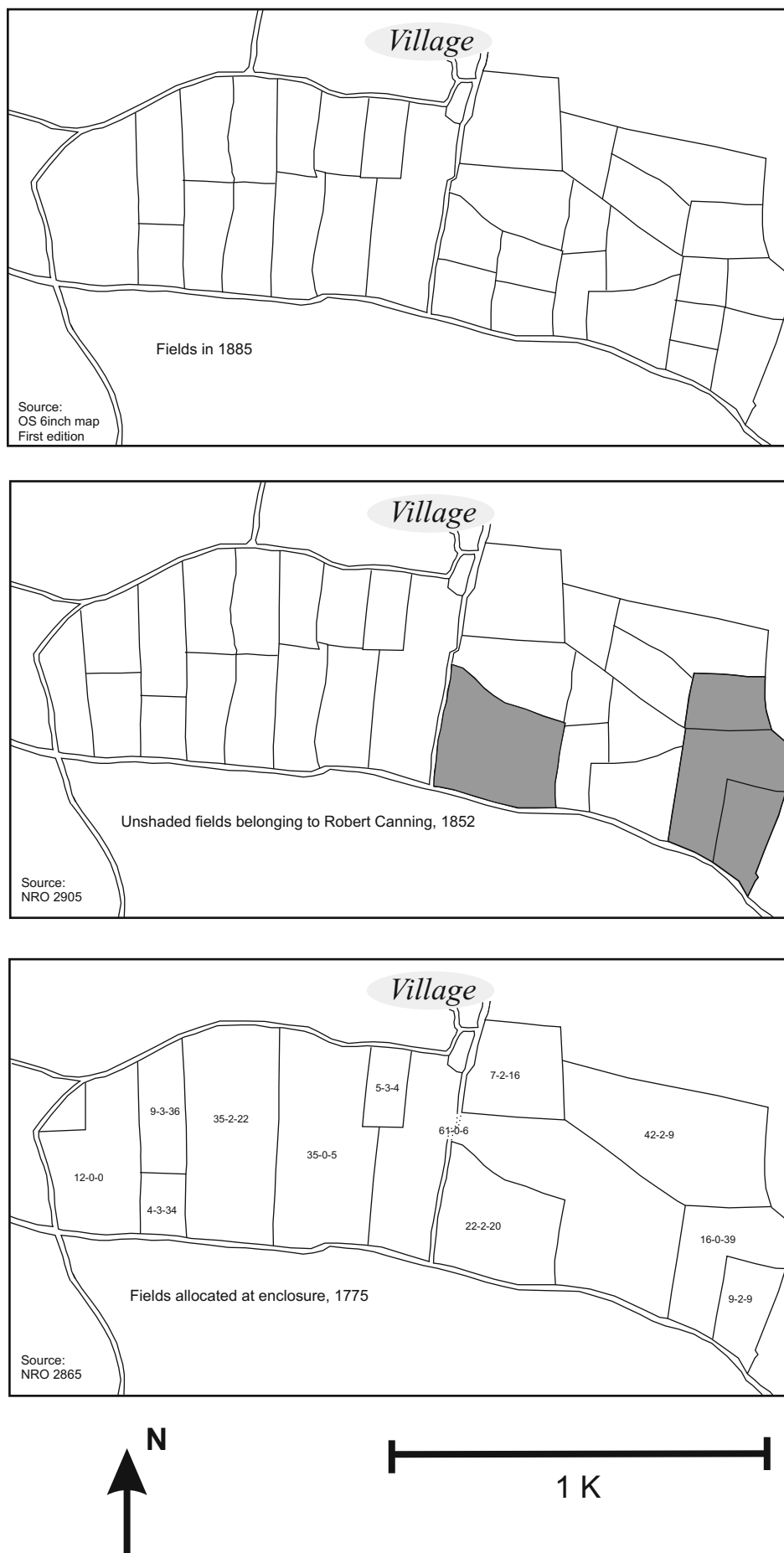[72] Surtees, *Town and Country Papers*, p. 102.

Figure 3.3: Subdivision of the Fields in Hellidon

As the landscape continued to develop, so the nature of the sport of foxhunting was further refined. Enclosure led to the erection of fences, if hunters wanted to keep with the hounds they had to jump them. Jumping had never figured largely in early modern hunting; forests, by their very nature, were supposed to be open. When necessary, riders tended to jump from the standstill or from the trot. As late as 1839, Delmé Radcliffe reminded his readers that 'there is no doubt that all quadrupeds can jump height as well standing as with a run at it'.[73] The 'flying leap', performed at speed, was an innovation of the modern sport, and became ever more an integral part of it. There is evidence that the hunters were not always pleased with these changes. The Althorp Chace Books contain more than one reference to the horsemen missing the best of the action because they were held up by the 'new inclosures' and their 'post and rails'. Charles King, huntsman with the Grafton at the end of the eighteenth century and the Pytchley at the beginning of the nineteenth, 'would rather get his horse's hind legs to a fence and make him creep through than jump it'.[74] Other followers would seek alternatives to jumping at all, Nethercote reported that the Pytchley had 'not been without some remarkable examples of members troubled with jumpaphobia'.[75] Elliott tells us that Lord Southampton managed to keep up well with his hounds while hardly jumping anything.[76] It was, however, central to foxhunting mythology that riders were fearless and tackled awesome fences with insouciance. The horsemen (and sometimes women) who were lauded above all were those who rode straight across country, taking each fence as it came. Thomas Assheton Smith, who was famous for his riding and was master of the

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[73] F.P. Delmé Radcliffe, *The Noble Science* (London, 1839), p. 116.

[74] Nethercote, *Pytchley*, p. 8.

[75] Nethercote, *Pytchley*, pp. 154, 206.

[76] Elliott, *Fifty Years' Foxhunting*, p. 63.

Quorn in the early nineteenth century, apparently claimed that 'there is no place you cannot get over, with a fall'.[77] The Buckinghamshire hard rider, Mr Peyton, would deliberately aim a tired horse at timber, because he reckoned that at least he would fall on the 'right side' (that is, where the hounds were).[78] The fearsome fences of the shires were part and parcel of their reputation, and the fences of the 'prime' portion of Northamptonshire hunting grounds were generally deemed to be more severe than those of Leicestershire or Rutland. Around Lilbourne, Surtees claimed 'there are some of the stiffest, highest fences, with some of the widest drains in the whole of Northamptonshire, or perhaps in the whole of England'.[79]

The method of fencing enclosure allotments usually comprised a quickset hedge protected by rails with a ditch on one side.[80] This pattern extended to the internal division of allotments and forms the landscape of parliamentary enclosure we have inherited. In the formative years of foxhunting, however, these hedges would have offered no greater an obstacle than a few rows of seedlings 'of such tender growth as required protection by a low rail on each side'.[81] It was awkward to jump, but nowhere near as dangerous as what came later. Plate 3.3 illustrates this type of fence.

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[77] Nimrod, *Hunting Tours*, p. 5.

[78] Delmé Radcliffe, *Noble Science*, p. 126.

[79] Surtees, *Town and Country Papers*, p. 92.

[80] This was sometimes prescribed in enclosure agreements, for example, the Potterspury and Yardley Gobion enclosure award stipulated quickset hedges with post and three rails on one side and post and two rails on the other. Steane, *Northamptonshire Landscape*, p. 232.

[81] G.J. Whyte-Melville, *Riding Recollections* (1875; London, 1985 edn), p. 17.

Plate 3.3: A Young Quickset (by Sir Robert Frankland, 1811)

A hawthorn hedge generally needs to be ten to twenty years old before it can

be cut and laid, but many of the hedges of the shires seem to have been left far

longer. In the first half of the nineteenth century Nimrod reckoned the 'bullfinch'

was the most common obstacle. This was 'a quickset hedge of perhaps fifty years

growth, with a ditch on one side or the other, and so high and strong that horses

cannot clear it'.[82] Foxhunters tackled such an obstacle by jumping *through* the hedge

(Plate 3.4). Nimrod claimed that their transit left no more sign 'than if a bird had

hopped through'.[83] The bullfinch seems to have been a particular feature of

Leicestershire and Northamptonshire. Some of the annual tenancy agreements

expressly forbade tenants from cutting the hedges except for repair.[84] There was

disagreement among agricultural writers as to whether this represented neglect or

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[82] Nimrod, *Chace*, p. 17.

[83] Nimrod, *Chace*, p. 17.

[84] LRO, 8D39/7377, 8D39/7382.

good husbandry. Both Monk and Moscrop, writing about Leicestershire some

seventy-two years apart, recommended that hedges were trimmed annually as

elsewhere (for a neat appearance as much as anything).[85] On the other hand, Pitt,

writing about Northamptonshire, quoted Young's observation that the 'only secure

way' to fence cattle was to leave 'very strong rows of white thorn uncut; and when

so old as to want renewing, to cut them off and keep cattle out till grown out again'.[86]

The situation became increasingly hazardous for foxhunters as the shire

districts began to concentrate more on the fattening of cattle after 1830, leading to

the introduction of 'oxers' (Plate 3.5). These fences were 'rendered necessary by the

difficulty of keeping fattening cattle within their pastures' and comprised 'a wide

ditch, then a sturdy blackthorn hedge, and at least two yards beyond that a strong rail

about four feet high'.[87] The intention was that the single rail would stop bullocks

running into, and through, the hedge. Foxhunters had to attempt to clear such an

obstacle in a single leap. In some cases the fences would be 'double oxers' with rails

each side.

As the nineteenth century progressed, so cut-and-laid hedges became more

common. Brooksby observed in the 1870s 'vast numbers of venerable tangled

bullfinches have been transformed into smart stake-and-bounds'.[88] Stake-and-bound

fences were constructed by weaving the cut hedge between vertical stakes, and

securing it at the top with a binder (principally plaited bramble at this time). There

were local variations in hedge-laying techniques, and, in an attempt to contain unruly

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[85] Monk, *General View*, p. 44; Moscrop, 'Report', p. 294.

[86] Pitt, *General View, Northamptonshire*, p. 56.

[87] Nimrod, *Chace*, p. 17.

[88] Brooksby, *Cream,* p. 3.

bullocks, Northamptonshire had the 'rasper'. Nimrod described this as an obstacle

where 'a considerable portion of the blackthorn, left uncut, leans outwards from the

fence, somewhat about breast high'.[89]

Plate 3.4: A Bullfinch (by Henry Alken snr.)

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[89] Nimrod, *Chace*, p. 39.

Plate 3.5: Approaching an Oxer over Ridge-and-Furrow (by John Sturgess)

When bullfinch, oxer or rasper proved unnegotiable, the hard rider could always resort to timber. This came in the form of stiles or gates or plain post-and-rail fencing. Nimrod recommended that, if all else failed, a hunter 'makes his way to one corner of the field, where he finds a flight of very high and strong rails, but without a ditch'.[90] Elliott reports a run with the Grafton where they were 'obliged to jump timber' because the hedges were so large.[91] Timber was the most feared obstacle of all, however, because, where it did not break easily, a horse could be somersaulted and land on his rider. Nethercote reports two fatal accidents at the same stretch of post-and-rail fence beneath Winwick Warren in the 1840s.[92]

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[90] Nimrod (C. Apperley), *The Horse and the Hound* (Edinburgh, 1843), p. 247.

[91] Elliott, *Fifty Years' Foxhunting*, p. 40.

[92] Nethercote, *Pytchley*, p. 131.

Foxhunters often destroyed the farmers' fences in their efforts to cross the country. It was considered good manners to break down fences when jumping them to make it easier for the following riders. Such destructiveness was present from the earliest days of modern foxhunting. In a letter dated March 23rd 1778, Charles Dormer humorously entreated his friend to leave off hunting with the Quorn in order to visit him in Oxfordshire. He begged him to consider that 'the honest farmer … is already busy in repairing his mounds and fences but you cruel foxhunters render all his labour in vain'.[93] Northampton's fearsome reputation for fences seemed to result in more fence breaking. Nimrod quoted Thomas Assheton Smith saying 'that he goes *over* Leicestershire, but *through* Northamptonshire'.[94] Nethercote described the young hunters of the Pytchley being 'not too proud' to wait until an old Guardsman, Colonel Allix, had 'made a hole in the big place through which he might find a way into the field beyond'.[95] One innovation of the farmers that did cause much consternation was wire, but this did not appear until the 1860s and did not take hold until the 1880s, and so it falls just outside our period of study.[96]

The nineteenth-century drive to improve enclosed pastureland by drainage also played a role in the evolution of the sport. The progress of a horse was considerably slowed by wet and boggy ground, and this could also lead to accidents and injuries to both horse and rider. The draining of the fields led to drier going in the winter hunting season, which in turn encouraged the ever increasing pace of the chase. Whyte-Melville attributed easier riding in earlier times to undrained pastures,

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[93] LRO, DG39/1099.

[94] Nimrod, *Hunting Tours*, p. 191.

[95] Nethercote, *Pytchley*, p. 23.

[96] Itzkowitz, *Peculiar Privilege*, p. 155.

a 'few furlongs' of which 'could bring the hardest puller back when he goes in over

his fetlocks every stride'.[97] The pasture that these fences divided may have accounted

for the popularity of the shires, but as we would have been wrong to envisage a

landscape of small neat hedges, we would be equally mistaken to picture smooth,

even grass fields. There was much ridge-and-furrow in these pastures, which itself

bore witness to the conversion to grazing after enclosure. In the eighteenth century

the fields were largely undrained, and in Leicestershire Monk reported that the

furrows were full of 'rushes and other trumpery.'[98] Nimrod talked of 'high ridges

with deep, holding furrows between each'.[99] Riders needed to stay on the ridges in

order to attain the firmer going, and even this was soft by today's standards. Heavy

going was detested because it slowed horses down and caused tendon injuries

(involving a long lay-off). The Althorp Chace books frequently reported deep and

heavy going, and sixty years later Henry Dryden's Northamptonshire hunting diaries

carefully recorded the going he encountered during the chase with phrases such as

'country very deep', 'tremendously deep', 'stiffish'.[100]

The process of enclosing fields with ditches cut along every hedgeline

improved matters to some degree, but the eighteenth century saw the introduction of

underdraining techniques, and this gathered momentum in the nineteenth century.

Early efforts involved the digging of shallow trenches that were backfilled with

wood or stones through which water could flow; spring tapping and turf drains were

also popular. Technical innovation brought the tile drain and later the drainage pipe.

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[97] Whyte-Melville, *Riding Recollections*, p. 37. (The fetlock is the lowest joint on a horse's leg.)

[98] Monk, *General View, Leicester,* p. 59.

[99] Nimrod, *Chace*, p. 38.

[100] NRO, ML4428, ML4429, ML4430; NRO, ZA477.

Leicestershire and Northamptonshire had a large proportion of clayey and loamy

soils with impeded drainage.[101] Both Monk and Pitt cited further drainage as one of

the main improvements that could be made to Leicestershire.[102] From research done

by Phillips using records of the take-up of government grants, these drainage

techniques were not as widely adopted in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire as in

more arable counties, but they still made an impact. [103] Foxhunters held these

improvements as being partly responsible for the ever increasing pace of the hunt.[104]

Farmers were recommended to take additional steps to improve their pasture.

During the early days of the Pytchley, the hunt was looking for foxes in small

patches of gorse that seemed to inhabit both the new enclosures and the older

'grounds'.[105] Pitt's recommendations for improving the pastures included

'extirpating bushes, furze, and weeds'. Pitt also reported that in some of

Northamptonshire's grazing grounds the ant hills were so abundant that 'it is possible

to walk over many acres, step by step, from one ant hill to another, without ever

coming upon the level ground'.[106] In 1852, the pasture of Northamptonshire was 'too

frequently overrun with thistles, nettles, and hassocks'.[107] But Moscrop had detected

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[101] Leicestershire 77.5% of 1873 county area, Northamptonshire 64.8%, this ranks them first and third in the country. A.D.M. Phillips, *The Underdraining of Farmland in England During the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 39.

[102] Monk, *General View*, *Leicester*, p. 59; W. Pitt, *A General View of the Agriculture of the County of Leicester* (London, 1809), p. 59.

[103] Leicestershire and Northamptonshire appear in the mid-range of total loan expenditure on draining. Phillips, *Underdraining*, p. 77.

[104] Whyte-Melville, *Riding Recollections*, p. 37.

[105] NRO, ML4428, ML4429, ML4430.

[106] Pitt, *General View, Northamptonshire*, pp. 136, 139.

[107] W. Bearn, 'On the farming of Northamptonshire', *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*, 13 (1852), p. 80.

improvement in Leicestershire at least, talking of graziers keeping their pastures as 'smooth as a cricket ground'.[108]

To summarize the development of the foxhunting fieldscape: the eighteenth century brought conversion to grass, which ultimately gave rise to foxhunting at the gallop. The improvements of the nineteenth century made it possible to go even faster. The fearsome fences constructed by the farmers made jumping from a gallop a central part of the chase (at least for the braver riders). All came together to produce the short sharp bursts that characterized foxhunting in the shires in its 'golden age', and contrasted with the slower, more drawn-out character of earlier hunting. These factors helped to shape foxhunting in its modern form, and it was this modern form that caught the attention of a group of men looking for winter entertainment. It went on to catch the imagination of a far wider public who, while not necessarily participating themselves, came to see the sport as a somehow quintessential part of English life.

This account of the landscape of foxhunting has stressed the role that enclosure, both old and new, and the conversion to pasture played in the formation of foxhunting. The modern sport found its highest expression in the form practised in the east midlands, including part of our Northamptonshire study area: the hallowed 'shires' of foxhunting history.

Bevan has recently contributed some valuable work in tracing the exact characteristics of the landscape hunted over by Northamptonshire lords in the eighteenth century. She has used hunting diaries and compared their contents with evidence from enclosure awards and maps. In doing so she questioned the argument

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[108] Moscrop, 'Report', p. 296.

made in the last 45 years that the rise of foxhunting in the eighteenth century was driven by the shift from arable to grassland following enclosure by parliamentary statute.[109]

Bevan started her examination in Leicestershire with Meynell, as the widely acknowledged 'father' of modern foxhunting. She divided his foxhunting career into three phases: from 1753 to 1762 he hunted from Quorndon, he then based himself at Langton Hall just north of Market Harborough, and finally he hunted the triangle bounded by Quorndon in the west, Melton Mowbray in the east and Ruddington in Nottinghamshire to the North. Bevan had these movements driven by the desire to avoid land that had been recently subject to parliamentary enclosure, and to hunt across the remaining open fields. Turning her attention to the Pytchley hunt, Bevan used evidence from the Althorp Chase books from 1773 to 1793 to suggest that the Spencers were similarly driven to seek out open fields in preference to enclosed fields, citing the very many falls at fences in these hunt records. Finally, she examined records of the Grafton hunt, taking the Fitzroy's eighteenth-century habit of moving the hounds to Euston Park for part of every season as proof of their preference for riding the open Brecklands to the enclosed parishes surrounding Wakefield Lawn.

The detailed examination of hunting landscape is worthwhile, but the conclusions that Bevan draws from this work are less satisfactory. For her, the motivating forces of her masters of hounds are the desire to avoid jumping. Our own account of enclosure and agricultural improvement, and the consequent increase in the amount of jumping required to cross a hunting country, has shown that jumping

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[109] J. Bevan 'Agricultural change and the development of foxhunting in the eighteenth century', *Agricultural History Review*, 58 1 (2010), pp. 49-75.

was far from universally popular with hunt followers. But was this an overriding

feature in deciding where to hunt? The eighteenth-century masters and huntsmen,

including Meynell, the Spencers and the Graftons, were still far more interested in

the hunting than the riding. They were driven by where to find foxes, and where the

best scent was to be had. This is not incompatible with the greater speed of pursuit

that was a feature of later eighteenth-century foxhunting, but should not be

interpreted as using the hunt as the means to ride a horse fast. These masters were

fascinated with the breeding of a faster foxhound and pushing the limits of what the

hounds could achieve.[110] John, Viscount Spencer, Master of the Pytchley from 1808-

1818, claimed that his 'leading passion' in life had been to 'see sporting-dogs

hunt'.[111] The fact that these men were using better and faster horses to keep up with

the action was growing in significance, but was not their driving force.[112] It did,

however, become the driving force for the ever-growing number of mounted

followers, and particularly the 'hard riders'. Their influence began to shape the hunt

and dictate the ground that the hunt covered, and they voted overwhelmingly for the

grassland of the shires. As the country was ever-more subdivided, they made a virtue

out of a necessity as far as jumping was concerned and found that they had the

horses, the skills, and the appetite to tackle these obstacles.

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[110] Beckford, although very much a hound man (and still starting his hunt at dawn rather than mid-morning), still stressed the speed of the foxhunt, contrasting the old aim 'to walk down a fox' with the new one of keeping close at him, and killing him 'as soon as you can'. Beckford, *Thoughts on Hunting*, p. 180.

[111] Paget, *Althorp and Pytchley Hunt*, p. 34.

[112] Bevan also rather overplays the third Duke of Grafton's preference for hunting from Euston Park. By her own calculations the hounds spend longer in Northamptonshire than in Suffolk (four months *versus* three months). Wakefield Lodge was rebuilt as a hunting box for the second Duke, complete with new stables. Worsley suggests that the apartments above the stables were intended for Grafton's hunting guests. This does not suggest that Northamptonshire hunting was considered 'second best'. (It is unfortunate for our purposes that the third Duke's Suffolk hunting diary alone survives, there is no Northamptonshire equivalent, so no direct comparisons are possible). G. Worsley, *British Stable*, p. 204.

Most writers on foxhunting, from the early-nineteenth century to the present day, have acknowledged that the eighteenth-century form of the sport was still a 'work in progress' and very different from its finished form. Nimrod, for example, was all too conscious of the transformation that foxhunting had undergone. The eighteenth-century beginnings of the sport he described as slow, but a treat to a 'real sportsman' (that is, someone more interested in the working of the hounds).[113] In 1826, Cook talked about the method of riding to hounds being 'so much altered' within the 'last few years'.[114] Writing in 1912, Scarth Dixon observed that foxhunting 'did not occupy the first place till the eighteenth century was well advanced' then 'it grew and increased in popularity with a rapidity that was unprecedented, and when the nineteenth century opened it claimed place as the national winter sport'.[115] Later historians of foxhunting and landscape have observed this chronology themselves. Hoskins had foxhunting developing in Leicestershire in the 1770s 'in time to enjoy the exhilaration of galloping over miles of unfenced country'. He acknowledged, however, that enclosure 'made things more difficult' or at least 'necessitated new and exciting skills'.[116] Bevan started her paper with a quotation from Bovill: 'but for enclosure foxhunting would never have become a popular sport'. She questioned this because eighteenth-century foxhunters seemed to have been equally, or even more, happy to hunt across open fields than enclosed pasture. But foxhunting did not become a truly 'popular' sport (in the sense that many people participated) until the early nineteenth century, and by that time the east midlands landscape produced by both ancient and parliamentary enclosure, and still

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[113] Nimrod, *Chace*, pp. 4-8.

[114] Cook, *Observations*, p. 7.

[115] Scarth Dixon, *Hunting*, p. 332.

[116] W.G. Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape* (1955; London, 1985 edn), p. 196.

being refined by subdivision, drainage and other improvements, was a vital part of the sport.

The Landscape of Fox Preservation

As we have seen, explanations of the development of modern foxhunting have attributed its birth to shortage of deer. But, ironically, foxhunting sources displayed a continual worry about shortage of foxes. By 1781, Beckford was already talking about actions to take when faced with a depletion of the fox population. He strongly advised against buying in foxes because that would cause thefts from neighbouring hunt countries.[117] Some hunts had to resort to hunting 'bag men' – foxes that were caught earlier and released into the covert just before being hunted. The seventeenth-century diary of Thomas Isham contained incidents of capturing foxes in order to hunt them later.[118] In November 1773, the Althorp Chase book recorded the hunting of a 'bag' fox and in November 1776 reported their whipper-in rescuing a fox from a drain and releasing it 'before the country people could put him into the sack that they had got for him' (selling a captured fox could be profitable).[119] In 1833, the Duke of Grafton was paying a man ten shillings for watching fox coverts, presumably to thwart fox-nappers.[120] But hunting bagged foxes was seen increasingly as a disreputable practice, and one unlikely to supply good sport. A good run depended on the fox determinedly breaking cover and making a fast dash towards another known place of safety. Bagged foxes were unfamiliar with the district so did not know where to run. Dryden reports a disappointing run with the

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[117] Beckford, *Thoughts on Hunting*, p. 201.

[118] N. Marlow (trans), *The Diary of Thomas Isham of Lamport, 1671-73* (Farnborough, 1971), pp. 105, 159.

[119] NRO, ML4428.

[120] NRO, G2017.

Grafton in 1841, when a fox killed within one field was 'supposed to be a bag

man'.[121] There was a trade in captured foxes carried on from Leadenhall in London;

bagged foxes or imported foxes were also known as 'Leadenhallers', a term of some

disparagement.[122]

Hunts took means to preserve and boost the population of the foxes that they

had. Some masters imported foxes from Scotland or France to increase local numbers

and 'improve the breed'. When Lord Alford took the Pytchley mastership, he

attempted to improve local foxes by releasing 'six brace of the largest Scotch ones he

could procure' at Cottesbroke.[123] The Grafton hunt's Sholebrooke kennel accounts

record frequent payments to people who rescued fox cubs, and even raised them by

hand.[124]

Foxes, like deer, required cover and would by choice make their home in

woodland. But the very thing that made the shires such popular hunting county was

the open grassland; Charnwood in Leicestershire and the royal forests of

Northamptonshire were considered decidedly 'second rate' in comparison. To

maintain a fox population, the hunts had to take steps to provide habitat in the form

of planted fox coverts.

Fox coverts provided both a habitat in which the fox could thrive and an

essential focus for the start of a hunt. In some areas, there was existing woodland that

could be managed to preserve foxes; in other areas, coverts had to be planted to make

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[121] NRO, ZA477.

[122] For Cook, the disgust at hunting a 'bagman' extended to the hounds themselves. He maintained that if the pack were in 'sport and in blood' (that is, had hunted and killed recently) they would refuse to eat a bagman after catching him. Cook, *Observations*, p. 105. Dixon reckoned about a thousand imported foxes went through Leadenhall market in a year. Druid, *Scarlet and Silk*, p. 362.

[123] Nethercote, *Pytchley*, p. 152.

[124] NRO, G3867.

up for shortage of natural habitat. Planted coverts most often comprised gorse; it was only with time that such areas themselves developed into woodland, with trees either growing up naturally or being planted for ornamental effect. It was the undergrowth associated with most woodland, rather than woodland *per se*, that the fox required. Not all patches of woodland or scrub would serve the hunt's purpose. Firstly the covert needed to be of a certain size: an acre at minimum but preferably more. Secondly an agreement needed to be made with the owner of the covert, such that he, or his tenant, would preserve the foxes that bred there and allow the hunt access. Hunts very often paid 'covert rent' to such landowners.

Large woodlands would not necessarily provide ideal habitat so far as modern foxhunting was concerned. As Cook explained, such an environment would be one where foxes 'commonly hang, and seldom go away'.[125] Large expanses of woodland were, however, popular when it came to 'cub hunting': the early-autumn activity that was primarily aimed at training young hounds. The intention then was to hunt the fox within the covert, and to disperse other foxes that were not being hunted. Cub hunting, like earlier forms of the sport, was primarily about the hound, not the horse, and large woods provided the ideal environment for such an undertaking.[126]

For Cook, the covert most likely to provide satisfaction to the modern foxhunter was the medium-sized gorse covert (unfortunately, the writer does not specify what size constitutes 'medium'). But Cook also warned the reader that the successful construction of such a covert was no small undertaking. The ground had

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[125] Cook, *Observations*, p. 48.

[126] Meynell spent two months in the autumn hunting his entire pack in the woodlands. In November, he divided the hounds into an old pack and a young pack. The young hounds were under two years old and were hunted twice a week, as much in the woodlands as possible. J. Hawkes, *The Meynellian Science or Fox-Hunting upon System* (1808; Leicester, 1932 edn), pp. 41-2.

to be thoroughly prepared and only the best seed used. The covert then required

thorough weeding as soon as the first shoots appeared. Cook also had advice on

constructing the earths that would encourage foxes to take up residence. He favoured

introducing badgers to perform the dirty work over the construction of earths by men

with spades.[127] Nimrod estimated that a well-planted gorse covert would hold foxes

in its second year.[128] Plate 3.6 shows hounds drawing a gorse covert: a low, dense

covering as it would appear early in its life. As time passed, ungrazed gorse would

get 'leggy' and expire altogether if overshadowed by trees. The covert would then be

described as 'hollow' and would cease to hold foxes. So a covert needed to be

managed and maintained; Squire Bouverie of Delapre near Northampton wrote to Sir

William Langham in 1800 requesting he arrange for his tenant to carry out

maintenance work on the fox covert Bouverie was renting. This involved cutting the

gorse (or 'furze') where necessary and 'such parts where the furze does not grow

well ploughed and some more sown'.[129] Gorse was often gradually replaced by

blackthorn or hawthorn, which provided a denser and more permanent cover. Many

fox coverts bore the name 'Gorse' long after they had ceased to comprise gorse

bushes. (Waterloo Gorse in the 1870s was 'the blackthorn, except for old

denomination'.) [130]

Northamptonshire provided many examples of purpose-made coverts, and we

can see this process gathering momentum. The earliest of the Althorp Chace books

rarely refer to what can now be identified as dedicated fox coverts. In the 1770s the

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[127] Cook, *Observations*, pp. 43-9.

[128] Nimrod, *Hunting Tours*, p. 139.

[129] NRO, L(C)1082.

[130] Brooksby, *Cream,* p. 274.

chases most often included locations such as Badby Wood, Daventry Wood, Weedon Wood. In 1781 the books included references to 'Elkington New Cover', suggesting that covers were beginning to be purpose-built. [131] Elsewhere we learn that the Royal Horse Guards (the 'Blues') planted a covert in Droughton parish in 1779, which was known as 'Blue covert' and that Naseby Covert was planted in 1789 by George Ashby.[132] The 1805-8 Althorp Chace books include references to previously unmentioned coverts such as Nethercote's and Isted's, names that are well-known from the list of 'the company' at each meet.[133] Waterloo Gorse was originally planted in 1812 and then subsequently renamed in honour of the battle.[134] In 1849, Lord Alford, then master of the Pytchley, leased an eleven-acre close in Clipston for twenty-four years at the rent of £20 per annum, for the purposes of 'making a covert for the breed and protection of foxes'.[135] This became known as Alfords Thorns. Earl Spencer established a new covert near Church Brampton in 1853 which he attempted to call 'Balaclava'. The name did not take and it became known as 'Sandar's Gorse' (after the farmer on whose land it stood, and who maintained it).[136]

In some areas there was natural woodland that could serve as fox coverts. The Pytchley hunt took some advantage of the forest woodlands in the east of its territory, but also of detached parcels of woodland such as Sywell Wood and Harlestone Heath. Where existing woodland was used as cover, or where a covert developed into woodland over the years, the hunt would have rides cut and maintained to keep the

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[131] NRO, ML4428, ML4429.

[132] Paget, *Althorp and Pytchley Hunt*, pp. 11, 19.

[133] NRO, ML4428, ML4429.

[134] Paget, *Althorp and Pytchley Hunt*, p. 9.

[135] Clipston Parish Records, NRO, 206p/247.

[136] Nethercote, *Pytchley*, p. 41.

woods accessible. As we have seen, the coppices in the forests of Rockingham,

Whittlewood and Salcey were already criss-crossed by rides. Woodland rides could

be thick mud in the winter. Surtees described the rides in Sywell Wood as being

'more like a quagmire than anything else'.[137] This was another reason woodland-

based hunts were not popular with riders.

Coverts could also be claimed from the 'wild'. Land if neglected and left to

its own devices would generally develop in a way almost suitable as a fox covert; the

Pytchley covert Cock-a-roost was founded by 'enclosing the patches of gorse

growing naturally on the hillside.'[138] Quite a few Pytchley coverts took advantage of

the patches of woodland on steep slopes that Fox told us was a characteristic feature

of the wolds (for example, the Hemplow Hills and Laughton Hills coverts).[139] The

early Althorp Chace Books, covering the 1770s, make reference to drawing 'small

patches of furze' found in enclosures near Yelvertoft, and the same in enclosures

near Guisborough, suggesting some agricultural neglect.[140]

Coverts, whether reclaimed from the wild or purpose-made, needed to be a

fairly good size – an acre at minimum but preferably far more. When the Althorp

hounds found a fox in a 'little furze cover' near Winwick Warren in December 1775,

'there was a great danger of his being killed in cover it being so small'.[141] Many

coverts were around twenty acres, some up to one hundred. Waterloo Gorse and

Crick Covert were both about ten acres, Loatland Wood was forty acres, Naseby

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[137] Surtees, *Town and Country Papers*, p. 110.

[138] Nethercote, *Pytchley*, p. 234.

[139] Fox, 'The people of the wolds', p. 82.

[140] NRO, ML4428.

[141] NRO, ML4428.

