Geography and Modernity

Changing Land, Law, and Life on Cranborne Chase in the Nineteenth Century

D.Phil Submitted Trinity Term 2007 [i.e 2008 - LTS = 18/ii/08]

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Cartouche from *Andrews and Dury's Map of Wiltshire, 1773*

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Cranborne Chase is distinctive not only for its predominantly rural landscape but also for its history as a hunting franchise. A vast expanse stretching into three counties – Dorset, Wiltshire, and Hampshire – it remained subject to premodern laws and land use patterns well into the modern period.

This thesis sets out to examine the interaction and changing relationships between land, law, and life both immediately preceding and immediately following the Chase's 1830 disfranchisement, itself the culmination of a forty years' 'disfranchisement debate' between Lord Rivers and his neighbours, known collectively as 'the proprietors'. At the heart of the debate were two seemingly incompatible views of property, one distinctly premodern and the other distinctly modern, and yet with some interesting parallels.

Lord Rivers sought to retain his franchise despite its being deemed an obstacle to innovation and improvement, a temptation towards crime, and a financial burden by the proprietors, whose own concerns were private profit and game preservation. His Lordship was keen to point out the social status and paternal feelings it engendered – its value was as much symbolic as financial – the local commoners being particular beneficiaries. In fact, in many ways, the preservation of deer promoted, rather than prevented, social unity and ecological stability.

The Chase was not without its problems, though. Not only did the deer destroy certain crops and prevent the cultivation of others, but they were also much sought-after by generations of deer stealers, many of whom stole to supply a lucrative black market. Documents relating to numerous and often lengthy legal proceedings provide an abundance of information about the Chase's management and protection, as well as an insight into local criminal and social patterns.

We will thus pursue three themes, or aspects, of the Chase's history, as well as their origins in, and implications for, its geography: firstly, land use and management; secondly, crime, particularly deer, game, and wood theft; and thirdly, hunting, including its cost, social significance, and modernisation. Many of these issues are discussed within their wider context, for although Cranborne Chase was in some ways very distinctive, it was also a prime example of national changes in law and lifestyle effecting local changes, with implications for both the land and its inhabitants.

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A Note on Style

With respect to quotations from primary sources, provided the meaning is clear, original spellings and grammar have been retained.

Chapter 1 Geography and History

The purpose of this discussion is to discover what was happening to affect a large and distinctive area of Southern England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It seemed prudent at the outset to look for guidance about the context in which this might be done, especially given that my first degree was in Biological Sciences.

1.1 Geography, Human Geography, and Historical Geography

'All the facts in natural history, taken by themselves, have no value, but are barren like a single sex. But marry [them] to human history, and [they are] full of life' (Emerson, quoted in Allen 1994, pviii). Unbeknown to Emerson, this observation anticipates what would later become known as historical geography. But what exactly is historical geography? In particular, how are its scope, purpose, and methodology similar to or different from those of history and geography, and to what extent is it a component of each? In order to answer these and other questions, Baker (2003, p209) sets forth seven principles (italicised when quoted as in the original), which 'bring the relations of geography and history into sharper focus' and thereby '[underpin] the practice of historical geography'.

1.1.1 Geography as Human Geography

But before we elaborate upon historical geography, we must first clarify what we mean by geography more generally. Langton (1988, p17) identifies 'two quite distinct versions of the structure of geography (and, indeed, of knowledge as a whole)': systematic and synthetic. Systematic geography 'is about space not place. A scientific, analytical subject concerned with the spatial organization of human activity' (*ibid*). In contrast, synthetic geography 'is about place, not space. Its purpose ... is integrative or ecological, concerned with the relationships between human societies and the natural environments in which they live' (*ibid*, p18). In synthetic geography, 'concepts such as the region, the cultural landscape, and human ecology ... keep together what systematically construed geography deliberately pulls apart' (*ibid*). Human-environment relationships thus become apparent through 'loosely structured frameworks within which it is possible to bring together ideas and findings ... across the highly permeable boundaries between the different disciplines in the humanities' (*ibid*). The synthetic approach is used here.

1.1.2 Geography as Historical Geography

'*Historical geography is fundamentally concerned with place synthesis, not with spatial analysis*' (Baker 2003, p219), and is, therefore, '*central to [(synthetic)] geography as a whole*' (*ibid*, p216). But what of its scope, purpose, and methodology, and its relationship with each of its two 'mother' subjects? '*Historical geography, like history, asks questions about the past*. Unlike history, it addresses essentially geographical questions' (*ibid*, p209). These questions follow no particular format; instead,

> given the wide range of questions posed by geographers in general, there is an equally wide range of studies produced by historical geographers in particular. Some examine the changing location and distribution of human activities ... others examine the relationships of peoples with their physical environments ... some trace the making of landscapes or decode meanings of landscapes ... others concern themselves with reconstructing the geography of regions or places (*ibid*);

all do so with regard to the past. But what makes these questions – and, by extension, historical geography – more geographical than historical? Writing in the 1870s, Wimmer proposed two primary functions for historical geography: explaining the operation of geography in history and reconstructing the geography of past periods. The former 'may in practice involve a study not very different from [the latter, but] as a part of the necessary context within which the flow of historical events may be better understood' (Smith 1965, p122). Interestingly, 'both historians and geographers converged on this theme from different directions' (*ibid*): historically minded geographers turning to written evidence and geographically minded historians to archaeological evidence for further clarification. Thus, in what initially appears to be a reversal of roles, the former looked to man while the latter looked to the land. Of course, geography, taking the land as its starting point, treats man as a major influencing factor, and vice versa for history. This is certainly a reasonable generalisation, but some distinction must be made; otherwise, we face the 'serious objection to this type of historical geography, that it sets out to clarify history, not geography' (*ibid*). Although this distinction may seem overly philosophical, it is nonetheless an important one, for if historical geography's true place is in history, then debate concerning its place in geography becomes superfluous. Interestingly, this may be the case, but not for the aforementioned reason.

Darby (1953, p6) famously argued that 'all geography is historical geography, either actual or potential': if geographers cannot fully understand the present without first understanding the past's

influence in shaping the present, then geography must, by definition, be a historical endeavour. Langton (1988, p20) reiterates the point, observing that

> in so far as the relationships described in the present or the past can only be accounted for and made intelligible with reference to the way that they have developed through time, all human geography must be historical and therefore, in the same way that all history must be about some place and therefore geographical, the adjective is an entirely superfluous tautology.

These insights are not wholly recent. In tracing the long-standing concern over historical-geographical interactions, Darby (1953, p1) cites a seventeenth century work – Heylyn's *Microcosmus* – explaining that 'there is a much quoted sentence ... which runs: "Historie without Geographie like a dead carkasse hath neither life nor motion at all"; but what we do not so often hear is the beginning of the quotation: "Geographie without Historie hath life and motion but at randome, and unstable"'. Even so, contemporary geography tends to distinguish between historical and non-historical research. The latter may acknowledge past influences, but they are not of utmost significance. 'The term 'historical geography' has [thus] come to be increasingly identified with an approach in which data are historical but in which the method is geographical. The purpose of the historical geographer, according to this view, is to reconstruct the geography of past times' (Darby 1953, p4). Although all geographical research contains some element of the past (whether recognised or not), only specifically historical geographical research makes this element its primary objective.

In conclusion, then,

> as long as geographers are concerned with the study of places and what they are like, how they differ from each other, and how their parts are interrelated, they will want to know how these places came to be what they are, and what they were like in the past. It is obvious that such studies may be pursued with varying relevance to the geography of the present day, and with varying interest and importance to geographers, according to their predilections. But historical studies have a contribution to make which lies very much closer to the heart of the subject, for they are frequently essential to the understanding of why things are where they are. This problem of location is, indeed, seen by some as the central theme of the subject of geography as a whole (Smith 1965, p118).

Moreover, it is this central concern with location that distinguishes geographical from historical pursuits. Hence, Baker's (2003, p220) seventh principle, that '*historical geography highlights the historical specificity of particular places [(locations)]*. [It] emphasises the distinctive and varying geographical patterns and geographical processes identifiable in particular places [and] it seeks to situate places within their own historical contexts.'

1.2 Historical Geography and Landscape

1.2.1 'Style' in Historical Geography

Baker characterises historical geography as a subject marked by both important continuities and fundamental changes. Just as it addresses evolution over time, it has itself evolved over time so that there now exists the 'possibility of identifying three general 'styles' of historical geography, without implying that a 'new' style completely replaces an 'old' style ... and recognising that the pace of stylistic change is by no means uniform throughout the world' (1988, pp7-8). As he (*ibid*) elaborates,

> 'historical geography' has had different meanings at different periods in the past and still carries today different meanings in different places. Nonetheless, some universal traits are distinguishable and – recognising the considerable degree of simplification, even of caricature, involved in the following enterprise – three basic 'styles' of historical geography may be identified: 'traditional', 'modern' and 'post-modern'.

The first he (*ibid*, p8) defines broadly as

> the cross-sectional study of places at critical periods in their past ... in which the data are 'historical' but ... the methods of analysis and interpretation are 'geographical'. It is a style which emphasises the importance of discovering unpublished documentary sources which can be mapped in order to depict regional differences ... and changing cultural landscapes.

Its dependence on historical documents can pose potential problems (further discussed below), as can its implicit assumption that 'the geography of a place can be stable, unchanging for a given period or time in the past' (Baker 2003, p216). (This latter issue can be redressed to some extent by the addition of ''vertical themes' of landscape and geographical change' (*ibid*, p215), also further discussed below.) Nonetheless, 'one of its enduring strengths is the insistence upon the need for scholarly textual criticism, for a circumspect use of primary sources' (Baker 1988, p8). The modern style is far more quantitative: in its 'enthusiasm for spatial order, for models and for techniques of numerical analysis ... [it] privileges 'hard' sources [and is] fundamentally positivist in its approach and reliant upon scientific as opposed to humanistic models of explanation' (*ibid*). It, therefore, conforms more to the systematic view than to the synthetic view of geography. Meanwhile, post-modernism draws upon both of its precursors in an 'attempt to humanise', that is, 'to refocus attention upon man as an agent of landscape change, upon ideas as much as upon artefacts, on attitudes as much as upon actions' (*ibid*). In doing so, it 'searches for the symbolic significance, and social meaning, of landscapes and of places [and] tends to emphasise the historicity of geographical change, the importance of areal differences rather than of

spatial regularities' (*ibid*, pp8-9). This, in turn, 'is closely allied to the wider revival of interest in a new kind of regional geography with a strongly historical emphasis. Place synthesis, as opposed to spatial analysis, is one of the distinguishing traits' (*ibid*).

The study undertaken here is not strictly traditional, modern, or post-modern, but instead draws on all three, the intended outcome being a humane historical geography derived for the most part from historical documents – both personal and official – and considering the values inherent in the cultural-physical interactions they describe. This overlap need not be problematic: writing at a more general level, Golledge (quoted in Langton 1988, p23) assures us that 'the discipline should not be dominated by one mode of thought' and that 'perhaps it is the existence of such 'divisions' in geography that has the potential to make it one of the more imaginative and exciting disciplines'. The same holds true here in that, by incorporating the underpinning principles of more than one style, a more fully informative representation should emerge.

1.2.2 Style and Landscape

In distinguishing between each of the above three styles, Baker illustrates their various implications with reference to 'landscape', itself a loaded term, and yet one of the most fundamental and pervasive concepts in synthetic geographical research.

> To view the landscape historically is to acknowledge its cumulative character; to acknowledge that nature, symbolism and design are not static elements of the human record but change with historical experience; and to acknowledge too that the geographically distinct quality of places is a product of the selective addition and survival over time of each new set of forms peculiar to that region or locality (Conzen, quoted in Baker 2003, p128).

Landscape in traditional studies is largely about maps, in modern studies about models, and in post-modern studies about meanings. Although all three styles emphasise the term's strong cultural connotations, their methods for examining those connotations differ. Baker (1988, p9) describes the first as focusing on

> the cultural morphology of landscapes, upon the origins and transformation of distinctive landscape forms and of the personalities of places as expressed in regional assemblages of landscape structures. Such work has been dominantly empirical, thoroughly grounded in appropriate archival and field evidence, and essentially rooted in particular places and periods.

Although relatively objective, the methodology involved is not nearly as quantitative as that of the modern style. In contrast, post-modern methodology is both subjective and qualitative. Its main concern is

> not only with patterns of structures and processes of change but also with symbolic significance and social meaning ... Individual forms within landscapes may be interpreted as social signs which combine into cultural messages of spaces and places which need to be decoded and interpreted as having varied levels of meaning (*ibid*, pp12-13).

Even the most 'ordinary landscapes deserve and demand extraordinary interpretations, because of the individual and collective cultural significance with which they are endowed not only by those who created them but also by successive generations who have experienced them' (*ibid*, p13).

This brings us to the important point of individual interpretation. As Graham and Nash (2000, p5) observe, 'historical geography is about the interplay between the past and the present, between symbolic and material worlds'. Although landscapes include physical features, which are simply those in and of themselves, these features take on cultural value when perceived and depicted in particular ways. 'If we would study with profit the history of our ancestors, we ... must never forget that the country of which we read was a very different country from that in which we live' (Macaulay, quoted in Darby 1953, p4). Both the land and the way in which society thinks about it have changed.

One thing that has not changed, however, is the fact that man creates landscape: '"a geographical individuality ... is not something delivered complete from the hand of Nature" ... it is something that emerges when men wrest their livelihoods from the soil' (de la Blache quoted in *ibid*, p6). Indeed, integral to the concept of landscape are man's direct interaction with the land and the resultant mark he leaves upon it. Because this interaction is a continual process, and because it is driven by man's changing needs, the landscape undergoes constant transformation. Thus, 'the landscape we see is not a static arrangement of objects. It has become what it is, and it is usually in the process of becoming something different' (*ibid*), both physically and culturally. Hence, Sauer's (quoted in Baker 2003, p130) assertion that

> the cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a culture group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, and the cultural landscape is the result. Under the influence of a given culture, itself changing in time, the landscape undergoes development, passing through phases, and probably reaching ultimately the end of its cycle of development ... The natural landscape is of course of fundamental importance, for it supplies the materials

> out of which the cultural landscape is formed. The shaping force, however, lies in the culture itself.

1.2.3 Questioning the Landscape

> When, as geographers, we gaze around, one question forces itself upon our attention; it takes a variety of form: 'Why does this countryside look as it does? What has given this landscape its present character?' The moment we ask this question, that moment are we committed to historical geography in one form or another (Darby 1953, p9).

But, if the concept of landscape relies so heavily upon individual interpretation, the underlying influences of which are rarely explicit, how can historical geographers ever hope to uncover its full significance? Coones and Patten (1986, p15) warn that

> those who attempt an explanatory description of a cultural landscape are confronted with a daunting task. Landscape is in its very essence a totality, composed of a multitude of interrelated elements which cannot easily be separated or divided for analysis without the unity being violated and the overall conception lost ... Landscape is neither a careless jumble of artefacts nor a loose assemblage of necessarily evolving or progressing themes, but a complex entity rooted in a specific time and at a particular place.

Yet, although 'any given [place] can only represent the natural order of things, in Thomas Hardy's vivid phrase: "At this point of time, at this point in space" [we] must study it with an eye to the forces that brought it to its present shape' (Edlin 1956, p75). Despite Darby's (1962, p1) initial foreboding – 'let us at once acknowledge that in attempting to describe a landscape, the geographer faces many difficulties' – he does suggest a possible solution: 'one difficulty arises from the fact that he usually has to describe an area larger than can be seen at one time. This may be resolved by a choice of small representative areas, or by generalization based upon features common throughout the larger area as a whole.' The same is true of our choice of themes. We previously alluded to two possible methodologies: horizontal and vertical cross sectioning. The main difference, as the names suggest, is that the former looks at all relevant factors within specific periods, while the latter traces specific factors continuously through time. The general picture created in each case is likely to be similar, but the emphasis will be different, and vertical studies are often preferred. As Postan (quoted in Smith 1965, p131) points out, 'past, present and future are but steps in the "ascending ladder of necessity": a ladder in which every step is so fully supported by the step below and so fully supports the step above that its relative position between the two will tell us all we need to know about itself as well as about the ladder as a whole'. '[It] does, indeed, then become highly desirable to link successive period

pictures by studies of intervening changes and the social and economic determinants of change' (*ibid*, p132). Hence, Baker's fourth principle that '*historical geography is essentially concerned with geographical change through time*'. The current study's chosen period – although only a single period – was a particularly significant one, in which changes in national law, economy, and sport had important implications for local land management, crime, and social relationships.

However, even having overcome the problem of focus, there still remains one of objectivity. Although discussed more generally below, some brief comment with respect to landscapes may be useful here. Darby (1962, p4) poses the questions: 'is the geographer objective? Can he be? In describing a landscape, is he not committed by his past training and his past experiences – by his prejudices, if you will?' Similar questions must be asked of the individuals whose accounts the geographer interprets, for, in both cases, personal and public values undoubtedly influence the way in which individuals represent and interpret landscapes. But this need not be problematic: as previously mentioned, trends and values play an important role in landscape construction and so should be viewed as informative rather than obstructive to the geographer's understanding. In addition, provided he is himself sufficiently reflexive, the geographer can usually lay bare his own biases. As we have already seen, historical geography need not be a strictly factual pursuit; because it is about man's relationship with the environment, descriptions of that relationship, no matter how quantitative or qualitative, are both appropriate and revealing.

1.3 Sources: the Historical in Historical Geography

1.3.1 Manuscripts and Maps

'History cannot be written without sources. Good history cannot be written without knowing how to find those sources, how to understand them, and how to exploit them effectively' (Olney 1995). In praise of the most obvious source, manuscripts, Denning (1969) writes, 'when we speak thus of 'history', we mean not only the story of the great affairs of state, but also of every side of society ... the study of [which] is enriched by recourse to the papers of those who took part'. Manuscripts, written in the past to convey a particular story, circumstance, or objective, offer historians a glimpse into the attitudes and events that shaped the writers' daily lives. Where hard evidence – indeed *any* evidence – is often scarce, written documents enable historians to access an often otherwise unknowable world; their value is immense.