Covert fifty acres, Nobottle Wood was some 160 acres.[142] The Pytchley coverts

tended to be smaller and more sparse in the north-west of their country but large and

numerous in the east. The names of the coverts seem to be significant in describing

their size and nature. The name 'spinney' indicated a small covert – most often of

under ten acres. 'Gorse' or 'Covert' was applied most often to medium-size

plantations of ten to thirty acres. All of these tended to be purpose-made for holding

foxes. 'Woods' were the largest coverts of all and their existence likely to pre-date,

and not depend on, their fox-keeping function.

Plate 3.6: At Covert (by Henry Alken Snr.)

There was a hierarchy of coverts, depending on size and location, reliability

at yielding foxes, and the country to which they were adjacent. The location could

affect the 'enjoyability' of the chase, whether it was near well-drained grassland

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[142] Paget, *Althorp and Pytchley Hunt,* pp. 9, 19, 25, 29.

(popular) or holding ploughland (not so welcome). The west of the country was the most popular with hunt followers because the sparse coverts encouraged the foxes to take long runs over the ancient pastures of that area; as Brooksby expressed it when describing this area 'the Pytchley field generally – prefer the small gorse coverts and the grass to the deep woods and the plough of the Northampton country'. [143] Not all of the coverts founded were guaranteed of success. Where they were frequently found to be devoid of foxes (known as 'drawing a blank'), they might be grubbed up and revert to agricultural use. Sandar's Gorse was planted because it was believed that the 'picturesque and popular' Cank had 'seen its best days and was losing its attraction for foxes'. It was not long then until Cank was 'improved from off the face of covertland'. [144] Coverts might be purposely located in a particular place to attempt to encourage foxes to run a certain line of country (a late example of this has Major Paget 'experimenting with a little spinney at Wheler Lodge' to encourage the Sulby foxes to run the Hemplow Hills). [145]

No one was expected to take a sizeable plot of land out of production without recompense, and one way or another rent was paid for the coverts. Who paid it varied according to the covert, the hunt, and the date. Sometimes hunt expenses were met by the master. This was often the case when the pack was run by a great magnate (the Belvoir and the Dukes of Rutland, the Pytchley and the Spencers and the Fitzroys and the Grafton at various times), or even occasionally when the hunts were run by less exalted masters (for example, the Quorn and Sir Harry Goodricke). When the first Earl Spencer took the Pytchley country in 1765 he paid for the hounds, but

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[143] Brooksby, *Hunting Countries*, 1, p. 135.

[144] Nethercote, *Pytchley*, pp. 41-2 (Cank was subsequently re-established).

[145] Paget, *Althorp and Pytchley Hunt*, p. 20.

the cost of the covert rents was paid by the hunt club members.[146] At other times

masters took subscriptions from hunt supporters to meet at least some of the

expenses. Arrangements tended to become more formal as time wore on. In early

days individuals might pay for a certain covert as their contribution to the hunt.

Squire Bouverie paid for a Pytchley covert as evidenced by the letter quoted above,

this in spite of the fact that Bouverie himself was 'never an enthusiastic sportsman or

much of a performer in the field.'[147] In the late nineteenth century, surviving

Pytchley accounts show a separate list of covert-fund subscribers to the main list

(unfortunately the accounts do not list the coverts being paid for).[148] However it was

organized, the outlay on fox coverts was quite considerable; Dick Christian reckoned

Goodricke's outlay on coverts alone to be £600 per season.[149] Nimrod put the Quorn

covert bill even higher, at £1000 (a figure confirmed by a begging letter sent out by

the Quorn hunt committee in 1860 seeking help with this expense).[150]

     These arrangements illustrate the tripartite relationship between the hunt, the

landlord and the tenant underlying the organization of foxhunting. Sometimes this

could lead to misunderstandings. In 1807, the Quorn master, Thomas Assheton

Smith, wrote a letter to Sir Justinian Isham of Lamport regarding a fox covert at

Shangton Holt. Apparently Isham had offered to get his tenant to maintain it as a

covert, but the tenant, on not receiving confirmation from the hunt, proceeded to

plough up 'the greatest part of one quarter' of it. As Assheton Smith considered the

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[146] Paget, *Althorp and Pytchley Hunt*, p. 72.

[147] Nethercote, *Pytchley*, p. 23.

[148] NRO, L(C)32-35.

[149] Druid, *Silk and Scarlet*, p. 66.

[150] Nimrod, *Chace*, p. 16; LRO, DE5047/113/1.

'main excellence' of the covert to derive from its size, he requested to be allowed to rent the whole of it.[151]

It was likely to be the least favoured parcels of land that were given over to form coverts. The famous Pytchley covert, Blueberries, was enclosed in 1576 in the north western edge of the parish of Lamport. Originally called 'Blewbarrows', Sir Gyles Isham suggested the name was derived from its situation on an exposed hill.[152] There is some suggestion that the hunts rented parish land that had been allocated at enclosure to provide common grazing or to support the poor. Glapthorne Cow Pasture in the Woodland Pytchley country became a fox covert. 'Old Poor Gorse' in Old parish was the portion of the common reserved under the enclosure act for the poor to collect firewood. It was rented by the hunt from the overseers of the parish, who apparently used the money to buy coal for the poor.[153]

The protection of foxes was something that went hand-in-hand with allowing the hunt to use land for a fox covert. When Herbert Hay Langham took over as master of the Pytchley in 1878 he wrote to all the covert owners in his country seeking permission to continue to draw coverts (and, presumably, to continue paying rent for them). Many of the replies detailed the state of the foxes in the coverts and contained remarks such as 'the preservation of foxes will be carefully attended to', 'I will do my best to preserve foxes', 'You may feel quite certain of my doing everything I can to preserve foxes.'[154] The amount of cooperation the hunt could expect in the provision and maintenance of fox coverts, and the preservation of

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[151] NRO, IL3115.

[152] Marlow (trans), *The Diary of Thomas Isham,* Sir Gyles Isham's notes, p. 68.

[153] Paget, *Althorp and Pytchley Hunt*, p. 15.

[154] NRO, L(C)688, L(C)693, L(C)697.

foxes, is somewhat surprising. By no means all of the covert owners were hunting men or women, as is clear from the Langham letters. There were also coverts intended for the preservation of game to cater for the increasingly popular sport of shooting. Game coverts would not necessarily be intended to double as fox coverts, but no one told the foxes that, with consequential depredations on the gamebird population. A gamekeeper's instinct might be to shoot foxes, but 'vulpicide' was frowned upon by society, and so there was generally a truce between the two interest groups of hunting and shooting.[155] When making arrangements for cub hunting in 1889, Langham's huntsman, Goodall, reported that 'Edwards the Selby keeper came to see me yesterday he is anxious for us to do there he says there are a brace of foxes in the covert and they want moving.'[156]

A large number of the coverts identified survive to the present day, the majority being the same size and shape as they were in the 1880s. While it is true that some coverts mentioned in the earlier hunting sources cannot be identified on the late nineteenth-century OS maps, either because they were renamed or lost, those that appear on these maps tend to also appear on modern maps. The modern landscape would have far less woodland if it were not for the fox coverts. The following table and map show the fox coverts used by the Pytchley hunt in their favoured shire country up to the 1880s (identified on the 6-inch OS maps from that decade). The coverts themselves are illustrated in subsequent thumbnails taken from the 1880s maps.

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[155] Sporting magazines would publish the names of known vulpicides. Itzkowitz, *Peculiar Privilege*, p. 150.

[156] NRO, L(C)681.

Table 3.1: Northamptonshire Fox Coverts
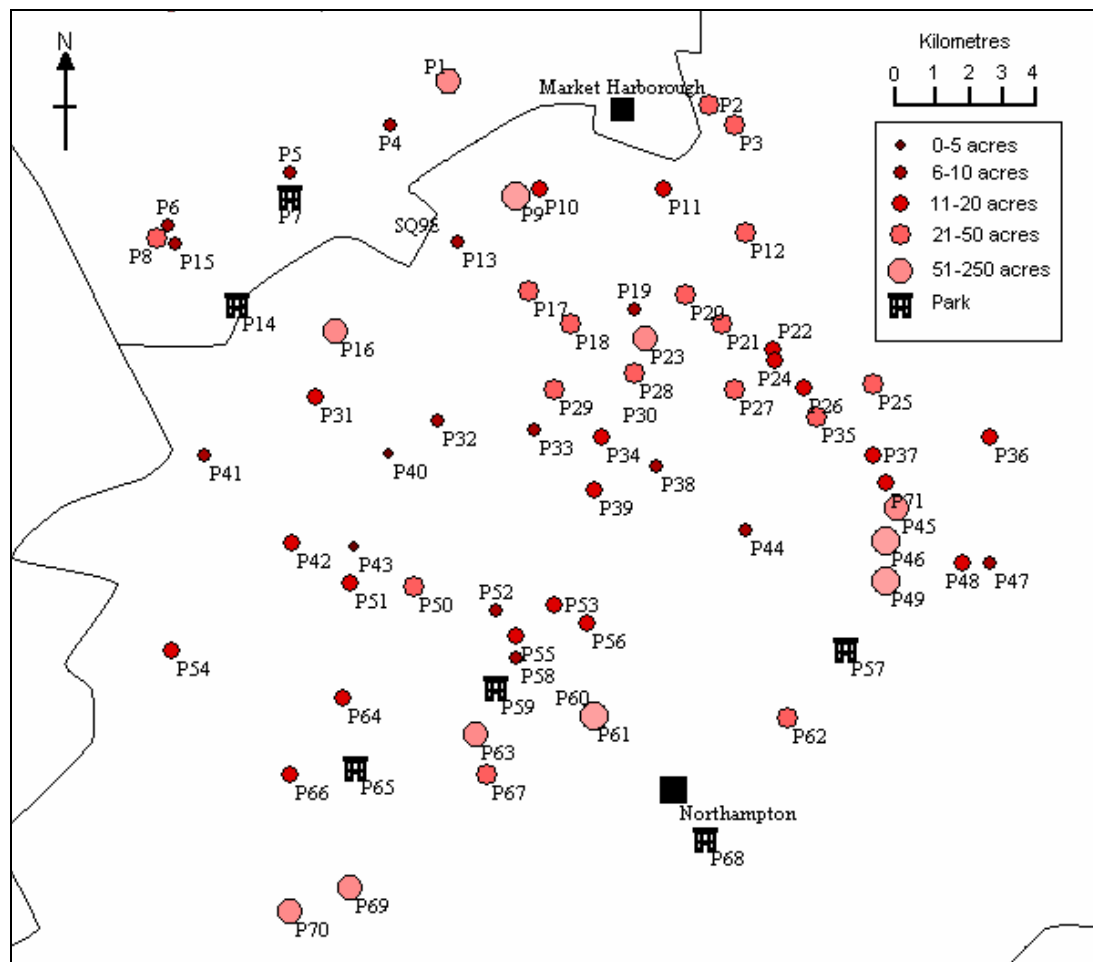
Code	Name	Exists Today?	Earliest Source
P1	Laughton Hills	Yes	Shared with South Quorn. Thomas Jones diary (1791)
P2	Dingley Warren	Yes	Langham diary (1866)
P3	Dingley Wood	Yes	King diary (1817)
P4	Bosworth Gorse	Yes	Langham diary (1865)
P5	Kilworth Sticks	Yes	King diary (1817)
P6	Misterton Gorse		Langham diary (1865)
P7	Kilworth Hall	Yes	
P8	Shawell Wood		Langham diary (1865)
P9	Marston Wood	Yes	King diary (1805)
P10	Alford Thorns	Yes (larger today)	Leased by Alford 1849
P11	Waterloo Gorse	No	Planted 1812 and later renamed (according to Paget)
P12	Loatland Wood	No	King diary (1805)
P13	Sulby Covert	Yes	King diary (1817)
P14	Stanford Hall	Yes	Langham diary (1865)
P15	Swinford Covert		Langham diary (1871)

Code	Name	Exists Today?	Earliest Source
P16	Hemplow Hills	Yes (shrunken)	Langham diary (1865)
P17	Naseby Covert	Yes	Pytchley club accounts (1798)
P18	Tally Ho	Yes	King diary (1805)
P19	Kelmarsh Spinney		Pytchley club accounts (1798)
P20	Sunderland Wood	Yes	King diary (1805)
P21	Blue Covert	Yes	King diary (1817)
P22	Faxton Covert	Yes	Pytchley club accounts (1798)
P23	Scotland Wood	Yes	King diary (1805)
P24	Bullocks Pen Spinney	Yes (shrunken)	Langham diary (1865)
P25	Cransley Wood	Yes	Pytchley club accounts (1798)
P26	Mawsley Wood	Yes	King diary (1805)
P27	Short Wood	Yes	King diary (1805)
P28	Maidwell Dales	Yes	Langham diary (1865)
P29	Pursers Hills	Yes	King diary (1805)
P30	Berrydale	Yes	King diary (1805)
P31	Yelvertoft Fieldside Covert	Yes	King diary (1805)
P32	Firetail	Yes (shrunken)	Langham diary (1866)
P33	Callander	Yes	Langham diary (1866)
P34	Blueberry Covert	No	Thomas Isham diary (1671)
P35	Old Poors Gorse	Yes	King diary (1817)
P36	Pytchley Spinnies		King diary (1805)
P37	Gib Wood		King diary (1817)
P38	Clint Hill	Yes	Langham diary (1865)
P39	Creaton Wood	Yes	Langham diary (1866)
P40	Winwick Warren	Yes (larger today)	King diary (1805)
P41	Crick Gorse	Yes	King diary (1817)
P42	Watford Covert	Yes	King diary (1817)
P43	Foxhill	Yes	
P44	Brixworth Covert		Pytchley club accounts (1798)
P45	Withmale Park		King diary (1805)
P46	Hardwick Wood	Yes	Pytchley club accounts (1798)
P47	Blackberry Covert		Pytchley club accounts (1798)
P48	Viviens Covert		Langham diary (1866)
P49	Sywell Wood	Yes	King diary (1805)
P50	Buckby Folly	Yes	King diary (1805)

Code	Name	Exists Today?	Earliest Source
P51	Vanderplanks	Yes	Langham diary (1865)
P52	Haddon Spinney	Yes	King diary (1805)
P53	Cank	Yes	King diary (1805)
P54	Bragborough Hall	Yes	Langham diary (1866)
P55	Holdenby	Yes (slightly altered)	King diary (1817)
P56	Sandars Gorse	Yes	Langham diary (1865)
P57	Overstone Park		King diary (1817)
P58	Blackthorn Spinney	Yes	King diary (1817)
P59	Althorp Park	Yes	
P60	Dallington Wood	Yes	King diary (1805)
P61	Harlestone Heath	Yes	King diary (1817)
P62	Billing Arbour	Yes	
P63	Nobottle Wood	Yes	King diary (1805)
P64	Whilton Osier Beds	Yes (larger today)	Langham diary (1871)
P65	Brockhall	Yes	King diary (1817)
P66	Dodford Holt	Yes	King diary (1817)
P67	Harpole Covert	Yes (shrunken)	King diary (1817)
P68	Delapre	Yes (shrunken)	King diary (1817)
P69	Stowe Wood	Yes (shrunken)	King diary (1817)
P70	Everdon Stubbs	Yes	King diary (1817)

Diary Sources:
Thomas Isham Diary 1671-73 (Farnborough, 1971)
Thomas Jones Diary (Derby, 1816).
Charles King Chace Book, 1800-1808, NRO, YZ2586.
Charles King Chace Book, 1817-1819, NRO, YZ2588.
H.H. Langham Hunting Journal, 1865-1875, NRO, L(C)646.

P2 Dingley Warren   P3 Dingley Wood   P9 Marston Wood   P10 Alfords Thoms

P11 Waterloo Gorse   P12 Loatland Wood   P13 Sulby Covert   P16 Hemplow Hills

P17 Naseby Covert   P18 Tallyho Covert   P19 Kelmarsh Spinney   P20 Sunderland Wood

P21 Blue Covert   P22 Faxton Covert   P23 Faxton Covert   P24 Bullock Penn Spinney

P25 Cransley Wood   P26 Mawsley Wood   P27 Short Wood

N

1 Km

P28 Maidwell Dales   P29 Pursers Hills   P30 Berrydale

Figure 3.4: Northamptonshire Coverts (a)
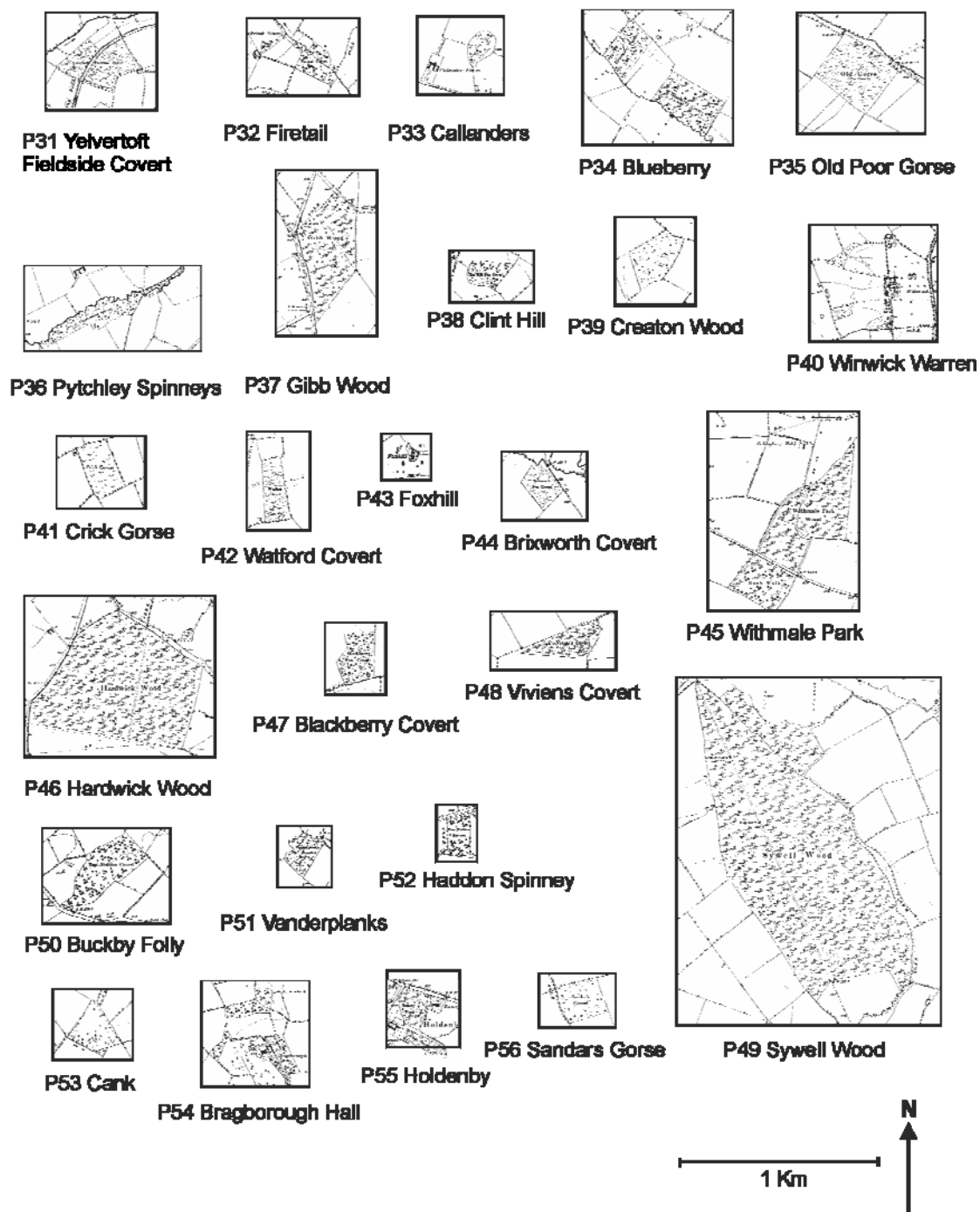
Figure 3.5: Northamptonshire Coverts (b)

P58 Blackthorn Spinney

P57 Overstone

P59 Althorp

P60 and P61 Dallington Wood & Harlestone Heath

P62 Billing Arbour

P63 Nobottle Wood

P64 Whilton Osier Beds

N

1 Km
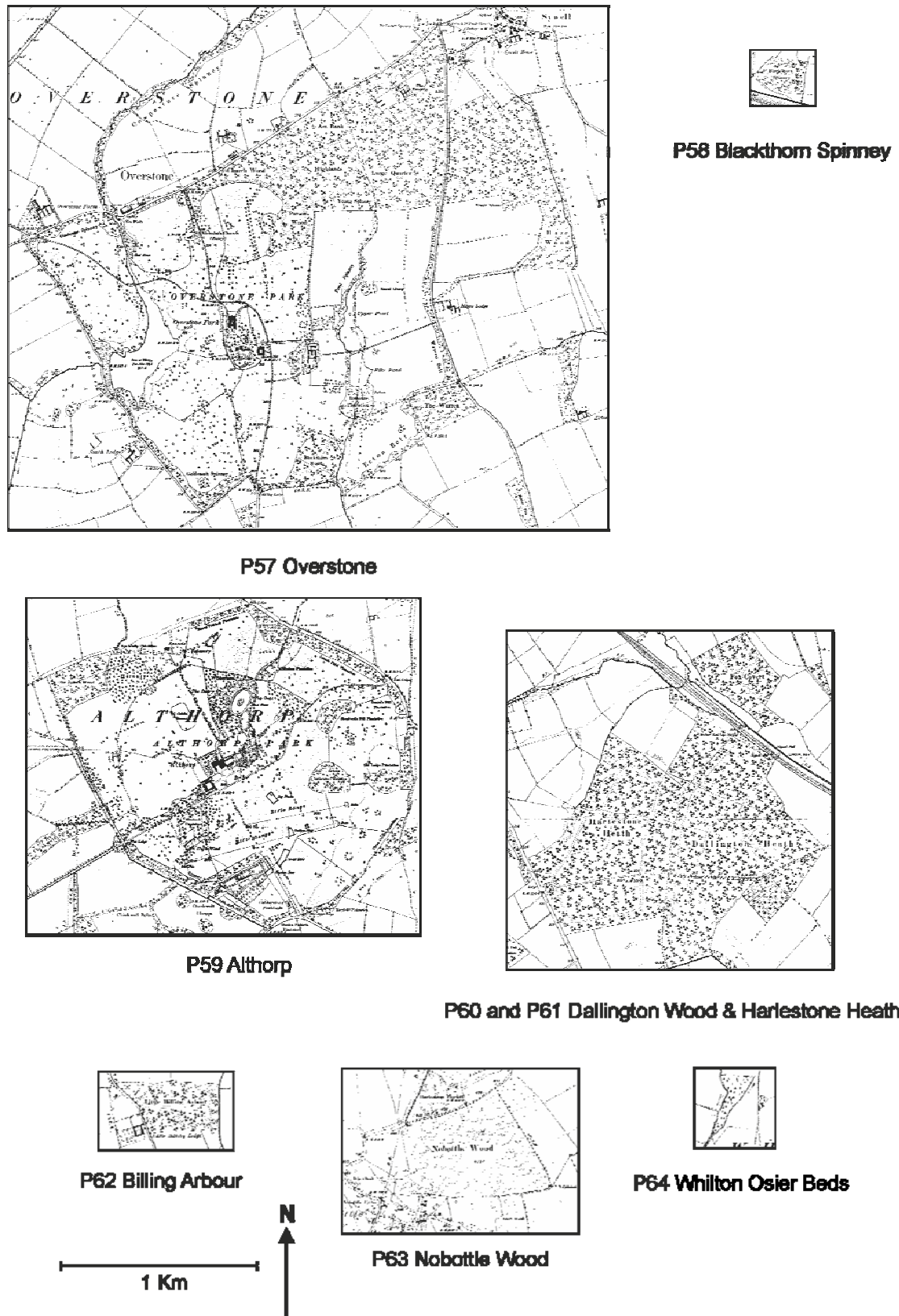
Figure 3.6: Northamptonshire Coverts (c)

P65 Brockhall

P66 Dodford Holt

P67 Harpole Covert

P68 Delapre

P69 Stowe Wood
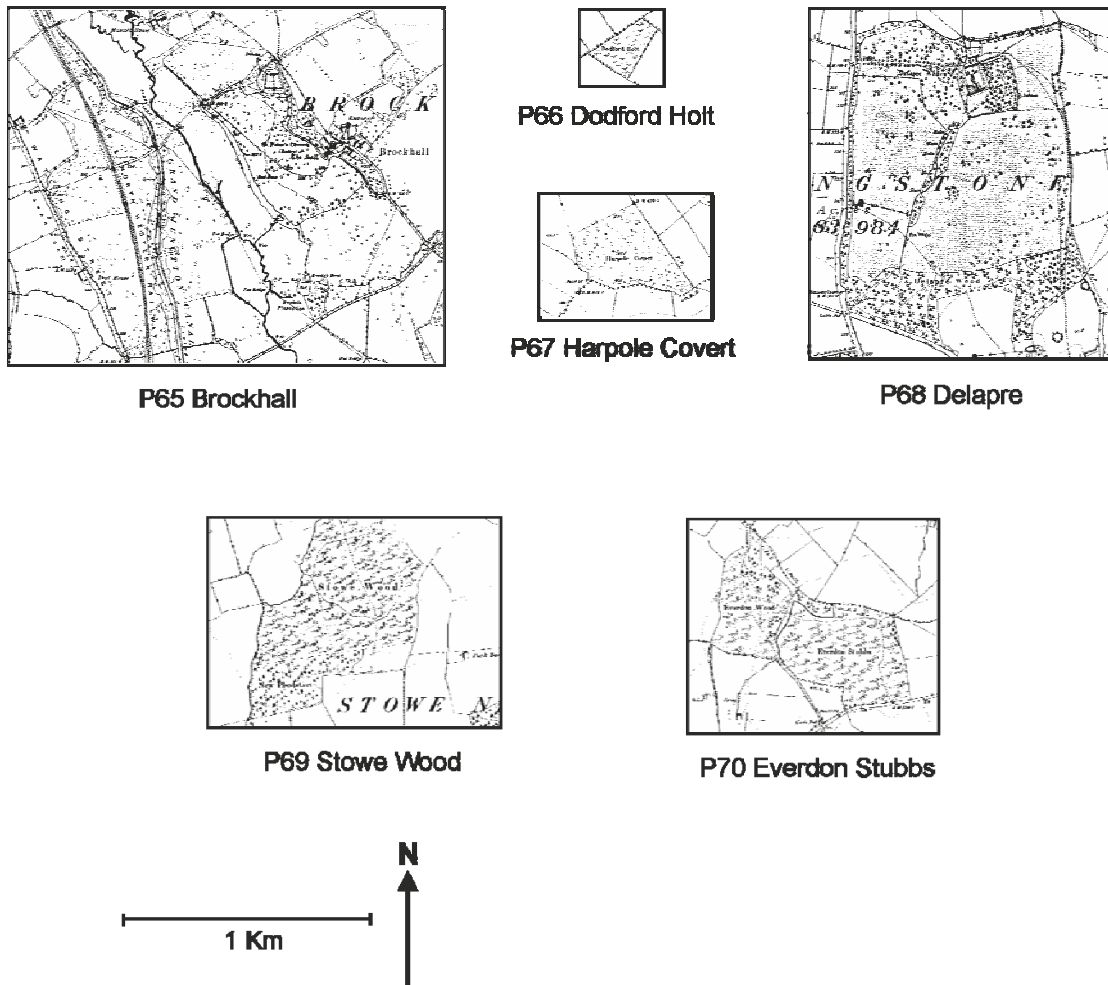
P70 Everdon Stubbs

1 Km

N

Figure 3.7: Northamptonshire Coverts (d)

Hunt Countries

Fox coverts were closely connected to the concept of a hunt's 'country'.

Nimrod defined this as 'such portion of a county as is hunted by any one pack of

hounds'.[157] But the country was not so much the territory that the hounds could run

across as the coverts in which they could draw for foxes. Cook had some strong

opinions on the importance of honouring a hunt's country in regard to coverts: 'We

all know, by law the owners of coverts can allow whom they please to hunt them; if,

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[157] Nimrod, *Chace*, p. 16. Hunt countries were a legacy of nineteenth century that have persisted to the present day, see G. Marvin, 'English Foxhunting: A Prohibited Practice', *International Journal of Cultural Property* 1 4 (2007), p. 349.

therefore, the boundary of a country is not held sacred, it is impossible to know what will be the consequence, or how it will end.'[158] The acknowledged boundaries of a hunt country evolved with the sport itself. Meynell's country was ill-defined when he started, but as the neighbouring shire packs were close behind in terms of development he had to negotiate with great landlords and humbler landowners alike to secure rights for his hunt. Meynell needed to extract written agreements about the drawing of coverts and hunt boundaries, not only with the owners of the coverts, but with the masters of the 'rival' hunts. Dale quotes at length from an agreement between Meynell and Noel (master of what became the Cottesmore hunt) by which the coverts were divided:

Owston, Laund, Skeffington, Loddington, Tugby, Allexton and Stockaston Woods, Easton Park, and the woods near Holt to be neutral coverts. The coverts on the Langton side of those above named to be drawn by Lord Gainsborough. Ashby Pasture not to be drawn by Lord Gainsborough. Billesdon Coplow to be neutral. No coverts on the Quorn side of Billesdon Coplow to be drawn by Lord Gainsborough. All earths in both hunts to be stopped in common.

On these conditions Mr Meynell will engage to draw no coverts except those above mentioned, which he understands to be claimed by Lord Gainsborough as belonging to Mr Noel's hunt.[159]

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[158] Cook, *Observations*, p. 51.

[159] T.F. Dale, *The History of the Belvoir Hunt* (London, 1899), p. 34. Unfortunately, Dale gives no date for this agreement, but elsewhere Clayton gives the date as 1766. M. Clayton, *Foxhunting in Paradise* (London, 1993), p. 209.

Once established by such agreements, the country came to define the hunt. After Meynell, the Quorn had a bewildering succession of masters, sometimes bringing new hounds, new staff, and even new hunt premises. Initially most hunts took their names from the master, who often owned the hounds. For example, the Quorn was known by a series of names: hunting appointments cards published weekly by a Leicester firm list the hunt as 'Sir R. Sutton's' then 'the Earl of Stamford's', it is not until the 1860s that it is called 'the Quorn'.[160] The Pytchley had a similarly varied history to the Quorn, notwithstanding its early close association with the Spencer family. Although originally based at Pytchley, the hunt kennels moved to Althorp, Boughton, Brigstock and Brixworth under various masters. What was really handed on, and gave the hunts their identity and continuity, was the hunt country. Finch recently described the hunt country as 'a cultural geography' that 'overlies, transgresses and textures the more familiar spatialities of farms, estates and parishes'.[161]

The hunt countries became formalized to such an extent that maps were published depicting them.[162] The hunts also became regulated so that they would hunt certain parts of their country on certain days of the week, and different areas would be known as 'the Monday country', 'the Saturday country' and so on. In the earlier days, the owners of the hounds would arrange meets and even move the hounds entirely to suit themselves. For example, the Grafton hounds spending part of

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[160] LRO, DG9/2802.

[161] J. Finch, 'Wider famed countries: historic landscape characterisation in the midland shires', *Landscapes* 8 2 (2007), p. 57.

[162] For example the hunting map of Leicestershire and Northamptonshire, published by A.H. Swiss in 1893, colour-codes the hunting countries and marks the location of the meets, with details printed in an accompanying booklet. The whole folds down into a pocket-sized package. Swiss No.7 Hunting Map, LRO, DE2055/1. An extract of this map is shown in Plate 3.7.

the season in Suffolk and part in Northamptonshire, and the meets of the Spencers'

hounds as listed in the Althorp Chace books not happening on regular days of the

week.[163] But as the nineteenth century progressed hunts were deemed to have a duty

to their followers, and to the farmers over whose lands they hunted, to be more

regular in their habits.[164]

Plate 3.7: Extract from Swiss No. 7 Hunting Map (LRO, DE2055/1)

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[163] NRO, YZ2586; NRO, ML4428, ML4429.

[164] Cook, *Observations*, p. 34.

Northamptonshire's other Foxhunting Countries

So far this section has concentrated on what we have described as Northamptonshire's 'prime' foxhunting territory. But foxhunting also became a thriving sport in the remainder of the county, and it is interesting to consider how the 'new' sport fared in the landscape of the 'old' sport, namely the royal forests of Northamptonshire. We have concentrated on the archetypal grassland landscape over which it was good to gallop, and which led to horse riding becoming the key part of the sport. But contemporaries were well aware of the difference between those who hunted in order to ride and those who rode in order to hunt, and this difference finds expression in the hunting landscape favoured by these different protagonists.