Yet, manuscripts are not without problems: '*both the sources and the theories of historical geography, like those of history, are problematic.* The practice of [both] involves an attempt to resolve the dialectical tension between 'fact' and 'interpretation'' – the problem being that 'the geography we reconstruct from the 'facts' discovered in historical sources is not factual at all; it is instead a series of judgements' (Baker 2003, p210).

> Our geographical knowledge of the past must always be incomplete because of the partial (in all of its senses) nature of historical sources. A complete record of the past was never compiled and only a small portion of the historical record which was compiled has survived and has been read critically by historical geographers. Moreover, a historical document or other source comes to us, not as a pure source about the past, but as one which has been refracted through the mind of the historical recorder and which in turn has now to be viewed through the eyes of present-day scholars. Strictly speaking, we are not reconstructing an 'actual' geography of the past; instead we are constructing an 'imagined' past geography (*ibid*, p211).

Baker thus summarises the main methodological concerns facing historians (hereafter taken to include historical geographers), the elaboration of which forms the basis of the ensuing discussion.

Practical Advantages and Disadvantages

'In its approximations to reality, history has always been constrained by [the] availability of evidence' (O'Brien, quoted in Olney 1995); 'the traces left by the past ... do not provide an even coverage of it. Archives are the product of the chance survival of some documents and the corresponding chance loss or deliberate destruction of others' (Evans 1997, p87). A document's survival may itself prove an interesting pursuit, or, at least, an interesting consideration. For example, the tendency for particular classes to be over- or underrepresented in manuscripts may be an important indicator of past societal relations: 'the social institutions and material practices which were involved in [a document's] production played a significant part in shaping what was said and how it was said' (Somekawa and Smith, quoted in *ibid*, p92). Only those sufficiently well educated could record their observations formally, and only those sufficiently well-off could afford an education. The upper classes were thus overrepresented in the original documentation and so, unsurprisingly, are overrepresented in the surviving documentation. Although this often results in a 'history of the elites' (*ibid*, p87), details about the lives of the lower classes can be ascertained in other ways, particularly through legal and administrative records.

Even when documents do survive, they may not be readily available: perhaps because they are part of a private collection or perhaps because they are simply too fragile to use. Little can be done to redress these problems; manuscripts are often unique and so once lost (or effectively lost, given the impossibility of gaining access), are lost forever. Historians can nonetheless derive meaning from the documents that remain. Thus, 'doing historical research is rather like doing a jigsaw puzzle' (*ibid*, p89); pieces may be scattered or lost, but by using the pieces that are available, the historian can create at least the outline of a picture, filling in the gaps through inference.

Despite the unique perspectives they offer, critics continue to contest the use of manuscripts alone. Rackham (1986, p6) argues that 'the historian has to combine the several types of evidence at his disposal. A story based on one kind of evidence is never so complete or secure as one that is corroborated from some quite different direction.' This may be true, but corroboration can come from within a single source type as well as from different ones. Triangulation between multiple manuscripts, for example about a single event but from the viewpoint of different observers, is a particularly useful test of consistency and one often used by historians. Meanwhile, although Rackham advocates its use in his own research, even the land itself is not without problems; as Coones and Patten (1986, p27) point out, 'it is often remarked that the landscape is a rich historical document of inestimable importance. But it is a very selective, distorted and potentially treacherous source, full of enigmas and interrupted by enormous gaps.'

But what to do with a manuscript once in hand? The first step is to determine its context, the second, to determine its content.

> Traditionally, historical geographers have been more concerned with the manipulation of data rather than with analysis of the source itself but the need to understand the language, methods, form of transmission, and purposes and motives of the compiler is crucial to its proper use. While such background information may be available in guides to record sources, its derivation often requires study of the general historical, economic and social structure of the period (Pacione 1987, pp2-3).

Moreover, 'intimately connected with this understanding ... is the need for an awareness of the extent to which the sample being studied can be considered ... representative. In the case of historical geography this exists in two dimensions, the temporal and the spatial' (Baker *et al* 1970, p14). Consider, for example, a map: despite being one of the most 'ostensibly spatially representative' (*ibid*, p15) sources available, information may nonetheless be purposely included or excluded, perhaps for

practical reasons or perhaps for political reasons, as further discussed below. Just 'because a particular feature was not marked on an early map does not necessarily mean that it was not in existence at that date, it simply may not have been considered important for the purpose of the compiler' (*ibid*).

On an even more fundamental level,

> as [geography] is essentially concerned with spatial patterns and relationships, one of the main problems facing the historical geographer is the location and size of the areal units to which his data is applicable. Much of the work concerns periods before detailed maps were in existence and the documents themselves may well be based on areal units that have long since disappeared (*ibid*, p16).

In other cases, 'spatial units', despite being 'of paramount importance ... are often never explicitly stated and may have to be inferred from supplementary sources' (Pacione 1987, p3), or they may be stated, but easily confused. The Cranborne Chase timber accounts are full of measurements, the most interesting of which, in this context, is the lug. According to Smart (1841, p145), 'the lands within the inner bounds were subject to a special admeasurement, as in forests, viz. eighteen feet to the rod or lug, (as it is provincially called) which is sixteen and a half in other places'. In fact, although the rod (also known as a perch or pole) was standardised at 16½ feet in 1820, several different measurements were previously in use. For example, the fencing rod usually measured 24 feet, the forest rod 21 feet, and the coppice rod 18 feet (Connor 1987). Dorsetshire land was measured 'by the goad or lug of 15 feet and an inch' (Stevenson 1812, p253), while Davis (1811, p268) explains of Wiltshire that 'a Lug ... is of three lengths in this county: 15, 18, and 16 feet'.

One final practical point worth mentioning is that of handwriting. Although this may seem a relatively frivolous point, accessibility relates not only to the availability of documents, but also to their comprehensibility. Not only are past modes of handwriting different from those more common today, but the language often differs, too; historians must be familiar with these idiosyncrasies. And nor are

> problems connected with palaeography ... limited, as might be expected, to medieval times for in many respects handwriting of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries poses as many problems of illegibility as does that of earlier periods and does not have the conventions of style and language of earlier 'Court Hands' (Baker *et al* 1970, p15).

The aforementioned problems

> are associated with all types of source materials used by historical geographers ... [The] point to be emphasised [is] that no geographer can approach historical source material *de novo* and immediately extract data to be mapped and analysed. An immense amount of scholarship and time must be spent in understanding the nature of the source material before a start can be made in analysis (*ibid*, p17).

When such scholarship and time are spent, manuscripts remain an important source of information.

Theoretical Advantages and Disadvantages

Having acknowledged the practical advantages and disadvantages of using manuscripts, how do we set about accurately pursuing and portraying our chosen theme? Because history is by definition no longer with us, and is at any rate a relatively intangible concept, one obvious obstacle to objective historical representation is our inability to know everything about anything, and especially about something with which we have no direct contact. This consideration is an important one because we can only ever have access to history that leaves behind artefacts, fragments of the past upon which we subsequently base our entire understanding of that past. Langton (unpublished, p6) approaches this conundrum with reference to Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, in which the author

> emphasises the difference between statements which are meant to convey the nature of material being in the world, and statements which relate to the intellectual possibility of knowing about being in the world. He argues that a preoccupation with the processes and problems of knowing distracts attention from what it is we are trying to know about.

The debate over the potential for objective historical representation is a long-standing one. Ranke, writing in the nineteenth century, suggests that history's purpose is not so much the uncovering of absolute truth as of 'wie es eigentlich gewesen'; that is, of 'how it essentially was' (Evans 1997, p17). However, Fischer (1970, pp68-70) believes that essentialism too closely resembles holism, 'for knowledge of the 'essence' of a thing implies knowledge of the whole thing, which is impossible'. He continues,

> the fallacy of essences is tempting to historians, because many of them begin with an article of faith ... that history happened in the way that it happened and not in any other way. But it does not follow from this premise that there is one 'essential' inner reality, which can be hunted and found. There are many factual patterns ... which can be superimposed upon past events. A historian's task is to find patterns which are more relevant to his problems, and more accurate and more comprehensive than others, but he cannot hope to find that 'essential' pattern, any more than he can hope to know all of history, and to know it objectively.

Yet, as O'Brien (quoted in Olney 1995) points out,

> latterly a discourse ... has tried to persuade historians that the evidence they assiduously uncover in primary sources is entirely problematical. Manuscripts are merely texts. Their apparent meanings emerge only if and when they are decoded and written down by historians. But, the argument goes [that] there is no recoverable or unambiguous meaning ... in documentary or other forms of evidence. All attempts to write history are severely compromised notably by the ideological and other biases that historians bring to their research but also by their discipline's predilection for imposing a spurious order on a chaotic and incomprehensible past through the use of theories and narratives and above all through language. Historians have, however, long been aware of the problems involved in the interpretation of manuscripts ... They appreciate that the transformation of historical texts into modern prose requires integrity, skill and sensitivity if the reality and objectivity embodied in evidence is not to be reduced to mere texts of ambiguous authority and credibility ... Practitioners of the discipline accept that inferences are contestable; that evidence is provisional and subject to the discovery of new and better sources.

Hence, Baker's third principle, that '*debate is central to the practice of historical geography* ... Current ideas and assertions must be, and must expect to be, revised as new evidence comes to light, as new techniques of analysis become available, as new problems deserving attention are identified, and as new ideas and theories are brought into play' (Baker 2003, p213). With sufficient reflexivity, historians can overcome, or at least bypass, many potential problems. To this extent, manuscripts are a tool like any other: used well, they will produce good results, and vice versa.

Trevelyan argues that 'the collection of facts [and] the weighing of evidence as to what events happened, are in some sense scientific; but not so the discovery of the causes and effects of these events' (Evans 1997, p25). Unlike science, the practical value of which lies in its induction of laws describing and allowing the prediction of cause and effect, the value of Trevelyan's history lies in its description of events immune to law and yet of immense public interest.

> In reaching this judgment, he was echoing the original principle of Ranke, who had distinguished in his day between the rigorous principles of source-criticism needed for an accurate representation of events in the past, and the intuitive method needed to establish the 'interconnectedness' of these events and penetrate to the 'essence' of an epoch ... History, said Trevelyan, was a mixture of the scientific (research), the imaginative or speculative (interpretation) and the literary (presentation). What the historian required was not "more knowledge of facts", which in any case would always be incomplete ... [Instead,] the historian who would give the best interpretation of [an historical fact] was the one who, "having discovered and weighed all the important evidence available, has the largest grasp of intellect, the warmest human sympathy, the highest imaginative power" (Evans 1997, pp25-26).

But what is historical fact? And, perhaps more importantly, if history can never be objective, can it ever be factual? Although Baker reminds us that 'the geography we reconstruct from the 'facts'

discovered in historical sources is not factual at all', Evans (*ibid*, p76) suggests that 'a historical fact is something that happened in history and can be verified as such through the traces history has left behind ... Where theory and interpretation come in is where facts are converted into evidence.' In other words, there exist in history countless perceivable truths; the role of the historian is to uncover, present, and interpret these truths. 'What is at issue, therefore, is how historians use documents not to establish discrete facts, but as evidence for establishing the larger patterns that connect them' (*ibid*, p80).

Integral to seeking these patterns are facilitative questions. 'Scissors-and-paste historians study periods; they collect all the extant testimony about a certain limited group of events, and hope in vain that something will come of it. Scientific historians study problems: they ask questions, and if they are good historians they ask questions which they see their way to answering' (Collingwood, quoted in Fischer 1970, p3). These questions are not merely those defining the topic of research, but additional ones about the material being used, in particular its origin and purpose. Humans undoubtedly have agendas, many of which they reveal in their writing; 'with a manuscript ... the historian can study not only what it says but also how it presents itself' (Olney 1995). He can then more accurately present the context in which the document emerged, including the writer's underlying objectives. Indeed, strive as historians might to present their topics of research accurately, they must bear in mind that the observers upon whom they depend may not have shared this concern; in fact, they may have purposely distorted the truth in order to achieve a particular end. 'Documents are always written from somebody's point of view, with a specific purpose and audience in mind, and unless we can find all that out, we may be misled' (*ibid*). This need not be problematic, though: 'perceptions and representations of reality', although often different from reality, may be 'just as historically important' (Stone, quoted in Evans 1997, p82). As previously mentioned, triangulation is one useful means of testing consistency among different accounts and, therefore, of establishing any given account's degree of veracity.

Similar arguments apply to maps:

> the usual perception of the nature of maps is that they are a mirror, a graphic representation, of some aspect of the real world ... The premise is that a map should offer a transparent window on the world. A good map is an accurate map ... This value judgment is often translated into the way we read old maps. It promotes a mode of interpretation that emphasizes the factual or literal statements maps make about empirical reality ... As an index to the location of things, processes, and events in the past maps are a unique form of documentation. Locating human actions in space remains the greatest intellectual achievement of the map as a form of knowledge. There is, however, an alternative answer to the question "What is a map?" For historians an equally appropriate definition of a map is "a social construction of the world expressed through the medium of cartography." Far from holding up a simple mirror of nature

> that is true or false, maps redescribe the world – like any other document – in terms of relations of power and of cultural practices, preferences, and priorities. What we read on a map is as much related to an invisible social world and to ideology as it is to phenomena seen and measured in the landscape ... The fascination of maps as humanly created documents is found not merely in the extent to which they are objective or accurate. It also lies in their inherent ambivalence and in our ability to tease out new meanings, hidden agendas, and contrasting world views from between the lines on the image (Harley 2001, pp35-36).

Cranborne Chase: Manuscripts and Maps

Examples of missing, altered, or conflicting evidence, and of biased opinions, all appear in the contemporary documentation concerning Cranborne Chase. The central point upon which our chosen period hinges being an ongoing disfranchisement debate, and each side of the debate being headed by powerful members of the local aristocracy, the opportunity for conflicting stories and for political and media spin was great. The problem was acknowledged even at the time; hence, Chapman's (1791, p21) accusation that 'Mr. Hutchins's ... account of the disputes relating to the Chace, in his History, is very erroneous; and partial in favor of his patron Mr. Pitt (now Lord Rivers)'. The Chase's very existence was, by the turn of the nineteenth century, considered contentious by many; the disfranchisement debate provided a focal point for complaint, most of which accompanied endless diplomacy and legal test cases. In fact, much of this debate resulted from missing or conflicting interpretations of evidence; no one even knew the exact area of the Chase, or the size of its deer population. As Thomas (n.d., p11) concludes,

> the History of Cranborne Chase, like the history of all chases and royal forests, is complex and acrimonious. Complex because not everything was documented, and when it was, documents did not always survive; acrimonious because what survived best were the court records of arguments about those sore grievances.

1.3.2 Non-Manuscript Sources

The vast majority of data drawn upon in writing this work comes from letters, accounts, and legal papers contained within the Pitt-Rivers archive (DRO D/PIT), but other family archives, particularly those of Lords Anglesey (DRO D/ANG), Arundell (WSRO 2667), and Pembroke (WSRO 2057), and of the Pleydells (DRO D/TRD), also appear, and assorted Calendars of Prisoners (DRO NG/PR1; New Forest Group (n.d.); Wiltshire Family History Society (n.d.); WSRO A1) form the basis of crime statistics. However, numerous non-manuscript sources have also proven useful, among them, both fiction and non-fiction books, newspapers, and even modern research.

'There has been a long tradition in historical geography of using novels as a source for regional geography, as mines of information about the landscape and character of a place' (Baker 2003, p122); hence Brousseau's 'regionalists in search of more vivid [descriptions] of place [and] humanists seeking evocative transcriptions of spatial experience' (quoted in *ibid*). Although Hardy's Wessex was an imagined realm, it was nonetheless based upon real localities in Cranborne Chase and surrounding areas; in the 1895 preface to *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Hardy explains that 'it may be well to state, in response to inquiries from readers interested in landscape, prehistoric antiquities, and especially old English architecture, that the description of these backgrounds in this and its companion novels has been done from the real' (quoted in Darby 1940, p427). Of course, 'novels are by no means straightforward accounts of place and they have to be interpreted within their own historical and geographical contexts'; even so, '[these] and other literary forms can be made to reveal historically embedded structures of feeling about a place in a specific period' (Baker 2003, p123). The same is also true of more strictly historical details, and of individuals in a variety of settings, including, for example, domestic and work environments. Memoirs, travel writings, and newspapers can be equally revealing provided their 'historical and geographical contexts' are likewise borne in mind. But not all sources in historical geography need be either historical or geographical. Today's ecologists have tools for measuring plant-animal interactions not available to eighteenth and nineteenth century observers; modern research into deer damage in both sylvicultural and agricultural habitats helps to clarify the management systems previously in place on Cranborne Chase and so underlies much of the relevant discussion here; hence, an emphasis on the land itself. Recall, as cited above, Rackham's warning against using single source types; he (1986, p64) elaborates with reference to woodland: 'woods, more than most wild vegetation, result from long-running interactions between human activities and natural processes, to both of which the historian has to give due weight. Their history should never be based on written records alone.' Szabo (2005, p19) similarly observes that

> the scope of any study on woods has to be defined in relation to the two determining factors in woodland history: people and nature. Most woodland studies have so far concentrated on the former. However, what people think of woods and the way they perceive them do not necessarily have anything to do with what is actually happening in real woods ... Nature, on the other hand, is almost completely neglected in historical works. Historians tend to forget that trees are not artefacts but have their own properties and behaviour. Moreover, woods are much more than many trees together. The community of plants and animals that make up a wood is a most complicated subject to understand and has its own share in the making of the history of woodland ... Studies of woodland, thus, have run along two lines. Those dealing with the historical aspects have confined themselves to the general or literary written record.

> Present-day woods, on the other hand, have been examined by botanists and ecologists who tend to disregard the human impact. Historical ecology ... lies in-between these two approaches. It is history in the sense that it uses sources that were not produced to answer its questions. Researchers do not carry out experiments as in ecology, but gather pre-existing and often well-hidden data. It is ecology in the sense that nature is accepted as having an active role in the events. Human impact and natural processes are interpreted together and with respect to each another. Historical ecology concerns actual woods and what people did in those woods.

Ironically, the abundance of potential resources may itself prove problematic, the number of topics and viewpoints on offer occasionally clouding rather than clarifying our understanding. Reviews of several troublesome issues of this kind appear as appendices, which will be introduced when appropriate.

1.3.3 Summary

In summary, manuscripts are an important source of information for historians, but, as Olney (1995) points out, 'manuscripts have their peculiarities ... Their relation to each other may be problematic, as may their relation to the historical reality for which they provide the evidence.' Although various potential problems expose historical research to criticism, they are not insurmountable. If 'the whole modern method of historical research is founded on the distinction [as well as the relationship] between original and derivative authorities' (Momigliano, quoted in Evans 1997, p93), then, provided that these are taken into account and presented to readers so that they, too, are aware of both their existence and their importance, the use of manuscripts for historical research is a necessary and productive endeavour; and so, too, with other primary and secondary sources, whether historical or current.

1.4 Conclusion

'Landscape is the visible expression of the altered geographical environment, the tangible product of the operation of natural processes over aeons and the activities of mankind in transforming and using the environment over a much shorter span of time' (Coones & Patten 1986, p26). It shapes, and is shaped by, both history and geography and is thus integral to our understanding of the past – be it the human past, the environmental past, or both. However, our perceptions of history and geography generally, and of landscape more specifically, are all coloured by our own experiences and values just as our predecessors' perceptions were coloured by theirs. In striving for some degree of academic rigour, we must be aware of these biases and of their potential implications. We must likewise be aware

of history's fragmentary nature, which often leaves us wondering not only how to interpret a piece of evidence but whether there is any evidence to interpret. It nonetheless remains of utmost importance in informing our geographical understanding.

Chapter 2 Geography and Modernity

2.1 The 'Modern' Problematic in Historical Geography

The 'modern' in historical geography may refer to one of two very different concepts: firstly, a particular methodological approach (already discussed) popularised during the 1960s and 1970s, but confined neither to the study of that period nor to historical geography generally; and, secondly, the various changes wrought between the late sixteenth and late nineteenth centuries, characteristic of man's quest for improvement. The latter is of interest here.

> Against the backdrop of the Enlightenment, modernity is associated with the release of the individual from the bonds of tradition, with the progressive differentiation of society, with the emergence of civil society, with political equality, with innovation and change. All of these accomplishments are [in turn] associated with capitalism, industrialism, secularisation, urbanisation and rationalisation (Marshall, quoted in Ogborn 1998, p10).

The period was undoubtedly a progressive one, being characterised by a 'broad spirit of improvement, openness to change, and excitement about innovation as Britain entered, indeed created, the modern world' (Spadafora, quoted in *ibid*, p23). The advent of modernity, 'the deployment of instrumental human reason in relationships with nature and people, eventually to create an incomparably more materially productive, intricately ordered and expansive world' (Langton 2004, p112), had profound implications for social, political, and economic sectors, at both the individual and the institutional levels.

Yet, when the modern period actually began remains ambiguous. At one extreme, Latour (quoted in Ogborn 1998, p7) argues that 'we have never been modern'; for him, there exists no divide between premodernity and modernity, the continuities between past and present negating the need for classification. In contrast, while Ogborn (*ibid*, p3) refers to a 'Big Ditch' or 'Great Divide' between premodern and modern societies, Wilson (quoted in *ibid*, p26) suggests that

> modernity need not be seen as one particular moment, whose 'origins' and characteristics can be identified with certainty and mapped onto a specific temporality between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries ... Modernity in this sense is not one moment or age, but a set of relations that are constantly being made and remade, contested and reconfigured, that nonetheless produce among their contemporaneous witnesses the conviction of historical difference.

Slack (quoted in Langton 2004, p135) thus asserts that 'by 1700 improvement was a cultural force of major importance for the environment', while Colley (quoted in Ogborn 1998, p24) reminds us that 'there was more than one eighteenth-century Britain'. One point of interest, then, is the contemporary perception of modernity: of its appearance and implications.

Langton (2004, p124) addresses just this, asking 'how was this seething space of contrasts and changes envisioned and depicted at the time?'. Fortunately, underlying the modern 'quest for improvement' was 'the communication of both abstract and instrumental knowledge, in written and other forms. Modernity [was] therefore not only a state of being, but also, necessarily, a communicated state of knowing: a text about itself' (*ibid*, p112). However, 'modernity's texts are inevitably historical' (*ibid*) and thus pose potential problems, as previously discussed. Although 'in the early eighteenth century, histories became noticeably more modern in their scholarly signification of factual accuracy' (*ibid*, pp136-137), we must nonetheless bear in mind their almost inevitable subjectivity; 'we must ... be wary of taking at face value what contemporaries began to tell themselves (and us) about the geography of their world and how it was changing' (*ibid*, p112), for, as Barnes and Duncan (quoted in *ibid*) point out, 'when we tell it like it is we are also telling it like we are'. As we shall see later,

> the textual innovations of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries ... were part of a deliberate political project to "write England" as a cohesive unitary realm, independent of outside authority. Mapping was central to this effort. The dynastic realm was represented in its separateness as an empire ... and in its cohesive unity as a commonwealth of free people (*ibid*, p137)

– in other words, as a modern landscape of power, ambition, abundance, and strength.

2.2 Private Property and the (Pre)Modern Landscape

The distinction between typically modern and typically premodern landscapes is of particular relevance here. For although Hardy (1891, p38) rightly attributed to Cranborne Chase a deep sense of history in deeming it 'a truly venerable tract of forest land, one of the few remaining woodlands in England of undoubted primaeval date', many of his predecessors would have likely labelled it archaic rather than venerable. To them, it remained a stubbornly premodern landscape in what was an increasingly modern world – a world in which timber and turnips, pheasants and foxes were amongst the country gentleman's chief concerns. For him, the modern period was a time of enclosure, private profit, and game preservation.

Hunting franchises like Cranborne Chase imposed a premodern way of life not only upon their inhabitants but also upon their lands. The rights attached to forests and chases extended not only over land belonging to the owner of the forest or chase, but over all land within its bounds. Unsurprisingly, landowners deemed these regulations governing how they could or could not manage their land restrictive and backwards.

> In relation to modernizing schemes, Forests and Forest Law were obstructive anachronisms. Their officers had a vested interest in frustrating efforts to bring economic rationality and impartial legal principles and procedures into Forest administration ... The *raisons d'être* of Forests lay wholly outside the emergent traits of early-modern English culture, antithetical alike to proper legal, intellectual and aesthetic concerns, to productive work, and to private property and its assiduous improvement (Langton forthcoming).

On Cranborne Chase,

> the tensions and frustrations inherent in such a system grew in intensity as the eighteenth century pursued elsewhere its special preoccupations of land clearance and enclosure, improved agricultural methods and the sharper definition of territorial rights and autonomies among the landed gentry. An overlordship that stultified any impulse to change the landscape or depart from the *status quo* was bound to generate friction (Hawkins 1980, p19).

> In particular ... Forest Law removed the right of subjects to hunt over their own land: whilst the owner of a Forest franchise could pursue his animals across other people's land with impunity, hunting in his Forest by anyone else without his permission, even over their own lands and woods, feloniously infringed his property rights (Langton forthcoming).

Landowners' 'rights were restricted even in disafforested purlieus' (*ibid*) (that is, land on the margins of forests and chases colonised for farming), for, 'albeit these purlieus be absolutely disafforested, and have no liberty of forest there, yet, for conveniency, it hath been permitted that the rangers of the forests should, as often as the wild beasts range into purlieu, with his hound rechace the same' (West 1816, p101). Indeed, the 1692 *Act for the more effectual Discovery and Punishment of Deer-stealers* [3 & 4 Will. & Mar. c.10] set forth the illegality of hunting 'any Red or Fallow Deer, in any Forest, Chase, *Purlieu*, Paddock, Wood, Park, or other Ground inclosed ... without the Consent of the Owner or Person Chiefly entrusted with the custody thereof' (quoted in Whitehead 1980, pp171-172 – emphasis added). But forests and chases were 'a source of discontent, not merely from a dislike of the medieval law of vert and venison in its restraint on free hunting but more specifically for the frustrations it imposed on normal farming practices' (Hawkins 1983, pxi). Fortunately, owners of purlieu land could take steps to protect their land from deer depredation. Asserting 'that the deer

frequently did trespass, and do considerable damage' upon their lands in Cranborne Chase, a group of local landowners announced

> that although those trespasses have been borne, though reluctantly, for many years past, they are now determined not to submit to the illegal injury their estates have suffered any longer, but to come forward, and appeal to the laws of their country for protection against such (as they apprehend) illegal claims; and by that means to relieve their property from a great part of the injury it now suffers; which would reduce his Lordship's Chace to a very insignificant Franchise indeed (Chapman 1791, p5).

On a separate but related note, although the Game Laws were criticised for being as elitist and barbaric as the Forest Laws – Blackstone (quoted in Jones 1973, p213) observed that Forest Law was neglected for its 'bastard slip, known by the name of the game laws, now arrived to and wantoning in it's highest vigour' – they were at least enforced only over one's own property. Forest and chase rights generally reigned supreme within their boundaries, but grants of parks and free warren, even within these boundaries, were fairly common. Hence, Lord Pembroke's steward advised him in 1786 that 'Wilton Park I should think would sufficiently supply the Family with Venison, and the small Game at Ferndítch, would in my opinion, be as plenty after the Deer were destroyed there, as it is at present' (WSRO 2057/E1/11). The right to game also attended certain manorial rights; hence Chapman's (1791, p3) declaration that on Cranborne Chase, 'the lords of the manors, and proprietors of lands, within the Chace, holding their manors, and lands, independent of his Lordship [and the] soil, the timber, the woods, the furze, the bushes, the fern, being their *freehold property* ... his Lordship has no other right over it but Free-chace'. This, however, was not the case; as Langton (forthcoming) points out, 'although the Statute of Merton (1235) permitted lords of manors to enclose waste if they left enough common for their free tenants, in Forests that was to commit the crimes of assart, waste or purpresture'.

Eastwood's observations on the relationship between property and power are particularly interesting in this context; he (1994, pp22-23) writes,

> the local power of the landed elite tended to reinforce and regenerate itself. "Great territorial properties localize, if we may so speak, the influence of wealth; and forcing it to exert itself always in the same place and over the same persons, give it by that means a more intense and a more permanent character." The government of provincial England, therefore, was a patchwork of intense and local personal jurisdictions. Tocqueville believed that this system of government remained stable because the English temperament was an "aristocratic temperament" which aimed not at extending but rather at conserving personal authority. The aristocratic governors of England were "more afraid of being disturbed in one's own domain, than wishful of extending it to others".

A possible point of contention in forests and chases but less so in parks was the extent and supremacy of any one individual's domain; what one party considered 'conserving personal authority', another party might consider 'being disturbed in one's own domain'.

2.2.1 Seeing the Modern Landscape

Langton (2004, p140) suggests that 'if a geographical imagination is concerned with spatial patterns, the human ecological processes making landscapes, and the interaction between them, then it began to become evident in early modern times'. 'Three aspects of modernity operated together to initiate this [emergence]: the need for a unitary state to exert social control; the drive for economic improvement associated with it; and enlightened curiosity about empirical relationships' (*ibid*, p141). Each of these three factors profoundly affected not only society, but also nature. Of particular importance was agriculture.

> In a realm wracked by division, dearth and dissention, the Tudor ruling elite aimed to ensure abundant food supplies and social order. The encouragement of arable farming provided both: according to Sir Robert Cecil ... "whosoever doth not maintain the Plough destroys the Kingdom". Fruitful cornland was the bulwark of England, its proprietors and cultivators the epitome of Englishness (*ibid*).

However, 'the geography of farming and the way it changed were as kaleidoscopically varied as all the other phenomena' associated with modernity, 'with a multitude of little fractures between small regions rather than clean divides between slabs of uniform territory' (*ibid*, p14). This variability had important implications for society's perception of both the land and its inhabitants. As one observer commented (quoted in *ibid*, p28), 'our soil being divided into champaign ground and woodland, the houses in the first lie uniformly builded ... with streets and lanes, whereas in the woodland countries ... they stand scattered abroad, each one dwelling in the midst of his own occupying'.

> This difference was strongly evaluated: a truly English landscape was one of cornfields interspersed with meadows and woodlands, nucleated villages of husbandmen, manor houses and parish churches ... English soils were generally better suited to pasture than to arable farming [but] non-corn producing areas were anathematised. According to the early seventeenth century surveyor, cartographer and topographer John Norden, "where great and spacious heaths are ... many cottages are set up, the people are given to little or no kind of labour ... dwelling far from any church or chapel, and are as ignorant of God, or of any civil course of life as the very savages among the infidels" (*ibid*).

Bearing in mind that Norden worked for the crown, his sentiments are hardly surprising; enclosure was a predominantly upper class project: improvement could not be achieved 'where "men mixed with beasts together in one shed", but required a properly ordered landscape, where "no crook-backed tree/ Disgraced the place, no foolish rambling shrub,/ No wild and careless bush, no clownish stub"' (*ibid*, pp28-29).

2.2.2 Seeing the Premodern in the Modern Landscape

But what of these backward communities: given the great pressure to enclose, how did they – effectively premodern relics – survive in an increasingly modern world? In many cases, the answer lay with hunting. Indeed, epitomising premodernity were forests and chases, the country's traditional hunting grounds, and 'everywhere ... huge areas of land survived in that pre-modern state. Managed to facilitate deer hunting by the crown and aristocracy, [they] sustained scrappy woodland, coppices, warrens and lawns on open common 'wastes'' (*ibid*, p14). Thus, despite the modern economic objective of exploiting the land for profit, enclosure might not proceed where it interfered with premodern hunting (Cecil, who above championed the plough, was himself the owner of Cranborne Chase and repeatedly criticised for the damage done by his deer).

The survival of forests and chases also had important implications for the local labouring population: '[within a forest] the poor could eke out an independent living. Although forests were no more heavily wooded than elsewhere, their resources were accessible to everyone. Squatters could graze a few cows, sheep, and pigs and do craft work', and to this end, 'the makeshift forest economy of the poor was actually facilitated by the draconian acts passed after 1660 to protect forest deer and game for the crown and nobility' (*ibid*). As an aside, the sense of 'otherness', of non-conformity, attributed to forest dwellers is reflected in the word's original definition. As Hawkins (1980, pp25-26) explains,

> as good a definition of ... forest as any was that made by an earlier writer, James Lee, which Thomas Hearne included in his *Curious Discourses on English Antiquities*: "The word *forest* ... doth signify ... all things that are abroad, and neither domestical nor demean [demesne]" ... From this it is clear that forest territory was originally the wilderness that lay beyond those areas that men had enclosed and cleared and put to agricultural or pastoral use. These wild undomesticated territories would belong to the king or paramount lord since – by definition – they had not been granted to any subject to clear and enclose for his own use and were therefore literally 'no man's land'.

However, by the eighteenth century, hunting's significance extended beyond these traditional forest and chase boundaries, premodern and modern influences combining to create the modern landscape park. Although this emergence of a modern hunting landscape did not immediately detract from its premodern counterparts, the nineteenth century did witness the latter's eventual decline and disappearance. In southwest Cumberland, 'as the population of the area increased and the demand for land became greater the area of the forest decreased. Land which had once been forest land reserved for the lord's hunting was first opened to cultivation then deserted by the deer' (Liddell 1966, p112). Meanwhile, although the

> concern of the holders of the free chaces with agricultural improvements did not preclude a careful attention to their forest rights; even after they had begun to improve land, they continued to appreciate their forest franchise and enforce their rights ... The creation of deer parks where the destruction the deer caused could be limited, and the killing of the deer for meat would be easier, brought about the end of the free chace. Its function as a deer preserve was out of date in an age of agricultural improvement (*ibid*, pp126-127).

2.2.3 Seeing the Hunting Landscape

The Modern Park

Hunting dates back centuries as an aristocratic sport; writing in 1784, de La Rochefoucauld comments on the 'English landed elite's addiction to [it]' (Williamson 1995, p130), exclaiming that 'one of the greatest pleasures of the English is that of the chase ... they are all mad about it' (quoted in *ibid*). As Williamson (*ibid*, pp132-133) points out,

> hares, pheasants and partridges ... had always been objects of elite gift exchange, conferred ... in return for political or other favours, cementing allegiances and defining social relationships ... But it was not only game that could pass by gift outside the charmed circle of the elite. So too could the right to hunt it. For in spite of the 1671 Act [which restricted the right to less than one percent of the population] large numbers of unqualified people did in fact go hunting, with the full knowledge and indeed permission of local landowners. Such 'indulgences' were one of the most important pieces of patronage bestowed by landowners, and were often used for political advantage ... Tenants too were often allowed some shooting.

No matter whom the hunter, though, game must have somewhere to live, and hunters, somewhere to hunt.

> The landscape park was above all a storehouse for game birds [and] many eighteenth-century texts ... show how the requirements of game were carefully considered when parks were being designed. [For example,] Repton argued against the creation of narrow belts with a wide drive through the centre on the grounds that two narrow strips of plantation would not be

> "such effectual harbours of game, as deeper masses: especially where the game is likely to be disturbed by a drive betwixt them" (*ibid*, pp131-132).

Bearing such considerations in mind, we now take as the basis for further illustration the evolution of landscape parks with reference to shooting, 'arguably *the* most important influence on the style of the landscape park' (*ibid*).

First, to set the scene: the eighteenth century was one of ever-changing game legislation and ever-improving gun technology, both of which brought about decreased 'willingness of country gentlemen to 'indulge' their tenants and neighbours with sporting rights' (Munsche, quoted in *ibid*, p133). In terms of legislation, 'as the English landscape became more enclosed, and in particular as landed estates became increasingly consolidated, more strenuous attempts could be made to preserve game' (*ibid*). Equally important were 'improvements in firearm technology which ensured that ever larger numbers of birds could be shot' (*ibid*), especially on the wing.