Two hunts counted the royal forests as part of their foxhunting country: the Pytchley hunted Rockingham, and the Grafton hunted Whittlewood and Salcey. In both cases the forests were only a portion of their territory. We have already examined the other part of the Pytchley country. The remaining Grafton territory stretched southward into Buckinghamshire and eastwards as far as Bozeat. But it is the woodland territories of these hunts that are of most interest at this point, and specifically how the old landscape of the chase was used for the purpose of the 'new' sport. Writers such as Brooksby had no doubt that woodland offered several advantages over hunting across an open landscape. Woodland foxes had the reputation of running straight and true, and hounds got a better scent without having to contend with the interruptions of roads, fallow fields, sheep and cows and their manure, not to mention the 'foot folk'. In this way woodland provided a necessary 'school for young hounds'. But Brooksby admitted that following such a hunt was a minority sport compared to hunting in the shires. There was a 'strong section' of

woodland hunters who adored such sport, but it remained 'inexplicable' to others. The field of the Woodland Pytchley hunt remained a 'small and almost purely local one'.[165]

The later of the Althorp Chace books contain some accounts of hunting in the forest. In August 1808 the hounds were cub hunting around Geddington Chase, Boughton Woods, Farming Woods and Rockingham. The meets were not 'advertised', started much earlier in the morning, and were not expected to be widely attended. In November the full foxhunting season began and the hounds were hunting back on their prime grassland grounds to the south west of the county, although some of their runs took them through Salcey forest.[166]

Elliott's reminiscences of hunting with the Grafton in the nineteenth century included some vivid accounts of woodland runs through Whittlewood and Salcey. As with the Pytchley, the autumn cub hunting was accomplished in the woodland: in Whittlewood and Salcey forests, and other woods in the Grafton country (East Horn, Haversham, Gayhurst and Stoke Park woods). The author records one, to him, surprisingly good chase through Salcey forest in the 1840s but observed 'I do not suppose a fox will ever run like that again, and his running the ridings must have been caused by the state of alarm he was in' (a fox would normally be expected to take advantage of the cover provides by the coppices which would not make for so fast a pursuit).[167] The author of these memoirs was a local man, not at all a 'shires' hunter, but he did prefer the grassland to the woodland. It may be an indication of the gap between 'hunters' and 'riders' that when Colonel Anstruther Thomson took over

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[165] Brooksby, *Hunting Countries*, pp. 147-9.

[166] NRO, ML4431.

[167] Elliott, *Fifty Years' Foxhunting*, p. 41.

the Pytchley with the intention of hunting the hounds himself he retained the services of the huntsman for a season, but the colonel hunted the woodlands while the huntsman was consigned to the 'fashionable' west of the country.[168] Surtees described Northamptonshire as being regarded as the 'admitted second best' to Leicestershire, but he was inclined to call it 'the *best* country in England'. The reason for his judgement was Northamptonshire's 'extensive' woodlands, which gave it 'a decided advantage over Leicestershire as a hunting country'. The advantage lay in the number of foxes that the country could provide. One of the aims of cub hunting was to disperse the foxes from the woodlands to the smaller coverts.[169] Surtees particularly praised the Duke of Buccleuch's woodlands 'extending twenty miles end to end' where 'they may begin as early and hunt as late as any part of England, the New Forest not excepted' and where 'they generally kill twenty brace of fox before they disturb a cover in the Pytchley country'.[170] For all his enthusiasm for acres and acres of rolling grassland, Surtees regarded himself as belonging more to that group who rode to hunt, rather than those who hunted to ride. By the 1870s the interest in the different types of hunting country had polarized sufficiently to make it worth forming a separate hunt, the Woodland Pytchley, to concentrate on the type of hunting landscape to be found in north east Northamptonshire.[171]

There was a certain contradiction lying at the heart of the landscape requirements of modern foxhunting. The foxes themselves required the traditional hunting landscape of woodland and dense undergrowth as habitat, but their pursuers

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[168] Nethercote, *Pytchley,* p. 170.

[169] Cecil, *Records of the Chase*, p. 283.

[170] Surtees, *Town and Country Papers*, pp. 188, 93-4.

[171] Nethercote, *Pytchley*; G. Paget, *Althorp and Pytchley Hunt.*

favoured smaller coverts, sparsely situated across grass country to encourage their

prey to run along the desired 'lines' and give the opportunity for extended gallops.

Foxhunting and Farmers

We have linked the final form of modern foxhunting with the landscape of

enclosure. Enclosure had implications for hunting in addition to the nature of the

landscape over which the fox was chased, however. As Bevan showed, earlier

eighteenth-century foxhunters were as likely to ride over open fields as enclosed

pasture, but by the beginning of the nineteenth century foxhunters needed access to

land now held in severalty. Landholding patterns were changing too, with the

landowning yeoman farmer giving way to an agricultural economy of landlord and

tenant farmer. By the late eighteenth century, grassland farms could command much

better rents for the landlords, with the additional benefits of reduced costs in

maintaining farm buildings and simplified estate administration.[172]

Historians such as Itzkowitz have been surprised at the seemingly unfettered

access that such farmers granted hunters. He investigated possible economic

advantages, the breeding of hunters, the supply of feed and forage, but largely

dismissed these as bringing no serious or sustainable benefit. [173] Carr counted the

form of land tenure in the midland shires as one of the main factors in its rising to

pre-eminence as the prime area for modern foxhunting.[174] A pattern of large

landowners and tenant farmers enabled hunting rights to be written into leases and

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[172] T. Williamson, *The Transformation of Rural England: Farming and the Landscape 1700-1870* (Exeter, 2002), pp. 29-51.

[173] The acquiescence of farmers in the rise of modern foxhunting is a major theme of Itzkowitz's book. Itkowitz, *Peculiar Privilege*.

[174] R. Carr, 'Country sports' in G.E. Mingay (ed.) *The Victorian Countryside*, 2 vols (London, 1981, p. 475

pressure put on farmers who might otherwise restrict the destructive winter presence of two hundred or more horsemen on their land. Foxhunters might have originally believed that they had the right to hunt over any land, but a contentious court case of 1809 established that they were as subject to the laws of trespass as anyone else.[175] Northamptonshire evidence supports Carr's view. Tenancy agreements from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries invariably reserved sporting rights to the landlords.[176] A printed form used for tenancy agreements by the Earl of Pomfret on his Eaton Neston estate in the early nineteenth century reserved the right for 'the Earl, his agents, gamekeepers and servants' to 'enter and come into and upon the said lands at all seasonable times for the purpose of sporting, shooting, coursing, hunting, fishing, and fowling thereupon.'[177] The terms of leases could support hunting in other ways too. Draft tenancy agreements for the Grafton Estate forbade tenants to sell hay or straw off the farm, except for to 'Wakefield and Salcey Forest, or to the kennel at Sholebrook', the latter being the hunt kennels.[178] Leases often also specified that game was to be preserved. A late nineteenth-century tenancy printed form used for 'michalemas leases' included a requirement for 'the tenant undertaking to use his best endeavours to preserve foxes, fish, game, and wild fowl.[179]

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[175] The case of Capel *vs* Essex was something of a family quarrel, Lord Essex objected to the destructive antics of the Old Berkley Hunt in his lands around London and successfully prosecuted. All foxhunters seemed to be aware of the potential implications of this ruling, Cook commented 'we all know, from an unfortunate exposure in a trial for trespass, that we cannot *legally* claim any *right* to hunt'. R. Carr, *English Foxhunting: a History* (1976, London 1986 edn), pp. 215-7; Cook, *Observations*, p. 29.

[176] For example: lease of a farm in Canons Ashby, 1709, NRO, D(CA)719; tenancy agreements, Aldwinckle St. Peter, 1783, 1784, NRO, C(AL)10, 12; lease of a farm in Cold Higham, 1815, NRO, Fermor Hesketh N Bundle 7.

[177] NRO, Fermor Hesketh N Bundle 7.

[178] NRO, G4139/3.

[179] NRO, G4079/50/1.

The picture of arrogant foxhunters rising roughshod over the interests of tenant farmers might chime well with some modern views of the sport, but the form of foxhunting that emerged in the eighteenth century had quite a different legal position than other forms of hunting. Our examination of deer hunting explored the number of ways in which the law concerned itself with the hunting of deer, and other animals. Deer came to be regarded as property, and were protected by the felony laws. Other prey, such as hares and rabbits, were protected by the game laws, which effectively prevented farmers from hunting on their own land. Overton had the game laws as one of the principal sources of friction between landlords and other social groups in the countryside.[180] Foxes had no such protection: they were vermin and belonged to no one. Their destruction by the 'common man' had even been encouraged at some points in time, with the parish bounty on fox brushes referred to previously. There were no legal barriers to anyone joining in a foxhunt.

Different historians have made widely different assessments of the social inclusivity of the sport of foxhunting. Carr contrasted shooting in the nineteenth century with foxhunting; the former was socially divisive, but hunting played a part in 'creating the sense of a coherent rural community'. Carr saw the changing social composition of the hunting field across the Victorian period as an instrument of social mobility, in particular it was a sport that 'bound together both farmer and landlord'.[181] By contrast, Landry had a very different assessment. She suggested that, despite the apparent openness of foxhunting as a 'vermin chase, not a game chase', any hope of democratization through the sport was 'fast disappearing into a new

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[180] M. Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England: The Transformation of the Agrarian Economy 1500-1850* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 184.

[181] Carr, 'Country sports', pp. 475-8.

exclusivity'. This manifested itself in what Landry called one of the 'principal pleasures' of nineteenth-century hunting: the 'initiation into a coterie language that grew ever more specialized and refined'.[182]

The division in the assessment of the social openness of foxhunting can be explained, in part, by a contradiction in the attitudes of nineteenth-century foxhunters themselves. In theory anyone who could lay their hands on a horse could ride with the hunt, regardless of their social position. And the hunt followers themselves were sometimes keen to trumpet the socially inclusive nature of their sport. Nethercote proudly reported that the Pytchley in 1843 numbered among its field 'a mounted pauper in the actual receipt of out-door relief from the Guardians of a County Union'. Eventually the Guardians found out, and he was forced to thereafter follow on foot. [183] The Grafton apparently had a devoted follower in the form of a chimney sweep from Stony Stratford.[184] Surtees included a real-life Gloucestershire tailor, Jem Hastings, a famously loyal foot-follower, in one of his fictional accounts of the antics of Jorrocks.[185] These were all characters that other followers of the hunt would hold up as examples of the appeal of their sport to all ranks of society. But it is equally easy to find illustrations of snobbery and exclusiveness in the hunting field. Delmé Radcliffe, on more than one occasion, drew parallels between the importance of 'blood' (that is, good breeding) in horses, and its importance in human society. For example, he argued that a gentleman would always make a better huntsman than

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[182] D. Landry, *The Invention of the Countryside: Hunting, Walking and Ecology in English Literature* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 177.

[183] Nethercote, *Pytchley*, p. 114.

[184] Such was the celebrity of Adam Sherwood, the sweep, that Elliott devoted an entire chapter to him, and reproduced the coat of arms designed for the sweep by the hunting artist, Mr Lorraine-Smith. Elliott, *Fifty Years' Foxhunting*, pp. 17-20.

[185] Hastings was apparently a foxhunting celebrity, and Jorrocks had a picture of him on his wall at home. Jorrocks himself was, of course, a Cockney grocer. Surtees, *Town and Country Papers*, pp. 4-5.

a paid servant, if he had time to dedicate to it, because superior blood and breeding would tell.[186] Surtees gives a fictionalized example of a hunt organized by the 'riff-raff' of the countryside. The meet occurred at some 'low public house' with 'the field consisting of all the scamps in the country, and the hounds of all sorts from the calf-sized fox-hound to the pygmy rabbit beagle'. The group pursued a bagged fox mounted on 'cart-horses, fleecy coated ponies and donkeys'.[187]

Whatever their view of the lower sections of society participating, foxhunters recognised early the importance of maintaining good relations with farmers. Cook advised his readers 'to endeavour to gain the good will of the farmers', he insisted that it was both ungentlemanly and impolitic to treat them in the field, or elsewhere, with anything other than 'kindness and civility'.[188] Foxhunters were conscious of the need to keep the farmers on their side, and the majority of farmers supported the hunt despite the cost and inconvenience to them.

Hunts would take pains not to upset their neighbours, whatever their social standing. In the mid 1830s, the Duke of Grafton wrote a letter of fulsome apology to Sir Henry Dryden because the latter had been upset by the activities of the Grafton hunt (they had evidently hunted close to Canons Ashby, not realising that the baronet was in residence). The duke was conscious of the danger that abuses had 'a natural tendency to turn the best friends – into enemies to all that is connected with foxhunting'.[189] At the lower end of the social scale, the Grafton hunt kennel accounts

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[186] Delmé Radcliffe, *Noble Science*, p. 38.

[187] Surtees, *Town and Country Papers*, p. 154.

[188] Cook, *Observations*, p. 87.

[189] NRO, D(CA)406 (the letter is undated).

between the years 1833 and 1842 recorded numerous payments as compensation for

'fowls destroy'd by foxes', and in one case for a lamb killed by a hound.[190]

As well as compensating for losses, hunts sought to positively reward

farmers. Sandars, who maintained the Pytchley covert that took his name, was

presented with a silver tankard by the 'gentlemen of the neighbourhood' to mark

their appreciation of the 'services he had rendered to the hunt.'[191] There were social

benefits for the farmers as well: although they were not generally invited to the hunt

balls, there were farmers' breakfasts or dinners given to show the hunts'

appreciation. When Anstruther-Thomson resigned the Quorn mastership, and was

about to send his horses to London to be sold, he invited a 'large party of ladies, hunt

members, farmers and others' to a 'luncheon of inspection.'[192]

Hunts also used the custom of 'puppy walking' to further involve farmers in

the sport, whether the farmers themselves hunted or not. Hound puppies were lodged

with walkers until the puppies were old enough to rejoin the pack for training. This

was a way for the hunt to get free board and lodging for their hounds until they could

work for their living, but puppy walkers undoubtedly took pride in raising a good

hound, and hunts often held a show and awarded prizes when the hounds were ready

to return to the kennels. According to Surtees, the Pytchley hunt had walks among

the Duke of Buccleuch's tenants for fifteen couples of hounds, while the then master,

Osbaldeston, had walks for between forty and fifty couple on his own estates near

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[190] NRO, G3867.

[191] Nethercote, *Pytchley*, p. 41.

[192] Nethercote, *Pytchley*, p. 153.

Scarborough in Yorkshire.[193] In 1885 the Grafton hunt had 35 puppy walkers

listed.[194]

Historians have examined the social and economic benefits that might have

accrued to farmers from having a hunt close by, but one fact that has to be

acknowledged is that many farmers both participated in and enjoyed foxhunting

themselves. Surtees commented that 'the Northamptonshire squires have never been

great supporters of hounds, differing in this respect from their humbler brethren, the

graziers and farmers, than whom a better or more sporting lot nowhere exists'.

Nimrod commented that the Northamptonshire farmers 'almost all keep hunters,

which, if they can't ride themselves their sons ride for them'. Surtees had words on

the 'reckless riding' of some of the young farmers, graziers, and horse dealers in that

county, illustrating that such pleasure in the chase was not confined to aristocrats and

gentlemen.[195] Hunting farmers benefitted from their profession in that they were not

expected to subscribe to the hunt and pay money for their pleasure, unlike their

landlords. The enthusiasm of farmers for foxhunting could be such that, in the less

'fashionable' districts, they maintained their own packs of hounds. Cook described

the 'Invincibles', a pack kept by farmers. Cook acknowledged that this pack 'were

occasionally a great annoyance to me, and disturbed the cream of the country', but he

could not be displeased with the Invincibles because 'the farmers who managed them

were respectable people, fond of the sport, and had as much right to hunt as I had.'[196]

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[193] Surtees, *Town and Country Papers*, p. 94.

[194] NRO, YZ3494.

[195] Surtees, *Town and Country Papers*, p. 109; Nimrod, *Hunting Tours*, p. 192.

[196] Cook, *Observations,* p. 112.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to both describe the emergence of the sport of modern foxhunting, and to describe its relationship with the landscape of Northamptonshire. The eighteenth-century origins of English foxhunting were geographically widespread, with packs hunting a variety of terrains.[197] But while these various hunts seem to have shared many interests, improving their hounds and increasing the pace of pursuit, the sport had not then caught the popular imagination and gained large fields of mounted followers. Scarth Dixon quoted a 1736 letter where a Yorkshire huntsman described a particularly exciting run; the company comprised eight men, with five in at the kill; a very different enterprise to what was to come. Early foxhunters were looking for a landscape to chase across, rather than a landscape in which to find prey, so the drive was from the forests to grassland and to open fields. Early packs were converting to fox from both deer and hare, and many continued to hunt whatever 'jumped up' in front of them.[198] Foxhunting might have remained a fairly marginal sport were it not for developments in the east midlands in the second half of the eighteenth century.

The landscape changes we have traced in Northamptonshire, enclosure and conversion to grass, were not by themselves sufficient to shape modern foxhunting. It was their coinciding with Meynell's 'new science' (based on starting the hunt in

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[197] Scarth Dixon used the hound list of the Charlton hunt from the 1730s, as well as other sources, to trace the existence of foxhound packs in most areas of England (drafts of hounds from other packs appear in these lists). He paid particular attention to his native Yorkshire, finding evidence of numerous packs from the Duke of Buckingham's late seventeenth-century pack (in Clevedon and Helmsley) through those belong to a variety of county squires. He also attempted to demonstrate that a similar state of affairs existed for Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and Hampshire (although with less evidence and more conjecture). A great swathe of land from Gloucestershire eastwards to London was hunted by the Berkeley and the Beaufort hunts, which converted from deer and hare to fox in the eighteenth century. Scarth Dixon, *Hunting*.

[198] Cecil, *Records of the Chase*, p. 21.

late morning), the widespread breeding of faster hounds, and, above all, the breeding

of the thoroughbred horse, that produced foxhunting in its iconic form. The speed

and the dash attracted ever-growing fields of followers, who mounted themselves on

quality horses and went along for the ride. These were the men who paid the

subscriptions as the hunt became an increasingly 'public' sport.[199] They expressed an

overwhelming preference for the grassland of the midland shires, and were prepared

to travel to enjoy it.

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[199] The transformation in the organization of hunting is examined in more detail in chapter 6.

Chapter 4

Other Pursuits: Hunting the Hare and the Carted Deer

This thesis is concerned with deer hunting and with foxhunting, and the transition between the two. But the sport of hare hunting also has a role to play in the narrative, and an examination of hunting in the period 1600-1850 would be incomplete without some reference to the hare. There is also the question of what became of the pursuit of the deer, once it had lost its role as the iconic form of hunting. This chapter addresses that issue too.

Hare Hunting

The hare seems to have rivalled hart and buck, hind and doe in its popularity as a prey. Medieval hunting sources rated hare hunting highly. Edward of Norwich praised it because it could be practised throughout the year and at any time of day; the chase itself was entertaining because the hare was cunning and ran for longer. He described it as 'the king of all venery'.[1] Markham, writing in the early seventeenth century, agreed, he described the sport as 'everie honest man and good mans chase' being 'the finest, readiest and most enduring pastime.'[2] According to Blome 'this chase affords delight and recreation to every man for none but persons of estate and quality have the privileges and conveniences of forests, chases and parks'.[3] Stringer enumerated the advantages of hunting the hare: there was 'scarce any place or part of a country but it hath hares', a man could see the sport even if 'indifferently mounted', hares generally ran the best sort of ground and, because the hare ran rings

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[1] Edward of Norwich, *The Master of Game*, eds William A. and F. N. Ballie-Grohman (1909; Pensylvania, 2005 edn), pp. 14-22.

[2] Gervase Markham, *Countrey Contentments* (1615; New York, 1973 edn), p. 31.

[3] Richard Blome, *The Gentleman's Recreation* (London, 1686), p. 91.

without flying very far, the 'foot-men' as well as the horsemen had 'a share of the sport'.[4]

These sources were united in upholding the worth of hunting the hare, and, in some cases, compared it favourably with the honourable hunt of the buck or the stag. It is not possible to argue that the hare was merely a poor man's substitute for the deer, either in theory or in practice. The Stuart kings were enthusiastic hare hunters. James regularly processed from Whitehall to Theobolds and onto Royston, Newmarket and Thetford; the last three locations being favoured for hunting the hare with hounds, and for hawking. While at Newmarket, Charles was often distressed to find that others wanted to hunt the same game. In February 1636, he issued a prohibition against 'both lords and other of our subjects' who took their hounds into the Liberties of Newmarket and pursued his game. Back in Newmarket in October of the same year he complained of 'persons of inferior rank' who used 'great boldness' in killing game 'notwithstanding the late proclamation'.[5]

Considerations of legal entitlement applied to the hunting of hare just as they did to the hunting of deer. The hunting franchise that existed under the forest laws, and grants of free chase and free warren, provided for exclusivity in pursuing hare as well as deer (and a number of other animals too). The status of deer and hare did diverge, however, as the game laws developed. Early laws had been aimed explicitly at restricting the pursuit of deer or rabbits outside the defined hunting franchises (where it was already restricted). The game law of 1671, and the subsequent game laws, explicitly excluded deer and rabbits from their strictures and were aimed at 'game'. The game category comprised hare, pheasant, partridge and moor fowl. (As

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[4] A. Stringer, *The Experience'd Huntsman* (Belfast, 1714), p. 137.

[5] J.P. Hore, *The History of Newmarket and the Annals of the Turf*, 3 vols (London, 1886), 1, pp. 29, 31.

deer came to be regarded as property, so could its theft be treated as larceny, and dealt with with corresponding severity.)[6]

The techniques used for the hunting of hare were as varied as those used for hunting deer. Hunting parties could consist of a mixture of men on foot and on horseback, or entirely of men on foot. A variety of scent hounds could be used, from swift northern hounds, through to large, slow hounds, to beagles for those wished to pursue the hare on foot. Hares could also be coursed with greyhounds for a more sedentary sport, and this gave an opportunity for wagering on the outcome.[7]

Hares were versatile in their habitat requirements. According to Blome, some hares lived in the mountain, some in coverts and fields, some in marshes or moorish grounds. Others were 'ramblers' and had no constant abode.[8] All of the hunting authors from Phoebus through to Blome suggested that hares preferred different habitats depending on the time of the year. Markham gave instructions for hunting the hare in the woods and in the champaign country and advised the use of different types of hound depending on the type of countryside to be hunted.[9] Hore commented that Newmarket was such a favoured royal hare-hunting venue because it was a plain country 'entirely free from trees', leaving the hunters the 'full enjoyment' of 'seeing the animals without interruption and observing their subtle flight'.[10] Stringer advised the huntsman that the best way of 'ordering the field' was to have the gentlemen stand their horses on surrounding hills so that they could view the action from

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[6] P.B. Munsche, *Gentlemen and Poachers: the English Game Laws 1671-1831* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 3.

[7] Munsche, *Gentlemen and Poachers*, pp. 32-3.

[8] Blome, *Gentleman's Recreation*, p. 91.

[9] Markham, *Countrey Contentments*, pp. 4, 32.

[10] Hore, *Newmarket*, 2, p. 282.

there.[11] Our study county of Northamptonshire was not without its habitat, Morton commented that the 'strongest and hardyest hares in the county, perhaps in England' were to found in the 'spacious fields of Rance' (Raunds). The 'finest greyhounds' had been at Kelmarsh, where the coursing was of 'particular fame', before the enclosure of the lordship.[12]

The comparative ubiquity of the hare meant that there was not the same emphasis on the finding of the prey as there was for the harbouring of the hart or the lodging of the buck. The favoured method for locating the hare was beating whatever type of undergrowth there was in the locality being hunted ('bushe' or 'shrubbie ground' in woodland or 'where gorse or whinnes grow' or 'short heather, bramble bushes or such like' in champaign country).[13] Stringer described several ways to start a hare hunt, all equally valid in his opinion: some fancied hunting the hare from 'her relief to her form' (like hunting the drag of a fox), some beat the places where she was most likely to be, some let the hounds hunt all the 'doubles' that a hare made 'without giving them any advantage of her more than encouraging them'. He did advise that, whatever starting method was chosen, the hunters should 'keep a good distance behind' because if they rode too close it would press the hounds to run too fast and risk overshooting their prey.[14]

Hunting the hare remained popular throughout the eighteenth century, it could even be argued that it was the most favoured form of hunting for most of that century. Justinian Isham's early eighteenth-century diary records many sociable hare

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[11] Stringer, *Experience'd Huntsman*, p. 151.

[12] J. Morton, *Natural History of Northamptonshire* (London, 1712), p. 10.

[13] Markham, *Countrey Contentments*, p.32.

[14] Stringer, *Experience'd Huntsman*, pp. 149-50.

hunting expeditions with friends and neighbours in the season 1709 to 1710.[15] In the

earlier part of the eighteenth century huntsman do not seem to have been so

particular at always sticking to the nominated prey. In 1714 Stringer did not approve

of this practice, which he said was 'a prevailing custom among gentlemen in fox-

hunting'. He described how such a hunt might properly be hunting the trail of a fox

in the morning, but if a hare started in front of them the huntsman 'threw' the hounds

at that and hunted it down.[16] Cecil, writing from the vantage point of the nineteenth

century, commented that 'it is very fair to conclude that when foxhunting was

becoming, but had not reached, the position of a distinct amusement, the change was

brought about by degrees, and that foxes, stags, and hares were hunted by the same

pack.'[17] Meynell, regarded as the father of modern foxhunting, would start his young

hounds by hunting hare 'to find out their propensities'; if he discovered qualities that

he did not like, he would draft the hounds (that is, send them to another pack).[18] Most

of Beckford's 1781 work was dedicated to foxhunting, but he also spent some time

giving advice on how best to hunt the hare. Beckford acknowledged that hare

hunting was of 'great service' to the hounds, because 'it shows their goodness to the

huntsman more than any other hunting', but for Beckford it could never rival

foxhunting as a pastime: 'I always thought that hare hunting should be taken as a

ride, after breakfast, to get us an appetite to our dinner'.[19] The easy movement

between hare and foxhunting seems to have persisted into the nineteenth century.

Cecil observed that 'it not unfrequently happens, even in the present day, that a

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[15] For example, Monday 18th December, 1709. Justinian Isham's diaries, NRO, IL2686.

[16] Stringer, *The Experienc'd Huntsman*, p. 25.

[17] Cecil (C. Tongue), *Records of the Chase* (1854; London, 1922 edn), p. 21.

[18] John Hawkes, *The Meynellian Science or Fox-Hunting upon System* (1808; Leicester, 1932 edn), p. 41.

[19] Peter Beckford, Thoughts on Hunting in a Series of Familiar Letters to a Friend (1781; Lanham, 2000 edn), p. 92.

gentleman makes his debut as a master of hounds in pursuit of the hare, and ultimately converts his pack into fox-hounds'.[20]

Many apparently continued to prefer hare hunting to the modern version of foxhunting that was gaining in popularity in the eighteenth century. John Byng, in 1794, was clearly unimpressed with his experience of a fox hunt in Bedfordshire ('all these modern methods of hunting are to me unknown') and was nostalgic for the type of hunting in which he participated previously. He fondly remembered 22 years before taking his brother's hounds out, 25 couple of old hounds and 15 couple of puppies, to hunt hare in woodland. For Byng the hounds and the experience were far superior to his Bedfordshire hunt. Cobbett was similarly nostalgic for previous hunting practices. In one of his rural rides he had a planned hare hunt disrupted by the appearance of the local foxhounds. He remembered a time, forty years before, when there were five packs of foxhounds and ten packs of harriers kept within ten miles of Newbury; when he wrote there was only one subscription pack of foxhounds left, an arrangement that Cobbett clearly regarded as inferior to the one whereby gentlemen remained in the country and kept their own packs.[21]

Hare hunting did not seem to have attracted the literary attention that foxhunting did, so we have no Nimrod-like accounts of hare chases, no novel with hare hunting at the centre of its plot. There is no doubt, however, that it did continue with quiet popularity throughout the nineteenth century. Surtees, for example, gave some account of the sport. He advised his readers to keep the sport small and

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[20] Cecil, *Records of the Chase,* p. 21.

[21] W. Cobbett, *Rural Rides* (1830; London, 1950 edn), p. 35.

informal and not to try and impersonate the more defined structure, and greater

expense, of a foxhunt.[22]

What of Carr's contention that there were two hunting transitions in the

eighteenth century, from deer to the fox for the aristocracy and from hare to fox for

the gentry?[23] Our examination of hare hunting suggests that it had been a popular

sport with the aristocracy as well as the gentry. It was, however, a more 'low key'

sport than deer hunting or foxhunting. People did not travel to some hare hunting

'metropolis' equivalent to Melton Mowbray, and there was no prime hare hunting

landscape that rivalled the shires. The sport did not seem to attract the same ritual or

meaning as either deer hunting or foxhunting, and it continued to remain a popular,

but comparatively modest, pastime into the nineteenth century. It could be argued

that there was no transition involving hare hunting. It never held the primary position

in the hunting hierarchy and never attracted the huge number of followers that

foxhunting did. It was, and remained, important to those that were interested in

hunting hounds, but not necessarily to those who were interested in riding to hounds.

Later Deer Hunting

The sport of hunting deer did not fade altogether with the ascendancy of

foxhunting. Historians have, in fact, used the changing nature of the sport as

evidence to support the argument that pursuit of the fox supplanted pursuit of the

deer because the former were plentiful and the latter were scarce. It is true that the

nature of deer hunting was transformed in the eighteenth century, just as foxhunting

was acquiring its modern form and growing in popularity. The most significant

development was the growth of the practice of hunting the carted deer. This

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[22] R.S. Surtees, *Town and Country Papers* (the R.S. Surtees Society, undated), p. 159.

[23] R. Carr, *English Foxhunting: a History* (1976, London 1986 edn), pp. 24-5.

involved loading a captured animal into a cart and transporting it to the appointed place of the meet. The deer was then set loose and given a small head start before the hounds were released, *en masse*, to start the pursuit. Initially the deer would be killed once caught, but by the nineteenth century the practice was to recapture the deer and transport it home once more, when, after sufficient rest and recuperation, it could be hunted again.

As with hare hunting, the later sources are quiet on the subject of deer hunting when compared to the coverage given to the burgeoning sport of foxhunting. One place where the changing nature of deer hunting can be traced, however, is in the records of the royal buckhounds. The kings and queens of England continued to ride to hounds, albeit it with varying degrees of enthusiasm. In the eighteenth century, however, they eschewed the royal forests in favour of locations such as the Windsor parks, Richmond Park and Bushey Park. Meetings of the royal buckhounds became part of court life. Sometimes a stag would be 'roused' from its resting place and then pursued by the hunt, sometimes it would be transported to the place of the meet and then 'uncarted'.[24] Initially carted deer would be killed at the end of the hunt, just like deer that were roused. There are some examples of a particularly notable animal being spared, either to hunt another day or to be free from pursuit forever (the latter being signified by the placing of a silver collar around the neck of the fortunate animal).[25]

The meetings of the royal buckhounds could be extremely popular, although this seems to have been more for the opportunity of viewing members of the royal

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[24] For examples of hunts where deer were roused, see J.P. Hore, *The History of the Royal Buckhounds* (Newmarket, 1895), pp. 275, 287. For example of hunts where deer were uncarted, see pp. 283, 287, 296, 304.

[25] Hore, *Royal Buck Hounds*, pp. 275, 319.

family at leisure rather than for the sheer pleasure of the chase. Such could be the press of people at Richmond that it rendered the riding troublesome and dangerous, and so Queen Caroline introduced a ticket system for hunting in New Park. No person was admitted to the park without a hunting ticket bearing the day's date and the seal of the ranger.[26]

By the time George IV was hunting with the buckhounds, it had become normal practice to recapture the carted deer and take it home. Such deer could obtain a celebrity status. 'Marlow Tom' was so named because he jumped a seven foot wall with a fifteen foot drop in that town, and lived to run another day. High Flyer, Moonshine and the Popham Lane Deer were other examples of famous deer associated with the royal buckhounds in this period. *The Sporting Magazine* talked of High Flyer and Moonshine having 'blood and bottom', using the type of language typically employed to describe racehorses.[27]

The hunting of deer elsewhere in the country followed the pattern we have seen for the royal hunt. Whitehead's book includes a gazetteer of known packs of stag hounds in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[28] Figure 4.1 plots the whereabouts of packs that were in existence in the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century (to coincide with our period of study). The map shows a concentration of activity within reach of London, and in East Anglia. Few packs of deer hounds are recorded as existing within the venerable foxhunting country of the shires. Neither do the packs generally coincide with the existence of royal forests (with the notable exception of Exmoor). The hunting by the Duke and Duchess of

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[26] Hore, *Royal Buck Hounds*, p. 306.

[27] Sabretache (Barrow), *Monarchy and the Chase* (London, 1948), p. 116; *The Sporting Magazine*, November 1803.

[28] G.K.Whitehead, *Hunting and Stalking Deer in Britain through the Ages* (London, 1980), pp. 206-52.

Grafton of a carted deer in 1760 was such an unusual occurrence that it was recorded in the newspaper:

Tuesday their graces the Duke and Duchess of Grafton took the diversion of stag hunting in Northamptonshire. A stag was turned out on Whittlebury Forest which led them a chace to within half a mile of Northampton, and back again to the forest, where it was killed. The corn being cut down, and mostly carried in, the company met with no restriction in that fine champaign country, and her Grace being an excellent horsewoman was in at the death.[29]

Paget, in his history of the Althorp and Pytchley hunt, tells us that the seventh Earl of Cardigan, disappointed in his ambitions to secure the mastership of the Pytchley in 1840, started a pack of bloodhounds with which to hunt the carted deer, but that they 'were not a success'.[30]

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[29] NRO, ZA8011.