The game bird of choice was undoubtedly the pheasant; 'it is [therefore] hardly surprising that [the pheasant's] needs had an immense effect on shaping [landscape parks]. The gentry and their gamekeepers were keen observers of their quarry, and the particular preferences of the pheasant help to explain many of the features of eighteenth-century parkland plantations' (*ibid*, p137). For example, 'the pheasant ... was only really at home in woodland, and where this did not exist it had to be planted' (*ibid*, p134).

> Young conifers were thought to be particularly attractive to pheasants, especially those in which larch was a major element [However,] once these trees had grown to maturity [their suitability] declined dramatically ... Underplanting with some shade-resistant species was then required: hence the vast quantities of bird cherry which appear in many eighteenth-century accounts, and the great masses of rhododendron planted in belts and clumps in the nineteenth century (*ibid*, p138)

and described by Forsythe (quoted in *ibid*) as 'the crowning plant for game cover'.

But just as important as species was size. As Blaine (quoted in *ibid*, p139) explains, pheasants 'are generally found in woody places, on the borders of plains where they delight to sport'. In other words, they prefer woodland edge. Logic has it that the smaller the wood, the larger the edge to area ratio, and, thus, the smaller the wood, the larger the density of pheasants it can sustain. Noting this, and additionally bearing in mind considerations of proximity to the house for reasons of both convenience and security, Williamson (*ibid*, pp139-140) suggests that

> one logical arrangement would be to have a number of small blocks – let us call them clumps – scattered around the landscape. A more extensive area of woodland, planted in the form of a thin linear strip ... could be placed on the periphery of the reserve – let us call it a belt. Where drives ran in from the outside it would be sensible to erect a lodge, to control access and to act ... as a base for security guards engaged in permanent surveillance against the incursion of poachers. What we have just done, of course ... is to construct the essential framework of the eighteenth-century landscape park.

Obvious from such considerations is the widespread and crucial impact the landed elite's passion for shooting had on both the physical environment and the way in which individuals perceived that environment. Land management, in addition to intensive breeding, attentive rearing, and systematic protection of game birds, meant that the landscape park was to at least some extent 'maintained as a private larder ... a sylvan arena for blood sports' (Williams, quoted in *ibid*, p130).

The Premodern Park

However, parks were not in and of themselves a modern institution; their predecessors, deer parks, dated in one form or another from Anglo-Saxon times. As Vera (2000, p185) explains,

> the Anglo-Saxon toponyms 'haga' and, after the Norman Conquest, 'haye', occur in relationship to mantle and fringe vegetations. These mantle and fringe vegetations can be derived from park-like landscapes. From groves surrounded by mantle and fringe vegetation in park-like landscapes, we can derive in turn the deer park as a certain grove selected for hunting surrounded by mantle and fringe vegetations, 'een hage', into which the game was driven and then killed ... Later, the game was kept there permanently. The mantle and fringe vegetation was in time replaced by a wooden palisade.

The mode of hunting to which Vera alludes is likewise interesting, especially given its landscape implications.

> In a park-like landscape, the wild animals would be rounded up and finally driven through an opening in the mantle and fringe vegetation in a grove ... The animals would be inclined to flee into the grove ... because a grove offers more protection from predators than open terrain. The grove itself was good for hunting because of the openness of the growth ... As a result of the fact that people started to keep deer permanently inside the 'haga', the grove would have become more and more open, because there was no regeneration in the grove as a result of the presence of large ungulates. It would have become more open from the centre out, because the oldest trees were located in the centre of a grove. Regeneration only took place on the edges of a mantle vegetation. In this way, the park would have become synonymous with a certain type of landscape, namely semi-open, with large single standing old trees without an undergrowth of bushes or young trees (*ibid*, pp160-162).

Writing several centuries after the introduction of haga, Irving (quoted in Whitehead 1950, p32) observes,

> nothing can be more imposing than the magnificence of English park scenery. Vast lawns that extend like streets of vivid green, with here and there clumps of gigantic trees, heaping up rich piles of foliage; the solemn pomp of groves and woodland glades, with the deer trooping in silent herds across them: the hare, bounding away to the covert; or the pheasant, suddenly bursting upon the wing.

The transition from practical to picturesque is unmistakable.

2.3 The Premodern Landscape

Parks were just one of four premodern hunting franchises, the others being forests, chases, and warrens. The fact that 'the equivocal status of the English forests enabled them to flourish as centres of resistance towards modernity, sequestered places in which significant political, religious, and social counter-cultures flourished' (Kelly 2003, p20), was an interesting side effect of their '[remaining] indispensable to the crown and aristocracy for deer hunting and patronage ... Forests and forest lordship were symbols of supreme privilege' (Langton 2003, p22). Johnson (quoted in Langton forthcoming) refers to them as '[territories] of ground ... bounded with irremoveable marks, and replenished with beasts of venery or chase, and with great coverts of vert for their succour and abode: for the preservation of which place, vert, and venison, there are certain particular laws'. Coke (quoted in *ibid*) is more succinct, observing that 'a Forest doth consist of 8 things, viz. of Soil, Covert, Laws, Courts, Judges, Officers, Game, and certain Bounds'. Interestingly, Hutchins (1868, p406) concludes of Cranborne Chase that it 'is such by prescription. No footsteps appear that it ever was a forest', and yet, Pugh (1959, p458) remarks that 'it appears to have acquired by prescription some of the incidents of a forest'.

With these latter comments in mind, how can we differentiate between the various franchises? What exactly were they, and how did they differ from one another? Manwood (1615, pp24-25), in his influential *A Treatise of the Lawes of the Forrest*, explains that

> as a Forest in his owne proper nature is the most highest franchise of noble, and princely pleasure, that can bee incident unto the Crowne and Royal dignitie of a Prince, so the next degree unto it is a Liberty of a franke Chase. A Chase in one degree is the selfe same thing that a Parke is, and there is no diversitie between them, save onely that a Parke is inclosed, and a Chase is alwaies open and not inclosed, and therefore the next in degree unto a franke Chase is a Parke. The last and next in degree unto a Parke is the liberty and franchise of a free Warren, And therefore because a Forest in dignitie is both the highest and the greatest franchise, being also a generall and compound word, the same doth comprehend in it, a Chase, a Parke, and a free Warren: And for that cause, the beasts of Chase, and the [noxious] beasts and foules of Warren, are priviledged within a Forest, as well as the beasts of the Forest are: For every Forest is a Chase, a Parke, and a Warren, for the same doth comprehend every one

> of them in it, even as every generall doth comprehend the speciall: for every Forest is a Chase, but a Chase is not a forest, but a part of it. And in like sort of a Parke and a Warren: And by that reason, the killing, hurting, or hunting, of any of these beasts or foules, of Chase, Parke, or Warren, within the territorie of the Forest, is a trespasse of the Forest, and to be punished by the Lawes of the Forest onely, and not by any other Law.

He (quoted in Langton 2003, pp21-22) further differentiates between forests and other franchises, asserting that 'the sovereign alone can make a forest, and by a sovereign alone can a forest be held; and thus is a forest distinguished from a chase, a park, a warren or a pasture'.

Focusing on forests and chases, we can highlight several interesting points. Firstly, although forests and chases had a definite geographical aspect, they were, in fact, privileges rather than places. That is, they were legal franchises, bestowing the right to hunt over a certain stretch of land, which the grantee might or might not own. Secondly, although chases were, strictly speaking, subject only to common law, many, including Cranborne Chase, used various aspects of Forest Law, which Chapman (1791, p43), highlighting its archaism, condemns as 'at first the offspring, and ... now the dregs of Norman tyranny'. Thirdly, although the owners of forests and chases held the exclusive right to preserve and hunt a number of animals, deer were most important. And finally, to point out that neither franchise need have any trees – premodern forests and our modern forests, although rooted in the same history, are quite distinct. Nonetheless, owners of forests and chases had the right to preserve vert as well as venison – that is, plants as well as animals. Cox (1697, p14) defines vert as 'any thing that beareth green Leaf, but especially of great and thick Coverts'; it did not, according to Manwood (1615, p52), include 'plants, which are of the nature of hearbs, as thistels, and such like' because they cannot 'hide or cover a Deere'.

The term 'forest' has thus undergone significant transformation in meaning. Although now used to denote 'an extensive tract of land covered with trees and undergrowth, sometimes intermingled with pasture' (OED), Manwood (1615, pp18-19) defined it as 'a certaine Territorie of wooddy grounds and fruitfull pastures, priviledged for wild beasts and foules of Forest, Chase and Warren, to rest and abide in, in the safe protection of the king, for his princely delight and pleasure'. Our own modern understanding of 'forest' emerged as Britain gained imperial and industrial power – enclosure of woodland for timber proving more profitable than its maintenance for the deer that had, for so long, justified its existence.

2.4 Forests: the Antithesis of the Modern Landscape

Forests, and, by implication, chases, thus stood in interesting contrast to parks. As Langton (forthcoming) comments, 'the *raisons d'être* of forests lay wholly outside the emergent traits of early-modern English culture':

> hunting fostered the uncouth masculine attributes of violent outdoor exertion and co-operative killing. In "[making] the best company", it produced a man
>
> > "Who visits with a gun, presents you birds,
> > Then gives a smacking buss, and cries - No words!
> > Or with his hounds comes hollowing from the stable,
> > Makes loves with nods, and knees beneath a table:
> > Whose laugh is hearty, tho' his jests are coarse,
> > And loves you best of all things - but his horse." [Pope]
>
> [It] sat equally at odds with [consumerism and materialism]. The slaughtered animals could not legally be bought or sold until 1827. The privilege of hunting in forests was inaccessible through wealth or social status alone; and it cost a great deal of money to pursue.

Why maintain forests and chases given such economic inefficiency? Far from being concerned with maximising income, 'landowners fought against any devaluation of land as a purveyor of social and political status, as the repository of traditional permanent values, and as the conspicuous emblem of leisure' (Raven, quoted in *ibid*).

> Because deer and other game could not legally be bought or sold until 1827 [and 1831], venison, hares, rabbits and game birds were much more than valuable foodstuffs. The capacity to consume them was a badge of the highest social distinction, conspicuous consumption of the highest possible order, and the ability to give them as presents was a powerful means of patronising and currying favour with people of lower social rank (Langton forthcoming).

To this extent, parks differed little from forests and chases. They may even have been attempts by unprivileged nobility to recreate on a much smaller scale the greater forest franchises of their neighbours; they were certainly both founded on the idea that property signified wealth, and wealth signified status. That is not to say, however, that there was anything particularly aesthetic about forests and chases, their main purpose, beyond the overtly social, being the practical preservation of deer.

As Langton (*ibid*) concludes,

> the importance of hunting (and the vast documentation to which it gave rise) come as a shock to anyone acquainted with literature on the origins of modernization, the aesthetics of country parks and houses, or metropolitan poets. The determination with which governing landed classes limited hunting to themselves shows that it was one of their central preoccupations.

Indeed, 'the rural utopia with which a gentleman [Randolph] lured his friend back from London' was not a well-ordered and aesthetically pleasing landscape park but

> a forest where
>
> > "Ours is the sky,
> > Where, at what fowl we please, our hawks shall fly:
> > Nor will we spare
> > To hunt the crafty fox or timorous hare:
> > But let our hounds run loose
> > In any ground they'll choose;
> > The buck shall fall,
> > The stag, and all" (*ibid*).

2.5 Conclusion

The transition between premodernity and modernity played out on many different stages. Of interest here is hunting: more specifically, the way in which changes in hunting influenced not only the land but also its inhabitants. Cranborne Chase was at its heart a hunting landscape. Not only physically managed with hunting in mind, but also imbued with a deep sense of history – of a privileged Lord of the Chase, of long-suffering landowners, and of opportunistic labourers. Even after disfranchisement, large swathes of land remained dedicated to sport. As we shall see in coming chapters, despite mounting pressure throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Chase remained a stronghold for deer, deer stealers, and deer hunters alike, a franchise founded on archaic laws, in turn founded on the concepts of venery and veneration. Even after their disappearance, a certain sense of otherness remained, which many have since attributed to its slower pace of life and to its sense of nostalgia.

Chapter 3 Geography and History on Cranborne Chase

3.1 Local Geography

3.1.1 The Land and its Use

Location and Size

Hardy's (1891, p38) description of Cranborne Chase as

> a truly venerable tract of forest land, one of the few remaining woodlands in England of undoubted primeval date, wherein Druidical mistletoe was still found on aged oaks, and where enormous yew-trees, not planted by the hand of man, grew as they had grown when they were pollarded for bows

is particularly romantic – and somewhat misleading, focusing on only one aspect of the Chase's landscape. Hawkins's (1980, p17) description could be similarly criticised but is nonetheless also revealing.

> The southern counties of England have not been able to preserve many surprises to offer to their visitors, but there are still a few quiet corners that can arouse our sense of wonder and refresh the spirit. One such comes to the traveller who passes southwards through Shaftesbury towards Ringwood and Christchurch. Here the chalk scarp rears up steeply: a winding zigzag road twists round hairpin bends to reveal suddenly a broad plateau that undulates into the blue distance. To come upon it in this dramatic way is like stumbling on to a lost world ... It is a bold landscape, an unexpectedly big landscape, with the satisfying amplitude that makes line more important than colour. This is Cranborne Chase.

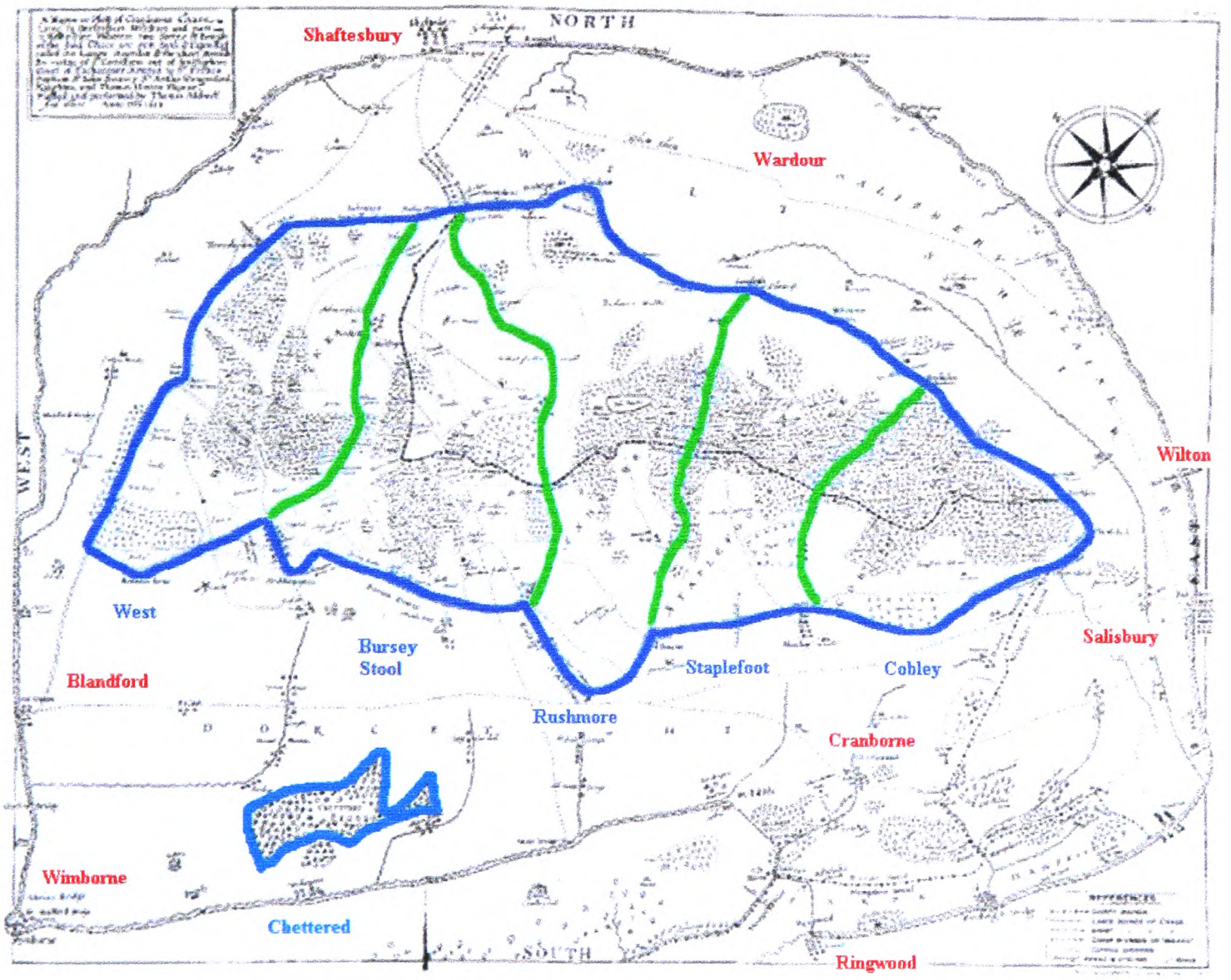
The sweep of woodland referred to as Cranborne Chase since its disfranchisement (which likely informed Hardy's conception of the Chase) comprises only a relatively small proportion of its previously vast extent. '[Spreading] untidily over three counties – Dorset, Wiltshire and [to a much lesser extent] Hampshire' (*ibid*, p11), its original area

> may be generally described as bounded on the north and east by the River Avon and the Nadder, and on the south and west by the Stour. It contains from 700,000 to 800,000 acres of land [and is] in circuit nearly 100 miles, which is called the 'Out-bounds.' Within this territory is included a tract about ten miles in length from north to south, three or four in breadth, and about twenty-seven in circuit, called the 'In-bounds,' and consisted of about 40,000 acres of woods and pasture; and a separate tract of woodland called Chettered, which however was always an integral part of the Chase (Hutchins 1868, p406).

Hawkins (1980, p19) offers a more graphic description: 'to gain a tolerably accurate impression of the size of Cranborne Chase it is sufficient to sketch a rough quadrangle with Shaftesbury, Salisbury,

Ringwood and Wimborne at the four corners. It has been estimated as a circuit of eighty miles.' He (*ibid*, p35) adds that 'the precise acreage of the Chase is a matter for argument but there can be no doubt that the figure usually cited is wrong … West put it at between seven and eight hundred thousand acres in 1816.' Writing in the same year, Webb put it at a slightly lesser 500,000. However, 'in considering the Chace … as containing 500000 acres It must be remembered that two Walks (Alderholt & Fernditch) are included altho' wholly excluded from [Chase] Rights and they contain together about a third of the whole Chace' (DRO D/PIT/L45); hence, perhaps, Pitt-Rivers's 1929 estimation of 300,000 acres. Hawkins (1980, p35) agreed: 'a more realistic figure for the area … would be about 250,000 acres, which still compares impressively with the [approximately 92,000 acres of the] New Forest' in 1860.

Fig. 3.1 Aldwell's 1618 Map (altered to emphasise the boundaries of the five inner walks and Chettered – taken from West's (1841) *A Chronicle of Cranborne and the Cranborne Chase*)



But, however large the outer bounds, the heart of the Chase lay in its inner bounds, which, as can be seen from Aldwell's 1618 map (Fig. 3.1), consisted of five walks: West, Burseystool, Rushmore, Staplefoot, and Cobley. A sixth – Chettered – lay separate and to the south. Two additional

walks, Alderholt and Vernditch, preceded the Chase's 1830 disfranchisement, the former being cleared of deer in the sixteenth or seventeenth century, and the latter being sold to the Earl of Pembroke in the seventeenth century and eventually disfranchised in 1802.

We will return to these inner and outer bounds again later (and in Appendix 1), but first, a look at the area's physical structure and its implications for land use, particularly agriculture.

Geology and Topography

Having reviewed the ecclesiastical and civil divisions of Dorset, Hutchins (quoted in Darby 1948, p431) added,

> there is another [division] not yet described; I mean that which nature has formed. The others are arbitrary and mutable; this is fixed and invariable. Whatever changes a country undergoes, the soil and situation are still the same: and here the down, the vale and the heath will be always distinct; nature has set to each its proper bounds, which it cannot pass.

Down and heath lands cover Cranborne Chase.

> Physically the Chase is a chalk plateau, bordered by the valleys of the Stour and the Avon, rising steeply along its northern escarpment and sloping gently southward to lose itself in the wastes of heather, gorse and pine that run westward from Christchurch to Wareham ... The chalk is not unrelieved, however: other soils, notably green-sand and clay, appear in places to give a variety to the general style of the landscape. The open simplicities of rolling downland are bordered and diversified by the many woods and copses that still survive from the days when no tree or shrub could be destroyed without the consent of the lord of the Chase (Hawkins 1980, p17).

Following Hawkins's lead, we look first to the chalk land that dominated Cranborne Chase and then to the less prominent heaths, considering the relationship between land and land use in each.

Chalk Downs

> The heart of Dorset is a vast upland, which is linked geologically with the Chalk of Salisbury Plain, and the Downs of Hampshire and Sussex. The northern section of these uplands extends from Cranborne Chase in the north-east to the mouth of the River Axe and consists, for the most part, of undulating, round-backed ridges, forming open down land (Tavener 1940, p256).

Variously described as 'a soft white chalk in which flints are present in abundance' (*ibid*, p257), 'a retentive loamy chalk, varying to a poor chalk with clay-capped hills' (Hinchy 1972, p108), and, more simply, 'chalk ... covered by clay with flints' (Darby 1940, p432), the part of Cranborne Chase running

along the Dorset-Wiltshire border is perhaps better suited to pastoral than agrarian pursuits. For Darby (*ibid*, p 433),

> the economy of the region could best by summed up in the phrase "calcareous downs and corn-lands" – pasture and arable. The bare, open downlands were known in this part of the country as "ewe-leases" ... The other element in the economy of the chalk country was arable land. But for the most part the soil was light and returns were poor.

A large part of the problem, according to Tavener (1940, p263), was the fact that 'clay-with-flints is notable in containing a very small proportion of carbonate of lime, and the lime-deficient soils developed from it encourage 'finger-and-toe' or 'clubbing' in cabbage, turnip, and swede crops'. However, for Claridge (1793, p16) the blame lay with the Dorset farmer:

> the general practice and management of the tillage in this county is less attended to, than any other part of agriculture. Great part of the soil of the enclosed land, is light and easy to work; all the open and unenclosed parts are so likewise, and the Norfolk husbandry might be adopted with success in almost every part of the county. From the observations I have been able to make upon the present practice, the idea universally prevails of putting all crops into the ground, with as few ploughings as possible ... Indeed, plowings is so little attended to, that all symmetry and neatness is disregarded, and in many small pieces of ground, I have observed the ploughman vary three or four yards from a strait line, in a very short distance, and persevere in this vagrant direction as a matter of no purport.

Of course, the situation on Cranborne Chase was confounded by the presence of numerous hungry deer, West complaining in 1816 (pv) that 'the cultivation of turnips is almost impracticable, unless in very small proportion, which is subject to great damage from the deer [and] the corn suffers much at times'.

But as Marshall (1817, pp249-250) points out,

> after discribing the Norfolk husbandry, and recommending something like it, on "some rough pastures of the Downs or Ewe Leas, which are now overrun with bushes and furze," – Mr. [Claridge] observes, with true discrimination, "I do not mean, however, to recommend the breaking up of any of the best of the downs, as they are valuable in their present state";

the 'Ewe Leas' fed the ewes, which in turn manured the farmers' otherwise undernourished fields. This so-called sheep-fold system underpinned much of the local agricultural economy, both in Dorset and in Wiltshire. Hence Claridge's 1793 (p7) observation,

> the advantage derived from sheep, in the county of Dorset, is very considerable, and it is undoubtedly its greatest object as an agricultural resource; indeed of so much real importance, as to be productive of great national benefit ... The greatest advantages are derived from them, as well from the profit upon the fleece and carcase, as from the quantity of ground manured by them.

Hence, too, Stevenson's (1812, p348) observation, twenty years later, that

> the *Sheep-fold* is probably held in as high estimation in this county as in any part of the world. It is considered by most of the farmers not only as a manure of a very useful kind (which no person will dispute), but as an indispensable requisite in the cultivation of the arable land, and without which the produce would decline very considerably.

The sheep-fold system was one whereby 'the wether sheep [were] constantly folded all the year round, running over the ewe leas or downs by day, and ... penned on the tillage by night ... The ewes [were] folded only in summer, that is, when they [had] no lambs' (Claridge 1793, p9). Lisle (quoted in Bettey 1986, p122), the author of the eighteenth century *Observations in Husbandry*, emphasises the system's significance, warning that 'if a bane fell on sheep, corn would be dear, because there could not be a fifth part of the folding that otherwise there would be, and consequently a deficiency of the crop'. Meanwhile, Defoe (1724, p285) asserted that

> by folding their sheep upon the plow'd lands, removing the fold every night to a fresh place ... this, and this alone, has made these lands, which in themselves are poor, and where, in some places, the earth is not above six inches above the solid chalk rock, able to bear as good wheat, as any of the richer lands in the vales, though not quite so much.

Defoe (*ibid*, p192) was a great admirer of Wiltshire's chalk downs: 'I have mention'd that this county is generally a vast continu'd body of high chalky hills, whose tops spread themselves into fruitful and pleasant downs and plains, upon which great flocks of sheep are fed'; 'nothing can be like it, the Arcadians plains of which we read so much pastoral trumpery in the poets, could be nothing to them' (*ibid*, p218). Aubrey (1656) likewise believed that where 'the downes are intermixt with boscages ... nothing can be more pleasant, and in the summer time doe excell Arcadia in verdant and rich turfe and moderate aire'. Thus, although Bettey (1986, p121) refers to the chalk lands as 'an area of bleak, windswept downland' and Stevenson (1812, p335) complains of their being 'in general destitute of shelter, either from trees or hedges', Claridge (1793, p6) proclaims them 'the most striking feature of the County [and] in general of a delightful verdure and smoothness, affording a scene beautifully picturesque'.

Banks (p44), writing in 1767, is similarly complimentary regarding the area's sylvan landscape; on the 16th of May, he reports that 'the Countrey about [Eastbury] is Pleasant, consisting chiefly of open Downs and sheep walks, except towards the west and N.W., where the town and enclosures of Tarent Gunvil and the woods of Cranbourn Chace give an agreeable variety, contrasting with the open countrey on the other sides'. Indeed, although dominated by the mixed agricultural-pastoral fold system, Tavener (1940, p263) reminds us that 'oak, hazel, and ash grow well on these soils'. Hazel was of particular local importance, being the source for the hurdles with which the fold-sheep were penned every night. Aubrey (1656) explains that 'in the south part [of Wiltshire], and particularly Cranbourn Chase, the hazells are white and tough; with which there are made the best hurdles of England'; in addition, 'the nutts of the chase are of great note, and are sold yearly beyond sea. They sell them at Woodbery Hill Faire, &c.; and the price of them is the price of a buschell of wheate.' A century later,

> fifteen dozen [hurdles] with a like number of stakes and writhes, to confine them together, will inclose a statute acre of ground, and will contain twelve or thirteen hundred sheep therein very commodiously ... One penning is never estimated worth less than half a guinea, or twelve shillings per acre, and two at a guinea. The hurdles are worth seven shillings and sixpence per dozen, including stakes (Claridge 1793, p9).

Also of local significance was woad, a plant extract used as dye – imported until the late sixteenth century but subsequently introduced to the chalk lands where it soon flourished. As Bettey (1986, p132) observes, 'woad is a hungry plant and was much used as a first crop on newly broken downland or old grassland [including much newly broken grassland on Cranborne Chase], which was often too rich and too much infested with soil pests for the immediate sowing of corn'.

Heathland

Chalk land was not alone in its significance; also integral to local livelihood was the vast heathland that comprised the remainder of the Chase's non-wooded terrain. Webb attributes heathland's perceived barrenness to the difficulty of cultivating it, but the heath was not without its uses.

> Up to the 18th century, it was not possible for men to reclaim heathland and then use the land profitably. No technology existed to alter heathlands significantly, so they were used as they were to supplement rural life. Many practices developed which utilized heathland and its

> plants, so helping to perpetuate it; grazing and burning, for example, helped to check scrub invasion and the ultimate development of woodland. Fuel-gathering of various kinds helped to keep the nutrient content of the soil low, and created conditions unfavourable to woodland regeneration (Webb 1986, p46).

On the Dorset heathland,

> sheep and cattle were frequently grazed, although the heathland sheep were less important than the vast flocks pastured on the chalk downs; heathland grazings merely supplemented those of the downs. Cattle were raised in much the same way. They were held on the rough heath grazings and then fattened on the better land nearby (*ibid*, pp47-48).

Interestingly, the only reference to heathland in the Domesday Book is for the Dorset village of Boveridge, on Cranborne Chase, where St Mary's Church at Cranborne held heathland 'two leagues long and wide, together with nine-and-a-half furlongs of pasture and a woodland one league by a half' (quoted in *ibid*, p37). Roe deer may occasionally graze on scrubby heathland, but fallow rarely do.

3.1.2 Inner and Outer Bounds: the Symbolic Landscape

Recall from our opening descriptions of Cranborne Chase that the former focused on its ancient, wooded landscape while the latter focused on its vast, open landscape. In effect, Hardy described the inner bounds, while Hawkins described the outer.

> It would indeed be no great exaggeration to say that areas outside the Lesser Bounds were often the subject of mutual forbearance appropriate to purlieus without either party caring to determine the precise status in a legal definition. The signal for a renewed conflict was usually the emergence of a more aggressive and self-assertive personality, in the form of a new owner of the land or a fresh lord of the Chase (Hawkins 1980, p49).

The deer, needing woodland for food and shelter, may have strayed into the surrounding fields and downs, but rarely strayed very far, Webb (DRO D/PIT/M38) claiming that

> altho there have been Instances of their going as far as Wardour Castle ... this happens but very seldom, If I might judge from the time I have been here, it will be about once in 7, 8 or 10 years and even then, I don't think they would ever go so far from their Woods, if they had not been hunted and driven by the Deer Stealers.

Additional woodland existed in the southeast corner of the Chase, but much of it was effectively disfranchised under the Ashleys, and was anyway surrounded by heathland. Even West, one of the

Chase's harshest critics, calculated that only 32,000 acres of its total 700,000-800,000 acres was subject to deer damage (less than five per cent). Thus, although

> the concept of the Outer Bounds ... bedevilled the history of the Chase right up to the nineteenth century ... their exact definition on the map was mainly the concern of the large landowners and lawyers. Unlike the dwellers in the Inner Chase, the lesser men got on with the business of wresting a living from the land largely unaffected by the fact that they were living within a Chase (Thomas n.d., p32).

This division into inner and outer bounds may be oversimplified, though; the inner bounds did not even encompass all of the walks, Chettered (and, previously, Alderholt and Vernditch) lying outside. Hence the belief that 'as to the difference in the mode of enjoyment of the Chace ... The difference of enjoyment in point of fact is, not between the Inner & Outward Boundary but between the Deer fed part of the Chace & the [remainder] of the Chace both in the Inner & Outer boundary' (DRO D/PIT/L45). We shall return to this point later, but in the meantime, suffice it to say that the boundary between the inner and outer Chase was an important feature in its symbolic landscape.

3.1.3 Hunting and the Landscape

'The social structure of the Chase villages seems to reflect the character of a hunting ground. The towns are all just outside the bounds of the Chase. Shaftesbury, Blandford, Ringwood, Wimborne and Salisbury are situated like harbours round the edge of some great lake, in which villages appear as little islands' (Hawkins 1980, p21). Indeed, 'the real centres of activity' were not the towns but

> the big manor houses, to which the villages [were] appendages. At first it was the religious houses that dominated the scene ... When the monastic estates were dissolved, the new men of Tudor England emerged – the Ashleys, the Cecils, the Arundells, the Groves, the Napiers. With the growth of the Empire came the new wealth of the Pitts, the Beckfords and the Dodingtons. The City of London in the eighteenth century provided its own invasion of the Chase – the Sturts, the Glyns, the Farquharsons. Their memorials are the magnificent buildings that they erected as their private palaces.

We have already seen that one of the primary functions of many such 'private palaces' was sport; hence Claridge (1793, p6) notes not only Dorset's numerous 'noble Edifices both antient and modern' but also its 'numerous Parks'.

Fortunately,

> within the borders of the small county of Dorset a great variety of sport is to be found, interesting both for its antiquity and its excellence. The wild nature of the county and the smallness of the population have doubtless been greatly in favour of sport, and a strong love of it is inborn, not only in the leading families of the county, but also in the yeomen farmers of Dorset, a class of men whose equal can hardly be found anywhere out of England. Even among Dorset labouring men this love of sport appears, and they will be found always ready to tell the line of the hunted fox, the best spot in the river or bog to find wild-fowl, or the deep pool where the largest trout rises in the gloaming (Page 1908, p299).

In addition, 'there are good coverts of all sizes for pheasants, fir plantations famous for woodcock, bog, river, and harbour for wildfowl, upland and arable for partridges and hares, whilst the heath swarms with rabbits' (*ibid*, p318).

Wiltshire, too,

> has a number of natural physical features which have played an important part in determining the forms of sport pursued within it. The large expanse of downland, more than half the total area, is particularly suited for sports requiring much space and an unrestricted view. These were not only sports of the chase ... Besides providing first-rate ground for racing and coursing, the downs ... were much used for hawking' (Pugh 1959, p362).

Given that 'Humphrey Sturt built his splendid observatory at Horton in Dorset in c.1750 not to survey the heavens, but to keep watch on deer in Holt Forest and Cranborne Chase' (Langton forthcoming), Cobbett's (quoted in *ibid*) belief that 'the great business of life in the country appertains, in some way or other, to the game' comes as no surprise.

3.1.4 Summary

For many, Cranborne Chase evokes a particular mental image, perhaps of a large, open, undulating landscape populated more noticeably by sheep than by people, or perhaps of an altogether shadier – in all senses of the word – landscape, where both deer and deer stealers crept amongst the many trees and hedges. We shall continue to explore land management on the Chase, as well as its implications for local society; but in doing so, we must not forget that underlying both the land and its management was the area's physical framework – its geology and topography. To at least some extent, the soil, not the Lord of the Chase, determined where woods could grow, and of what species, just as it was the soil, not the farmer, that determined where crops could grow, what kind and how well. The area's history has greatly influenced its appearance, both during the past several hundred years and today, but the area's appearance – deer or no deer – may have been markedly different had its physical geography been so.

3.2 Local History

The origin of its physical landscape aside,

> the Chase is still very different from other parts of southern England and is in some ways unique. The differences and the uniqueness are being gradually blurred but they are real enough to be treasured and enjoyed; and since their nature is essentially historical we must find our starting point in the history of the Chase (Hawkins 1980, p25).

West (1816, piv) asserted that Cranborne Chase 'partakes most of the nature of a forest'. However, Hutchins (1868, p407) writes of the Chase that it 'no footsteps appear that it ever was a forest, though it might have originally been so.' The point may seem pedantic but is in fact an important one, with particular relevance to the Chase's boundaries. Thus, although its history has been well documented elsewhere, some discussion is necessary here.

3.2.1 Saxon, Norman, and Medieval Owners

> The Lordship of the chase is thought to have originated with the possessions [namely, the Honour of Gloucester] of Brictric, which at the time of Domesday were held by Matilda, the wife of William I. On her death the lordship lapsed to the Crown, but was granted by William II to [his cousin] Robert Fitzhamon, from whom it passed to his eldest daughter, Mabel, who married Robert, created Earl of Gloucester, an illegitimate son of Henry I (Pugh 1959, p458).