[30] G. Paget, *The History of the Althorp and Pytchley Hunt 1634-1920* (London, 1937), p. 262.
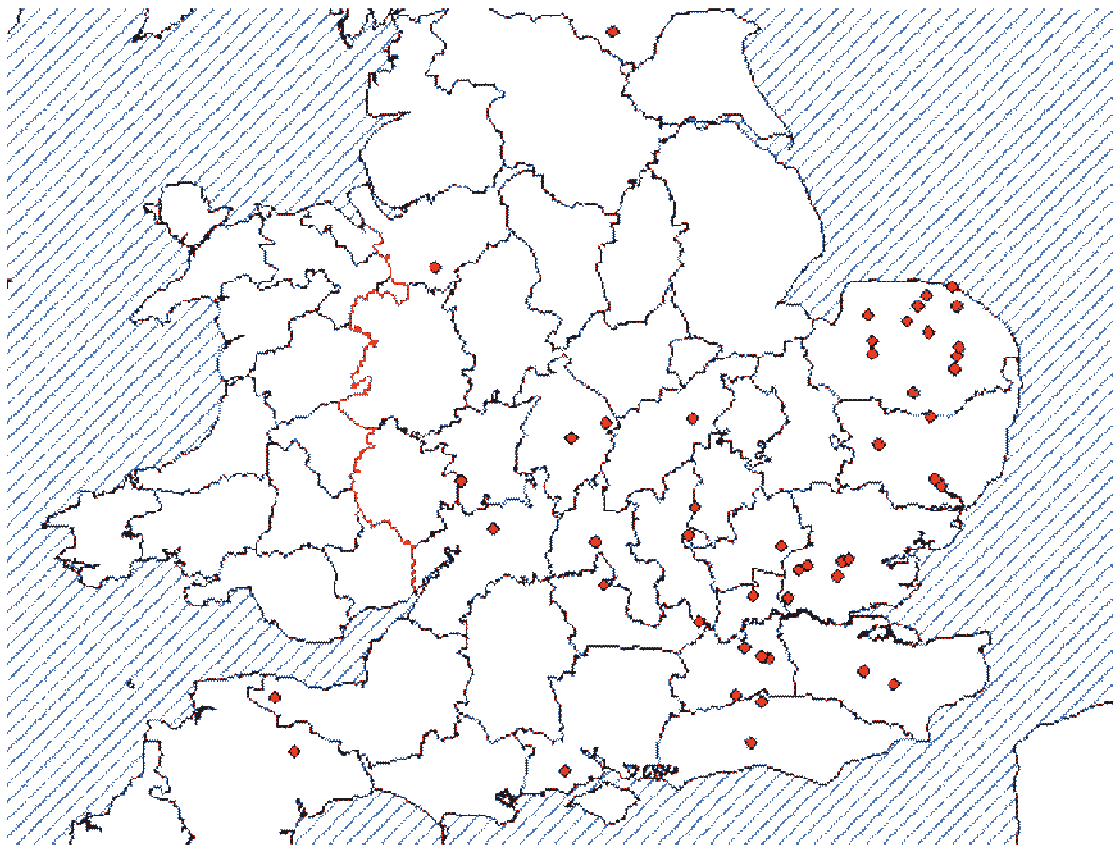
Figure 4.1: Stag hunts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (source data: Whitehead, Gazeteer of Deer Hunts)

In the nineteenth century the royal buckhounds were taken to hunt elsewhere than Windsor and Richmond, and this included regular two-week stays in the New Forest (where they would attempt capture wild deer to take back to the Swinley deer paddocks with limited success), but such expeditions do not seem to have stretched as far as the royal forests of Northamptonshire.[31]

The great majority of the stag hunts still extant in the first half of the nineteenth century were hunting the carted deer (with the notable exception of the North Devon hunt). It was generally regarded as being a somewhat inferior sport to foxhunting. Nethercote talks of William Angerstein, a late resident of Northamptonshire and follower of the Pytchley, establishing a pack of stag hounds when he moved to Norfolk, on the theory that 'half a loaf' was 'better than no bread'. But Nethercote reported that Angerstein was not long in discovering that 'the pursuit of the deer in an essentially non-hunting country, and that of the fox over the big pastures in the neighbourhood of Crick or Market Harborough are enjoyments as distinct in their character as light from darkness.'[32]

In his account of the development of hounds in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Nimrod informs us that the traditional stag hound was, in fact, extinct. By the time he was writing, the royal buckhounds, and 'the few other packs that follow this game', consisted of foxhounds 'of the highest blood that can be procured'. Nimrod approved of this development because, although the English stag hound 'was a noble animal of his kind', he was 'not sufficiently speedy'. As hunting developed, so did the taste for following on horseback. At the end of the eighteenth century, both

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[31] Lord Ribblesdale, *The Queen's Hounds and Stag-Hunting Recollections* (London, 1897), p. 68.

[32] H.O. Nethercote, *The Pytchley Hunt Past and Present* (London, 1888), p. 255. According to Whitehead's gazetteer, Angerstein's pack was founded in Rugby around 1870 and moved to Norfolk in 1872.

the royal hunt and the North Devon hunt were using large, slow hounds. In 1813, the

Duke of Richmond presented the Goodwood pack of foxhounds to George IV to

replace the old-style hounds. In line with the new arrangements, the 'yeomen

prickers' of the royal buckhounds were pensioned off and replaced with three

whippers in.[33] The North Devon stag hounds were sold in 1825 and replaced in 1827

with a pack made up of drafts from various foxhound packs.[34]

The hunting of the carted deer even came to imitate foxhunting in its

seasonality. The traditional pursuit of the deer had involved chasing stag or buck in

summer and hind or doe in the winter. Stag and hind seasons continued to be

observed by the North Devon hunt. According to Palk Collyns, the stag season on

Exmoor in the nineteenth century ran from August 12th to October 8th. This was then

followed by a two or three-week break until the hind season commenced, which

continued up until Christmas. There was then another break until hind hunting

recommenced 'as soon after lady day as weather permits' and carried on until May

10th. This had already pushed the start of the stag season somewhat later, because it

had traditionally started around midsummer. *The Sporting Magazine* recorded the

season of the royal buckhounds as commencing in September.[35] The carted deer

packs seem to have followed foxhunting's calendar rather than that of the traditional

sport. In Nimrod's opinion, the difference in seasonality was one of the reasons that

the hunting of the wild red deer did not survive as an English sport: 'from the

circumstance of the stag being, by his nature, unfit to be hunted during some of the

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[33] Nimrod (C. Apperley), *The Horse and the Hound* (Edinburgh, 1843), pp. 360, 428.

[34] C. Palk Collyns, *Notes on the Chase of the Wild Red Deer in the Counties of Devon and Somerset* (1862; London, 1902 edn), pp. 111, 116.

[35] *The Sporting Magazine*, November 1803.

months that sportsmen like to be in the field'.[36] Nineteenth-century hunts often seem

to have hunted castrated deer, known as 'haviers'. Whitehead suggested that this was

both because they were less temperamental than stags, and because a stag that had

been 'to rut' was 'no good' for hunting until 'well into December' (which much later

than the traditional summer season for hunting the stag).[37] Depending on when a stag

was castrated he would not regrow his antlers if they had already been cast. Stags,

and haviers that had retained their antlers, often had these adornments sawn off to

facilitate both their transport in a deer cart and their recapture at the conclusion of the

chase.

The main virtues of hunting the carted deer seem to have lain in the certainty

of the sport and its comparatively short duration. The hunting of the wild red deer as

practised in the West Country continued to involve the harbouring of the deer, that is,

the locating of the lair of an animal of the required sex, and of suitable age and

stature, to ensure a good chase. The hounds were taken to the nearest farm where the

majority of the pack would be confined in a barn or similar. Then two or four of the

most trusted would be taken to the site of the harbouring to act as 'tufters'. They

would rouse the chosen quarry and set it running, at which point word would be sent

back to where the rest of the pack were waiting, and they were brought forward and

laid on the scent of the escaping deer. Clearly this could be a time-consuming and

unreliable process, which might be viewed as part and parcel of the sport by

enthusiasts, but unacceptable to anyone who had only a few hours to spare. As Palk

Collyns commented 'It must not be assumed that a deer can always be harboured for

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[36] Nimrod, *Horse and Hound*, p. 414.

[37] Whitehead, *Hunting and Stalking Deer*, p. 123.

the day's sport'.[38] Turning a deer out of a cart to hunt would certainly provide more

of a sure thing. Sometimes a carted deer would not be successfully recaptured at the

end of the chase, and the hunt would have to use more traditional techniques to

harbour the 'outlier' in the next week or two to take it and return it to the safety of

the deer paddock, but most of the meets would be fairly certain to show some sport.

Nimrod gave an assessment of the place of stag hunting in the sporting world

of the early nineteenth century: although it could 'never be again reckoned amongst

the popular diversions in England', the modern invention did have its uses. He

observed that 'turning out deer before fox-hounds in the neighbourhood of the

metropolis' had the 'advantage of affording a certainty of something in the shape of a

run' which was most useful to 'persons whose time is precious'. No one seemed to

have expected to sport to match the excitement offered by a fox hunt. Cecil

acknowledged the same advantages enumerated by Nimrod, but also remarked that

'compared with fox-hunting there is a lameness about it—an artificial character not

quite in accordance with the true spirit of a sportsman'.[39] Even advocates of hunting

the wild deer on Exmoor acknowledged that their sport would only satisfy 'a first-

flight Melton Man' if 'he is not merely a rider, but a sportsman to boot.'[40]

In the nineteenth century all pursuit of deer was covered by the term 'stag

hunting', regardless of the sex of the animal pursued. It does, however, seem that the

red deer was carted in preference to the fallow deer (which, as we have already seen,

was the favoured quarry of earlier park-based hunting). There are some mentions of

fallow deer in the records of nineteenth-century hunting: when Charles Davis was

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[38] Palk Collyns, *Chase of the Wild Red Deer,* p. 106.

[39] Cecil, *Records of the Chase*, p. 217.

[40] Palk Collyns, *Chase of the Wild Red Deer,* p. 171.

huntsman of the royal buckhounds, he apparently entered his young hounds to the

fallow deer in Windsor park; a Mr T. Nevill of Chilland carted a fallow deer that had

been presented to him by the Earl of Portsmouth; and a Mr Mellish hunted wild

fallow deer in Epping Forest up until 1805.[41] In the main, however, red deer stags,

hinds and haviers were the favoured prey of the deer packs. It is a curiosity of the

sport that the hunted animal became in many senses the star of the whole

proceedings. Ribblesdale was in no doubt that successful stag hunting depended

above all on 'the condition and the humour' of the deer that was hunted. If the animal

was unfit or was not in the mood to run then the enterprise was doomed to failure.

The same author expressed great satisfaction, at the end of a successful day's

hunting, 'to be able to bid good-night to your good deer comfortably housed in the

best loose box about the place, up to his knees in long wheat straw'.[42]

Historians have viewed the ascendancy of carted-deer hunting in the

nineteenth century as evidence supporting the traditional explanation of the hunting

transition. The switch to hunting the carted deer was made because the traditional

haunts of deer had disappeared, and it was no longer possible to pursue the wild

animal. Carr summed it up thus: "fewer forests and fewer deer parks meant fewer

wild deer. The hunting of carted deer – was one answer.'[43] I would rather argue that

the practice of hunting carted deer was intended to, and largely succeeded in,

bringing the new style of hunting to a population who might otherwise not be able to

enjoy it on so regular a basis. Thus the prevalence of stag hunts in the south-east of

England, within reach of London, and in Norfolk (where the pre-eminence of the

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[41] Ribblesdale, *Queen's Hounds,* pp. 74, 98, 122.

[42] Ribblesdale, *Queen's Hounds,* pp. 92-3.

[43] Carr, *English Fox Hunting*, p. 24. Griffin expresses a similar opinion on the significance of hunting the carted deer: E. Griffin, *Blood Sport: Hunting in Britain Since 1066* (New Haven and London, 2007), pp. 106-7.

shooting interests precluded widespread foxhunting). Those who enjoyed following these hunts valued fast runs and good quality horses, just as foxhunters did. The deer were pursued by fast and fleet foxhounds, not by the slower and more ponderous stag hounds of previous centuries. When the royal hunt had days in Windsor Forest and the New Forest they found themselves with far fewer followers, with the majority preferring the faster runs that could be had over a grass country. Carr suggested that hunting the carted deer was 'a tame substitute for the real thing', but, for enthusiasts of the fast horseback pursuit, the reverse seems to have been true. It was generally expected that the wild deer in the West Country would run slower and not as far as their pampered, well-fed relatives further east.[44] For the most part, nineteenth-century stag hunters were not 'making do' with some pale imitation of an ancient and noble sport, rather they were making the best of a rather 'watered down' version of foxhunting.

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[44] Palk Collyns, *Chase of the Wild Red Deer,* p. 122.

Chapter 5
Horses and Hunting

In the previous chapters the suggestion was made that if early hunting was about the hound, then later hunting, and particularly foxhunting, was about the horse. This chapter examines this assertion in more detail.

Horses in Literature

Medieval hunting sources largely ignore the horse. For example, *The Master of Game* had extensive coverage of the types of prey that might be hunted, much on hounds and on how to train them, a great deal on the ways to seek out a stag and on the social formalities of the hunt, but the work contained not one word on the hunting horse.[1] The sixteenth century, however, saw the beginning of a period when horses themselves were considered to be a suitable subject of literature. Initially this enthusiasm was sparked by a continental, and particularly Italian, passion for high-school riding (from which modern-day dressage descended). The sixteenth century saw a growing number of works on the breeding and training of horses and on treating their ailments. The first writers on equestrianism had connections with the royal household. Thomas Blundeville had spent his youth at court. John Astey was a friend of Blundeville's and the son of a Gentleman Pensioner. Gervase Markham, who became probably the most prolific and popular author on horsemanship in the early modern period, was also related to one of Henry VIII's Gentleman Pensioners and his father was a friend of Francis Walsingham.[2]

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[1] Edward of Norwich, *The Master of Game*, W.A. and F.N. Ballie-Grohman (eds) (1909; Pensylvania, 2005 edn).

[2] J. Thirsk, *Horses in Early Modern England: for Service, for Pleasure, for Power* (Reading, 1978), p. 17.

Blundeville's first published book was an English translation and adaptation of the work of the Italian Federico Grisone. In 1565 Blundeville followed this with the larger and more original *Fower Chiefest Offices Belongyng to Horsemanshippe*. Blundeville was concerned with the quality of the native horses and had many suggestions for improving the stock. He was more interested in horses for service (that is, for warfare) than in horses for hunting. Indeed, he went as far as to suggest that gentlemen's parks would be better dedicated to the breeding of horses than to the keeping of deer (which he describes as 'altogether a pleasure without profite'). In the part of the book that dealt with breeding, Blundeville acknowledged that people required different types of horse for different purposes. Some wanted a 'breede of great trotting horses' for military use, some wanted 'ambling horses of a meane stature' for travelling long distances by road. He here acknowledged that some would have a race of 'swift runners to run for wagers, or to gallop the bucke or to serve for such like exercises of pleasure'. For the breeding of such a horse he recommended the use of a Turk or Barb stallion, particularly the latter as he had a natural toughness. The writer observed that such 'extreame exercises as to gallop the bucke, or follow a long winged hawke – killeth yearlie in this realme many a good gelding'. The remainder of the *Fower Chiefest Offices* was dedicated to the breaking and riding of a horse intended for warfare or for high-school riding, and for dealing with vices that might develop in these horses. There is no more mention of the hunting or the racing horse.[3]

By contrast, in the early seventeenth century Gervase Markham dedicated the third part of his book *Cavelarice* to 'the choice, training, and dyeting of hunting horses'. He was interested in the type of horse best suited both for riding after

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[3] T. Blundeville, *The Fower Chiefyst Offices Belongyng to Horsemanshippe* (London, 1566), p. 12.

hounds and for use in hunting matches. He had specific recommendations to make as regards the type of hunting that readers should use to train their horses. Interestingly, Markham discounted the chase of the fox or the badger because 'for the moste part it continues in woody and rough grounds, where a horse can neither convenientlie make foorth his way, nor can tread without danger of stubing'. Markham approved the pursuit of the buck or stag especially 'if they bee not confyned within the limits of a parke or pale, but haue libertie to chuse their waies according to their own appetites, which of some Hunts-men is cald hunting at force', but he equally warned that this sport should be reserved for the exercise of horses of 'staid yeares' as it was too long and exacting for young horses. For the training of youngsters, the best by far was hare hunting, which provided chases of the right length and speed and took place between Michaelmas and April, when the sun was not too hot, nor the ground too hard.[4]

Michael Baret gave advice on both hunting horses and 'running horses', but he viewed a gentleman's interest in his hunting horses being focused more on how to win hunting matches. For Baret the difference between a hunting horse and a running horse was not great, but 'only in continuance of labour, for this dependeth upon long and weary toyle; and that upon a quicke and speedy dispatch'. The hunting horse was more stretched both in terms of the distance that he was expected to run, and the quality of the ground that he had to gallop over, but the training regime that Baret advised was very similar for both types of horse.[5]

Thomas de Grey produced another book entirely dedicated to horses and horsemanship in 1639. In *The Compleat Horse-man and Expert Ferrier,* however, far

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[4] G. Markham, *Cavelarice*, Book 3, (London, 1607), p. 6.

[5] M. Baret, *An Hipponomie or the Vineyard of Horsemanship (*London, 1618), pp. 51-73.

from giving his readers guidance on the breeding and training of hunting horses, he

went so far as to criticise their use in the sport. De Grey complained that the hunters

'overstraine the strength of their poore horses'. The sight of horses returning after a

days hunting would 'pitty the heart' of any horse lover, the mounts being 'mired,

blooded, spurred, lamentabley spent and tyred out'.[6]

Later in the century William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, produced

probably the most famous work on horsemanship that survives from the early

modern period. Cavendish was primarily concerned with training the horse for the

'mannage'. He talked of 'dressing' horses, in the sense of training them to perform

various high-school movements, and it is from this type of riding that we derive the

terms 'dressage' and 'manege' (the latter being an all-weather arena in which horses

are trained). Cavendish made some allusion to hunting in passing. He grouped

together the sorts of horse that a man might use for hunting, hawking or travelling.

He was certainly of the opinion that such horses had their place, 'I am always ready

to buy for such purposes an old nagg of some hunts-man or falconer, that is sound'.

Cavendish deemed such an animal to be 'a useful nagg' because he 'gallops on all

Grounds, leaps over ditches and hedges'; such a horse was not, however, suited 'for a

souldiers horse, nor the mannage'. Cavendish had no particularly high opinion of

running horses either. These, he said, 'are the most easily found and of the least use'.

Part of the trouble was the ground they were used to: 'commonly they run upon

heaths (a green carpet)'. This made them unaccustomed to rough going and 'they run

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[6] T. de Grey, *The Compleat Horse-man and Expert Ferrier* (London, 1639), (unnumbered introduction).

on the shoulders'; in modern parlance they were 'heavy on the forehand', and this is still considered an undesirable feature in a riding horse.[7]

From this survey of early equestrian literature, we can see that the authors were not particularly concerned with hunting. They were as likely to describe the features of a horse required for hawking. This would seem to confirm the view that we have from studying the early writers on hunting: while horses were necessary for the sport, their role was not considered to be important enough to be treated separately. Where the early modern equestrian writers did give consideration to the hunting horse, this was likely to be influenced by the considerations of hunting matches. This is significant when we come to consider the relationship of the developing sport of horse racing to the changing physiology of the horse and to the development of 'modern' foxhunting.

Hunting itself remained a popular literary theme, and there were books published in this period that treated both horses and hunting. In 1677 the first edition of Nicholas Cox's *The Gentleman's Recreation* appeared. This described the four gentlemanly sports of hunting, hawking, fowling and fishing. Like earlier works on hunting, the book said very little about the hunting horse *per se*, but the third edition, published in 1686, added an entire section devoted to the selection, feeding and training of a horse to be used for hunting and for running in hunting matches. This work repeated much of what Markham had to say on the subject at the beginning of the century.[8] Richard Blome had a somewhat wider view of gentlemanly recreations than Cox. The first part of Blome's *A Gentleman's Recreations* was an encyclopaedia of the arts and sciences, while the second part contained treatises on

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[7] W. Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, *A New Method, and Extraordinary Invention, to Dress Horses, and Work Them According to Nature* (London, 1667), pp. 110-1.

[8] N. Cox, *The Gentleman's Recreation* (London, 1674).

horsemanship, hawking, hunting, fowling, fishing, and agriculture, with a short section on cock-fighting.[9] Although he talked of hunting horses in his section on horsemanship, Blome's advice on hunting comprised the standard fare: the types of hound that were available, how to hunt the various prey, how to treat the illnesses of hounds. Horsemanship and hunting were treated as two separate recreations.

Cox and Blome were both reprinted in the eighteenth century, and other works appeared in that century on the subjects of both hunting and on horsemanship such as Thomas Fairfax's *The Compleat Sportsman* in 1764 and William Osbaldiston's *The Universal Sportsman* in 1792. These works were often derivatives of the books that we have already examined. Fairfax, for example, quoted Cavendish verbatim when describing how a colt should be kept in his early years. These authors repeated the pattern of treating horsemanship and hunting as two separate subjects.[10]

The sport of modern foxhunting came to have a large body of literature associated with it: magazine articles by 'celebrity' sporting correspondents, guides on where to hunt, novels based on the hunting field, and antiquarian histories of famous hunts. These works contained much less emphasis on how to hunt and much more on where to hunt and who with. Above all, there was more emphasis on what to hunt on.

The Sporting Magazine was first published in 1792. It covered all manner of sports across the country through means of correspondents scattered the length and breadth. Early issues contained articles on such diverse sports as boxing and cock

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[9] R. Blome, *The Gentleman's Recreation* (London, 1686).

[10] T. Fairfax, *The Compleat Sportsman; or Country Gentleman's Recreation* (London, 1764); W. Osbaldiston, *The Universal Sportsman: or, Nobleman, Gentleman, and Farmer's Dictionary of Recreation and Amusement* (London, 1792).

fighting.[11] It carried accounts of every type of hunting: meetings of stag hounds,

buck hounds and harriers as well as of foxhounds. But by the 1820s it began to

concentrate more on foxhunting. In 1822 the magazine employed Charles Apperley,

who took the pen name 'Nimrod', as a hunting correspondent at not inconsiderable

expense. By the early 1820s the magazine was the fourth best selling monthly

periodical in London; one writer credits Nimrod's contributions with trebling the

circulation of the magazine.[12] Nimrod's pieces often took the form of reports on the

various meets that he had attended. The emphasis was on the thrill of the chase,

including detailed descriptions of the riding, the riders and their falls. Although he

talked of the hounds and the men who hunted them, the horses were foremost in

Nimrod's accounts. A man who understood the working of the hunt and the nature of

the dogs would have a distinct advantage, but this was because it enabled him to

achieve the aim of the foxhunter: to keep up with the hounds and be in at the death,

and this was more for the sense of achievement than plain enjoyment of hunting *per

se*.[13] Apperley was himself an accomplished horseman and although, as an inveterate

snob, he would never describe himself as a horse dealer, he supported himself before

his writing career took off by buying, training and selling hunters. Unlike earlier

works on hunting, at no point did Nimrod give advice on the breeding or keeping of

hounds, or on the 'science' of hunting itself, but he did publish advice on the hunting

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[11] For example, the October 1803 edition had two articles on boxing, but only some correspondents' reports on hunting meets. It did contain two articles on the health and welfare of horses. *The Sporting Magazine*, October 1803.

[12] C. Cone, *Hounds in the Morning: Selections from the Sporting Magazine 1792-1836* (Kentucky, 1981), pp. 22-4.

[13] Nimrod (C. Apperley) 'Riding to hounds', *The Sporting Magazine,* January 1823.

horse. He collected some of his writings in *The Sporting Magazine* together and published them as a book entitled *Remarks on the Condition of Hunters* in 1837.[14]

Other writers followed in Nimrod's footsteps. Surtees is probably the most famous of these. He started as a hunting correspondent for *The Sporting Magazine* around the time of Nimrod's rather acrimonious departure in 1829, assuming the pen name 'Nim South'. He had a rather different attitude to Nimrod, preferring to follow hounds away from the press of fashionable people in Leicestershire; if Nimrod could be described as an inveterate snob, Surtees could be described as an inverted one. Surtees was more interested in the hunting itself and, after inheriting the family estate in Durham, kept a pack of hounds himself. He too fell out with *The Sporting Magazine* and was one of the forces behind the founding of *New Sporting Magazine* in 1831. His Jorrocks character first appeared in the latter magazine. Surtees was rather more interested in the dogs than Nimrod, and his accounts of runs included more details on the hunting than his predecessor's. Surtees was well aware of the difference between those who rode in order to hunt, and those who hunted in order to ride, and one cannot escape the impression that he approved rather more of the former.[15] Surtees's work, however, still bears more resemblance to Nimrod's than it does to the seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century works on hunting that we have described previously. His accounts were narratives, rather than prescriptions on the best ways to hunt, and paid much attention to those who attended various meets and the ways in which they were dressed. While he gave more descriptions of

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[14] Nimrod (C. Apperley), *Remarks on the Condition of Hunters* (London, 1837).

[15] Surtees says as much in his observations about a Dorset Hunting parson. R.S. Surtees, 'Dorsetshire: Mr. Farquharson's (1834-1835)' in *Town and Country Papers*, (Surtees Society, 1993), p. 118.

the hounds than the horses, the rideability of the hunting country remained

paramount in his descriptions.[16]

Where writers did seek to provide instruction on the management of a hunt

and its hounds, the horse still played a larger role than in the earlier examples of the

genre. Colonel John Cook published *Observations on Fox Hunting* in 1826. This,

like Beckford's work of fifty years before, was written in the style of someone

offering advice to a young gentleman seeking to establish his own hunt. Where it

differed, however, was in its explicit acknowledgement of the importance of the

hunter to the success of the project. Cook might have rued the fact that an entire pack

of hounds could be purchased for less than the price of a good horse, but he advised

his student that mounting himself and his hunt servants was crucial to the aim of

providing good sport and good entertainment for the gentlemen of the

neighbourhood.[17]

Subsequent writers on hunting tended to follow in the footsteps of Nimrod

and Surtees rather than those of Cook. They concentrated on reporting on real-life

hunts rather than giving advice on how to hunt. The next famous correspondent was

Henry Hall Dixon, who took the pen name 'The Druid'. He did not himself ride to

hounds, but he took delight in reporting the escapades of those who did. The primary

hunting coverage in both *The Post and the Paddock* and *Silk and Scarlet* featured the

recollections of the 'rough rider' Dick Christian, and naturally were very much more

concerned with tales of hard riding than with hard hunting.[18]

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[16] We have already drawn upon Surtees's description of Northampton's landscape and the 'stiffness' (difficulty) of its fences. R.S. Surtees, 'The Pytchley, (1833-1834)' in *Town and Country Papers*, p. 90.

[17] J. Cook, *Observations on Fox Hunting* (1826; London 1922 edn.), pp. 4, 58.

[18] The Druid (H. Hall Dixon), *The Paddock and the Post* (1857; London, 1862 edn.); The Druid (H. Hall Dixon), *Silk and Scarlet* (London, 1859).

Today Surtees is more famous for his novels, all of which have foxhunting at their centre. The nineteenth century also produced Whyte-Melville, who wrote both general works on horsemanship and foxhunting novels in the middle of the century.[19] The great Victorian novelist Anthony Trollope was himself an ardent foxhunter, and hunting scenes featured heavily in some of his works.[20]

Our survey of hunting literature has served to illustrate two points: that the role of the horse was very much more important to later foxhunters than it was to earlier deer hunters, and that the literature of the nineteenth century was addressed to the very large 'field' that followed the hounds, rather than to the men who actually kept and hunted hounds. Some time between the seventeenth century and the early nineteenth century, the animal previously referred to as 'the hunting horse' was recognized by the term 'the hunter'. It is one of the arguments of this thesis that the changing nature of the horse, and the increased enthusiasm for riding hard to hounds, was one of the forces that drove the hunting transition. We need to investigate the development of the horse between 1600 and 1850 in more detail.

Horse Racing

A significant cultural development of the eighteenth century was the growing importance of the sport of horse racing. Borsay described horse racing as 'the most rapidly developing and commercially oriented of eighteenth-century physical recreations'.[21] Horse racing as an organized sport was relatively young. Although horse racing certainly existed under the Tudors, it was to the reign of James I and the

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[19] For example: G.J. Whyte-Melville, *Market Harborough* (1862; London, 1984 edn); G.J. Whyte-Melville, *Riding Recollections* (London, 1878).

[20] Trollope produced a set of hunting sketches, first published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, in which he satirized the various followers of hounds. A. Trollope, *Hunting Sketches* (London, 1865).

[21] P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660-1770* (1989; Oxford, 1991 edn), p. 181.

beginning of the ascendancy of Newmarket that the modern sport generally traces its origins. James and his son Charles both had hunting establishments at Newmarket. In his history of Newmarket and English racing, the nineteenth-century writer Hore had various references to hunting matches and the losses and wins of sundry noblemen as they bet on the outcome. Hore usefully turned his attentions away from Newmarket and gave evidence of race meetings elsewhere in the country in the first two decades of the seventeenth century. These examples include Chester, Croydon, Richmond, Lincoln, Salisbury, Derby, York and, significantly for students of Northamptonshire, Brackley.[22] Meanwhile the 'earliest authentic and irrefutable occurrence' of racing at Newmarket in the reign of Charles I was the Gold cup in 1634. Charles II himself rode in the races at Newmarket. Young Thomas Isham records in his diary being told that the king had ridden two heats at Newmarket 'and the Duke of Albermarle's horse had fallen'.[23]

The sport in the seventeenth century, and early eighteenth century, was very different from the sport of flat racing that we would recognize today. Hunting matches were a popular way of competing. These involved pitching two horses against each other across three heats. For each heat a 'train scent' was laid by dragging a dead animal along the route it was desired the horses should take. Hounds were then loosed to follow the scent, and the horses would follow the hounds. Each rider had a judge, called a 'trier', who rode behind and ensured fair play. The triers directed where the train scent was laid, which was an effective way of delimiting a racetrack over the kind of open terrain where most races were staged. Horses also

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[22] J.P. Hore, *The History of Newmarket and the Annals of the Turf*, 3 vols, (London, 1886), 1, pp. 338-58.

[23] N. Marlow (trans.), *The Diary of Thomas Isham of Lamport, 1671-73* (Farnborough, 1971), p. 165.

ran for plates, without the benefit of hounds to chase.[24] A plate typically

accommodated more runners than a match but between four and eight seems to have

been the common number. Again the race was staged in heats. A horse often ran

three heats of up to four miles each, which was an endurance event compared to the

distances covered by modern racehorses. Some plates were specifically for horses

that hunted, but as time went on there was more emphasis on specialist racehorses,

too precious to risk on the hunting field. There were also races for 'galloways',

which were strong ponies in modern parlance. The racing calendars of the last

quarter of the eighteenth century show that, by then, racing was beginning to assume

a more recognizable form. There were still plates and other prizes being run for in

heats at various racecourses around the country, but there were far more competitions

comprising 'one heat' and many more sweepstakes, where the prize money came

from the entry fees. [25]

To focus on our study area, Northamptonshire was well catered for with race

meetings. We have already alluded to the meetings held at Brackley in the

seventeenth century. Thomas Isham's diary, covering 1672 and 1673, adds races at

Harlestone, just to the north west of Northampton, Irthlingborough, near

Wellingborough, and Rowell (Rothwell).[26] Early in the following century the diary

of Justinian Isham recorded race meetings at Borough Hill (near Daventry),

Irthlingborough, Harlestone and Rothwell.[27] One of the Harlestone meetings

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[24] T. Fairfax, *Compleat Sportsman,* pp. 62-4; W.A.Osbaldiston, *Universal Sportsman*, p. 486.

[25] J. Weatherby, *Racing Calendar: containing an account of the plates, matches, and sweepstakes, run for in Great-Britain and Ireland, &c. in the year 1774* (London, 1774).

[26] Marlow, *Diary of Thomas Isham*, pp. 147, 153, 203.

[27] J. Cheny, *An historical list of all horse-matches run, and of all plates and prizes run for in England and Wales (of the Value of Ten Pounds or upwards) in 1729* (London, 1729), pp. 93-7.

included a race for galloways.[28] The 1729 racing calendar gave details of races at

Daventry, Kettering, Peterborough, Rothwell, and Northampton. Many of these

meetings included races for hunters and galloways. A 1769 racing calendar gave

details of races held on Wakefield Lawn at Whittlebury, but these races do not seem

to have become an established event.[29] The racing calendar of 1779 listed only

Northampton and Peterborough as racing venues in the county.[30]

Horses bred for racing

The enthusiasm for horse racing led to a concentration on the breeding of

horses for this purpose that culminated in the production of the English

thoroughbred. For Peter Edwards the thoroughbred in the eighteenth century 'helped

to define Englishness in a country obsessed with horse racing'.[31] But the significance

of the thoroughbred has been greatly understated by most historians. The breeding of

this animal had a wider impact than on the sports of racing or of hunting; the lessons

learned laid the foundations for the great programme of stock improvement

associated with the agricultural revolution in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

While this fact has been acknowledged by specialists in the subject of stock

breeding, it is largely unknown to a wider audience.