Their granddaughter, Isabel, married Prince John, later King John, although they divorced upon his succession; she then married Geoffrey de Mandeville. John nonetheless played an important role in the Chase's history. As Hutchins (1868, pp406-407) explains,

> the earliest notice concerning the chase is a reference to a perambulation of the bounds made when King John was Earl of Gloucester, and before he came to the Crown. And the earliest record extant is the following: "17 John (1216) ... We command you to make perambulation without delay ... to ascertain what is our chase there, and what the chase of Geoffrey de Mandeville, viz. the chase which William Earl of Gloucester, father of Isabella the wife of Geoffrey, held. Likewise, perambulation of the forest of Craneburn and of Chetterden, which is between our chase and the chase which William Earl of Gloucester held. And such perambulation being made, let Geoffrey de Mandeville, without delay, have those chases which William Earl of Gloucester held." From the record we infer that there were several independent tracts of chase and forest land in this district, and, though not clearly defined, the probability is that "our chase" therein mentioned refers to that which is now known as Holt Forest; that the chase of William Earl of Gloucester ... was that tract which is now comprised within the "in-bounds" and extending into Wilts; the forest of Chettered being immediately situated; and the forest of Cranborne that tract which lay beyond the in-bounds, and extended into Hants and Dorset.

'In 1245 at an inquisition to determine in what manner King John had held the chase, and how far it extended otherwise than by the usurpation of the king, the jury unanimously affirmed the outer bounds as far as the River Nadder' (Pugh 1959, p459). Although a 1279 perambulation

> decided in favour of the inner bounds, and recommended that 'Chettel Wood' and Vernditch and all the country as far as the Nadder be disafforested as contravening the Charter of the Forests ... no evidence was adduced to show that any part of the chase had been afforested in the reigns of Henry II, Richard I or John, so as to bring it within the terms of the Charter [of the Forest (1217)] (*ibid*).

Also, vitally, the Chase not having been considered a forest even when in royal hands, it had not been subject to a perambulation under the Charter. John ordered its first perambulation while still only Prince, and the second, although done once he was King, like the 1245 perambulation, confirmed the larger bounds. Edward I's (1280) *Quo Warranto* endorsed this decision. When Gilbert de Clare, who inherited the Honour via Isabel's sister, was required 'to show by what authority he appropriated to himself Free Chase from the highway which leads between Shaftesbury and Blandford on the hill on the western side of the said highway unto the water of the Stour' (Hutchins 1868, p407), '[he] relied upon the 12th-century perambulation made when King John was Earl of Gloucester and upon that of 1245. The boundaries both of the inner and outer bounds were described from point to point with great particularity' (Pugh 1959, p459). In 1352, Elizabeth de Burgh 'made a successful application to have the *Quo Warranto* of Edward I "exemplified in Chancery under the Great Seal" ... The metes and bounds of the Chase were thus put on record in a final and irrevocable way – or as nearly irrevocable as the law could guarantee. What Edward I had conceded was to endure for over five centuries' (Hawkins 1980, pp33-34).

3.2.2 Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Owners

From the time of Edward IV to that of James I, Cranborne Chase remained vested in the Crown, but in '9 James I ... it was granted to [Robert Cecil] Earl of Salisbury, by the description of "totam chaceam, liberam chaceam, et liberam warennam de Cranborne, ac omnia privilegia, juridictiones, libertates, in com' Dors,' Wilts, et South', &c."' (Hutchins 1868, p406). The Cecils rose to power under Elizabeth I, Lord Burghley being a senior statesman in her court. It was his second son, Robert, later Viscount Cranborne (1604) and Earl of Salisbury (1605), who is of interest here. In helping James I secure the crown, Robert secured his own position as the king's 'little beagle', a role

that would soon bring him – and subsequent Lords of the Chase – new-found wealth, power, and conflict. As Hawkins (1980, p42) observes, 'no man was more firmly entrenched in the favour of the king and he [quickly] set about the improvement of the manor house at Cranborne to make it fit for James to visit'. In fact, Cecil had not long been in possession of property in and around Cranborne Chase before his rise to authority there. He only appeared on the scene, quite literally, in 1599 when 'he bought a large mixed bag of Crown properties in the west of England, including a substantial stake in Cranborne' (*ibid*). His various titles followed soon thereafter, leading Hawkins (*ibid*, p43) to comment, 'in local terms the sudden supremacy of Cecil in a role that had for so long been the monarch's was a dazzling manoeuvre, the significance of which was not lost on men like Pembroke, Arundell, Freke and Ashley' – men who were themselves accustomed to holding the privileged positions now made redundant by Cecil's succession. A number of challenges followed, the first of which commenced in 1609, resulting several years – and lawsuits – later in the affirmation of the Chase boundaries as including land in Wiltshire, and in the sale of Verndítch Walk to Lord Pembroke, Cecil's most powerful neighbour.

As Hawkins (*ibid*) explains, 'the second Earl of Salisbury', who inherited in 1612,

> was not the powerful political figure that his father had been. His attempts to enforce the full extent of his Chase rights met with stiffening resistance and he was openly defied by one of Lord Arundell's tenants who argued that Tollard Royal, being in Wiltshire, was outside the Chase. A jury found against Salisbury, with the implication that the form of the royal grant was inadequate. Salisbury therefore surrendered the grant of the Chase to the king who promptly regranted it in a modified form involving an annual payment of twenty shillings to the Exchequer court, where Salisbury reckoned to have favourable verdicts. Strengthened in this way Salisbury decided to reverse the Tollard Royal decision and to clear up some other disagreements by starting a comprehensive action in the Exchequer against Arundell, Pembroke and others.

Litigation continued throughout the 1610s, the courts eventually finding in Salisbury's favour. He sold Verndítch Walk to Pembroke, perhaps 'as the price of victory ... or [perhaps] as a conciliatory gesture' (*ibid*, p45), less than two years later, in 1620.

Salisbury's surrendering of the grant to the Exchequer had another important implication for the Chase's future: it could now be bought and sold, as well as inherited. Lord Salisbury, having suffered politically and financially from the Civil War, thus sold the Chase, together with the manor of Berwick St John, to Lord Shaftesbury for £5,300 in 1671, thereby separating it from the Honour of

Gloucester. Not long after, in 1695, the second Lord Shaftesbury sold it, minus both Berwick and Alderholt, to Mr Freke for £3,500.

> In the mind of William Chafin this short period of Shaftesbury ownership prompted an interesting speculation, that the principal aim was to suppress Alderholt Walk and rid it of the deer which were damaging the young timber trees in the extensive plantations that the Shaftesburys were making at this period ... Chafin offers no proof, but the circumstantial evidence supports him, the whole of the eastern end of the Chase was singularly free from the eighteenth-century disputes and affrays that occurred in the remaining walks. Moreover the list of villages on which Lord Rivers's compensation was ultimately levied omits these eastern territories (*ibid*, p46).

In addition, although Chafin (1818, p4) admits that 'the old records say it was dischased in the reign of King Henry VIII. near a century earlier', Hutchins (1868, p383) offers a possible solution, explaining of Alderholt, 'here was formerly a park, which generally went with the manor ... It was disparked and the deer destroyed temp. Hen. VIII.' Perhaps the park was disfranchised under the Tudors and the Walk under the Shaftesburys.

Alderholt aside, Freke's great-nephew, George Pitt, inherited Cranborne Chase in 1714; it would remain in his family until its disfranchisement more than a century later. The Pitts soon proved 'a force to be reckoned with. They sat in Parliament; they exercised their lordship of the Chase; their acreage and their influence put them on level terms with the most illustrious of their neighbours ... [and] in a county of large estates they could [easily] compete' for the title of 'Dorset's greatest landowner' (Hawkins 1980, p135); in 1775, the third Pitt Lord of the Chase was made Baron Rivers of Stratfieldsaye. His son succeeded him in 1803. Yet, despite their great wealth and political status, other prominent landowners began collectively to question the family's authority, urging the Chase's disfranchisement initially in 1786 and repeatedly thereafter until their efforts finally came to fruition in 1829.

3.2.3 Summary

At various points in Cranborne Chase's past, key legal decisions determined the course of its future. Despite numerous challenges, the Chase survived largely intact for some eight hundred years, concessions sometimes being made, but generally by choice rather than necessity. True, the franchise George Pitt inherited in 1714 was significantly smaller than that granted to Lord Salisbury only a century earlier, but what was left, he and his descendants were determined to enjoy and protect. The

premodern system of land management that consequently remained in place had important implications not only for the look of the land but also for the lives of its inhabitants, especially within and around the inner bounds.

3.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, Cranborne Chase's landscape was, and to some extent still is, the product of two main factors, agriculture and hunting. Although the latter is now less important, the centuries of its being the Chase's *raison d'être* have left their mark. But so, too, has the area's more recent development. If the landscape is the meeting point for history and geography, then Cranborne Chase is one landscape in which premodernity and modernity clashed as they met. With the Chase and many of its inhabitants remaining stubbornly entrenched in the premodern past, frustration mounted amongst those who would usher it into the modern future. The ensuing struggle would itself have important implications apparent in the area's landscape today.

Chapter 4 The Disfranchisement Debate

4.1 Introduction

When, in 1816, *The Salisbury and Winchester Journal* recounted Mr. Sergeant Best's arguments for the defendant in *Rivers v King*, it remarked upon the lawyer's strong sense of injustice – his not uncommon belief that Lord Rivers's franchise brought him, and his deer, unjustifiable advantages, and at great cost to local society. In addition, Lord Rivers's 'claim was in its nature so oppressive, that it could hardly be consistent with any law' (5 August 1816, HRO 116M86/16). Meanwhile, Mr. Sergeant Lens, speaking on behalf of the plaintiff, asserted 'that the feelings excited by Mr. Sergeant Best were only calculated to mislead the judgement'. Unfortunately for Lens, many of these arguments had been fine-tuned over a period of decades, if not centuries, and particularly in Wiltshire where many shared Best's sentiments. The judge and jury hardly needed (mis)leading as they found in the defendant's favour.

Although this latest wave of rebellion against Lord Rivers culminated in the *King* case, it had in fact been brewing for some time. Indeed, an intermittent campaign against the Lord of the Chase had existed for centuries but had gained particular strength in recent decades, leaving Lord Rivers's opponents well rehearsed in their complaints. As long as Lord Rivers's franchise remained in place, his deer remained not only a pest, but an untouchable pest, and therefore an obstacle to progress.

4.2 The Disfranchisement Debate Pre-1816

4.2.1 History

The *King* case was a momentous one in Cranborne Chase's long history and certainly the most important in our period. However, the events immediately preceding it were, for Hawkins (1991, pxix), 'public expressions of a ground-swell of opinion which had been gathering force over thirty years'. Talk of disfranchisement commenced quite congenially with a 1786 conversation between Lords Rivers and Temple, the latter having been nominated to broach the subject as a Pitt kinsman and as the recent successor to the substantial Eastbury estate, lying just outside the Chase's inner bounds. At a meeting held the following year, Lord Temple (now the Marquis of Buckingham) and various other local landed proprietors (represented by the Chairman, Anthony Chapman) 'resolved unanimously ... that it will be beneficial to the public, and to the proprietors of lands within the said Chace, that the

same be disfranchised' (quoted in Chapman 1791, p7). They therefore offered Lord Rivers 'an annual rent in perpetuity of £200, levied on the estates of the Chase landowners' (Hawkins 1991, pxx) in 1789.

> Lord Rivers was favourably impressed by the idea, but not by the amount: £1000 [per annum] would have been a more appropriate figure, in his estimation, plus the addition of some parkland [worth £250 per annum] to his estate at Rushmore. The landowners declined to improve their offer and tried to bring pressure to bear on Lord Rivers by publishing an open letter to him [however,] there, for the time being, the matter rested. It was the death of Lord Rivers in 1803 which stimulated a renewed activity. The landowners' committee ... made a fresh approach, only to be told that the new Lord Rivers had no intention of reducing the terms demanded by his father (*ibid*),

although, 'as he had purchased some woods near Rushmore, he offered to accept a park near West Lodge [instead]. The committee of Proprietors consented to treat on these terms, but on account of the difficulty of procuring the lands required the agreement was not effected' (Smart 1841, pp241-242), and negotiation again ground to a halt. Over the coming decade, the proprietors' frustrations occasionally vented themselves in the courts, but to no avail. 'As a means of strengthening his bargaining position Lord Rivers had been advised to enforce his rights more strenuously' (Hawkins 1991, pxxi); unfortunately for the proprietors, he generally succeeded. Nonetheless, 1803 was itself an important turning point according to

> Charles Bowles [who] made the interesting point in his *History of the Hundred of Chalke* that the first Lord Rivers had exercised his rights with much moderation and "venison was so liberally distributed in presents to those who suffered from the depredation of the deer, that very few persons thought it an object worth enquiring about, as to what indeed were the actual boundaries". However, under the second Lord Rivers, "The obsolete and tyrannical laws of the forest were now attempted to be put again in execution" (*ibid*).

To what extent this accusation against the second Lord Rivers was or was not true is uncertain, but it may help to explain the continued undertone of resentment present in many subsequent Chase proceedings.

4.2.2 The Proprietors' Arguments

What exactly were the proprietors' grievances, and why did they fail to persuade Lord Rivers to proceed on their terms? Their arguments for disfranchisement were threefold: first, that his Lordship's deer did great damage to their land; second, that the deer were a temptation to local

plebeian society and were largely responsible for their corruption; and third, that the Chase was costly and that his Lordship would himself thereby benefit. Hence Chapman's (1791, p19) assertion that

> the public in general will join me in opinion, that he has been sacrificing the morals of the lower order of the people, the corn of the farmers, and the estates of the proprietors of lands, in and near his Chace, and ... in some degree his own fortune – to what! – To a boasted Royalty unproductive to himself of any good; but highly prejudicial, and of extensive mischief, and evil to the community.

Although these three strands form the basis of the subsequent substantive chapters, and will therefore be discussed in greater detail, some general elaboration may be useful here.

Land Management

With reference to the land and its potential for increased productivity, the proprietors' grievances were twofold: firstly, that the woods could not be improved and, secondly, that the fields could not be improved. Integral to modernisation were the planting of new crops and the use of new methods. However, Best (HRO 116M86/16) bemoaned the fact

> that in that wide range no man should plough the land to the detriment of the deer; that no man should raise a fence to the exclusion of the deer; that the growth of wood should be protected only for the benefit of the deer; that if any man turned his sheep into his own woods, they should be impounded by the owner of the deer; that the growth of timber should for ever be prevented by the browsing of the deer; that the rights of the Chase should in all things be preferred to the interests of man; that all cultivation should be subservient to those rights, and that the benefit of the deer of Lord Rivers should be paramount to all the rights of property, and make the industry of the husbandman of no avail.

The proprietors often invoked patriotism in defence of disfranchisement: the country needed protecting and feeding, especially during the Napoleonic Wars; timber was needed for ships, and grain for bread, but neither could be grown to a sufficient standard where first sacrificed to Lord Rivers's deer. Chapman thus took great offence at Lord Rivers's suggestion that 'doubtless these public-spirited Gentlemen, who expect so much of that virtue in others, will grub [the woods] themselves for the sake of the revenue, and preserve them now for the sake of the deer' (quoted in Chapman 1791, p27), replying that 'they certainly did not mean to grub their woods, but to enclose them' (*ibid*, p28); he also adds that 'they do not say [the woods] only are the sufferers, but they being the principal sufferers they mentioned them only; for they do not admit his Lordship's right over their corn and inclosures' (*ibid*,

p27). Yet, neither the woods nor the fields was without some means of protection. Indeed, a network of keepers and woodmen existed, not only for the deer's protection but also for the land's.

Crime

With regard to deer stealing,

> there were moral issues and also practical ones of financial interest which had somehow to be reconciled. From a farming point of view the deer were a confounded nuisance: by killing them in their own clandestine ways the poachers were aiding the farmers. But then again the law was the law; all rights of property must be defended and stealing was a sin. There is no mistaking the dilemma in which Samuel Hall [John Eliot's principal tenant at Ashmore] found himself when the Chase keepers asked him what Mr Eliot would wish them to do with three poachers they had caught on his manor. Leniency was evidently Mr Eliot's general attitude, but should not an example be made of some offender – if only to steer him and others into the ways of righteousness? As Hall explained:
>
> > Poaching is got to be such a general thing in our parish, that allmost every boy of the age of 14 practise it, which I fear will lead them to further mischief. If it was not for the sin and wickedness it leads young men into the preasant plan of poaching would be most to my advantage [as a farmer] but when considering their spiritual advantage it is desirable it should be suppressed (Hawkins 1991, pxvii).

Smart (1841, pp244-245) was similarly concerned, asking

> what shall we say of its effects upon the labouring class? With strong temptation to the commission of crime, and feeble powers of moral resistance, no wonder that the Chase exerted a baneful influence on the condition of the humble ranks of life; we do not indeed write unadvisedly when we state, that it proved to them a nursery of idleness and vice, and a source of misery in numerous instances that might be pointed to amongst the families of the neighbouring peasantry.

Although Chapman (1791, p113) suggested a seemingly straightforward solution to the problem – 'the temptation to deer-stealing is the deer: therefore, destroy the deer, and you take away the temptation of deer-stealing' – it was rebuffed by Chafin, a stalwart supporter of both Lord Rivers and his franchise. He (1818, pp69-70) quipped that

> in order to depreciate the rights of the Chase, it hath been alledged ... that the deer in particular lead men into temptation of becoming thieves; and that, from stealing of deer, they proceed to commit other felonies; and that, therefore, the annihilation of the deer would be of great service to the County, by taking away the temptation, and checking felony in its early progress ... A similar way of reasoning may be this, and full as forcible as the other. There are such persons in being as sheep-stealers, and the fine flocks of the Dorsets may be a temptation to such depredators to come among us, and make spoil of our folds; we had better, therefore, annihilate our flocks, and take away the temptation to felony before any is committed; which

> will keep our gaol clear of prisoners, to the great relief of the County. Such arguments, by parity of reasoning, are equally as conclusive as the former. But a truce with such absurdities.