Conscious attempts to manipulate and improve the standard of horses in

England were made as early as the reign of Henry VII. He passed legislation that

sought to prevent the export of mares or stallions, aimed at preserving the country's

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[28] NRO, IL2686.

[29] B. Walker, *An historical list of horse-matches, plates and prizes, run for in Great-Britain and Ireland, in the year 1769* (London, 1770), p. 92.

[30] Weatherby, *Racing Calendar 1779*, p. iv.

[31] P. Edwards, *Horse and Man in Early Modern England* (London, 2007), p. 31.

breeding stock.[32] Henry's son also recognized that England's horses stood in need of some improvement. The pursuit of war required both horses to fight from and horses to pull baggage trains. Henry VIII's warlike propensities led both to greater demand for horses and a diminution in supply. Further legislation sought to encourage the breeding of suitable equines. A law of 1535 dictated that those in possession of a park, or other enclosed ground with a circumferance of a mile or more, should keep two mares capable of breeding foals to mature at a minimum height of 13 hands. The penalty for ignoring this law was a 40-shilling fine. There was a similar penalty for anyone who allowed these mares to be covered by stallions of less than 14 hands. A law of 1541 forbade anyone in named midland and southern counties to turn loose any stallion under 15 hands in 'forest, chase, moor, heath, common or waste' where there were mares and fillies running. Furthermore, any females found in such places judged unlikely to bear sizeable offspring were to be killed. Henry had earlier passed legislation reinforcing his father's export ban, and had included Scotland in its scope. In 1541-2, nobility, gentry and churchmen were ordered to keep riding horses of certain ages and sizes. The exact requirements depended on the status and income of the man. The king himself set up a number of breeding studs at his parks as an example to his subjects, the most famous of which was at Tutbury, still in existence a century later.[33] Under Elizabeth, the pressure to improve the supply of horses for service was maintained. In 1580 the queen set up the 'Special Commission for the Increase and Breed of Horses' whose remit was to oversee the enforcement of existing laws, and to ensure those required to keep horses for service were fulfilling

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[32] A law of 1496 forbade the export of any stallions and of mares worth more than six shillings and eight pence. Sir W. Gilbey, *Concise History of the Shire Horse* (1889; Liss, 1976 edn), p. 21.

[33] Gilbey, *Shire Horse*, p. 21; Thirsk, *Horses in Early Modern England*, pp. 12-4.

these commitments. There is some evidence that the nobles and gentlemen being so supervised were themselves quite interested in improving the breeding of horses.[34]

We have already observed that the sixteenth century saw the beginning of an explosion of literary interest in the subject of horses and horsemanship, and many of these works was occupied with breeding. The advice tended to follow the same pattern even if the specifics varied from author to author. For example, the readers of both Blundeville and Markham had the various breeds of horse described to them and were advised on which they might choose as a sire or a dam according to the intended purpose of the offspring. They were also told what type of ground was suitable for stallion, mare, and mare with foal at foot, and even of how to divide their park accordingly (Markham also catered for the humbler breeder in that he gave advice on the best places to tether a mare). Feeding was covered, as were the mechanics of covering the mare and of her foaling.[35]

Cavendish was a less derivitive writer than his predecessors, and he was positively scathing about Blundeville's work from the century before his own. Cavendish too, however, had much to say on the various breeds of horses and which to use as sire and dam. He was primarily concerned with horses for the 'mannage' and, as we have previously seen, had a low opinion of horses bred for racing. Spanish horses were unrivalled as sires in his opinion (although he did recognise the value of eastern horses in breeding racehorses). While Cavendish strongly advised against the use of a stallion that the reader himself had bred (he believed that would lead to the production of 'cart horses' within three generations), he did suggest that his audience 'cannot Breed Better, than to Breed of your Own Mares that you have

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[34] Thirsk, *Horses in Early Modern England,* p. 16.

[35] Blundeville, *Fower Chiefyst Offices*; Markham, *Cavelarice.*

Bred; and let their Fathers Cover them; for there is no Incest in Horses: And thus they are Nearer, by a Degree, to the Purity, since a fine Horse Got them, and the same fine Horse Covers them again.'[36] Such inbreeding became the key to stamping an identity on sheep, pigs and cattle in the following century.

At the end of the seventeenth century, however, it seems that Cavendish's audience was more interested in breeding horses for racing, rather than for the school or war service. It was at this time that the foundations were laid for the production of the English thoroughbred, a creature in an advanced state of development long before Bakewell of Dishley produced the New Leicester sheep. Earlier works on horses gave only passing advice on the breeding of running horses. There was near unanimity, however, in suggesting that it was the eastern breeds of horse, identified variously as the Turk, the Barb and the Arab, that made the best sires when breeding for this purpose.[37] As the sport of horse racing rose in popularity after the Restoration, so more and more gentlemen turned their attention to breeding horses that would win them matches and wagers. They followed the advice of the writers on horsemanship and turned to the eastern horses for their foundation stock. All modern thoroughbreds include three early sires in the male line of their pedigrees: the Byerley Turk, the Darley Arabian and the Godolphin Arabian. The first of these was initially his owner's war horse (having reputedly been captured at the seige of Vienna in 1683 and later fighting at the Battle of the Boyne), he was retired to stud in North Yorkshire until his death in 1709. The Darley Arabian was purchased at Aleppo and brought to England in 1704. He stood at Aldby Park near York until 1730 and sired the famous and influential horse, Flying Childers. The Godolphin

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[36] Cavendish, *New Method*, p. 93.

[37] For example, Blundeville, *Fower Chiefest Offices*, p. 12; Blome, *Gentleman's Recreation*, p.2.

Arabian stood at stud in Cambridgeshire until his death in 1753. Other Eastern stallions, such as the Dun Arabian and the Bloody Shouldered Arabian (imported from Turkey in 1715 and 1719 respectively), had early influence on race horses but their lines have since died out in the thoroughbred, although they can be traced in the pedigrees of other breeds. Upwards of 200 stallions were imported into England in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century.[38] These stallions were used on both eastern and English mares to produce a recognizable, and reproducible, breed of horse. Many of the bloodlines were recorded for posterity in the various racing calendars that appeared in the eighteenth century as well as the *General Stud Book* produced by James Weatherby in 1791.[39] This latter book traced the lineage of thoroughbred horses back to the late seventeenth century, and it was the foundation for the thoroughbred stud book which is produced by Weatherby's to this day. From these records, and from the studbooks of individual breeders, we get some picture of how close breeding was a tool used in stamping the desired features on a horse. Writing in 1756, the veterinary surgeon William Osmer observed that 'affinity of blood' was fine in the breeding of horses so long as it was 'not continued too long in the same channel'. As proof he cites the case of Flying Childers, 'perhaps the best racer ever bred in this kingdom', who had the sire Spanker twice in his dam's line.[40]

It is difficult to identify exactly when the term 'thoroughbred' was first used to describe this horse specifically bred for racing. In *A Dissertation on Horses*, Osmer argued that the 'excellency' of particular race horses was due to their

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[38] http://www.tbheritage.com/HistoricSires/FoundationSires.html (accessed 31/08/2010).

[39] For example, John Cheny's series of *An Historical List of All Horse-matches Run* ran from 1729 to 1750; Reginald Heber's similarly-titled series ran from 1751 to 1768; James Weatherby's *Racing Calendars* ran from 1773 to 1800. All contained some information on breeding, as well as accounts of the races themselves.

[40] W. Osmer, *A Dissertation on Horses* (London, 1756), p. 26.

conformation rather than to some invisible quality of 'blood'. The author did admit

that all race horses must be bred from 'foreign' (that is, eastern) stock, and referred

to this group as 'high bred'.[41] Ten years later he appended a defence of this argument

to a work on farriery. In this he used the term 'bred horse' to describe these animals.

He later used the term 'half-bred' to describe horses that 'can boast of no blood or

pedigree'.[42] In 1809 John Lawrence pondered the question of how early in the

history of racing a certain breed of horse was fixed upon; he commented that, in his

time, all horses intended for racing 'it is well known must be thorough-bred'. He

went on to define the term: 'in plain terms both their sires and dams must be the

purest blood of Asiatic or African coursers exclusively, and this must be attested in

an authentic pedigree, throughout whatever number of English descents'. [43] By the

1820s the term 'thoroughbred' had certainly entered the common parlance. Nimrod,

for example, used it freely.

Modern historians who have looked at the 'improvement' of farm livestock in

the eighteenth century have acknowledged the great influence of horse breeding.

Thomas outlined how the requirements for different types of horse had effectively

led to selective breeding before even the advent of the thoroughbred. He asserted that

'by the end of the eighteenth century cattle, sheep, foxhounds and even pigeons were

being bred with comparative attention'.[44] Thirsk commented that 'for want of proof,

one can only hazard guesses when exactly the lessons learned from horse breeding

influenced breeders of other livestock' but she thought that it was 'no accident' that

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[41] Osmer, *Dissertation*, p. 7.

[42] W. Osmer, *A Treatise on the Diseases And Lameness Of Horses* (London, 1766), pp. 207, 209.

[43] J. Lawrence, *History and Delineation of the Horse* (London, 1809), p. 98.

[44] K. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (1983; London, 1984 edn)*,* pp. 59-60.

Bakewell's Dishley farm was in 'good hunting country'.[45] This is a thought echoed by J.R. Walton who suggested, in his study of pedigree in cattle, that Bakewell may have been 'strongly influenced' by Hugo Meynell, who had been breeding improved foxhounds a mere six miles away. Walton went on to remark on the geographical proximity of areas of 'improvement for profit' with existing sites of 'improvement for pleasure'. He went so far as to suggest that selective breeding was more successful for animals such as foxhounds, hunters and racehorses where 'richer land owners made direct use of the animals' utility functions'.[46]

The link that these historians have drawn between horse breeding and the drive to improve farming stock would have come as no surprise to its contemporaries. Writing towards the end of the eighteenth century, William Marshall described the improvement of midland sheep that reached its apogee with Bakewell's New Leicester. Marshall acknowledged that the exact method used by Bakewell was unknown; but Marshall maintained that he had likely bred by 'selecting individuals from kindred breeds'. Elsewhere, the writer tells us, breeders had used outcrossing in an attempt at breed improvement, but in the midlands 'superior stock' had been raised by breeding 'not from the same line only, but from the same family'. This technique had acquired a phrase to express it: 'breeding inandin'. But in a footnote Marshall informed the reader that the term was not of midland origin. He gave Newmarket as its birthplace, where the practice had been established by the breeders of racehorses.[47]

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[45] J. Thirsk, 'Agricultural Innovations and their Diffusion' in J. Thirsk (ed.) *Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1640-1750*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1985), 2, p. 578.

[46] J.R. Walton 'Pedigree and the national cattle herd *circa* 1750-1950', *Agricultural History Review*, 34 (1986), pp. 153-4.

[47] W. Marshall, *The Rural Economy of the Midland Counties*, 2 vols (London, 1796), 1, pp. 340, 250.

Few writers have looked at the question of animal breeding in depth and there is some disagreement among those that have. For example, some have denied that there was much inbreeding involved in the early history of the thoroughbred, while others accept its role.[48] As we have seen, the contemporary writers on equestrian matters did not necessarily agree with each other in their recommendations as to breeding strategy, and it is hard to find whether their prescriptions were directly followed anyway. One of the major problems in judging breeding advice is that writers had no actual knowledge of genetics, so that the justifications that they employed were inevitably fanciful. In his work on early modern animal breeding, Russell described how early writers on horse breeding turned to the classics for inspiration, and from these sources came theories as to whether the mare or the stallion engendered form, or whether it was the environment in which horses were bred that directly affected both form and function (with the implication that both would be lost if long removed from their native evironment). But whether by accident or design, the formula of using imported eastern stallions on native-bred mares (themselves with varying degrees of eastern blood) was successful in producing the ultimate equine athlete. So successful was it that the breed was subsequently exported around the world and enabled the growth of horse racing industries from the United States to Australia. Even without a knowledge of phenology, genology and heredity, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century racehorse breeders found a way of breeding for performance and breeding true to type.

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[48] N. Russell, *Like Engendering Like, Heredity and Animal Breeding in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 104; P. Willet, *The Thoroughbred* (London, 1970), p. 30.

Thoroughbreds and Hunting

It is an assertion of this thesis that the production of the thoroughbred was a major cause in the transformation in the sport of hunting between the years 1600 and 1850. It is now time to examine the impact of the thoroughbred upon the sport of hunting.

The writer Nimrod had no doubt as to what type of horse was required for hunting at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and particularly for hunting in the shires. In his account of the history of the sport, he detected the greatest change as having taken place 'in the horse called the hunter'. Nimrod admitted that a good half-bred horse was sufficient for the job a hundred years before, but a horse of that description would never 'carry the modern sportsman, who rides well up to hounds, on a good scenting day, over one of our best hunting countries'; such an animal 'would be powerless and dangerous before he had gone across half a dozen Leicestershire enclosures'. Nimrod advised his readers to mount themselves on a thoroughbred horse, or what he terms a 'cock-tail' which in modern parlance is a three-quarters or seven-eighths thoroughbred.[49] Lawrence described the required animal thus: 'the hunter, is either a thorough-bred Horse of sufficient substance, or one with a considerable shew of blood, and with good action; for example, got by a racer out of a half-bred, or three-part-bred mare; or any horse, mare, or gelding of sufficient powers and action.'[50] Youatt echoed this view: 'In strong, thickly inclosed countries, the half-bred horse may get tolerably well along; but for general use the hunter should be at least threequarters bred, perhaps seven-eighths.'[51] Cook, although more of a hound man than a horse man, had come to the same conclusions as

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[49] Nimrod (C. Apperley), *The Chace, the Road and the Turf* (1837: London, 1927 edn), pp. 7-9.

[50] Lawrence, *Delineation*, p. 117.

[51] W. Youatt, *The Horse, with a Treatise on Draught* (London, 1831), p. 51.

Nimrod, Lawrence and Youatt, commenting that 'many fox-hunters prefer thorough-bred horses, others cock-tails; I always give preference to the former'. It is worth noting that Cook had reached his conclusions hunting in Suffolk and in Essex; he was not a 'shire' man, but he still found thouroughbred horses to be superior hunters in terms of jumping ability and stamina.[52] Neither extraordinary speed nor particular jumping ability had been required in the horses employed in earlier forms of hunting. Writers such as Markham had seen the chief virtue of a hunting horse as being able to cover a variety of terrain safely. Even in hunting matches it was endurance and ability to cover rough ground that could be more useful than sheer speed, and matches were made between horses of comparable abilities rather than being a straightforward competition to find the fastest.[53] All the later writers were agreed that hunting, whether of fox, deer or hare, had become much faster and more furious and so required a horse bred for speed.

Nimrod's account of his earlier horse-dealing days gives a picture of the stamp of horse that he was able to sell as a hunter. These included horses that he raced while a soldier in Ireland, and then brought back to England. One such horse broke his knees on the passage and was only then fit to make a whipper-in's horse ('breaking the knees' is an injury to the skin and tissue rather than the bone and results in unsightly scarring, but does not necessarily lead to permanent lameness). Not all thoroughbreds would make good hunters; when first in Leicestershire Nimrod found himself in possession of two ex-racehorses, one with the venerable Eclipse in his bloodlines, but he found them both 'absolute failures' and 'without any mercy for my life and limbs' and so packed them off to London to see what they would fetch.

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[52] Cook, *Observations*, p. 60.

[53] Baret, *Hipponomie*, pp. 51-60.

On the other hand he failed to take the opportunity to buy a racehorse called Fisherwick, who was sold cheaply to another dealer due to foot problems and was subsequently purchased by the fourth Earl of Jersey for 300 guineas.[54]

All the hunting writers who recommended a horse to ride hunting recommended a thoroughbred.[55] There was, however, apparently a degree of resistance to this, with some preferring a part bred horse or 'cocktail'. Delmé Radcliffe countered that the 'taste for the highest bred is daily gaining ground'. He was convinced that a 'race-horse, with bone and substance sufficient to qualify him for the rough and smooth encounter of crossing a country, is, beyond all comparison, superior to the best cock-tail that can be produced'.[56]

A weight-carrying thoroughbred attracted a premium. For the ten to twelve stone man, acquiring a good hunter was not difficult, but a weight-carrying horse commanded a much higher price. According to Delmé Radcliffe, 'horses equal to higher weight, and possessing any knowledge of their business, are not to be had for under three figures'.[57] William, second Earl of Sefton, who took over mastership of the Quorn from Meynell, was credited with promoting the solution to the problem of heavy men riding thoroughbred, or part thoroughbred, horses. Although riding at about twenty stone, he would have several horses in the field, ridden by lighter grooms, and made frequent swaps between them. For the Druid, horseflesh was one of Sefton's primary interests, 'Lord Sefton cared very little for hounds, but his stud was superb, and he never had less than three horses out in a day'.[58] The habit of

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[54] Nimrod (C. Apperley), *My Horses and other Essays* (London, 1928), pp. 7, 12, 14.

[55] For example, Nimrod, *Chace*, pp. 7-9; Cook, *Observations*, p.60; F.P. Delmé Radcliffe, *The Noble Science* (London, 1839), p. 64.

[56] Delmé Radcliffe, *Noble Science*, p. 64.

[57] Delmé Radcliffe, *Noble Science*, p. 63.

[58] Druid, *Silk and Scarlet*, p. 252.

second, or even third horses, was widely adopted by those who could afford a large

stud of hunters. The aspirational mount for the foxhunter was a substantial

thoroughbred, and, although many continued to ride part breds, there can be no doubt

that the thoroughbred horse had a powerful influence on the horse called the hunter.

Horseriding skills

Horses and horsemanship had long been central to the status and identity of

England's elite. At the beginning of the early modern period the type of horse and

the kind of horsemanship was very much connected with the military role of the

mounted knight. But this was soon to change as gunpowder and shot came to

predominate on the battle field. The man in full suit of armour mounted on a heavy

horse was becoming obsolete as emphasis moved to infantry supported by

lightweight, more manoeuvrable, cavalry.[59] The horse's importance did not fade,

however; early modern life continued to be, as Raber and Tucker had it, 'saturated

with horses and horse culture'.[60] Although this importance embraced many different

types of equine, performing all kinds of task for those at all levels of society, the

horse remained most conspicuous as an expression of power and status. Those at the

upper end of the social scale had the wealth, and the leisure time, to develop new

methods of asserting their position through the equestrian arts.

The advent of *haute école* riding was one response to the changing role of the

horse. Originating in Italy, and soon gaining ground in France, it became a way of

demonstrating superiority through close control of a large and powerful animal

performing intricate and impressive movements (which were claimed to have their

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[59] Boehrer has investigated how the changing role of the mounted knight was reflected in
Shakespeare's plays: B. Boehrer, "Shakespeare and the Social Devaluation of the Horse" in K. Raber,
T. Tucker (eds), *The Culture of the Horse: Status, Discipline and Identity in the Early Modern World*
(Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 91-111.

[60] Raber, Tucker, *Culture of the Horse*, p. 1.

origin in military tactics). Most of the seventeenth-century equestrian books that we

described earlier contained instructions on riding such movements as the *capriole*,

the *terre à terre* and the *courbette*. High school riding was the primary focus of

Cavendish's books. He was convinced that he had perfected the knowledge, and that

his advice was superior to his English (not to mention Italian and French)

predecessors. While such riding was widely accepted as a way for the elite to

demonstrate their physical and mental prowess to themselves, to each other, and to

the 'inferior' ranks of society, another form of horsemanship was rapidly gaining

ground in England: one that had its origin on the racecourse and found widespread

expression on the hunting field.

To ride a horse at speed required a different type of equitation than that

demanded by the *manége*. The illustrations in Blome's section on horsemanship

show the rider to have an upright posture, straight legs in long stirrups, and a deep

saddle with high pommel and cantle. This was the posture needed to ride a horse in

extreme collection, with the hind legs well under the animal and the energy finding

expression in elevation rather than in forward movement. This was demonstrably not

the way to ride a horse when a gentleman wanted to win a hunting match or other

race; this required a different saddle design and a different 'seat' on the horse.

Landry has traced the development of what came to be called 'the English hunting

seat', and suggested that English horsemen did not only import eastern horses, they

also adopted, and adapted, the short stirrups and forward posture of the Turkish

rider.[61] In the case of both the eastern horse and the eastern riding style, the English

imported it, changed it, and produced something that they considered to be superior

to the original. Whereas the nobility had, in the medieval period, shared a common

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[61] D. Landry, *Noble Brutes: How Eastern Horses Transformed English Culture* (Baltimore, 2009), pp. 44-73.

military function across Europe predicated on their mounted role in battle, the

English elite now self-consciously separated themselves from continental horse

culture. The wealthy and the powerful increasingly used the horse to express their

status, and their common identity, on the racecourse and in the hunting field, while in

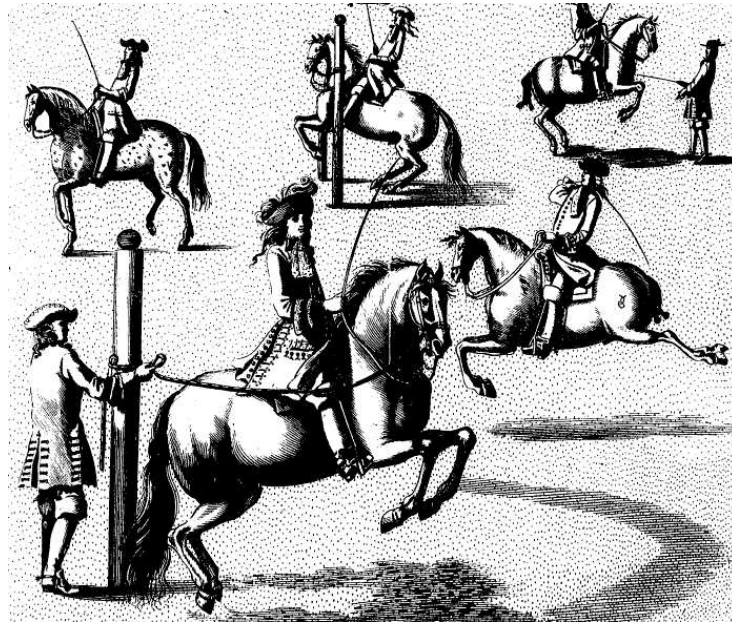the remainder of western Europe the emphasis remained on high school riding.

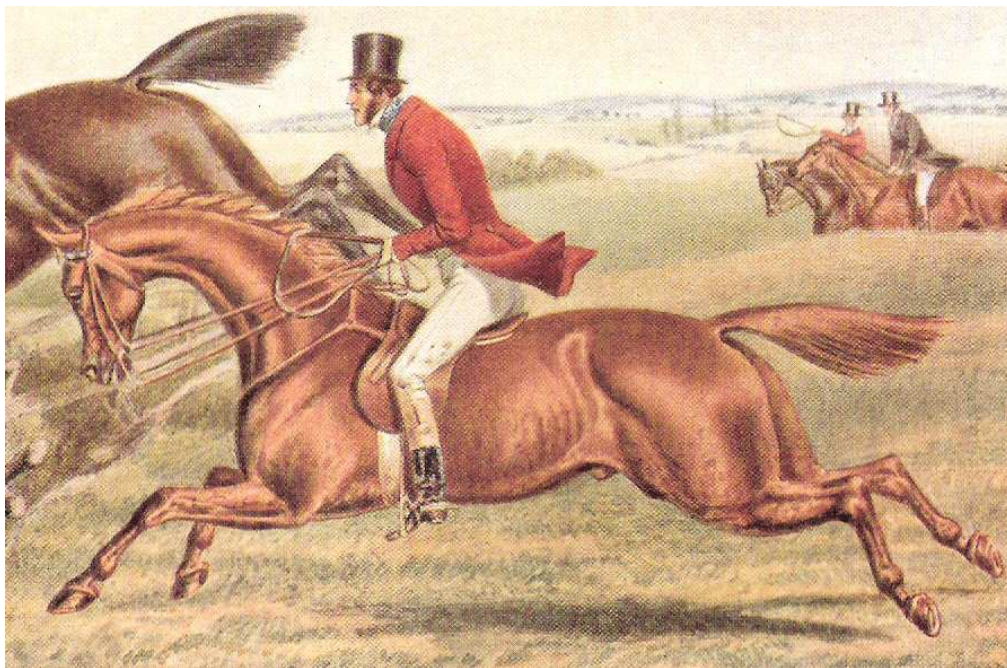*Plate 5.1: 17th Century Riding Position (from Blome,* Gentlemen's Recreation*)*

Plate 5.2: The English Hunting Seat (from a painting by Henry Alken Snr)

How did foxhunters express the significance of horseriding to their status and identity? We have already described the nature of the literature that accompanied modern foxhunting, and its concentration on the rider and the horse rather than the hunter and the hound. The anecdotes that were popular with these writers demonstrated an obsession with the 'derring-do' of the hard riders that began to characterize the sport from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Nimrod shared his vision of the essentials of foxhunting in his fictionalized account of a Leicestershire run. This follows the progress of a well-mounted visitor from the 'provinces' experiencing his first hunt in the 'shires'. From early in the chase the reader is left in no doubt as to the potential dangers this newcomer faced: 'two horses are seen loose in the distance – a report is flying about that one of the field is badly hurt, and something is heard of a collar-bone being broken, others say it is a leg; but the pace is *too good* to enquire'.[62] The pace being too good for anyone to stop and ask, leave alone stop and help, is a chorus repeated throughout the account. The Druid found that Dick Christian's reminiscences of hard riding in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire were popular with his readers. Christian recounted experiences like the time he attempted to jump a flock of sheep huddling by a fence he needed to jump. The horse cleared the sheep but hit the top of the rail and somersaulted. Unhurt, Christian remounted and was in at the death. He reckoned himself lucky if he only got three falls in a day.[63] The foxhunter aspired to have skill and daring to keep with the hounds no matter how fast they ran and what obstacles they encountered. It was not manly to complain too much of one's own injuries, or to be too concerned with the mishaps of others if the run was good (and it was exceedingly

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[62] Nimrod, *Chace*, p.37.

[63] Druid, *Scarlet and Silk*, pp. 3, 7.

bad form if one of those 'others' complained at this treatment). These characteristics

displayed on the hunting field were taken to demonstrate a man's character in a

wider field of endeavour. In his memoirs, George Osbaldeston (master of numerous

hunts in the first half of the nineteenth century including the Quorn and the Pytchley)

was scathing about Charles, Lord Middleton's performance as a horseman; and

asserted that the said lord was not much of a performer in the bedroom either.[64] The

dash and courage required to follow hounds across country was also considered

essential to the training of a soldier. Delmé Radcliffe described foxhunting as a

'national utility', and quoted the celebrated soldier Lord Lynedoch commenting that

'he should not have been the soldier he is, had he not been bred a fox-hunter'.[65]

Soldiers from Northampton and Weedon figured largely in the Pytchley field, and the

Blues had founded the covert of the same name.[66]

Foxhunting's writers were also convinced of their superiority as riders to their

continental cousins. Nimrod was critical of French horsemen and French horses. The

worst features were the length of the stirrups and the absence of the rising trot: 'his

system of riding – not rising to the action of the horse by the aid of his stirrups –

destroys enjoyment of his most ordinary, and enduring pace, the trot'. The postilion

was 'awkwardness and sloth' personified, with 'his awkward seat – his carcase

bumping, his feet scarcely touching the stirrups from the extreme length of the

leathers'. None of this was helped by the design of the French saddle: 'the pommel is

of uncalled-for height, tipped with brass, and so is the cantle', but the stirrups were

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[64] G. Osbaldeston, *Squire Osbaldeston: His Autobiography*, E.D. Cuming (ed.) (Bungay, 1927), pp. 52-53.

[65] Delmé Radcliffe, *Noble Science*, p. 5. Thomas Graham, first Baron Lynedoch, had a renowned military career in the French Revolutionary Wars and Napoleonic wars.

[66] N. Mansfield has recently suggested that the popularity of foxhunting had a bad effect on cavalry officers, arguing that it made for recklessness on the battle field where control was needed; N. Mansfield, 'Foxhunting and the Yeomanry: county identity and military culture' in R.W. Hoyle (ed.), *Our Hunting Fathers: Field Sports in England after 1850* (Lancaster, 2007), pp. 241-56.

worse: 'the leathers make their appearance through holes in the flaps, and the buckles are so placed that they come in contact with the rider's thigh. Then they are placed more to the rear than ours, so as to be almost in a perpendicular line with the rider's body'. This was very different from the flat-seated, forward cut saddle of English design, so suited to riding fast across country. Neither could Nimrod understand why the French shunned the thoroughbred, preferring Yorkshire carriage horses to thoroughbreds as sires for their cavalry horses. It was no surprise to him that most French travel was conducted at a mere 5 mph, with 8 mph as an absolute maximum.[67]

Horse Breeding and Rearing in Northamptonshire

Our account of the origins of the thoroughbred horse has tended to take us away from Northamptonshire. If the origins of the thoroughbred are associated with one particular county then that honour goes to Yorkshire.[68] Northamptonshire did have a strong association with the rearing of horses and with the horse trade, however. In the early modern period the Northamptonshire horse fairs had a national reputation as a source of high-quality cart and carriage horses. Cavendish advised his readers 'if you would Buy for the *Mannage* at Fayrs, you must go to *Rowel* Fayr, *Harborow* Fayr, and *Melton* Fayr, to *Northampton* and *Leicester-shire*; but *Northampton*, they say, is the Best.'

We have described the selective breeding that produced the English thoroughbred, and it was often thought that deliberate breeding policies were confined to the production of the racehorse. In 1809 John Lawrence, looking back to the reign of Queen Anne, commented that that 'the few scientific breeders, then as

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[67] Nimrod, *My Horses*, pp. 118-25.

[68] D. Wilkinson, *Early Horse Racing in Yorkshire and the Origins of the Thoroughbred* (York, 2003).

now, would breed none but Racers, leaving the propagation of the common species

in general to those, the weight of whose knowledge of what they were about, did not

much oppress their brains'.[69] But it is apparent from the surviving records of

Northamptonshire horse fairs that there was selective breeding aimed at producing a

different type of animal from the racehorse. The fairs in the eighteenth century were

famous for black cart or carriage horses. Although the black gene in horses is

dominant it is easily modified by 'shading' genes to produce brown, bay, dun and

grey horses. To persistently breed black horses involves some degree of selection in

the parents. Presumably the same selection was being used to produce a strong and

fairly tall (by the then standards) horse. In 1831, Youatt acknowledged that 'in the

midland counties in the breed of cart-horses; and the strict attention which has been

paid to it, has brought our heavy horses to almost the same perfection in their way as

the blood-horse.'[70]

Is there also evidence for involvement with the breeding of thoroughbreds,

and particularly the breeding of hunters? Our account of the origins of the

thoroughbred has given the geographical honours to Yorkshire. But that is not to say

that Northamptonshire was not involved at all. Captain Rider of Whittlebury had an

early influence on the breed; at the turn of the seventeenth century he founded an

influential thoroughbred line by importing a horse known as the St. Victor Barb. The

stallion's influence on the breed is said to be 'remarkable' given his 'limited'

opportunities. We learn some of Captain Rider's sporting history from accounts of

thoroughbred history. Rider, apparently, had long been associated with the turf,

having won with his 'French horse' in 1682 against the King's horse, Cork, in a

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[69] Lawrence, *Delineation*, p. 105.

[70] Youatt, *Treatise*, p. 220.

match at Newmarket. Later in the decade, he was associated with the Earl of

Rutland's running horses, and in the 1690s he sold two horses to the royal stud.[71] The

captain held Whittlewood from the Duchess of Grafton, and appears in local sources

ironically as a victim of the predations of local horses enjoying common grazing

rights on his coppices in the forest, where the damage was estimated at £1,756, or

more than eight years rent.[72]

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the third and fourth

Dukes of Grafton were tremendously influential on the breeding of English

racehorses. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, horse racing had changed to

become more recognizable to modern eyes. It increasingly involved tests of speed for

young horses, rather than tests of endurance for mature ones. This is the era when the

'classic' races, such as the Derby, the St.Leger and the Oaks were first run. These

races saw 3-year old horses competing over distances from a mile to one mile six

furlongs. Between 1802 and 1831 the third and fourth dukes won twenty-six classic

races, and are credited with breeding lines of horses that excelled at these shorter

formats.[73] The dukes kept their breeding stud at their Euston Park seat, some twenty

miles from Newmarket, but there was some stock at Wakefield Lodge. The dukes

encouraged their Northamptonshire tenants, and other local residents, to avail

themselves of the services of Grafton stallions.

There are surviving records of the Grafton horses that were kept on

Wakefield Lawn around 1780. These include a list of youngstock, together with

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[71] http://www.tbheritage.com/HistoricSires/FoundationSires/FoundSiresS.html;
http://www.tbheritage.com/HistoricDams/EngFoundationMares/Family15/Family15.html (accessed 31/8/10).

[72] NRO, ZB707/4.

[73] P. Willet, *Thoroughbred*, p. 47; http://www.tbheritage.com/Breeders/Grafton/Grafton1.html (accessed 31/8/10).

some assessment of their future usefulness. Of the sixteen youngsters listed, four

fillies were described as being 'from Euston'. Others were emphatically not

racehorses, being bred out of animals described as 'the dun hack mare', 'the dun

hunting mare' or 'the cart mare'. A 1767 watercolour of the lawn may depict some of

these very same mares, or their progenitors. Unfortunately the list does not give the

sires of these colts and fillies, but we know from other records that the racehorse

stallion 'the Coombe Arabian' covered some of the named mares (for example,

Lissom and Mealy) in 1773. The movement of horses between Northamptonshire

and Euston Park continued into the next century, when the Grafton racehorse

breeding programme was reaching the peak of its success. An account survives from

1810 for the cost of a man to journey to Euston with a mare and colt, and then to

bring the same mare back. A later bill records the transporting of a filly from

Wakefield to Euston.[74]

from www.tbheritage.com

Plate 5.3: Horses grazing on Wakefield Lawn

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[74] NRO, G4252.

Grafton stud books from the years 1766 to 1775 give details of the stallions that the third Duke made available for stud and of the mare owners that used their services. Initially there were two stallions standing: Fox and Tatler. We have no details of Fox, but Tatler was a grandson of the Godolphin Arabian; bred by the Duke of Grafton in 1754, he had several notable horses in his pedigree.[75] The stud fee for both Fox and Tatler was two shillings and sixpence, but Tatler seemed to be the more popular of the two. After 1773 the stud duties were performed by 'the Coombe Arabian'. It is believed that this horse may have been imported, and he fathered some reasonably successful racehorses. Thoroughbred breeding sources list him as an active sire between 1768 and 1773, but the Grafton stud book has him covering mares at Wakefield between 1773 and 1775. It is likely that none of these progeny appeared in the *General Stud Book* (hence his disappearance from thoroughbred history). The Coombe Arabian was evidently better thought of as a sire because, at five shillings, his stud fee was twice that of Fox and Tatler.[76] It is possible that these books record only a subset of the users: those that paid for the stallions' services. The Dukes of Grafton gave the use of the stallions free to their tenants in Suffolk, and it is likely that they did the same for their tenants in Northamptonshire.[77]

The Grafton stallions were kept busy. Between April 20th and August 2nd 1770, Tatler covered 148 mares (including returns, where the mare failed to conceive the first time). In 1773, the Coombe Arabian covered ninety-three mares. Many of those bringing mares to be serviced were from the immediately surrounding area: Paulerspury, Potterspury, Dadford, Wicken and Deanshanger are all well-

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[75] http://www.tbheritage.com/HistoricSires/SireLineschts/SireLineGA.html (accessed 31/8/10).

[76] NRO, G1662.

[77] BCPP, 1873, XIV, p. 38.

represented. Others come from slightly farther afield, with many north

Buckinghamshire villages being listed. The most distant mares came from Chipping

Norton in Oxfordshire, and Brixworth to the north of the county town. Figure 6.1

shows the geographical distribution of the mares that the Grafton stallions served

between 1766 and 1775. Who were the owners of these mares? The majority merit

only identification by name and place of residence, but there is quite a large number

of mare owners granted the title of 'Mr' or 'Esqr', indicating a somewhat more gentle

station in life. Those bringing mares to Wakefield Lodge also include eleven

clergymen, one knight, and six lords.[78] Some forest officers appear: Montague the

Ranger of Salcey Forest, a keeper named John Vacchina, and Francis Baily,

identified as being 'of Salcey Forest'. There are also four women listed. Several

names reoccur as breeders bring their mares back every year.[79] A few more details

can be recovered about some of the duke's customers from surviving wills for this

area and period. Of six wills that can be recovered for Northamptonshire three of the

testators are described as 'yeomen', two as 'farmers, and one as a 'gentleman'.

Buckinghamshire wills identify an innkeeper and farmer, a yeoman, and a

wheelwright.[80]

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[78] The lords were the sixth Earl of Denbigh, first Earl Spencer, John, Lord Fawsley, second Early Verney, fourth Earl of Jersey and second Earl Gower.

[79] NRO, G1662

[80] NRO, Wills 20.7.1773, 9.2.1797, 19.9.1783, 13.9.1793, 9.5.1810, 15.2.1794; BRO DAWc 131//67 DAWf 1113/67, DAWe 108/76, DAWf 103/232, DAWe 122/60, DAWf 108/121.
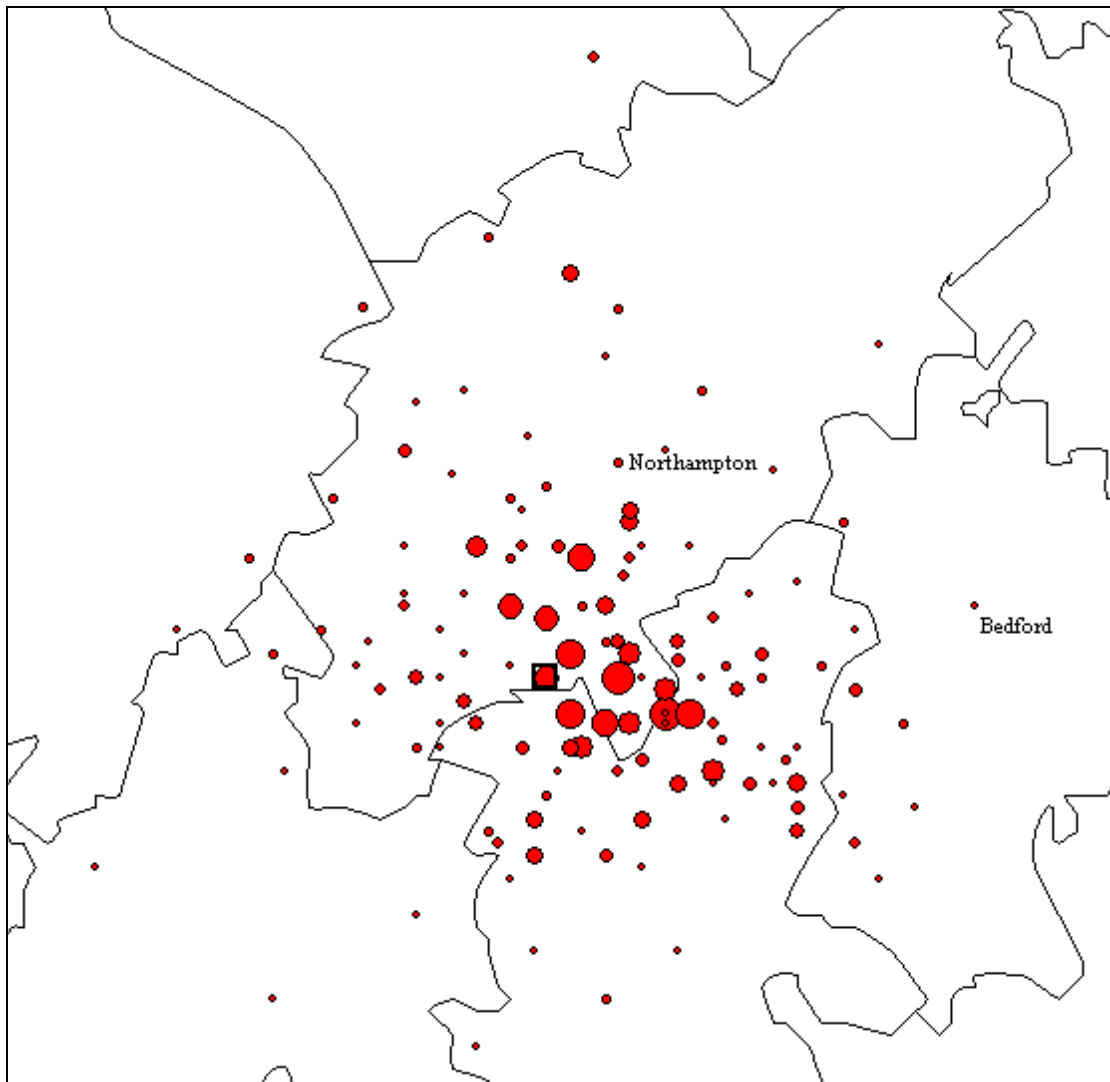
Figure 5.1: Geographical distribution of mares that the Grafton stallions served between 1766 and 1775

The provision of thoroughbred stallions was continued by the fourth Duke of

Grafton. In his memoirs of hunting with the Grafton, J.M.K. Elliott commented that

the fourth duke's great success 'upon the turf' stimulated him to 'turn his attention to

the improvement of hunters in the Grafton country' and keep a 'proper selection' of

stallions at Wakefield Lodge 'for the benefit of his farmers and friends'. In Elliott's

opinion this was a successful strategy, as the area became 'very famous' for its

hunters and, in the early part of the century, 'gentlemen and dealers flocked to it

from all parts'. For Elliott, however, the trade eventually floundered because the very

success of breeding hunters, and the high prices given, tempted the breeders to sell

their good mares. Apparently prices of £150 to £200 were 'freely given', with the

duke himself a great buyer.[81]

Donaldson, in his survey of the agriculture of Northamptonshire, recognized

the role that 'proprietors' had played in the county in standing good quality stallions

at stud for tenants and neighbours to use: 'it was by this means that the breeding of

blood horses came into such general practice here'. Donaldson's interest was in

suggesting that the same means be used to stand good examples of draught horses at

stud, and so improve their breed.[82] Pitt quoted Young in observing that 'on the Duke

of Grafton's estates breeding horses is not an inconsiderable article in live stock'. Of

the county at large, however, he commented that 'some years ago it was the practice

here to rear blood horses; but experience has proved that these animals, however

valuable they may still be in the estimation of the gentlemen, are unprofitable for the

farmer'. The farmers could invest much time and resource in the breeding and

rearing of such animals, but the 'least blemish' rendered them unsaleable.[83]

The agricultural writers of the later eighteenth century deprecated the money-

making potential of breeding either draught horses or 'blood' horses in the midlands.

Although Marshall went into some detail in describing the complex nature of the

horse trade, he concluded that the trade was not profitable, a judgement echoed by

both Donaldson and Pitt in their specific surveys of Northamptonshire.[84] This

appraisal has largely been accepted by modern historians, and in some ways has

undermined the importance of horse breeding. In his work on the social history of

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[81] J.M.K. Elliott, *Fifty Years' Foxhunting with the Grafton and Other Packs of Hounds* (London, 1900), pp. 1-2.

[82] J. Donaldson, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Northampton, with observations on the means of its improvement* (Edinburgh, 1794), p. 53.

[83] W. Pitt, *General View of the Agriculture of Northamptonshire* (Northampton, 1809), pp. 215-6.

[84] Marshall, *Rural Economy,* p. 262; Donaldson, *General View*, p. 53; Pitt, *General View*, p. 216.

modern foxhunting, Itzkowitz listed the breeding and selling of hunters as one of the supposed benefits that farmers in popular 'hunt countries' enjoyed. He was, however, dismissive of this activity. Although it was often suggested at the time that local farmers could prosper from not only breeding hunters but in supplying their feedstuff, Itkowitz maintained that the money went into the pockets of forage merchants and horse dealers, and that the farmers themselves could see that they were not getting rich from hunting.[85] In his account of the supply of horses in the second half of the nineteenth century, R. Moore-Colyer attributed a shortage of good quality cavalry horses to the enthusiasm for using thoroughbred stallions, regardless of their actual quality. He did however acknowledge the role of the farmer in breeding horses at the beginning of the century.[86] Whether or not there was much money to be made, farmers were definitely engaged in the business of breeding and selling horses.

The Landscape of Horse Breeding

We have identified that the midlands generally, including Northamptonshire in particular, played an important role in the breeding and rearing of horses. Although the area was most famed for heavy black carriage horses, we also have evidence of farmers breeding horses for the hunt. It should be observed that the facilities required for raising horses was different from those needed for working horses. The then notions of keeping working horses ideally precluded turning them out to grass at all. They were kept in stables and fed on oats, beans or similar 'hard

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[85] D. Itzkowitz, *Peculiar Privilege: A Social History of Foxhunting, 1753-1885* (Hassocks, 1977), p. 115. Writing in 1854, Cecil was conscious of the charge that foxhunters bought their feed and forage from dealers not farmers. But he pointed out that the 'dealers buy them from the farmers who grow them'. Cecil (C. Tongue), *Records of the Chase* (1854; London, 1922 edn), p. 290.

[86] R. Moore-Colyer 'Aspects of horse breeding and the supply of horses in Victorian Britain', *Agricultural History Review*, 43 1 (1995), pp. 47-60.

food', with hay as forage. As Markham summarized: 'al horses whatsoever, which be of any worth or estimation, are during the time of their serviceablnesse for the moste part kept in the house' this was for keeping them clean and at hand and also because unruly stallions needed constant handling to keep them tractable. It was not only that it was convenient for mans' purpose to keep working horses groomed and disciplined in the stable, it was felt to be positively injurious to work a horse from grass. Markham, again, tells us why: 'the Grasse questionlesse is nourishing during the time of sommer - but for stond horses of great pride and courage it is somewhat too cold and moyst, and therefore onely to be giuen phisically, as for a month together in the beginning of sommer, only to scowre them'.[87] The function of grass in most 'worthy' horses' lives was as part of a summer 'detox' programme. Cavendish went so far as to ascribe the superiority of Spanish and eastern horses to the hot conditions, dryness and lack of grass. He believed that even youngstock should be stabled, warning that colt that had 'gone abroad' for three and a half years would be 'a Dull, Weak, Fleshy Jade'.[88]

These theories about the best way to keep horses remained largely unchanged into the nineteenth century and beyond. Youatt talked of farmers who were in the habit of hunting a riding horse 'taken up and worked in the day, and with a feed or two of corn, and turned out at night', but although these men might argue that their horses were as 'active, healthy, and enduring' as those confined to the stable during the hunting season, Youatt could not agree with them, pointing to the frothy lather that such horses displayed after a run as evidence of their inferior fitness. Youatt, like Markham two centuries before him, did believe in turning a hunter out at grass for a

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[87] Markham, *Cavelarice*, Book 5, pp. 1, 8.

[88] Cavendish, *New Method*, pp. 95-6.

few months in the summer.[89] Nimrod, however, disagreed with even this. He

maintained that, as top hunters were required to match the speeds of racehorses and

for longer periods, they should be trained and kept with the same rigour. For Nimrod,

this precluded even turning them out for 'a summer's run at grass'. Rather, he

maintained, they should be kept confined to the stable or loosebox and exercised

once a day during the off season.[90]

 If working horses were largely kept inside, breeding stock was expected to

run at large. Blundeville describes how the breeders' grounds should be divided into

different partitions, both so stallions could be kept apart from other than the mares

they were covering, and colts could be weaned from their dams when the time came.

Rotating the stock through the different partitions, while resting some, also benefitted

the pasture.[91] Markham was at odds with Cavendish's later advice on housing

youngstock, and wanted them kept out for the sake of their health. A foal should

have 'all the bitternesse and sharpenesse that the latter end of the Winter can put

uppon it' because that would 'harden and knitte him'. Markham advised that every

foal should have his first two winters at large.[92]

 This division in the conditions for keeping working horses and breeding

horses persisted into the nineteenth century. Lawrence repeated the advice on

accommodating breeding horses given by Blundeville 250 years earlier, arguing that

the latter's suggestions 'being grounded on true principles and common Sense'

would 'never cease to be useful, whatever changeful Fashion may determine.'[93] One

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[89] Youatt, *Treatise*, pp. 53, 57.

[90] Nimrod, *Condition of Hunters*, pp. 28-30.

[91] Blundeville, *Fower Chiefest Offices*, p. 3.

[92] Markham, *Cavelarice*, Book 1, p. 3.

[93] Lawrence, *Treatise*, p. 114.

area where the nineteenth century did differ, however, was the actual method of covering mares. Blundeville and Markham both envisaged the stallion running loose with the mares he was to service, in an enclosure designated for that purpose. Lawrence, on the other hand, described the 'vastly greater number of mares, which might with equal effect and superior safety, be covered by the stallion in hand'.[94]

Common grazing evidently had a role to play in providing keep for breeding horses across the centuries. Markham offered advice to the yeoman or husbandman, who might desire to breed horses for profit and for his 'credit's sake', but who only had 'benefit of the common fieldes'. He advised that the breeder keep his mare tethered after she had foaled, moving her 'foure or five times in a day unto fresh grasse'. Better still to have the tethering sites near the 'corne lands' so 'that the Foale may at its pleasure crop & eate the green blades of Corne'.[95] Writing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Lawrence was keen to warn the 'common breeder' of an old danger when a mare 'takes her chance at large'. She might foal in a 'ditch, drain, bog or other dangerous place' and the fruit of the breeder's expectation is 'gone in an instant'. Lawrence himself kept breeding horse 'upon the commons', and told of how he affixed wooden labels bearing his name and address to the manes 'of the Horses and colts', which he believed had saved him from 'many a pounding'.[96] Theft from the commons was always a problem. The eponymous hero of the childrens' book *The Memoirs of Dick a Little Poney* was spirited away from Hounslow Heath by a group of gypsies while just a yearling.[97]

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[94] Lawrence, *Treatise*, p. 115.

[95] Markham, *Cavelarice*, Book 1, p. 7.

[96] Lawrence, *Treatise*, pp. 136-7.

[97] Anon. *The Memoirs of Dick the Little Poney Supposed to be Written by Himself* (London, 1800), p. 15.

The subject of keeping horses on the commons brings us directly back to the subject of the Northamptonshire forests. The common grazing that the forest villages enjoyed was specifically for horses and cattle; sheep and pigs were excluded. In Salcey the owners or occupiers of lands in the six forest villages had right of pasture in the forest from Old May day to 22nd November, for as many horses and cows as they could keep on their own lands over the winter. During the fence month, when the does were fawning, the forest was cleared of draught horses and milking cows, presumably because the regular catching up of these animals would disturb the deer. When the commoners turned out too many animals, or the cattle of 'strangers' were found in the forest, these animals were impounded.[98] In Rockingham, the period of common ran from May 4th to November 12th, with the animals being removed for the fence month.[99] In Whittlewood, the common rights were more generous. The owners and occupiers of the forests 'in towns' and 'out towns' were allowed to depasture horses and 'horned cattle' in the forest. The in towns had access from 5th April to 11th November; the out towns from 4th May to 25th September. The commoners did not remove their stock during the fence month, and it was reported that some of the in towns claimed that they had the right to common pasture during the 'winter haining', although this was disputed. The commoners were subject to no stint in the numbers of animals that they could turn out into the forest. There was usually an annual drift of the stock in the forest, where the cows and horses were collected together. The commoners paid 1d for each branded animal and 4d for each unbranded one. Any 'unlawful' animals were pounded, and let out upon payment of a fine. The report to the House of Commons of 1792 included information from a

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[98] *Commons Journal*, 46, p. 98.

[99] These were the dates that George Finch Hatton was attempting to enforce in his role as keeper of Rockingham in a printed poster dated March 1824. NRO, B(O)327/27.

forest keeper to the effect that the drift of the previous two years for his walk had

found 96 horses and 191 cows, and 124 horses and 205 cows respectively.[100] The

report contained a detailed breakdown for the year 1791, as shown in Table 6.2.

Table 5.1: 1791 Whittlewood Drift

Parish	Horses	Cows
Potterspury	24	19
Yardley	13	27
Grafton	4	-
Alderton	20	21
Lillingstone Lovell	15	22
Paulerspury with Heathencote	48	100
Passenham with Deanshanger	34	46
Wicken	16	15
Whittlebury	43	32
Lillingstone Dayrell	15	33
Whitfield	4	21
Syresham with Crowfield	26	60
Wappenham	19	77
Slapton	4	-
Silverstone	32	99
Total:	317	572

We can add details of the forest drifts for the Wakefield and Sholebrooke

walks of Whittlewood for the seven years to 1852 (although a note in the source adds

that there were no drifts for Sholebrooke for the years 1846, 1851 and 1852):[101]

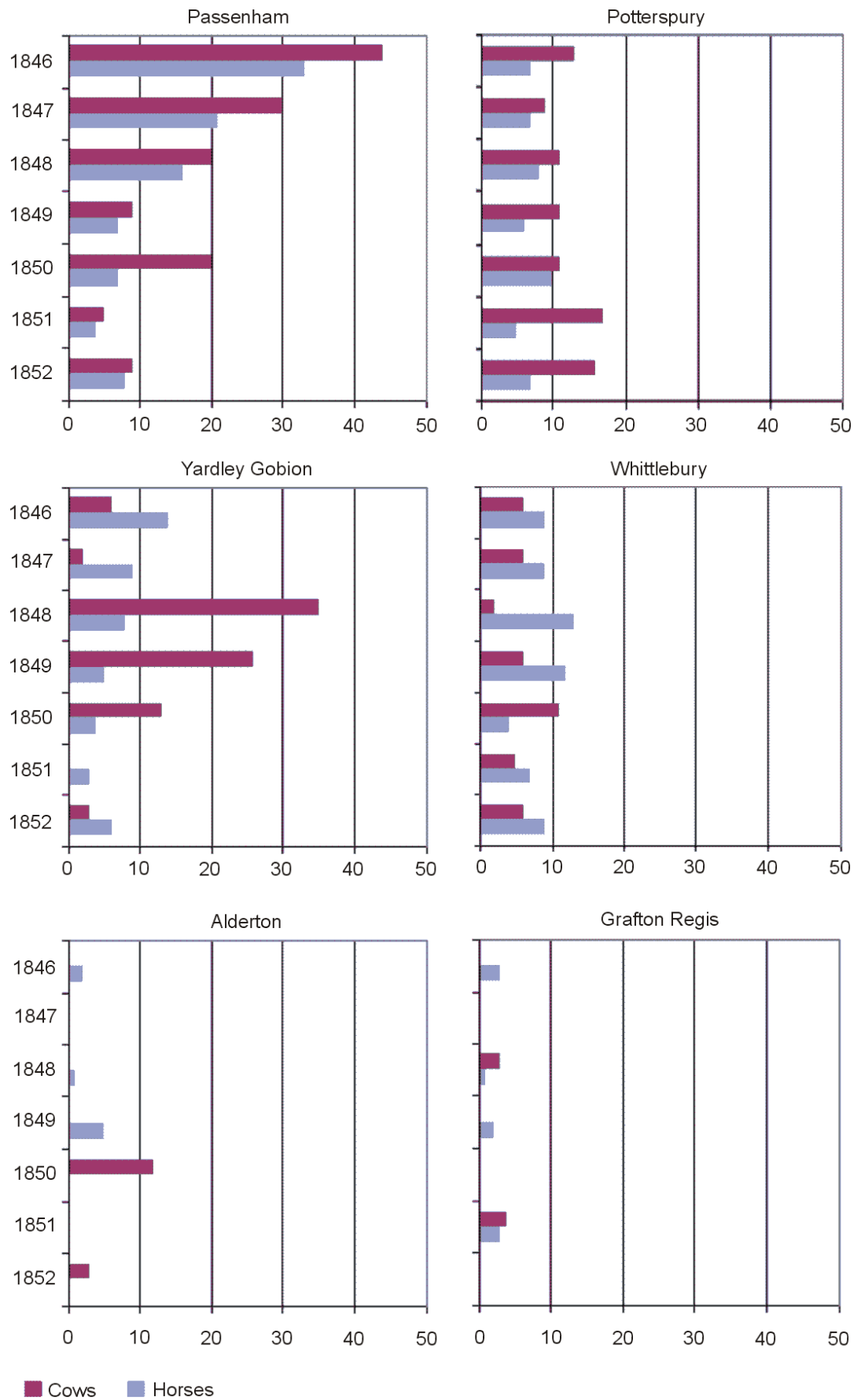[100] *Commons Journal*, 47, pp. 142, 173.

[101] NRO, G399/16/6
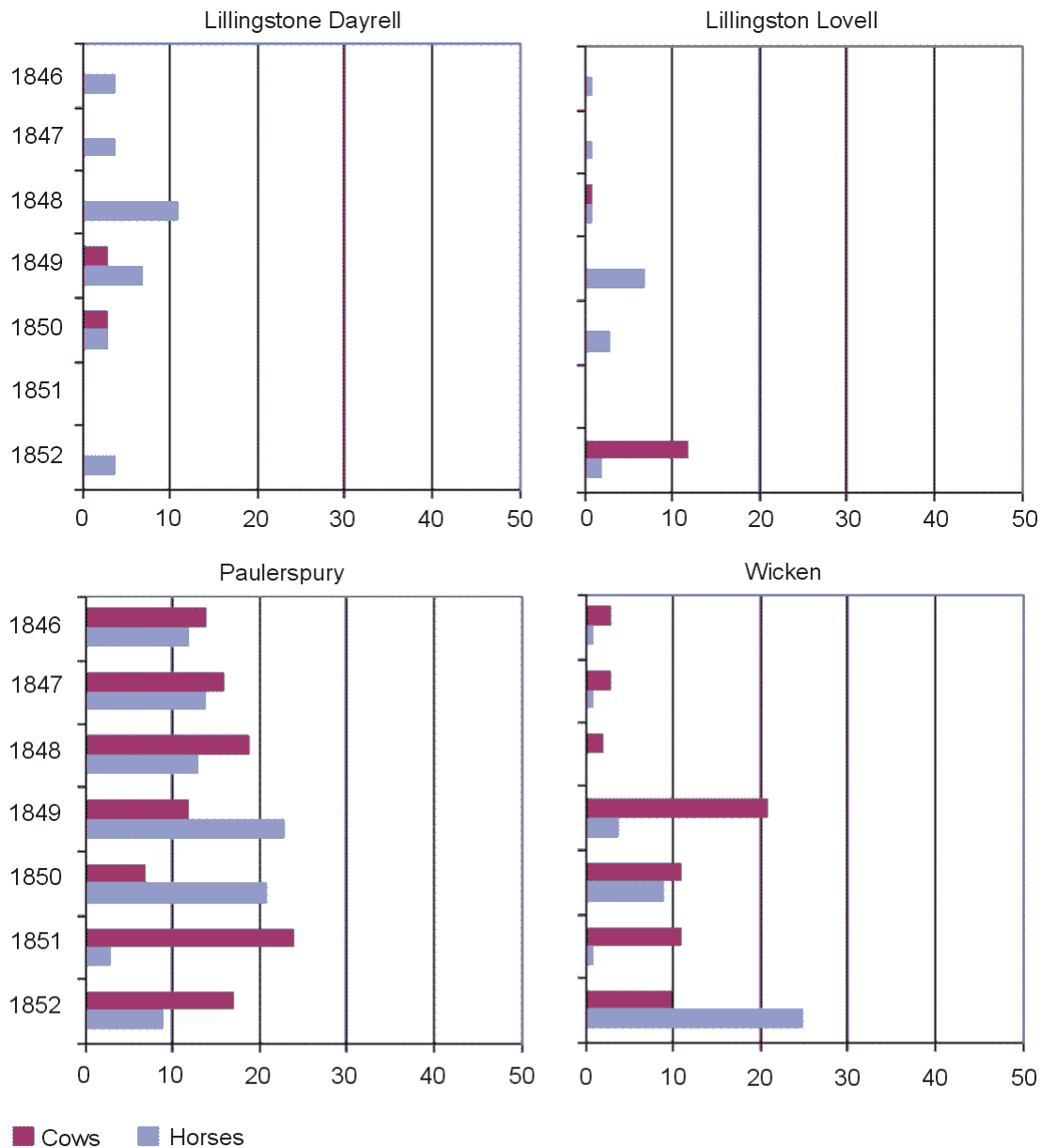
Figure 5.2: Whittlewood Drifts (a)

Figure 5.3: Whittlewood Drifts (b)

The drifts show quite a variation in the total amount of commonable animals turned out on the forest, but it is interesting to note the proportion of horses. Overall the ratio is approximately one third horses to two thirds cows, but in some villages more horses than cows are turned out. There is some correlation between these figures and the use of the Grafton stallions. The villages of Paulerspury and Potterspury figure prominently in both sets of data. Potterspury has eleven residents appearing in the stud books, accounting for twenty-three coverings and have more

horses on the forest commons than cows in the 1791 drift (twenty-four horses and

nineteen cows). Paulerspury with Heathencote has fifteen residents accounting for

twenty coverings, and has forty-eight horses counted in the 1791 drifts (but with 100

cows). But we have to note that some of the major users do not have right of pasture

on Whittlewood or Salcey, with the Buckinghamshire towns Stony Stratford and

Wolverton accounting for a lot of the Grafton stud usage. Eight residents of Stony

Stratford accounted for twenty-four coverings, five residents of Wolverton accounted

for eighteen coverings.

Pasturing for horses also formed part of the perquisites of forest officers. All

keepers and copy keepers of the part of Cliffe bailiwick in Rockingham Forest under

the keepership of the Earl of Westmoreland received horse grazing rights as a portion

of their remuneration. A document of 1716 proposed amended figures for these

rights 'for the improvement of the forest'. Under these terms the keeper of Morehay

lawn could pasture four mares with foal at foot up to one year old on the lawn. The

two men he employed could keep one mare and foal on the lawn each. In 1716 this

was valued at £6 per annum for the keeper and £3 per annum for his two men. The

keeper of Morehay could also keep two cows and one bull on the lawn, which was

valued at £16-16-0.[102] Comparison with figures for 1668 indicate that Westmoreland

was proposing a reduction in the customary rights: the keeper of Morehay in 1668

could keep twelve cows, one bull, and four mares (although no monetary value is

described in the earlier document). It is noteworthy that these rights related to equine

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[102] NRO, W(A)6vi2/36 and W(A)vi2/0. The other forest officers had similar proposed entitlements: the keeper of cross a hand walk had three closes for cutting hay and the right to pasture six cows and four horses on Morehay Lawn, the keepers of Blackmore Thick and Spaw Walk each had the right to pasture 2 cows, and one mare and foal on the lawn, the keeper of Sulehay could keep ten cows and a bull in Little Short Wood, two mares and foals in Great Short Wood, plus a further two mares and foals on the lawn. The copy keepers had lesser rights, each could keep a mare and foal on the lawn, while the copy keeper of Sulehay could keep two mares and foals plus two cows.

breeding stock. The use of grazing in the forests was not confined to the humbler commoners. In August 1701, when the country was 'burned for lack of rain', Earl Fitzwilliam ordered his steward to 'keep only deer in the park; turn my horses into the woods or the fens'.[103] In June 1725, Daniel Eaton reported to his master, the Earl of Cardigan, that he had 'sent the horses into the woods'.[104]

From this evidence it seems clear that the keeping and breeding of horses was widespread in the forest areas of Northamptonshire. It might not be possible to argue that the existence of horse breeding and rearing was directly due to the availability of common grazing in the forest, but it is a factor that should be considered. It is a reflection of the paucity of attention that historians have paid to horses that it is hard to come by any serious appraisal of the value of this common grazing. Pettit, for example, gave some space to considering the question of the worth of the grazing that the Northamptonshire forests provided in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He talked of the cows turned out, and even sheep that were illicitly depastured, but no attention was given to the value of horse grazing.[105]

The importance of rough grazing to the raising of horses was recognized by contemporaries. In the later nineteenth century there was concern about the quality of the country's horse population. This was particularly manifested in a shortage of supply of cavalry mounts and artillery horses. A Select Committee of the House of Lords produced a lengthy report on the problem in 1873. The shortfall was variously attributed to the buying activities of foreigners, the lack of breeding acumen, and the

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[103] D.R. Hainsworth and C. Walker (eds), *The Correspondence of Lord Fitzwilliam of Milton and Francis Guybon, his Steward 1697-1709* (Northampton, 1990), p. 91.

[104] J. Wake and D. Champion-Webster (eds), *The Letters of Daniel Eaton to the Third Earl of Cardigan* (Northampton, 1971), p. 23.

[105] P.A.J. Pettit, *The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire: a Study in their Economy 1558-1714* (Gateshead, 1968), pp. 152-8.

onerous systems of horse duty and dealers' licences. But one persistent theme was the decrease in horse breeding among the country's farmers. Some witnesses blamed the engrossment of smaller holdings into larger farms, meaning that there were fewer farmers who were prepared to keep one or two breeding mares. Many observed that breeding sheep and cattle paid better than breeding horses, even though prices for equines had increased. Another significant factor was deemed to be the change in farming practices and the 'improvement' of both arable and pasture land. It was believed that breeding good horses required unimproved pasture, as the committee put it 'are not the best and soundest horses bred upon the poor land - and have they not better and sounder feet than if they were bred upon rich grazing'. Enclosure and draining diverted farmers to breeding other stock; 'people now can substitute cattle and sheep where they could not do it before; their land was suited for horses, and therefore they breed them'. The report serves to illustrate that both Northamptonshire in particular and the midlands in general had lost their place as pivotal centres of the horse trade. The witnesses called overwhelmingly represented buyers and sellers who concentrated their efforts on Ireland and on Yorkshire. One Irish dealer had some trade in selling young horses to the graziers of Lincolnshire, Leicestershire and Northamptonshire, and there was one witness who sometimes bought artillery horses from the midlands, but the trade had undoubtedly declined. A Leamington veterinary surgeon commented that his area used to be a 'very good breeding country' as did 'the adjoining counties of Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire' but at his time 'they have given up breeding in those counties'.[106]

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[106] *HCPP*, 1873, XIV, pp. 45, 213, 143, 124.