Chafin's interesting logic aside, many people both assumed and asserted a connection between deer stealing and other crimes. Smuggling was one example frequently cited, Chapman (1791, pp22-23) complaining that the Chase 'is likewise a great harbour for smugglers, the woods being very commodious for secreting their goods, and the deer-stealers always ready at hand to give them every assistance'. According to Hawkins (1980, p71), it was 'the alliance between smugglers and deer-stealers which gave the Chase its lawless reputation in the eighteenth century. Two favourite ports of entry for the smugglers were the harbours of Poole and Christchurch, both lying a few miles south of the Chase border with largely deserted heathland in between.' And whereas

> the romantic view of smuggling tends to concentrate on the risks and adventures connected with landing the contraband, [it] is apt to overlook the fact that this was only the beginning of the smugglers' problems. The goods had to be moved to hiding places inland and distributed to the towns and cities. For these movements discreet staging posts were necessary ... and it is easy to see how useful the special skills and local knowledge of the deer-stealers would be to the smuggling fraternity (*ibid*, pp71-72).

Morley (1987, p86) likewise highlights the 'great wooded fastnesses' of Cranborne Chase and the neighbouring New Forest 'in which the fleeing smugglers were safe from pursuit, able to sell their contraband goods in peace'.

> The New Forest had long been a vast refuge for outlaws ... fugitives from justice, deserters from the armed forces and, of course, the deer poachers [among whom] the smugglers were accepted as brothers, as mates, as 'ackers', just as they were by the same sort of people in the twin stretch of forest, Cranborne Chase, another refuge for the Gentlemen of the Night (*ibid*, p104).

Isaac Gulliver, known as the 'King of the Dorset Smugglers', made Cranborne Chase his home for a number of years, his wife heralding from the local crime hotspot of Sixpenny Handley.

At least part of the challenge facing not only Lord Rivers but also his neighbours, all of whom undoubtedly suffered criminal attack at some point, was the definition of crime. We shall later discuss the significance of 'social crime' and will distinguish between opportunistic and professional thieves, but some brief elaboration on one Act in particular may be useful here. That Act is, of course, 9 Geo. 1. c.22. (1723), the Black Act: notorious for classifying an unprecedented number of crimes as felonious. Although other authors have discussed various aspects of the Black Act at length elsewhere, one point

particularly relevant here is the Act's redefining of crime. ('New laws [often] meant new crimes' according to Emsley (1987, p24).) In a way, thoroughly modern, it individualised criminals, making anonymity – and, by implication, protest – a much more serious offence. Many of the activities covered by the Act related to deer, game, and wood theft, crimes often defined as 'social' and therefore not universally accepted as such. They were also crimes closely associated with forests and chases. This brings us to an interesting point: whether the contemporary perception of forest and chase dwellers as particularly criminal was due to some social tendency peculiar to them or to the greater number of serious crimes they were apt to commit. This, in turn, had implications for men like Samuel Hall, who must decide whether to make a public example of men who were, privately, of great assistance. (As an aside, George Pitt, the forebear of our Lords Rivers, was himself targeted during the various raids precipitating the passage of the Black Act, his park at Stratfield Saye being pillaged in 1723. Whether this might have coloured his descendants' views of deer stealers is of course unknowable, but an interesting possibility nonetheless.)

Cost

The proprietors' concern purportedly lay not only with their own financial wellbeing and with their tenants' moral wellbeing, but also with Lord Rivers's financial and moral wellbeing, for here was a man throwing away huge sums of money in vain, and thereby neglecting not only his purse but also his paternal duty. As Chapman (1791, p84) warned, although 'a man may have a legal right to do oppressive acts, he cannot have a moral right; a number of instances occuring continually, where persons act strictly legally, and yet are justly condemned by the virtuous part of mankind'. Where an appeal to his Lordship's moral sensibility failed, Chapman hoped an appeal to his financial sensibility would succeed.

> His Lordship seems ... to conceive that we were earnestly soliciting him to grant us a great favor: The committee entertained a very different idea. They considered the Chace as a very expensive, troublesome, and offensive Franchise: and that his Lordship would be as much benefitted by receiving a fair compensation for it, and getting rid of the expence and trouble it unavoidably occasioned, as the proprietors of estates would be by the Disfranchisement (*ibid*, p4).

He (*ibid*, pp112-113) continues, just as 'Mr. St. John ... says, "The general project of the enclosure of the forests, is so evidently beneficial, both as it respects the revenue of the Crown, and the wealth of

the nation, that it is needless to prove the affirmative of that proposition"', so, too, the disfranchisement and subsequent enclosure of lands on Cranborne Chase would prove beneficial. Indeed, '*if his Lordship kept all his Walks in hand, and sold every joint of the deer that were killed in it, the sale would not produce sufficient to maintain the keepers, and pay the other expences incident to the Chace* – and therefore it was not, nor could be made, productive' (*ibid*, p30).

But although Lord Rivers himself acknowledged the great cost of maintaining the Chase, he also pointed out that its value was not merely monetary. In a society founded upon social standing, such franchises were important status symbols. Venison was a particularly expensive commodity thanks to restrictions on hunting and to a thriving black market. What Lord Rivers lost financially, he more than recouped in respect.

4.2.3 Valuing Cranborne Chase

This brief discussion of finance brings us to another important point: that of valuation. Although Chapman was replaced as Chairman of the Committee of Proprietors when negotiations reopened in 1803, his initial correspondence with Lord Rivers, and particularly his 1791 *Letter to the Noblemen, and Gentlemen, Proprietors*, is very revealing, as are certain observations made by Lord Pembroke's steward. At the heart of the problem: the fact that, on the one hand, Lord Rivers owned only six per cent (1,040 acres) of the deer fed part of the Chase; yet, on the other hand, the deer fed part comprised less than four per cent (17,150 acres) of the Chase's total 500,000 acres. Although Lord Rivers's land did not suffer much from deer damage, he might argue that neither did anyone else's, relatively speaking. Chapman (*ibid*, p44) did not agree:

> your Lordship may say the Chace is your own, and you have a right to exercise the privileges annexed to it though to the detriment of the public, or individuals: that they possess their estates subject to the Forest-Laws, and therefore have no right to complain. With respect to the public, I must controvert it, it being a known established principle of our constitution, that private rights must give way to public good.

Yet, why should the proprietors' private property be rated above that of Lord Rivers? After all, both had their foundation in the law. This was the very question facing Samuel Hall when asked what to do with the three aforementioned deer stealers.

But returning to the question of valuation: the correspondence between Chapman and Lord Rivers reveals two very different approaches. Whilst Chapman (and his fellow proprietors on the

committee) offered a straightforward sum which they deemed adequate compensation for what was a costly and unproductive franchise, Lord Rivers, whose money was being spent, reminded his neighbours that he had no particular desire or need to disfranchise – money not being an issue – and that it was in fact they who would most benefit financially. What were they willing to pay for the benefits they would gain? Surely, given all the fuss, the deer damaged their collective property to an annual value of more than £200; otherwise, all this time and effort was for nought. If they were so desperate for disfranchisement, they should be the ones open to negotiation. Although a little unorthodox (Chapman (*ibid*, p36) deemed it 'novel and unusual'), the suggestion of valuing by damage was a logical one. Chapman was none too impressed, though, for despite

> the proprietors of lands in Cranbourne Chace ... saying, it is a great injury to their estates, as well as to the public; and that they are willing to make his Lordship a compensation for it equal to the full value. His Lordship replies, by my withholding my consent I can injure your estates to a very considerable amount: you bought them subject to the Chace-rights, and paid accordingly; therefore, unless you will comprize in the value, the damage my withholding my consent will do you; I will not give it: having a legal right to refuse (*ibid*, p85).

Chapman (*ibid*, p46) further adds, 'even admitting your Lordship's right of valuing by damage, I will venture to assert the damage done to the woods would not amount to half the money' demanded in compensation, and besides, 'I cannot suppose your Lordship means that [the proprietors] should pay for the removal of what ought not to exist: it being a principle of our constitution (and indeed of every well regulated government) that every temptation to the breach of law, and the corruption of the morals of the people, should be done away' (*ibid*, p47). Finally,

> with respect to what his Lordship says about the proprietors of lands having purchased their estates, subject to the Chace-rights, and paid accordingly; I answer, Is that a reason why a man should not improve his estate? or that another man who has the means of preventing him from improving it, should have a right to use those means to his injury, though of no benefit to himself (*ibid*, p84)?

In short, Chapman (*ibid*, p121) was 'pretty well convinced, it is truly insignificant; *except from the mischief it does*'; not only should such a franchise not exist, being a relic of the abominable Norman yoke, but Lord Rivers was being stubborn and selfish, an entirely reasonable offer having being made in lieu.

Chapman's *Letter* was in fact in response to an 'authentic account' written and privately published by Lord Rivers, speaking of which Smart (1841, pp240-241) rather interestingly comments,

> we confess we cannot rise from its perusal, without a deep sense of the honourable and straightforward line of conduct pursued by the noble owner of the Chase, as contrasted with the opposite party, who, through their organ the chairman appear to have been actuated not so much by the principle of fair and equitable dealing, between man and man, as by the assumption of ... a theorem, whose fallacy and injustice were triumphantly exposed in the "observations" of Lord Rivers.

Smart's opinion is even more interesting in light of that expressed by Lord Pembroke's steward,

Seagrim, some fifty years earlier. He writes to Lord Pembroke in November 1790:

> I attended the meeting yesterday at Woodyates Inn, and from all circumstances I am convinced it was intended to be a partial meeting, altho' the advertisement of three days notice, gave it rather the sanction of a public one; convened without doubt; for the purpose of forming a combination or association for carrying on some endless suits of law with Lord Rivers, respecting his Claim of Chace Rights, and to wage War against his Lordship's Deer in the Chace. Out of about seven hundred Landholders interested in the Chace, only seven people attended ... Circular Letters were sent by Mr. Chapman ... to such people as he thought proper; Mr. Ogden told me he had received a Letter more than a Week ago, desiring his attendance; therefore if I attend any more meetings of this sort, without a written notice from the Chairman, I shall expect to be taken up for a Spy ... Upon the whole I foresee that a good Harvest is coming on for the Gentlemen of the Law, and my simple opinion is, that the less you know you have to do in the business at present, the better (WSRO 2057/E1/11).

In March 1791, he adds,

> the offer of the Committee to Lord Rivers for his Rights in the Chace seems to strike me to be too little, and his Lordship's demands for those rights, too much. I very much wish for the Peace of the Neighbourhood, and advantage of all parties, that a price could be agreed upon. I really think it would answer the purpose very well for the Landholders to give Lord Rivers Ten Thousand Pounds for his Chace Rights; and his Lordship would I believe do extremely well in accepting such Sum; but the difference between the Parties, is so very wide, that the Sum I have mentioned, cannot I fear with any prospect of success be proposed (*ibid*).

A letter dated only a few days later is also interesting, Seagrim advising that

> it is ... his Lordship's opinion that the Chace Committee should make Lord Rivers an offer of Ten thousand pounds or Guineas ... if this offer should be made, and rejected, there will be an end to the business at large; should this be the Case, Lord Pembroke will be ready I believe to join with you in consideration about the Deer at Fernditch ... A stock of Deer could very well be kept in Wilton Park, so as to admit of <u>twenty brace</u> being killed every year (*ibid*).

Vernditch was not disfranchised for a further decade; yet no one seemed to complain of damage done by its deer. Indeed, still underlying all of these goings-on was the question of boundary. With the original outbounds being claimed, the fact that some of the deer within that extent were owned by somebody else might be easily overlooked. Unsurprisingly, Chapman's (1791, p39) humble opinion

was that 'whatever damage the estates in the out-bounds may receive from the deer, it is from illegal trespass, and therefore they ought not to pay a sixpence' in compensation, and this despite the fact that both Vernditch and Chettered lay within the outer bounds.

4.3 The *King* Case and its Aftermath

The Salisbury and Winchester Journal explains of *Rivers v King*,

> this suit was instituted to ascertain the boundaries of the Chase of Cranborne, and involved, on the one side, the most extensive royalty which was ever claimed by any subject ... and on the other, the independent enjoyment of their property by all the owners of the soil throughout the range of that wide domain. No cause of equal importance was ever before submitted to a jury of Wiltshire gentlemen, and no question ever excited a higher degree of public expectation ... the rights of the forest or chase, now to be asserted over this vast district, however obnoxious they may be to the feelings of those whom they affected – however injurious to the interests of individuals – were grounded in the antient Constitution of England, and were protected by that law which held every right as sacred, and would never permit the irritated feelings of men to justify the invasion of any right (5 August 1816, HRO 116M86/16).

As to the specifics of the case, Hawkins (1991, ppxxi-xxii) explains that

> the farming element in the [disfranchisement] dispute was probably strongest along the Wiltshire border where there had always been support for the view that Chase law applied in Dorset but not ... Wiltshire ... the argument had been tested more than once and rejected. However, with feeling running high, there was an inclination to contest the issue yet again.

Just such an opportunity arose following an incident in which

> King was walking with his greyhounds and a keeper shot one, on the grounds that King did not have Lord Rivers's permission to exercise his dogs within the Chase. King's response was to challenge a test case. Finding the deer grazing on his farm he set two or three brace of greyhounds on to them, to drive them away. In due course Rivers brought an action against him, which did not come finally to trial until the Salisbury Assizes of 1816 (*ibid*).

The point in question was whether Trow Down, Goscombe Field, and Goscombe Coppice, all in Alvediston, were within or without the Chase bounds, those being the locations where the defendants allegedly did 'with force and arms break and enter the Chase of the Plaintiff ... and did then and there with certain dogs ... without the leave or license of the said Lord Rivers, unlawfully chase, hunt, wound, kill, take, and carry away ... twenty bucks, twenty does, and twenty fawns, to the value of £50' (Smart 1841, p235); the same being repeated, 'the said Lord Rivers says he is injured and has sustained damage to the amount of £500' (*ibid*, p236). King meanwhile argued that he

> was possessed of a certain parcel of land called Trow Down [and another called Goscombe Field], and because the said Bucks &c., were wrongfully eating and depasturing the grass and herbage ... and doing damage there, he, in his own right, and the other Defendants, his servants, by his command, with the said dogs ... gently drove, chased, and hunted, the said bucks &c., out of the said [pieces] of land, doing no unnecessary damage to the said bucks &c., [which] were ... a little bitten by the dogs against the will and consent of the Defendants ... and that a certain Deer was pursued and driven against their will and consent, into a yard or enclosed place, in Alvediston, whereupon they for the preservation of the said Deer, from hurt or injury, gently laid their hands upon him, and detained him there, and gave the said Lord Rivers notice thereof (*ibid*, pp236-237).

One suspects that neither version is completely accurate; but details aside, the main point is that King was effectively proclaiming the land between the inner and outer bounds to be purlieu. Despite evidence to the contrary, the jury agreed, '[returning] a verdict for the Defendants, thereby denying the Plaintiffs' claim to liberties of free chase, within the county of Wilts, which was the point mainly contended for, in the action, a verdict therefore subversive of Lord Rivers's ancient rights' (*ibid*, p239). It was, in Smart's (*ibid*, pp242-243) opinion,

> a decision arrived at, we hesitate not to affirm, in opposition to the clearest testimony in support of an ancient right, that was ever produced before a court of Justice. It was not however, enough to prove the prescriptive nature of that right, or its actual enjoyment for a period of more than six hundred years; it was not enough to substantiate its title by documents of unimpeachable authority, for there was a pre-existent bias in the minds of those who sat in judgment upon them, there was a secret prejudice against the possession of a power and a privilege, which some had even the boldness to assert were too princely and extensive to be safely entrusted in the hands of any subject. It is obvious [that] the disposition on the part of interested individuals, to dispute the tenure of the Chase, and to curtail its privileges, had assumed a most determined front; each partial success was lauded as a triumph; each instance of defeat proved the stimulus to renewed exertion.

Chafin, writing in 1818 (pp24-26), similarly remarked that

> the Illuminati of the County of Wilts have lately made a grand discovery; namely, that possession and enjoyment of rights for three centuries past do not confirm a title to those rights, if they are appendages of a Chase; that Lord Rivers is invested with such rights, which are excessive, and more extensive than those of any other subject in the Realm, and even of any of the Royal Family, and therefore ought to be reduced; and therefore, from the dictates of a learned Counsel, and from their own innate principles of true patriotism, a decree hath passed – that Lord Rivers, being possessed of greater rights than any subject ought to have, should be dispossessed of those parts which are in the County of Wilts, and that they should be shared by the gentry and yeomanry of the said County. And great hopes have been entertained that the neighbouring County would go and do likewise: but in this it is hoped there will be a disappointment; for the Writer cannot believe that the County of Dorset is, as yet, so sufficiently illuminated as to follow so bright an example; and, perhaps, it will be thought that such an act will too much resemble the leveling system which was so fatal in another Kingdom, and which ought to be thoroughly reprobated in this, and every the least tendency towards it most cautiously attended to and averted. The Writer of these anecdotes hath no other end or view whatever, but to prevent gentlemen from throwing away their money in useless contests, and to promote harmony, friendship, and good neighbourhood.

In contrast, 'Charlotte Grove expressed herself as "*delighted*"' at the ruling against Lord Rivers, 'and on the following Sunday, attending Berwick St. John church, she complained indignantly that the rector "did not *rejoice so much* as he *ought* upon the Chace cause being gained"' (Hawkins 1991, pxxiv). But despite the seeming lack of enthusiasm in Berwick, Seagrim wrote to Lord Pembroke that

> the Victory of Waterloo did not infuse more Joy into the Hearts of a large portion of this neighbourhood, than the defeat of Lord Rivers in his Deer Cause. The Bells at Salisbury and at most other places in the Vicinity of the Chace (Wilton excepted) were Rung on the occasion; the Salisbury and Barford Ringers applied to me for Money for Ringing (your Lordship being Interested in the Decision) but I did not think it prudent to comply with their request. Great Merit was attached to your Lordship at the Assizes by the Disfranchisement of Fernditch, and I hope that understanding will take place between the contending parties, and that Lord Rivers will consent upon reasonable terms to Disfranchisement of the Chase which would be of great utility to those Interested and would root out and prevent the Greed of Poachers in that part of the Country (WSRO 2057/E1/11).