Conclusion

We have journeyed from a period when horses were seen as a necessary tool of hunting, but not its major focus, to a time when horses were the primary concern of most followers of the sport. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, hunting advice was likely to centre on the prey and the hounds used to pursue it. By the nineteenth century the horses, and the exploits of their riders, took centre stage. The growing popularity of horse racing, itself arising from 'hunting matches', drove the experiment in breeding which led to the creation of the ultimate equine athlete: the English thoroughbred. Lessons learned were eventually used to 'improve' many other animals, including the foxhound. Faster horses required faster foxhounds, and increasing pace in turn led to many more mounting themselves on the thoroughbred. In the 1820s, Nimrod could reflect on how much faster hunting was than 100 years previously. By the 1870s the witnesses to the parliamentary enquiry into the state of the horse industry could talk of the blistering pace of contemporary hunters compared with those of fifty years before.[107]

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[107] Nimrod, *Chace*, pp. 7-9; *HCPP*, 1873, XIV.

Chapter 6

The Chase goes out of Fashion: Hunting and the Polite Society

We have identified that the hunting transition had its roots in the eighteenth century and have looked for causality in the changes in the landscape that happened in this period. But the eighteenth century also witnessed a great cultural shift, and it is useful to examine whether this had a relationship with the change in hunting prey and hunting practices.

The end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries witnessed the emergence of 'polite society'. This is a considerable subject in its own right, but notions of politeness can be summarized as a self-conscious break from older ideals of appropriate behaviour and courtly ideals. Superficially it was concerned with manners and how people in the upper strata of society behaved towards one another. But historians have detected far more wide-ranging social and cultural movements underpinning these developments. These reflect a shift from the medieval culture of 'courtesy', through early-modern 'civility', to eighteenth-century 'politeness'. Associated with this was a movement from the hierarchical household of lordship, which emphasized vertical relationships between master and servants, towards a culture which laid more stress on the horizontal relationships between men of similar standing (although it has also been argued that polite society in some ways involved broadening the definition of the 'elite').[1] There was also a political dimension to this. Politeness and urban society were associated with the Whigs while the rural country interest was associated with the Tories.

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[1] P. Langford, 'The uses of eighteenth-century politeness' in *English Politeness: Social Rank and Moral Virtue, c. 1400-1900*, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), p. 311.

How do these developments relate to the hunting transition? Seventeenth-century hunting manuals were still being reprinted in the early eighteenth century. These were united in portraying the hunting of deer and other quarry as an appropriate pastime for a gentleman.[2] But other books appeared around this time that sought to instruct gentleman on how to behave, and these denigrated country pursuits, particularly hunting.[3] These views found literary expression well into the eighteenth century, from the essays of Addison and Steele in *The Spectator* through to novels such as the picaresque adventures produced by Fielding and Smollett. The country squire who dedicated his life to hunting and the hound became a figure of fun at best, and a boorish villain at worse.

The notions of politeness and civility might have been firmly rooted in London, but they had resonances in the provincial towns. This was a period that has been described as an urban renaissance, where towns and cities underwent transformations in culture, producing their own fashionable meeting places in the forms of assemblies, theatres, walks and race meetings. It was a century when leisure began to become a commodity in its own right. Borsay has identified a hierarchy in the development of provincial towns in this context. At the apex were the fashionable spa towns, such as Bath and Tunbridge Wells, but the county towns also developed significant social importance, and these were followed in turn by some of the market towns.[4]

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[2] A second edition of Blome's *Gentleman's Recreation* appeared in 1710. Cox's *Gentleman's Recreation* was reprinted in 1706 and 1721.

[3] Carter commented that 'attention was drawn throughout this period to the unacceptability of expressions of male violence, such as dueling and hunting, on which instruction had often been provided in early modern guides to gentlemanly education'. P. Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1800* (London, 2000), p. 71.

[4] P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660-1770* (1989; Oxford, 1991 edn), pp. 4-11.

There were contradictions aplenty to be detected in this cultural shift. Hunting continued to be popular with the higher echelons of society, and this was as true of members of the Whig government as the Tory opposition. Walpole himself was an enthusiastic sportsman, and, as we have seen, the Whig second Duke of Grafton was heavily involved in the first foundations of foxhunting as a modern pastime. The very members of the gentry who might have been ridiculed as 'country squires' were themselves important to the development of fashionable society in the provincial towns. The landed interest was still, at this time, the foundation of society. As Deuchars observed 'hunting as sport required and proclaimed the availability of land, the freedom and time to exploit it, and, very often, an economic status derived from a dependent class beneath'.[5] So, although it may have been ridiculed, hunting maintained a significant presence. Indeed, by the end of the century, hunting had been reborn in a new guise and its fortunes were very much on the rise.

This is the background against which we must trace the decline of the traditional forest and park-based pursuit of the deer, and the rise of foxhunting to itself become a fashionable and aspirational pastime. I am going to suggest that hunting adjusted, adapted, and absorbed many of the cultural shifts that went on in the eighteenth century, and its new shape was formed by these very developments. The discussion in this chapter is necessarily wide in geographical scope; much of the evidence is literary in nature and not based in Northamptonshire.

Changing Attitudes to Hunting

In our examination of early modern hunting techniques we have drawn on early modern literary sources. As well as giving insight into the methods employed,

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[5] S. Deuchar, *Sporting Art in Eighteenth-Century England: a Social and Political History* (Yale, 1988), p. 2.

these works also shed some light on how participants thought and felt about the sport, and the place that hunting was perceived to occupy in the wider culture. The authors of the hunting manuals commonly took time to expound on the value of their subject both in the life of the individual and in a broader context.

Blome reflected at length on the health-giving properties of hunting: 'Hunting is (or at least ought to be) a pleasing and profitable exercise intended to make us strong and active and to recreate and delight the mind'.[6] Markham had more specific advice for those who wanted to use hunting as a means of keeping fit. The hunter should acquire the type of hounds most suited to his exercise requirements: the biggest and slowest hounds for those wishing to exercise on foot, the slowest of the middle-sized hounds for those on horseback. If a man was more infirm and could only manage to walk and not run, then beagles were recommended.[7] It was not only writers on hunting who recognized the sport's health-giving properties; Robert Burton had hunting and hawking as one of the possible cures for melancholy 'because they recreate the body and the mind'.[8]

The other great benefit that hunting was thought to bring was in providing training for warfare. Cockaine found that hunters 'by their continuall travaile, painfull labour, often watching, and enduring of hunger, of heate, and of cold are much enabled above others to the service of their prince and Countrey in the warres'.[9] Blome wanted his readers to consider the requirements of war even when choosing their hunting horses. He did not recommend horses that were too fine

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[6] R. Blome, *The Gentleman's Recreation* (London, 1686), p. 7.

[7] G. Markham, *Countrey Contentments* (1615; New York, 1973 edn), pp. 12-4.

[8] R. Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford, 1621), p. 340.

[9] T. Cockaine, *A Short Treatise of Hunting* (London, 1591), p. 2.

because they would not do for war service.[10] King James clearly had hunting's

military application in mind when he derided hunting with greyhounds as 'not nearly

so martial' a game as *par force* hunting.[11] Blome echoed this in recommending that

horsemen of a 'warlike nature' ought to choose 'such sorts of hunting as are most

capable to answer these ends', which, in his opinion, was most likely to be hunting

the stag, the buck or the fox.[12]

       Works such as Blome's and Cox's devoted considerable space to hunting as a

gentlemanly occupation. Other instructional works, while not having sports as their

subject, acknowledged that learning the skills of hunting was an essential part of the

education of young royals, nobles and gentlemen. It was not only hunting techniques

that they had to learn, but also the practicalities connected with the pursuit. The mid-

fifteenth century *Boke of Curtesy* had no advice on hunting itself, but did explain

how the hunting organization should be run as part of the wider household.[13] Thomas

Elyot's *The Book Named the Governor* prescribed the education suited to a young

gentleman or noble. It was opposed to young men devoting themselves to 'idle

pastimes', but excluded from this classification hunting, hawking and dancing.

Hunting had classical antecedents in the activities of the Greeks and the Romans, and

hunting *par force* was especially valuable as 'an imitation of battle'.[14]

       The sources quoted so far are practically unanimous in the approval of

hunting as a suitable occupation for a gentleman (although Burton observed that the

English nobility hunted so much, it was 'as if they had no other meanes, but hauking

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[10] Blome, *Gentleman's Recreation*, p. 7.

[11] King James, *Basilicon Doron* (1599; Menston, 1969 edn), p. 144.

[12] Blome, *Gentleman's Recreation*, p. 7.

[13] Cited in J. Williams, 'Hunting, hawking and the early Tudor gentleman'*, History Today*, 53 8 (2003), p. 25.

[14] T. Elyot*, The Book Named the Governor* (London, 1531), f. 72.

and hunting to approve themselves Gentlemen with').[15] Towards the end of the

seventeenth century, however, there began to emerge some dissonant voices, casting

doubt on the value of country sport. Richard Allestree's *The Gentleman's Calling*

expounded on the natural advantages bestowed upon the gentleman and on the way

in which he should put these advantages to use. When considering the free time that

the gentleman was lucky enough to enjoy, Allestree had some stern warnings

concerning 'recreations'. While admitting that some 'divertisement' was necessary

for the body of a man, he condemned as reprehensible the 'excess and inordinacy of

it'. Allestree reflected that some gentlemen made the sports of hawking and hunting

into their 'calling'. They never considered that being a falconer or a huntsman was a

'mean vocation'.[16] Allestree was writing from a religious and a moral viewpoint.

Other critics of hunting were to condemn hunting because it was unfashionable, not

because it was ungodly. But one thing both sets of critics agreed on was that it was

not hunting *per se* that was bad, but rather the following of the sport to excess.

The Tatler and *The Spectator* magazines, the result of the collaboration of

Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, have been credited with setting much of the

initial tone and the agenda of 'polite society'. *The Tatler* was published three times a

week in 1709 and 1711. *The Spectator* appeared daily between 1711 and 1712, and

thrice weekly in 1714. *The Tatler* has been viewed as the more 'up-market'

publication, aimed at the clientele of the coffee house while *The Spectator* was

addressed more to the morning tea table, and to civil servants and merchants

(although there was some overlap in the lists of subscribers of the two periodicals).[17]

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[15] Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, p. 340.

[16] R. Allestree, *The Gentleman's Calling* (London. 1660), p. 106.

[17] A. Ross, *Selections from the Tatler and the Spectator* (London, 1982), p. 37.

In *The Spectator* the authors created Sir Roger de Coverley, the archetypal Tory hunting squire. Sir Roger, we are told, was the scourge of the local foxes in his youth. He earned the 'constant thanks and good wishes' of the neighbourhood 'having destroy'd more of these vermin, than it was thought the whole county could have produced'. In his older years he had given up foxhunting, but he kept a pack of 'stop-hounds'. Readers were treated to an account of Sir Roger hunting hare with these dogs. He made up for their lack of speed with 'the deepness of their mouths and the variety of their notes'. Sir Roger even refused the gift of a hound because it was a bass, and he needed a counter-tenor. He remained keen enough on sport to be out hunting nearly every day during the visit of the narrator of these tales. [18] Sir Roger was written about with some affection, it was not a scathing portrait by any means, but as a character he represented the old-fashioned and the amusing. The reader is left in no doubt this hunting squire stood for the somewhat laughable society of a bygone age.

The episodes in *The Spectator* concerning Sir Roger and his friends have been described as a forerunner to the novel.[19] Looking forward to the 1740s, and the novels of Henry Fielding, we find yet more examples of the hunting squire, sometimes as a figure of fun, and sometimes as a villain.

In *Joseph Andrews* the eponymous hero was bred up in the sporting country ways, working in the squire's kennels and his stables before being elevated to the post of footman. There are one or two references to sporting squires of the de Coverley ilk, such as Sir Oliver Hearty, who would 'sacrifice everything to his

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[18] R. Steele and J. Addison, *Sir Roger de Coverley*, J. Hampden (ed.) (London, 1967), p. 68.

[19] Ross, *Selections*, p. 55.

country' except 'his hunting'.[20] But the biggest villain in the novel, the would-be ravisher of the heroine, was a fanatical hunter. The travellers had the misfortune to cross his path when he was out in pursuit of the hare, and he set his hounds upon the parson for his own amusement. This squire was a spoilt and indulged child and 'from the age of fifteen he addicted himself entirely to hunting and other rural amusements'.[21]

Tom Jones had a hunting squire as a major character. Squire Western was the father of the heroine. More a comical figure than a villain, he was nonetheless an exemplar of the type: a man totally obsessed with his country sports. Fielding repeatedly tells us how much Western loved his daughter, but she had second place to horses and dogs.[22] Western crashed his way through the novel, nearly always announcing his presence with a hunting cry, and was seemingly incapable of describing anything without a hunting analogy. When he encountered Jones at the Inn at Upton, he exclaimed 'We have got the dog fox, I warrant the bitch is not far off'.[23]

Squire Western's entertaining antics are not Fielding's only comments on seventeenth-century country and hunting culture. Among the other characters that we meet are a landlady's husband who had been 'bred, as they call it, a gentleman; that is, bred up to do nothing'. He had spent his small inherited fortune on 'hunting, horse-racing and cock-fighting'. An old man that Jones encounters tells of his dislike of his brother, a sportsman, and describes what bad company his hunting companions

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[20] H. Fielding, *The History and Adventures of Joseph Andrews and his Friend, Mr Abraham Adams* (1742; London, 1999 edn), p. 157.

[21] Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*, p. 247.

[22] H. Fielding, *The History of a Foundling, Tom Jones* (1749; Oxford, 1998 edn), p. 130.

[23] Fielding, *Tom Jones*, pp. 477-8, 760.

were. Besides the 'noise and nonsense' with which 'they persecute the ears of sober men' the old man could not sit down to a meal with them without being treated with derision because he was 'unacquainted with the phrases of sportsmen'.[24] Smollett's *Humphry Clinker*, although 22 years later than *Tom Jones*, has similar references to disreputable hunting characters. One of his protagonists had the 'misfortune' of being second brother to a man who was 'a fox-hunter and a sot'. The elder brother neglected his affairs, insulted and oppressed the servants and 'well nigh ruined the estate'.[25]

The literary sources that we have cited illustrate clearly the attitude towards hunting and other 'country sports' that was prevalent in fashionable and polite society. Its proponents were, at best, figures of fun and, at worst, were cast in the role of villain. When advising his illegitimate son on how to behave in society, the Earl of Chesterfield was similarly disparaging about such sports. For him, hunting numbered among the pleasures that could 'degrade a gentleman' as much as 'some trades could do'. The Earl echoed the earlier opinions of Allestree (although from a very different moral viewpoint) in that he maintained that 'rustic sports' – which included fox-chases and horse races – were 'infinitely below the honest and industrious professions of a tailor and a shoemaker'.[26]

However 'out of fashion' hunting may have become, for hunters to have become such stock figures in literature there must still have been much hunting going on. It also seems that the hunters themselves were sensible of the criticism. The end of Stringer's *The experience'd Huntsman* is given over to a discussion between 'Mr

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[24] Fielding, *Tom Jones*, p. 371.

[25] T. Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771; Oxford, 1998 edn), p. 321.

[26] Philip Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, *Lord Chesterfield's Letters to his Son and Others* (1929; London, 1975 edn), p. 97.

Townly' and 'Mr Worthy' in which the latter stood up for hunting and argued that 'hunting is not a diversion so unbecoming a scholar so unsuitable to the politeness of a Gentleman' as Mr Townly imagined.[27] Deuchar discerns the mentality of something of an embattled minority among enthusiasts of the chase in the eighteenth century. There were two trends: one promoting an insular, specialized culture that was 'incomprehensible' to outsiders, and the other seeking to return hunting to the mainstream by justifying the sport in terms of its social benefits.[28]

Our literary sources all separate out foxhunting for particular mention, despite most of them being earlier than the conventional date (1750s) given for the start of the sport in its modern form. There was an implication that foxhunting was harder, more demanding, and more dangerous than other forms of hunting. When Sir Roger de Coverley appeared in *The Spectator* he had become too old for foxhunting, but he was particularly keen to defend its proponents as 'the ornaments of the English nation' and upbraided his companions for mentioning foxhunters 'with so little respect'.[29] When Matthew Bramble, one of the principal characters in *Humphry Clinker*, was taking a cure at Bath, he found himself in the company of an erstwhile college friend who, having come into an unexpected inheritance, 'commenced fox-hunter, without having served his apprenticeship in the mystery' and consequently ruined his health.[30]

There is little mention of deer hunting in any of these sources. Sir Roger de Coverley refers to the suitor of one of his female ancestors knocking down two deer stealers in carrying her off. Fielding, when talking of his heroine's appearance on the

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[27] A. Stringer, *The Experience'd Huntsman* (Belfast, 1714), p. 297.

[28] Deuchar, *Sporting Art*, p. 93.

[29] Steele and Addison, *Sir Roger de Coverley*, p. 35.

[30] Smollett, *Humphry Clinker*, p. 164.

London scene, uses the analogy of a 'plump doe' that is discovered to have 'escaped from the forest'. In *Humphry Clinker*, Bramble's nephew hunts both the stag and the roe deer, but this is while the party is in Scotland.[31] Hunting as a whole may be derided as being old-fashioned, but the hunting of deer seems so uncommon as to scarcely warrant a mention.

The Adaption of Hunting to Polite Society

As we have seen, the concept of 'polite society' is a complex one. We have already suggested that it had a deeper significance than merely prescribing a code of manners. It has been described as a concept with a 'meaning and implications that opens doors into the mentality'.[32] Naturally such an important shift in the culture of the country has been the cause of investigation, and some debate, among historians.

In her work *From Courtesy to Civility*, Anna Bryson traced some continuity in the origins of eighteenth-century polite society. She used early modern courtesy literature – the manuals that sought to teach young gentlemen about expected and appropriate behaviour – as her source. Bryson detected what she called a 'new way of seeing' emerging in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: a movement of English aristocratic culture 'away from modes of lordship and towards modes of urbanity'. This manifested itself as a move away from an emphasis on the relationships of the large household, to which the master-servants hierarchy was central, towards a greater stress on membership of social groups sharing similar tastes and having a degree of informal equality.[33]

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[31] Steele and Addison, *Sir Roger de Coverley*, p. 52; Fielding, *Tom Jones*, p. 783; Smollett, *Humphry Clinker*, p. 240.

[32] Langford, 'The uses of eighteenth-century politeness', p. 311.

[33] A. Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 105, 110.

Bryson allied these developments with the ascendancy of the metropolis. Despite Stuart efforts to ensure that landowners stayed on their land, rather than becoming purely a court aristocracy, by 1632 it was being suggested that the greater part of the gentry wintered in London. In the seventeenth century the 'naive astonishment and ineptitude' of the country gentleman visiting London for the first time was already providing a comic stock character.[34] In an earlier work on gentlemen and leisure, Marcia Vale talked of a controversy that raged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries about the relative merits of the life of a country gentleman and that of a courtier or city gentlemen. Vale suggested that in this debate the winning side was usually that of the city resident.[35]

Bryson identified many of the underpinnings of eighteenth-century polite society and traced their origins back to the early modern period. Other historians, however, have stressed a self-conscious break with the past. Carter emphasized the features of politeness by which its advocates distinguished it from existing codes of behaviour. Eighteenth-century writers identified politeness as distinctive and so gave it a new label. Carter also suggested that politeness was more than just the name given to external manners: it also involved the binding of an inner and an outer refinement. It was about a move from the rigid formality of a perceived past to a more relaxed and natural way of interacting, albeit it within a group comprising approximate social equals. But this new method was an expression of the true character of a person, rather than just behaviour that was concerned with the 'external proprieties of civility'.[36] Evidence supporting Clark's view can be found in

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[34] Bryson, *Courtesy to Civility*, p. 131.

[35] M. Vale, *The Gentleman's Recreations: Accomplishments and Pastimes of the English Gentleman 1580-1630* (Cambridge, 1977), p. 5.

[36] P. Carter, 'Polite "persons": character, biography and the gentleman' in *English Politeness*, p. 335.

The Spectator, where the narrator described the transition as a 'very great revolution'. The 'modish world' found too great a constraint in the old form of manners which involved 'several obliging Deferencies, Condescensions and Submissions' and had therefore thrown most of them aside.[37]

An important point for our purposes is that the whole concept of politeness was inextricably linked with leisure. As Tosh expressed it 'Leisure was the most fundamental precondition of politeness, the mark of a gentleman being either a man living on private means, or someone on whom business did not weigh too heavily.'[38] Hunting was a leisure activity and, in examining its relationship with the concept of the polite society, we are concerned with changing attitudes to leisure.

Several strands in the debate on politeness are significant when examining the relationship between the cultural shift that occurred in the eighteenth century, and the transition that happened in the methods and location of hunting. These are the move away from the central position of the hierarchical household towards a more stratified form of social relationships, the conscious attempt to break away from formal and rigid modes of behaviour that were deemed to be 'old-fashioned', the increasing importance of urban above rural society, and, lastly, the central place of leisure time and how a gentleman filled it.

Traditional Hospitality

Our previous investigation of traditional hunting methods provided examples of the type of hierarchical household from which eighteenth-century polite society was breaking away. This structure is illustrated in Smyth of Nibley's account of life

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[37] Steele and Addison, *Sir Roger de Coverley*, p. 81.

[38] J. Tosh, 'Gentlemanly politeness and manly simplicity in Victorian England' in *English Politeness*, p. 462.

in the Berkeley household, and the instructions on how the young gentlemen retained

as servants in the great household should behave themselves in various

circumstances.[39] This type of organization was also reflected in hunting itself, for

example, the highly formalized structure we have described of the royal buckhounds

with offices such as sergeants, yeomen prickers, and grooms. Other sources go into

more detail. In the *The English courtier, and the cutrey gentleman,* one of the

protagonists describes in detail the organization of a country household, where

several 'tall fellows' were employed as servants. They would be offended if they

were offered 'labour or drudgery'. Their purpose was to entertain at table, follow

their master when he visited London, or other large towns, or accompany the lady of

the household if she rode out. In addition to these young gentlemen, who were

mostly the sons of yeomen and farmers, the household employed several other

servants to do the actual work.[40] In his work on the history of leisure, Borsay

described a set of recreational practices and ceremonies in the early modern period

that were accessible to, and participated in in different ways, by all levels of society.

What was critical for him was that, as a result of 'polite and improving commercial

culture', these pastimes became 'deeply unfashionable'.[41]

Hunting was also intertwined with the traditional concepts of hospitality. The

essential role that hunting played in the entertainment of foreign dignitaries under

both Elizabeth and James illustrates its symbolic role as a display of royal power.

Elizabeth's entertainments in particular were lavish and formal. The identification of

hunting with hospitality rippled down through society. Nobles and gentlemen used

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[39] J. Smyth, *The Berkeley Manuscripts: Lives of the Berkeleys*, J. MacLean (ed.), 3 vols, (Gloucester, 1883), 2, pp. 365-6.

[40] Anon., *The English courtier, and the cutrey gentleman* (London, 1586), pp. eiii, fii

[41] P. Borsay, *A History of Leisure: the British Experience since 1500* (Basingstoke, 2006), p. 102.

their deer parks for the entertainment of their guests. Nicholas Breton's countryman described how some lords invited their tenants and their neighbours to join them in hunting when the harvest was safely home.[42] Those not entitled to hunt in their own right might avail themselves of a spot of illicit hunting to celebrate such events as weddings or christenings.[43]

Clark suggested that the entertainment provided by the hunt was a way for country magnates to define their patriarchal status, and that it also played an important part in the bringing together of kinsfolk and neighbouring landowners. We can see in the early seventeenth-century journal of Nicholas Assheton how neighbours and kin would band together to hunt the stag.[44] Clark also observed, however, that by the late seventeenth century landed families were moving away from the practice, if not the rhetoric, of the old-style hospitality. They were reducing the numbers of servants they kept and spending at least a part of the year in London.[45]

The literary sources that set the agenda for the polite society could be as critical of old-fashioned hospitality and manners as they were of old-fashioned country pursuits. *The Spectator* devoted an entire article to the subject of country manners, and the inconvenience it caused a man used to the more relaxed manners of the city. The rules of precedence on who walked first or last, and who sat where at dinner were troublesome to the writer, who had known 'my friend Sir Roger's dinner

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[42] N. Breton, *The Courtier and the Gentleman* (London, 1618), p. B.

[43] R.B. Manning, *Hunters and Poachers: A Social and Cultural History of Unlawful Hunting in England, 1485-1640* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 9, 18-9.

[44] N. Assheton, *The Journal of Nicholas Assheton* (Chetham society, 1848), pp. 39, 54, 57.

[45] P. Clark, *British Clubs and Society 1580-1800: the Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 32, 29.

almost cold before the company could adjust itself to the ceremonial'.[46] When the

party in *Humphry Clinker* reached Yorkshire, they called on a cousin of Matthew

Bramble, who prided himself on the 'old-fashioned' hospitality that he offered.

Bramble was scathing about his experience, however. He compared the squire's

home to an inn, and not a very good one at that. Bramble would rather dine on

'filberts with a hermit' than on 'venison with a hog'. The hospitality lapsed when the

guests were disappointed in their hopes of overnight accommodation.[47]

The New Sociability

　　With what were these antiquated manners and ideas of hospitality replaced?

The dining table in the great hall was replaced as a social focus by the coffee house

and the club. Clark's 2000 work on British clubs and societies explored the origins of

clubs, and their development in the eighteenth century to become a national social

institution. He saw their origins in London, but traced their progress as they spread

through the provincial towns. He drew some of his evidence from our study area:

Northampton had a florists' feast, a ringing society, a Masonic lodge, and a

philosophical society. Elsewhere in the county the towns of Kettering,

Wellingborough, and Daventry also benefited from the existence of clubs. For Clark,

the clubs and societies that he described played an important role in bringing together

the old and the new elite groups: gentry, professional men, traders, and, to a lesser

extent, merchants.[48]

　　The sport of hunting had been very much associated with the traditional

world, and traditional sociability, but there is some evidence that the sport was

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[46] Steele and Addison, *Sir Roger de Coverley*, p. 82.

[47] Smollett, *Humphry Clinker*, p. 164-5.

[48] Clark, *British Clubs*, pp. 84, 90, 450.

adapting itself to the newly emerging trends of the eighteenth century. The Charlton

hunt in West Sussex has claimed for itself the position of the first organized fox hunt.

It had its foundations in a pack of hounds kept for chasing fox in the late seventeenth

century by the Duke of Monmouth. In the first half of the eighteenth century it

counted men who were prominent at court and in politics among its followers,

including the Dukes of Grafton and Richmond. In 1720 some 28 members of the

hunt subscribed towards the building of a banqueting hall in the village of Charlton.

In 1738 the hunt followers formed themselves into a 'regular society'. The club was

founded when the gentlemen who followed the hunt met for dinner in the Bedford

Head Tavern in London.[49] A decade or two later (the exact date is not known) the

Pytchley hunt club was founded in Northamptonshire. The club had as its

headquarters Pytchley Hall from which it took its name. The hall was lent to the club,

rent-free, so long as they kept it in repair and paid the taxes. The hall was sizeable

enough to accommodate twenty members and their servants at any one time, and

offer stabling for their horses. The earliest list of members dated from 1766, and

included the Duke of Grafton and Earl Spencer among its number.[50] We have

already described the hunting confederacy which the Earl of Cardigan formed in

1730 with the third Duke of Rutland and the fourth Earl of Gainsborough among

others. Unlike the Charlton and the Pytchley, this association lacked a club building,

with the confederacy instead moving the hounds, and its social focus, from the

Lincolnshire/Leicstershire border, to Rutland, and ultimately to Northamptonshire as

the season progressed.[51]

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[49] S. Rees, *The Charlton Hunt: a History* (Chichester, 1998), pp. 1-4.

[50] G. Paget, *The History of the Althorp and Pytchley Hunt, 1634-1920* (London, 1937), pp. 70-1.

[51] J. Wake and D. Champion-Webster (eds), *The Letters of Daniel Eaton to the Third Earl of Cardigan 1725-1732* (Kettering, 1971), p. 153.

The Charlton and the Pytchley clubs were organized along similar lines. New members were nominated by an existing member and then balloted in. A black ball was sufficient for exclusion. The members of both clubs could invite friends to partake of the clubs' hospitality, albeit for a limited time. Both clubs held their annual meetings in London. The Charlton and Pytchley rules were all about regulating the club: how its costs were defrayed and how the membership was ordered. In contrast the rules of Cardigan's hunting confederacy were concerned with the hunting itself. It was essentially an agreement between ten individuals about how horses and hounds were maintained. The agreement did make provision for hunt servants which, in addition to a steward, a huntsman and six whippers-in, included two cooks, but these were catering for the hounds not the humans.[52]

Both types of organization, hunting club and hunting confederacy, mark a break with the past. The archetypal model of a hunt had been for a gentleman to keep a pack of hounds and invite friends and neighbours to join in. There were still many examples of this type of arrangement in the eighteenth century. Justinian Isham's diary reveals him hunting around Lamport in Northamptonshire in the autumn and winter of 1709-1710 and inviting friends to join him.[53] Our literary sources have many further examples of country squires maintaining their own packs: Squire Western in *Tom Jones*, Squire Booby in *Joseph Andrews,* Squire Burdock in *Humphry Clinker* and, of course, Sir Roger de Coverley himself.

It was one of the defining characteristics of 'modern' foxhunting, however, that it gradually left behind the model where both hounds and hospitality were entirely at the pleasure of some local landowner, to one where hunt followers paid

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[52] Wake, Champion-Webster, *Letters of Daniel Eaton,* p. 153-4.

[53] NRO, IL2686.

subscriptions for the support of the hunt. Certainly the hounds themselves were most often the personal property of the master; for example, from 1763 Lord Spencer owned the Pytchley hounds, but other expenses such as the rent of the fox coverts and the payment of the earth stoppers, were met out of money contributed by subscribers. In 1798, the Pytchley club spent £124-7-6 on renting fox coverts, and in 1800 the bill for stopping fox earths came to £15-15-0.[54] This reflected another facet of the development of leisure in the eighteenth century: the use of subscriptions as a way of jointly funding sports or entertainments. Borsay saw the widespread adoption of subscription systems in the eighteenth century as a 'crucial development', providing a 'halfway house' between the patron of traditional culture and the modern anonymous market place.[55]

Clark convincingly argued that the clubs and societies that burgeoned in the eighteenth century were overwhelmingly an urban phenomenon. The Charlton and Pytchley hunt clubs were both based in villages, but these were unusual. This brings us to another theme of the cultural history of the leisure of the eighteenth century: the phenomenon that has been described as the 'urban renaissance'. While many of the new modes of behaviour had their origins in London, the eighteenth century witnessed their spreading outwards into the provincial towns. Several themes have been identified as characterizing this urban renaissance: a physical transformation as classical architecture and new modes of urban layout came to prominence, an economic buoyancy which produced surplus wealth, and the expansion of the so-called 'middling sort' in society. Borsay used Northampton as an example for many of these developments. The county town's horse fair, which was of 'national

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[54] Paget, *Althorp and Pytchley Hunt*, p. 73.

[55] Borsay, *Leisure*, p. 19.

significance', put Northampton firmly on the map as a thriving trading community. The number of district trades and crafts rose from 45 in the period 1562 to 1601, to 83 in the period 1654 to 1705, to reach 114 between 1716 and 1776. The great fire in 1675 meant that Northampton began to be rebuilt in the fashionable classical style much earlier than other towns.[56]

But the aspects of the urban renaissance that most concerns the present study is what has been described as the 'commercialisation of leisure'.[57] This was the process whereby theatres, assembly rooms, walks, pleasure gardens, coffee houses and similar innovations, became so central to the social elite of the provincial towns and surrounding areas. Again, Northampton could boast several of these amenities. It had an assembly which met on a weekly basis, and in 1722 it boasted two coffee houses.[58] The county town made provision for promenading and public display in the form of walks laid out across the Cow Meadow in 1703 and between St. Thomas of Canterbury's Well and Vigo Well in 1784.[59]

The early eighteenth-century diary of Justinian Isham illustrates how one young Northamptonshire gentleman enjoyed leisure pursuits and socializing both at home and in the metropolis. The diary started in the spring of 1709 with our diarist in London. In addition to frequent dining with friends and acquaintances, he fitted in seven plays and an opera. After returning to Lamport at the end of May, the social pace scarcely slackened. June 2nd saw Isham at the races at Borough Hill near Daventry, rounded off with a visit to the Wheatsheaf where the dancing continued all night. A few weeks later there was a trip to Deene park, where Isham bowled and

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[56] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 45.

[57] J.H. Plumb, *The Commercialisation of Leisure in Eighteenth-Century England* (Reading, 1973).

[58] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, pp. 145, 153.

[59] *VCH Northamptonshire*, 3, p. 23.

inspected the dog kennels. In July he attended the assizes in Northampton (the

assizes commonly provided a social focus for county towns in this period). August

saw an excursion to the Wellingborough races, followed by dining at 'the ordinary'

with a good deal of company. The races were clearly a big attraction for the diary's

author, as elsewhere he mentioned attending Harlestone races and even travelling to

York for the races there.[60]

The Urban Focus

We have made the point that hunting had lost much of its status as an elite

pursuit and indeed had become a subject of some derision. Borsay, however,

suggested that the urban-based leisure revolution did include some provision for

hunting. He asserted that, in this period, towns developed a 'surprisingly close

relationship' with hunting either directly by supporting town hunts or indirectly by

servicing the needs of local hunts. Borsay gave the examples of Preston, York,

Leeds, Liverpool, Beverley and Bristol as towns that kept their own packs of hounds

(unfortunately there seems to be no evidence of any town hunts in

Northamptonshire).[61] Having already had a glimpse of how hunting adapted to the

culture of the club that gained such ground in the eighteenth century, we can usefully

examine how hunting adapted to the more urban focus of leisure and culture that

emerged in this period.

To some extent it had always been possible for a town dweller to hunt. We

have already described Henry, Lord Berkeley 'daily hunting' while living in London

with his mother as a young man.[62] In the great town versus country debate that

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[60] NRO, IL2686.

[61] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance,* pp. 178-9.

[62] Smyth, *Berkeleys*, 2, p. 281.

occupied the *English Courtier and the Cutrey Gentleman*, Vallentine assured Vincent

that, in the city, 'if you will hauke or hunt, there are Faukners and hunters enough'.[63]

Back in Northamptonshire, the Pytchley, which had its origins firmly in the

eighteenth century, had its urban adherents. The Althorp Chace books listed the

followers of the hunt in the late eighteenth century, and this often included parties of

gentlemen from Northampton. Among their number was one Mister Hillyard who, in

November 1786, 'had a bad fall but was not much hurt altho' he cried a good deal'.[64]

Borsay suggested that as foxhunting developed, and the social context of the sport

became 'more public and fashionable', so the role of towns as service centres for the

sport was enhanced.[65] But if the eighteenth century laid the foundations, it was in the

early nineteenth century that a town could become a national focal point for the sport

of foxhunting, which was the mantle that Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire

assumed. Our earlier account of the origins identified Hugo Meynell as the effective

founder of the new sport. Quorndon Hall was near to the town of Loughborough, and

it was this town that first attracted a seasonal visitation of foxhunters; as 'rough

rider' Dick Christian put it 'in Mr. Meynell's time the company used to be at

Loughborough'.[66] In 1762 Leicester hosted the county's hunt ball, with catering

provided by Meynell's cook.[67] Around the turn of the century, however, the

'company' began to move to Melton Mowbray. Dick Christian attributed this to the

Duke of Rutland's publication in 1804 of a map of the Quorn, Cottesmore and the

Belvoir hunt countries: 'Melton was just at the centre, so they came there after

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[63] Anon. *English courtier*, p. Mi

[64] NRO, ML4429.

[65] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance,* p. 179.

[66] The Druid (H.H. Dixon), *Silk and Scarlet* (London, 1859), p. 67.

[67] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance,* p. 179.

that.'[68] Using Melton as their base, the foxhunters could hunt six days a week over

the grassland that was fast winning fame as 'the shires'. Melton in its early days saw

the establishment of a number of foxhunting clubs. Unlike the Pytchley and

Charlton clubs, these were not connected to a particular hunt and were town, not

village, based. Each club had dedicated premises: of the Melton clubs, the Old Club

was the first and most famous. Situated in an eighteenth-century house opposite the

church, the club had an exclusive membership of four (because it only had four best

bedrooms). Originally called the 'Melton Club', it was founded around 1809-1810.[69]

Nimrod said 'there is something highly respectable in everything connected with the

Old Club … some of the best society in England [is] to be met within their circle.'[70]

In its time the club played host to the Prince Regent, the Duke of York and Beau

Brummell. It was disbanded in 1844. Nimrod tells us that the Old Club got its name

'in contradistinction to the New Club, some time since broken up'.[71] The 1830s saw

the founding of a new 'New Club', which evidently provided room for more

members than the Old Club. Following the club's disbanding in 1840, the sale

particulars listed 'ten gentlemen's bedrooms'. For those who wished to follow the

hunt but were not club members there were inns to cater for their needs and the needs

of their horses. 'The George', 'The Harborough' and the latterly 'The Bell' fulfilled

these functions. Foxhunters could rent rooms in these establishments for the season.

As the nineteenth century progressed, foxhunting became more inclusive of the

family and less exclusively male, and so the clubs disbanded and their buildings were

given over to private residences known as 'hunting boxes' in which keen foxhunters

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[68] Druid, *Silk*, p. 67.

[69] J. Brownlow, *Melton Mowbray: Queen of the Shires* (Wymondham, 1980), p. 107.

[70] Nimrod (C. Apperley), *The Chace, the Road and the Turf* (1837; London, 1927 edn), p. 12.

[71] Nimrod, *Chace*, p. 12.

and their families could take up residence for the season. Melton's rising popularity led to much building and rebuilding to cater for the swollen winter population. When he first came to Melton around 1802, Nimrod had found 'but a few houses with which a well-breeched Meltonian would be satisfied', but by 1840 he could assert that there was 'nothing now wanting for any man's comfort'.[72]

The town provided far more than accommodation for the followers of the sport. Much of Melton's economy came to be based on its standing as England's foremost foxhunting resort. By 1861 it could boast five saddlers, five blacksmiths, three veterinary surgeons and seventeen bootmakers. The 1861 directory also listed two artists and two horse breakers, categories that do not figure for many Leicestershire towns.[73] In the nineteenth century there is no doubt that Melton identified itself, and was identified by others, as *the* foxhunting location. Writing in 1835, Nimrod asked: 'what would Melton be if it were not for the noble sport of foxhunting?' and compares such a Melton to 'Cheltenham without the springs'.[74]

None of the Northamptonshire towns allied themselves so closely with foxhunting. Those men of fashion who wanted to experience the Pytchley country in west Northamponshire were most likely to base themselves just over the Leicestershire border in Market Harborough. Harborough probably came closest to rivalling Melton's status as foxhunting metropolis. Although not as well placed as Melton Mowbray, it was possible to hunt with two fashionable packs when based there. From Harborough the foxhunter could reach many Pytchley meets, and just about all those of the South Quorn/Tailby hunt. Meets of other notable, but not quite

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[72] Cited in Brownlow, *Melton*, p. 97.

[73] *Drake's Gazetteer and Directory of the Counties of Leicester and Rutland* (Sheffield, 1861), pp. 308-16.

[74] Nimrod (C. Apperley), *Nimrod's Hunting Tours* (1835; London, 1926 edn), p. 133.

'top-drawer', packs such as the North Warwickshire and the Atherstone were also accessible. Writing later in the century, Brooksby advised the foxhunter that Market Harborough 'is glad to welcome you to its comfortable hostelries and unlimited stabling'; echoing Nimrod's earlier assessment of Melton, he reflected that Harborough owed 'all its position in the world to its attractiveness as a hunting quarter.'[75] For those wishing to hunt with the Pytchley, Brooksby recommended Rugby, Weedon, Northampton or Market Harborough as bases. Of these, Rugby was deemed the most popular. Northampton, Brooksby reckoned, 'hitherto has not been much frequented', like Weedon, being chiefly famous as soldiers' quarters. For the Woodland Pytchley, Kettering, Thrapston or Oundle could be suitable bases, but although all three 'might invite visitors' but 'few come'.[76]

Our investigation of the relationship between hunting and towns has taken us rather further on in time than the rest of this chapter. But it is an important point to make that, when foxhunting reached the peak of its popularity in the nineteenth century, it was already comfortable being associated with an urban setting. Whereas hunting had previously been associated with parks and royal forests, the newly emerging sport came to be identified with a particular area of the country and with particular towns. That is not to say that foxhunting did not take place elsewhere, because it was ubiquitous, but the truly fashionable hunted the midland shires. That this development could happen was due in part to the development of better communications in the eighteenth century. In the same way that better roads allowed

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[75] Brooksby (E. Pennell-Elmhirst), *The Hunting Countries of England, their Facilities, Character and Requirements,* 2 vols (London, 1878-82), 1, p. 166.

[76] Brooksby (E. Pennell-Elmhirst), *The Cream of Leicestershire: Eleven Seasons' Skimmings, Notable Runs and Incidents of the Chase* (London, 1883), pp. 131-5.

other urban centres to 'specialize' in the provision of certain types of leisure, so there could be a dedicated foxhunting area.

Horse Racing and Society

In the previous chapter we described the development of the sport of horse racing, and our account of the cultural developments of the eighteenth-century has mentioned horse racing a number of times. It is curious that in the early eighteenth century hunting was considered to be on the way down, while the sport of horse racing was most definitely on the way up, but the origins of horse racing as a sport were inextricably linked with hunting.

It can be seen from the earlier description of how races were staged that they had close connections with hunting, to the extent of employing hounds to delineate the route that the horses were run over. So why was racing a polite pastime while hunting was not? There are two answers to this question: racing provided a spectator sport in the way that hunting could not, and the spectators could bet on the outcome. In some ways horse racing maintained links with what we have described as the more traditional culture of vertical social bonds. Horse racing could be, and was, enjoyed by people from the highest to the lowest, albeit it in different ways. At the top of the sport, the horses were owned by the titled and the wealthy. At the bottom, the commonality would enjoy the festivities and spectacle that accompanied horse racing meets and bet on the outcome. Race meetings were often associated with rowdy behaviour. Given these factors, it is not surprising that some eighteenth-century commentators, such as Lord Chesterfield, found the sport to be vulgar. But, on the other hand, the race meet did provide an opportunity for social interaction with equals, and was a platform for display.

There was a hierarchy in the status of the various race meetings. At the apex was Newmarket, followed most closely by York. Next came the meetings associated with the county centres (often, but not always, the county towns), with the smaller, more local meetings at the bottom. Borsay suggested that race meetings came to overshadow the Assizes in their importance to the provincial social calendar.[77] In some instances the attractions could be combined: public hangings had a close association with the races at York as the gallows were situated on the edge of the racecourse at Knavemire and the August race meeting was timed to coincide with the Assizes.[78] Race meetings were more likely to be associated with a town than a village, and the towns themselves were quite conscious of the prosperity that the sport could bring. Many towns provided plates and other prizes in support of the race meets that they hosted.

There were some attempts to 'clean up' the horse racing scene. Legislation in 1740 stipulated that running a horse for a prize of less than £50 would incur a £100 penalty (except at Newmarket or York), which effectively outlawed many of the minor race meetings and the involvement of lower status horses and owners.[79] The foundation of the Jockey Club in 1750s brought further regulation to the sport. The rules and regulations of the Jockey Club reflect those that have already been described for the Charlton and Pytchley hunt clubs. Any person desiring to be admitted to the coffee room in Newmarket (that is, join the Jockey Club) must be proposed by a member, his name advertised above the door the day before balloted, and then voted on by twelve members. Three black balls would exclude. The Jockey

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[77] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 144.

[78] D. Wilkinson, *Early Horse Racing in Yorkshire and the Origins of the Thoroughbred* (York, 2003), p. 56.

[79] J. Weatherby, *Racing Calendar: 1774* (London, 1774), pp. xxv-xxvi.

Club provides another example of the centrality of clubs to the culture of leisure in the eighteenth century.[80]

Deer and Venison

Before we leave this account of the development of leisure culture in eighteenth-century England, we should examine more closely the position of the deer. It is a central argument of this thesis that a new explanation of the hunting transition is required, because the old one does not fit the evidence. If a gentleman still wanted to hunt deer there were still deer to hunt; eighteenth-century landscape parks were as likely to contain deer as their medieval and early modern predecessors, and the animals remained an important part of English elite culture. The produce of hunting, as well as hunting itself, had had a significant role in the culture of early modern England. Not only did venison provide a good source of meat, particularly in the winter when fresh meat was otherwise scarce, it also had value as a gift. It was against the law to buy and sell venison, but giving it away provided a way of cementing friendships and alliances and rewarding those who had performed some service. 'Fee deer' provided part of the perquisites of those holding forest offices or park keeperships. The Crown favoured foreign ambassadors with gifts of deer, which they could hunt themselves or have delivered to them as venison. James made regular gifts of venison to the Mayor and Aldermen of London, as well as various companies, such as bricklayers and clothworkers and numerous named individuals.[81] Subjects in turn could seek royal favour by themselves giving gifts of venison to the Crown. The Lisle family bestowed venison on a wide variety of people from King

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[80] J. Weatherby, *Racing Calendar: 1779* (London, 1779), p. xxxix.

[81] *CSPD 1623-1625*, p. 321.

Henry VIII downwards.[82] Noblemen with large deer parks could afford to be generous to friends, neighbours and those with whom they sought favour. The 1515 game roll from the Howard's park at Framlingham in Suffolk lists 73 gifts of bucks to various individuals. In 1516 ninety-three does were killed 'for various persons'.[83] But such generosity probably expected some return: we are told that Henry, Lord Berkeley, was 'never unmindfull of yearly sending Lamprey pyes, Salmon, Venison red and fallow and other small tokens to Judges, great officers of state, privy counsellors and Lawyers' but his motives were not entirely altruistic; in return 'hee reaped both honor and profit, an hundred times more than the charge'.[84] Although trading in venison was illegal, a market did exist, and supplying this market provided one of the motives for deer stealing. The *Calendar of State Papers* refers to the 'insolence of cooks, victuallers and others who keep dogs and hunt down the King's deer to sell it'.[85]

Although deer hunting may not have figured like hare hunting or foxhunting in eighteenth-century literary sources, we do not have to look far into other sources to see how important both deer and venison remained. A set of correspondence between Lord Fitzwilliam and his steward, Francis Guybon, survives from the early eighteenth century. When in London, Fitzwilliam was keen to receive a regular supply of venison. In July 1698, he requested to be sent a doe each week 'as long as they are in season', but he was also mindful of the management of Milton park: in September 1706 he wrote 'I will have no more bucks from my park this season so that there will be more next year'. During a drought in August 1701 he commanded

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[82] Cited in Williams, 'Hunting, hawking and the early Tudor gentleman', p. 26.

[83] Reproduced in E.P. Shirley, *Some Account of English Deer Parks* (London, 1867), pp. 29-33.

[84] Smyth, *Berkeleys*, 2, p. 287.

[85] *CSPD 1619-1623*, p. 352.

that Guybon to give hay to the deer: 'lett it cost what it will the poore dumb creatures must not be starved'. But he was equally, if not more, concerned with the venison that was due to him from various walks in Cliffe bailiwick of Rockingham forest and was constantly asking Guybon to serve various warrants. The venison was equally likely to be presented to friends, relatives and neighbours as to be consumed by Lord Fitzwilliam himself, although the gift giving could itself be a source of contention. Early in the correspondence, Fitzwilliam commented on a dispute about venison with Mr Ballett and declared that 'he shall never have any venison more from mee'.[86] His resolution did not last long: in 1703 Guybon was instructed to send half a deer 'after Mr Ballett to Spalding'. The surviving correspondence between the Earl of Cardigan and his steward, Daniel Eaton, from slightly later in the century betray a preoccupation with the state of the deer in Deene Park.[87] This concern continued under the stewardship of Daniel Eaton's son (also called Daniel) in the middle of the century. As well as the plans for the improved management of the park for deer cited in the previous chapter, numerous accounts survive concerned with distribution of Deene park venison among various people and payment for transporting it both to London and East Anglia.[88]

In earlier chapters we questioned the traditional account of the hunting transition that had woodland declining, deer dying out, and gentleman not restocking their parks. Venison was still highly valued in the culture of the eighteenth century, which provides one explanation on why deer were still a prominent part of the polite landscape, even if the desire to hunt them had declined.

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[86] D.R. Hainsworth and C. Walker (eds) *The Correspondence of Lord Fitzwilliam of Milton and Francis Guybon, his Steward 1697-1709* (Northampton, 1990), pp. 23, 185, 215, 39, 127.

[87] Wake, Champion-Webster, *Letters of Daniel Eaton*, p. 20.

[88] NRO, Bru I xiii 2, 3, 4a, 4b, 5b, 5c. There is some evidence of Eaton receiving payment for some of this venison, although it was still technically illegal to sell venison in the mid-seventeenth century.

The Resurgence of the Rural Ideal

In its consideration of the emergence of the ideals of the polite society, this chapter has tended to concentrate on the period when the urban ideal was embraced, and the rural rejected. It has not been an intention to argue that the rural interest was totally overshadowed, however. There was certainly tension between the two ideals in this period: we have portrayed a cultural transition whereby the more traditional forms of social interaction was attacked as unfashionable and *passé*, as Clark commented 'rural society was not only seen as boring, backward, and dirty, but as populated by crypto-jacobites pursuing old-fashioned sports'.[89] Fletcher talked of a 'genuine clash of cultures' and of how city-dweller found it impossible to appreciate the seriousness with which country gentry and their tenants took the whole business of country sports.[90] But the countryside remained vitally important to the very people – gentlemen and aristocrats – who were most concerned with fashion, politeness and social propriety. We have quoted from the letters of Earl Fitzwilliam to his steward, and from Lord Cardigan's steward to his master. This correspondence exists because their lordships were spending so much of their time in London. Their Northamptonshire estates were essential to the funding of this metropolitan lifestyle. Clark reckoned that Fitzwilliam was receiving well over £8,000 a year from his Norfolk and Northamptonshire estates.[91] The elderly Earl of Winchelsea was evidently enjoying the opportunities London life offered for intellectual pursuits, subscribing to the publication of a great many books, but his 1723 journal also recorded the receipt of 'wood money', 'buck money' and other returns from his

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[89] Clark, *British Clubs*, p. 182.

[90] A. Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800* (Yale, 1995), p. 329.

[91] Clark, *British Clubs*, p. 145.

Northamptonshire park.[92] Sir Justinian Isham was spending the winter seasons in

London, fulfilling his duties as a member of parliament, but still valued the country

sports that Lamport offered enough to have injured himself quite badly by falling

from his horse while hunting the hare in 1725.[93] It can be seen that the country

estates of these lords and gentlemen remained important to them both as a source of

income and as a source of occasional entertainment.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the tide of fashion was beginning

to turn and the country life was once more being seen as desirable. Deuchar saw this

manifested in the history of the visual arts. He described a nostalgia 'for the

supposedly rural life of Old England' which emerged in the 1760s and had become a

'thriving business' by the 1790s. This was a reversal of the distaste for what was

perceived to be the 'medieval' and therefore awkward and barbaric in the earlier

decades of the century. Thomas described a cult of the countryside emerging around

this time; by the 1770s town dwellers were beginning to 'idolize' the country

cottage. Borsay suggested that anti-urbanism was starting to emerge by the end of the

eighteenth century. [94] The diaries of John Byng (later Lord Torrington) give some

evidence of this. Commencing one of his trips around the country in 1794, he

observed that 'I have for many years stated my haste, in spring, to get out of London

(with pleasure I could quit thee for ever) seizing every opportunity to renovate

myself by country air'.[95] This was part of a much wider cultural shift in the way

landscape came to be regarded. Where countryside had previously been admired, it

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[92] NRO, FH282.

[93] NRO, IL1917.

[94] Deuchar, *Sporting Art*, p. 154; K. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (1983; London 1984 edn), pp. 248, 251; Borsay, *Leisure*, p. 210. The author quotes Rosalind Sweet describing how the assumed barbarity of the middle ages acted as a fan to the polite and commercial society of eighteenth-century Britain.

[95] Bruyn Andrews, *Torrington Diaries*, 4, p. 1.

was as a landscape tamed and made productive by man. Thomas observed that, to the agricultural propagandists of the early modern period 'untilled heaths mountains and fens' were 'a standing reproach'.[96] Morton, in his 1712 description of Northamptonshire, was proud that the county had 'no naked or craggy rocks, no rugged and unsightly mountains'.[97] Robert Andrews set out from the east midlands on a tour of the west in August 1752. After leaving the Black Mountains in Wales he recorded in his journal that 'it was very agreeable, after travelling some time thro a country affording only the wild and scanty productions of nature to see again the returns of agriculture.'[98] In contrast, the end of the eighteenth century brought romanticism, and wilderness and mountains came to be appreciated and sought out. Travellers began to explore Britain's wilder fringes. John Byng was escorted up Cader Idris in 1784 by a man who was a 'seasoned' guide. The same author was later able to describe enthusiastically the 'wildness' of Charnwood Forest in Leicestershire, with it 'pleasant dips, and many romantic scars and rocks'.[99] Perhaps one of the most widespread manifestations of this shift in sensibilities is to be found in the landscape park, which concealed views of cultivation behind vistas of the seemingly wild. Thomas suggested that this fashion was, in part, a reaction to the very success of agricultural revolution. As the landscape came to be more ordered and regular, so the disordered came to be valued.[100]

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[96] Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 254.

[97] J. Morton, *Natural History of Northamptonshire* (London, 1712), p. 20.

[98] NRO, A280.

[99] C. Bruyn Andrews (ed.), *The Torrington Diaries*, 4 vols (London, 1934-38), 2, p. 158.

[100] Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 254.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the period that was crucial to the hunting transition in terms of how certain sections of society thought and felt about the sport. Hunting undoubtedly fell out of favour in some quarters, and socially and culturally influential quarters at that, where it was viewed as an outdated and antiquated pastime. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, the fortunes of the sport were once more on the rise. During the course of the century, hunting had adapted to many of the changes that had affected elite leisure. It was organizing itself on a subscription basis, along the same lines as many gentleman's clubs, and it was fully ready to exploit the amenities now offered by provincial towns.

One of the distinguishing features of modern foxhunting was the large number of mounted followers it attracted, and the increasingly public nature of the sport. Whereas hunting had traditionally been very much at the pleasure of the wealthy owners of the hounds, the hunt members now could influence, if not dictate, when and where the hunt met, and what type of landscape it encompassed. These followers tended to be largely interested in the riding, and preferred the type of grassland offered by the shires. It was this group that helped foxhunting to attain the preeminence it achieved in the nineteenth century.

Chapter 7
Conclusion

The aim of the thesis has been to look at the transition from deer hunting to foxhunting that occurred between 1600 and 1850 with relationship to the landscape of Northamptonshire, and to evaluate whether the traditional explanation of the transition stands up to scrutiny. The traditional explanation has tied the transition to change in the landscape: loss of woodland habitat led to loss of deer, and therefore there was nothing left to hunt. The great and the good identified the fox as a suitable replacement, a prey that would enable them to continue with their favoured pastime of hunting from horseback. The earliest source for this argument appears to be W. Scarth Dixon, in his 1912 book *Hunting in the Olden Days*. Scarth Dixon was a foxhunter rather than an historian, but his account of the transition gained currency and has been repeated in subsequent accounts up to and including Griffin's *Blood Sports* in 2007.[1]

An examination of the royal forests of Northamptonshire has not shown the kind of large scale diminution in woodland in the period 1600-1850 that would have driven a hunting transition based on necessity. Whittlewood and Salcey forests remained very much the same size and shape over this period. In Rockingham even disafforestation had not led to a radical reduction in woodland. Landowners continued to find wood and timber the best use for what could be marginal forest lands. Where the woodlands remained, so did the deer, and the forests were still managed to provide habitat for them. Insofar as the deer population can be traced, it seems to have recovered from a mid-seventeenth century crisis by the beginning of

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[1] Scarth Dixon devotes an entire chapter to 'The Passing of the Red Deer'. W. Scarth Dixon, *Hunting in the Olden Days* (London, 1912), pp. 20-27; E. Griffin, *Blood Sport: Hunting in Britain Since 1066* (New Haven and London, 2007), pp. 108-110.

the eighteenth century, before foxhunting emerged in its 'modern' form. It was the period after 1850, and after the establishment of foxhunting as a dominant country sport, that the woodlands of Northamptonshire finally went under pasture and plough, and man attempted to clear the deer from the landscape. Up until that time if the will remained to hunt deer then there were still deer to hunt.

An examination of the maps in the atlas of Rockingham Forest supports the findings in this thesis by showing a survival of woodland; but the maps also illustrate a significant diminution of wood pasture from the medieval to the early modern period.[2] It could be argued that maybe a crisis in deer population should be pushed backwards in time, and that the deer had already been depleted, and the landscape of pursuit restricted, by the late medieval period. Such an investigation is outside the chronological scope of this thesis, but it should also be observed that the hunting transition did not occur until the eighteenth century. The move from deer hunting to foxhunting did not happen when the wood pasture was turned over to arable agriculture, but much later, so any explanation of the hunting transition that linked it with this change in landscape would necessarily have to account for the fact that the transition took more than two hundred and fifty years to effect.

The exploration of the diverse methods used for hunting deer has demonstrated the role that the park played in the sport. The pursuit of deer was not necessarily a fast and furious horseback chase, and much sport and entertainment could be had within the park pales. We have found evidence for a resurgence in park making in the county of Northamptonshire and beyond in the early modern period. We have also demonstrated that these parks continued to be stocked with deer, even if the park's form and function changed in other ways. Again, if there was the will to

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[2] G. Foard, D. Hall, T. Partida, *Rockingham Forest: an Atlas of the Medieval and Early Modern Landscape* (Northampton, 2009), pp. 73-158.

continue with hunting as carried out in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there were certainly the prey and the environment to facilitate this.

The fox required a similar habitat to the deer; it favoured woodland and in particular woodland with dense undergrowth. The landscape of foxhunting was, however, characterized by grassland: this was the terrain required to chase the fox across at speed. As the sport of foxhunting grew in popularity, its proponents had to make special effort to preserve the prey and ensure that there were sufficient foxes to hunt. These efforts included the renting of land and the creation of purpose-made fox coverts. Foxes still inhabited the woodland retreats of Northamptonshire's royal forests, but this landscape did not become a centre for the new sport because it was not so good to ride across. It is an irony that, while the traditional explanation had hunting changing because foxes were plentiful, and deer were not, the hunters of the fox were constantly confronted with potential shortage of prey. They had to take steps, including the manipulation of the landscape, to ensure that there would be foxes to hunt.

An understanding of the methods used to pursue both deer and foxes has proved crucial to interpreting the hunting transition and its relationship with the landscape. Deer hunting was heterogeneous in methodology: deer could be pursued from horseback, driven past stands to be shot, or coursed by greyhounds, but all these methods involved the participation of trained dogs. Modern foxhunting was homogenous in its methodology: it involved fast pursuit on horseback. Even the most comparable form of deer hunting, the *par force* hunt, was significantly different to the form of foxhunting that rose to such popularity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Great importance was placed on finding a suitably prestigious stag to hunt, and ensuring that the hounds stuck to that exact animal. The hunt depended on the

active participation of many men on foot: to lead couples of hounds to places along the expected line of the hunt where they could be loosed in relays, to help control the hounds, and to assist them over any unsurmountable obstacles. The whole affair was slower by far than the modern foxhunt and had different priorities. The horse was an important player but by no means a central focus of the sport: he played a comparable role in medieval or early modern falconry. In foxhunting, on the other hand, the priority for the majority of the participants was the sheer thrill of a fast horseback chase. This contrast seems to have been missed by many writers on the sport when looking at early modern hunting techniques. They have expected to find evidence of an essentially equestrian sport, and when they discover that an activity predicated on long, fast gallops was not feasible in some environments, such as deer parks, they have questioned whether these really were hunting arenas. They have questioned whether the sport that could have taken place there could actually be classified as hunting, or whether it was some sad, faded descendent of a more energetic medieval predecessor. But I believe that this is to fundamentally misunderstand the nature of early modern hunting. The sport was about the hound, not about the horse. The acknowledged highest form of the sport was known as *par force des chiens*, not *par force des chevaux*.

Examination of literary sources has shown hunting to have been held in high regard in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was one of the activities that defined a nobleman or a gentleman. There is also evidence that people were not only reading about hunting, they were participating too. Regardless of the fact that some modern commentators have questioned whether what occupied the early modern hunter constituted 'real hunting', there was little doubt that the participants viewed it as such. Hunting did lose much of its cultural *caché* at the beginning of the

eighteenth century, however. The thrill of the chase seemed to hold little appeal for fashionable, metropolitan polite society. Hunting became the pastime of the hopelessly outdated Tory squire ensconced in his rural retreat, a figure of fun or of derision. But in the course of the eighteenth century hunting adapted. By the beginning of the nineteenth century foxhunting was not only the indisputably most popular form of hunting, it was well on its way to becoming a cultural icon. Hunting by then, however, was quite a different sport. It had become what we regard it to be today: a primarily equestrian sport.

The social position of hunting was transformed along with its methodology. Modern foxhunters congratulated themselves on the social inclusivity of their sport (albeit such inclusivity was extremely limited to modern eyes). As the nineteenth century progressed, the hunting field swelled to include men employed in trade and industry, as well as the landed elite. Farmers and graziers also had a significant presence, and although they were not regarded as the social equals of the foremost of the hunt followers, the importance of their active cooperation in allowing the hunt to cross their land was acknowledged. Both rural and urban labouring classes were well represented in the foot followers of the hunt, even if their presence might not always have been appreciated.

An important part of the explanation of why the nature of hunting changed so much lies in the popularity of horse racing and the breeding of the thoroughbred horse. With the arrival of this supreme equine athlete, man (and woman) wanted to experience the thrill of riding such a creature cross country. The very nature of riding itself changed in this period. Englishmen abandoned the long stirrup leathers and deep-seated saddles of high-school riding, and developed 'the English hunting seat', with its shorter stirrups and flat-seated saddle. The hunting seat facilitated fast,

forward riding, and the jumping of obstacles at speed. Following behind came the development of the side saddle with the 'leaping head' that held women in a secure position such that they could retain decorum while riding just as fast, and jumping just as high, as the men.[3] The central role of the horse explained the very different landscape that provided the theatre for the new form of hunting. What its participants required above all else was grassland over which to gallop. The enclosure history of Northamptonshire, along with the conversion to grazing, led to a portion of the county becoming part of the hallowed shires: the foremost location of an incredibly fashionable and aspirational pastime.

The sport of deer hunting itself was transformed to incorporate the type of chase so beloved by foxhunters. The practice of transporting a captive deer by cart to a hunting ground, and then recapturing it at the end of the chase, has been taken by hunting historians as further proof of the decline of deer stocks that supposedly drove the hunting transition. But the location of many nineteenth-century deer hunts, and contemporary accounts of the sport, suggest that it was, in fact, viewed as a poor substitute for foxhunting, rather than as a poor substitute for the idealized sport of deer hunting. Nineteenth-century deer hunts were primarily located near the capital, where a man could get away from business for a few hours hunting, and in Norfolk and Suffolk, where the shooting interest militated against establishment of foxhunting packs. The hunts themselves used foxhounds rather than old-fashioned stag hounds, and the principal virtue of the carted deer was in the provision of a certain, and comparatively short, pursuit.

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[3] By the mid-nineteenth century the dashing and fearless female rider after hounds had become a stock character in fiction. For example, the hero of *Orley Farm* is injured when he unwisely follows the crack rider Miss Tristram over a bank and double ditch. A. Trollope, *Orley Farm* (1861; Oxford, 2008 edn) pp. 287-288.

It is hoped that this thesis has argued successfully the need to revisit the traditional explanation of the transition that happened in the sport of hunting between the years 1600 and 1850. The hunting transition was tied to the landscape, but in a different way to that generally described. Hunting did not simply react to a negative – the diminution of woodland and disappearance of deer – rather it transformed itself into a different sport for cultural reasons and exploited landscape changes to enhance the experience. It is also hoped that the central position of the horse has been demonstrated. The breeding of the thoroughbred predated the breeding of the fast foxhound, it also predated the widespread switch to the fox as the primary prey of hunters. Modern foxhunting was a new sport, and marked a distinct break with tradition, precisely because, for the majority of participants, the horse was more important than the hound.

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Finch Hatton archive:
FH272
FH282
FH1433
FH2056
FH2457
FH2646
FH2829
FH2858
FH2954
FH3141
FH3842
FH3843
FH4248
FH4389

Fermor Hesketh archive:
Fermor Hesketh N Bundle 7

Grafton archive:
G399/16/6
G1662

G2017
G2464-G2471
G3867
G3951/23
G3980
G3982
G3999
G3999/3
G4000
G4050/2
G4079/50/1
G4104
G4139/3
G4252

Langham archive:
L(C)32-35
L(C)646
L(C)681
L(C)688
L(C)693
L(C)695
L(C)697
L(C)1082

Quarter Session Records:
QSR1/173/24

Isham archive:
IL1917
IL2686
IL3115

NRO Maps:
Map 2905
Map 2865
Map 3105
Map 4093
Map 4096
Map 4097
Map 4210
Map 5965

M(CM) 595

Survey of Whittleood Forest by Richard Davis of Lewknor:
NPL3044

NRO Wills:
20.7.1773

19.9.1783
13.9.1793
15.2.1794
9.2.1797
9.5.1810

Westmoreland of Abethorpe archive:
W(A) box4/parcel VIII/no 1
W(A) VI 2/23
W(A) VI 2/25
W(A) VI 2/26
W(A) 6 VI 2/36
W(A) 6 VI 2/0

Puppy cards:
YZ3494

Charles King Chace Book, 1800-1808, 1817-1819:
YZ2586
YZ2588

Henry Dryden's diary 1839-1842:
ZA477.

Wilson's diary:
ZA3801

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ZB707/4

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