Indeed, for many the ruling was not only a victory for King and his backers, nor only for those Chase dwellers residing in Wiltshire; it was a victory for all who had suffered by Lord Rivers's deer, poor and wealthy alike – it was, in short, a victory of private property and principles over corrupt and corrupting tyranny, of modernity over premodernity.

Lord Rivers had spent enormous sums of money (the 1816 accounts include contingent payments totalling £1,820 for the 'Bill for Business in the Chace Suits and Lord Rivers's General Concerns' and for 'Disbursement in [the same]' (DRO D/PIT/E174)) and had invoked all of the traditionally successful arguments in his defence, but to no avail. 'In the law-courts the tide continued to run against the privileges of the franchise. An apparently straightforward conviction by local magistrates in a case of deer-stealing in the parish of Chettle was quashed on appeal in 1820. Lord Rivers's bargaining position was thus weakened further' (Hawkins 1991, ppxxvii-xxviii). It was now 'an unequal contest, wherein one unsupported individual had to sustain the brunt of perpetual warfare waged by a combination of enemies, and it therefore became an act of prudence to resign on favourable terms, the possession of a right that was already threatened with extinction' (Smart 1841, p243).

> As the negotiations with the committee of landowners gathered momentum an outline agreement for the voluntary surrender of the franchise gave Lord Rivers, in compensation, an annual income of £1800 (but with no extra land) charged on the estates subject to damage by the deer. This was approved by a meeting of the landowners at the Crown Inn, Blandford in April 1826 (Hawkins 1991, ppxxvii-xxviii).

Interestingly, despite earlier protestations and a court ruling effectively exempting them, Samuel Hall wrote to his landlord, 'the proprietors of coppices in what we call the out-bounds is agreeable to pay their quota equal with the In Bounds. I believe that the commons and down lands that is exposed to the Deer is not to be included in the fine' (quoted in Hawkins 1983, pxv).

> The basis of assessment ... was five shillings per acre of woodland and £10 per mile of buck-fence ... The only discordant note came from Lord Pembroke whose assessment amounted to £395 but who refused to pay more than £200. To prevent a last-minute collapse of the scheme the other landowners agreed to share responsibility for the short-fall of £195, since neither Pembroke nor Rivers would give way (*ibid*).

4.4 Conclusion

> An Act of Parliament, 9 Geo. IV., was [consequently] obtained for the disfranchisement of the Chase, by which it was provided that Lord Rivers, and his heirs, were to receive from Michaelmas, 1829, the clear annual rent of £1,800 per annum; to dispose of twenty thousand head of Deer, to retain free the Lodges of Rushmore, West Lodge, and Busseystool. The Act expired *Oct. 10th*, 1830, and thus was the final disfranchisement of Cranborne Chase accomplished (Smart 1841, p242).

In Thomas's (n.d., p3) words, 'modern England and agriculture [had finally] caught up with the Chase'.

One of the first things many local landowners did with their woods was – as promised – enclose them, although for game cover as well as for profit. Now was *their* opportunity to enforce an elite system of game preservation: albeit over their own land only, but perhaps at just as great a cost to local society. Although Smart (*ibid*, p245) rejoiced that 'the temptation' to deer stealing 'has been done away, and though the evils to which it has given rise have not yet been wholly eradicated, we do still confidently anticipate that in process of time the moral infection will have entirely exhausted itself, and become inert', the temptation to poaching remained, and even grew. The resultant crime cannot be attributed solely to the area's history as a hunting franchise; poaching was rife throughout many parts of Britain, as were various other forms of social unrest. Nonetheless, for the farmers at least, 'the extermination of the Deer ... proved an effectual and permanent relief'; as it did for their wealthier landowning neighbours, amongst whom 'a demoralizing agency [had been] at work, evidencing its existence in the frequent outbreaks of litigation, and keeping up a feeling of animosity and ill-will, where friendship and kindness ought to have prevailed' (*ibid*). One means by which these individuals expressed their restored sense of camaraderie was through foxhunting, a form of entertainment with its own implications for local landscape and society.

In the coming chapters, we will examine the various changes in land, law, and life on Cranborne Chase, both in the run up to, and immediately after, disfranchisement, using each of the arguments made by the proprietors as the focus of separate chapters.

Chapter 5 Producing and Using the Landscape of Cranborne Chase

5.1 The Proprietors' Arguments: Woods

5.1.1 Historical Context

The proprietors spearheading the anti-Chase campaign formally outlined their complaints during an 1803 meeting. The 'Woods' section of the accompanying report reads:

> the owners of the Woods make Fences round them at every cutting sufficiently high to keep out the Deer. These Fences are broken down by the Keepers at Three years old to let the Deer leap & creep (as it is called) into the Woods but still leaving sufficient Fences to keep out the Cattle during the succeeding 4 years in all Cases where the Woods are Commonable for Cattle. The damage done to the woods by their being cropt by Deer at so early a period as 3 years old is very considerable, so much so that the underwood is in very few instances fit to cut under 18 years old, which would otherwise be as fit at 12 and in some instances 9 years old ... The Damage done by the Deer to the woods may therefore be ranged in two classes 1st. The extra expence of making fences [and] 2nd. The Damage done to the Underwood by cropping it so early ... and thereby not only retarding for some years the period of its cutting, but reducing the value of it when cut very considerably (DRO D/PIT/E3).

J.E. Arundell deemed the damage to 'the Tender Growth of the Wood ... so Shamefull ... that altho' the Woods are of 16 years Growth yet in fact they are no more than 12, added to [which] there are to contend with, the Wonderfull increase of Deer, which is said to be incredible' (WSRO 2667/20/47).

Marshall sympathised with those in the proprietors' position; although writing about the still-royal forests and chases, he might have written equally appropriately about Lord Rivers's franchise, which, when

> compared with those woods which are private property ... the difference is obvious to the most cursory observer. In the one, a young thriving oak-tree is scarcely to be seen, whereas in the other, a regular succession appears in every quarter. The miserable state of the Royal Forests does not originate from any want of public spirit in those who have at present the charge of them, but necessarily arises from the errors of an ancient system which had in view more the preservation of deer than timber: and consequently sacrificed the preservation of the latter for the purpose of securing food for the former (quoted in James 1981, p177).

Similar sentiments appear throughout the Cranborne Chase documentation. In 1796, J.E. Arundell feared that 'in Time The Woods in the Chace will be in ye same Conditions as those at Grovely, once stoked with Deer, of little or no value' (WSRO 2667/20/47). Twenty years later, West (1816 ppv-vi) confirms this prophecy, complaining that 'in the woodlands, though the soil is favorable for ash, and produces a little oak, the quantity of timber is very small. The young saplings are generally broken or

damaged by the deer.' In 1790, Lord Pembroke's advisers estimated that having 'about one thousand Acres of Wood subject to the Feed of Lord Rivers's Deer – if the Deer were destroyed the Wood would be worth 10s. per Acre more than it now is, at 20 Years growth, which is 6d. per Acre per Annum' or £25 per annum, plus the 'expence of Fencing per Annum [that] would be saved at least £10', yielding a total annual saving of £35 (WSRO 2057/E1/11). This is, in fact, a relatively negligible-seeming sum given both the size of the area and Lord Pembroke's vast wealth; however, in 1811-1812, he paid Jeremiah Soffe the somewhat larger sum of £25.1.2. for repairing the deer fence between Vernditch and Cobley Walks and £69.9.8. for felling and making lugs for the deer fences and hedges in five of his coppices (WSRO 2057/A3/24 – see Table 5.5).

Other estimations of land value before and after disfranchisement are more varied. For example, in 1829,

> W. Upjohn [valued two] Coppices [in Iwerne Minster, just outside the inner bounds, at] £1006.9.4. in their present State, without taking into account the advantages likely to result from the Disfranchisement of the Chase which in the Article of Fencing alone, to say nothing of any thing else [would] soon become considerable. In reference to this improvable Character of the Property [J. Eliot conceived] himself fully warranted in making to W. Upjohn's Estimate such addition as [would] increase the amount to £1200 (DRO D/PIT/E5).

The proprietors were not alone in their desire for increased woodland productivity – and profit; the gentlemen landowners of Wiltshire, in particular, were reputedly great improvers. In his *General View of the Agriculture in the County of Wiltshire*, Davis (1811, p91) certainly held the local upper classes in high esteem, applauding their 'Spirit of Planting' and explaining that

> it is certainly owing to the residence of so many noble-men and great land-owners in this county, that the spirit of improvement is so general; and while it is difficult to name one gentleman that has not contributed something, in proportion to the extent of his land, towards ornamenting the county by plantations, it would be invidious to point out any particular person as a great planter: a list of the names of the resident nobility and gentry in the county of Wilts, would be a pretty accurate list of its planters.

Nor was Lord Rivers immune to this 'Spirit', commencing work on a plantation at Rushmore in the late 1810s. The 'Nursery', as it was called, first appears in his 1822 accounts, but the entries from 1823 onwards are more detailed, listing costs for both labour and supplies. Whether the plantation was predominantly for timber (profit) or game (preservation) is uncertain – in 1824 he paid £2.13.6. for 'Holly and Thorn Berrys' (DRO D/PIT/E182) but had previously paid for 'nuts acorns &c. to plant'

(DRO D/PIT/E178). The accounts also reveal that he had similar plantations on his estates at Arne, Cerne, Melcombe, and Sturminster in Dorset, and at Sudeley in Gloucestershire.

The 'Nursery' and other such plantations aside, underwood was more prevalent than timber on Cranborne Chase. However, it, too, could yield a profit, whether grown in addition to timber or on its own. As Davis (*ibid*, p86) continues,

> the demand is still so very great for underwood, that woods will not only produce sufficient to pay the rent of the land on which they grow, but if in good situations, and well managed, will produce at least half another rent by the timber which may be raised in them, without any material injury to the underwood. It is a well known fact, that woods are the best and most natural nurseries for timber, particularly for oak and ash, and that the underwood contributes greatly by its shelter and protection to the growth of trees.

And nor should the spirited planter view his underwood as second-rate; instead, he must manage it with its own productive potential in mind. In Davis's (*ibid*, p89) opinion,

> the common rule of trade will hold good here, viz. that "small gains and quick returns will make the dealer rich, but long credit ruins him." In the article of underwood, not only the interest of money, but the loss of the succeeding growth, tell against the value of standing wood after it is fit to cut, and make it doubly the advantage of the owner to cut his underwood as early as it is saleable.

Of course, that is all very well provided the 'as early as it is saleable' stage is not delayed beyond one's control by herds of hungry deer – or so the proprietors would likely argue.

In their county's first *General View of Agriculture*, the people of Dorset received rather less praise than their Wiltshire counterparts. Writing in 1793, Claridge (p32) considered Dorset 'extremely barren, both in timber and wood', suggesting that

> if large tracts of the tops of the highest hills and poorest land, were inclosed and protected from game, and either sown with a mixture of all kinds of seeds of forest trees, or planted with seedlings, not above two years old, it would not fail to succeed, and must in a few years become beautiful to the eye, and profitable to the owner (*ibid*, p33).

The second edition was more complimentary:

> plantations of fir, of various kinds, intermixed in some cases with other trees, have been made by many of the principal proprietors; which have not only contributed in a great degree to adorn the neighbourhood of their country-seats, but have also added materially to the value of those barren heaths, which will not admit of any other mode of improvement (Stevenson 1812, p327).

This latter edition also includes some specific comment on Cranborne Chase, noting in particular its hazel coppices. The author obviously appreciated the Chase woodlands' main purpose, though: provision for and protection of the deer, which, he says, 'run all over it' (*ibid*, p334) – hardly an example of England's 'Heart of Oak', then.

5.1.2 Modern Context

Many of the issues raised by the proprietors continue to affect both sylvicultural and agricultural systems today. Although relatively little of our contemporary literature focuses specifically on fallow deer, a good deal of interest remains in deer management generally, and especially with reference to crop damage. Among the problems highlighted by the Cranborne Chase proprietors and still relevant two hundred years later are deer damage to plantations, coppices, and field crops; what do today's authorities have to say on these matters?

Putman (1986, p1) introduces the subject by explaining that

> much attention has been devoted in recent years to the role played by large herbivores in shaping and maintaining vegetational systems. It is perhaps self-evident that in any system where grazing animals ... occur in any density they are bound to exercise a significant influence upon that system: altering vegetational structure, diversity and productivity.

Moore *et al* (1999, p255) reiterate the point, but with more specific reference to woods:

> herbivores, especially deer, are known to have a significant impact on woodlands. Principally by browsing, but also by bark stripping, fraying and bole scoring, deer can influence plant species composition, the physical structure of the vegetation and the degree of regeneration within existing woods as well as preventing the establishment of new plantations.

Unsurprisingly, the forestry and conservation sectors show particular interest in the relationship between deer and woodland management, and several useful points underlying relevant research can be picked out from the two quotations above, especially with reference to plantations and coppices: first, the most common explanation for damage done by deer: high density; second, the most common means of damage: physical injury; and third, the most common result of damage: reduced performance. Taking each of these points in turn, we see that the proprietors' arguments were in fact thoroughly modern; they simply lacked the research to support them.

The Deer-Wood Relationship: Habitat Preference

Many surveys demonstrate a recent, substantial rise in fallow deer numbers without simultaneous range expansion, a potentially problematic situation because damage becomes increasingly concentrated in areas where deer already exist. This rise is due partly to the lack of natural predators, which would function as a biological control, and partly to a parallel rise in both sylviculture and agriculture during the last century. Fallow deer are in fact preferential grazers. But although they may not be as restricted to and therefore destructive of woods as some other species, they nonetheless depend upon woodland cover for security and woodland plants for at least part of their diet, broadleaved woods being particularly popular.

Among the factors contributing to deer habitat preference is woodland succession. As Ratcliffe (1992, pp234-235) explains,

> sequential changes in forest growth influence plant distribution and abundance, largely through changes in light transmittance to the forest floor. Canopy closure is therefore an important influence on the carrying capacity of any animal dependent upon the availability of ground vegetation. Additionally, deer require shelter from bad weather and cover to hide from disturbance. Clearly, intimate mixtures of different temporal stages of woodland succession will provide ideal conditions for deer, providing food, shelter and cover in close proximity.

Seasonal changes also influence the number of deer present in any given place at any given time. According to Carne (1966, pp98-99), '[fallow] are more prone than roe to make crepuscular or nocturnal raids on neighbouring farmland, such depredations reaching their peak in early spring when there is little natural green in the woods'. Studies of fallow deer habitat preference certainly show marked seasonality in the shift between wood and field. In his research on the use of open and closed coppice land and surrounding agricultural land, Sackur (in Ratcliffe 1992) demonstrates a tendency for deer to use both open and old closed areas increasingly through the summer and into the autumn. The deer continue to use closed habitats during the colder months, when the vegetation provides shelter and some woody browse, showing a particular preference for recent closed areas as spring and summer approach. All of these patterns reflect the relationship between food, shelter, and cover described by Ratcliffe: as a wood passes through its successional stages, the tree canopy closes, shading out the understorey vegetation upon which the deer prefer to feed. Both recent and old closed areas still have an early flush of undergrowth before the taller trees produce their leafy umbrella, but this flush lasts much longer in the former case, providing both food and cover, especially for newly dropped fawns.

The use of relatively food-poor old closed areas at the same time as relatively food-rich open areas during the summer and autumn suggests that the deer use the former mainly for refuge. This is probably also the case during the winter months when the deer venture into exposed fields to browse newly emerged crops.

Another animal preserved on Cranborne Chase, although rather later in the area's history, shows habitat preferences similar to those of the fallow deer – that animal being a favourite game bird, the pheasant. Like deer, pheasants exhibit seasonal shifts in habitat use, generally spending the winter in the woods and the summer in the fields.

> During the winter pheasants select certain types of woodland in preference to others. Densities, as shown by trapping success, are significantly higher in areas of scrub and woodland with a well-developed shrub layer than in bare or grazed woodland, hedgerows or open fields ... Apart from providing the main overwintering sites for pheasants, woodlands are also an integral part of male pheasant breeding territories and the birds select woodland edges with well-developed shrub layers (Bealey and Robertson 1992, p193).

Coppice understorey provides just such layers, over a period of several years. Thus, 'pheasant shooting ... can easily be amply provided for by encouraging the growth of berry-producing shrubs along the edges of the rides or green lanes, useful for autumn game driving, and necessary in any case for the proper conduct of forest operations or comprehensive scheme of management' (Nesbit 1900, p311). More on pheasants later, though.

The Deer-Wood Relationship: Environmental Damage

As previously mentioned, whilst in the woods, fallow deer may injure plants in a number of ways. Browsing, bark stripping, fraying, and trampling are all examples of physical damage that may reduce wood productivity. However, given that deer are a natural part of many woodland ecosystems, damage need not equate to destruction. Indeed, all of these instances have important biological functions and only become truly problematic when deer densities exceed the local carrying capacity and damage levels consequently cross a critical threshold. The first means of damage, browsing, is fairly self-explanatory: in satisfying its herbivorous needs, a deer nibbles a plant, thereby reducing the plant's bulk and potentially affecting its ability to regrow. Bark stripping is also as its name suggests: a deer bites into the bark of a tree and peels it downward to create strips, which it then removes and eats. Whitehead (1950) suggests that the tannin contained in these strips works to relieve indigestion while

Putman and Moore (1998) note the sporadic occurrence of bark stripping, arguing that the strips are simply a food supplement necessary to survival during particularly severe weather. Fraying also damages bark, with a buck rubbing its antlers up and down a trunk, either to relieve pent-up aggression or to help shed the velvet from its newly grown antlers. Younger trees suffer relatively higher damage because of their more flexible movement in response to the deer's thrashing action. In addition, fraying can be 'particularly disadvantageous in hazel coppice where the fraying wounds make [trees] unusable either because of their appearance or because the damage makes them too difficult to split for use as spars or hazel rods' (http://www.coppice-products.co.uk/Threats.htm). Finally, trampling simply involves damaging plants by squashing them underfoot. In each of these cases, the affected plant rarely dies although its injuries may affect growth and/or expose it to secondary problems, such as disease.

The various consequences of excessive deer damage, whatever the means, are numerous and interrelated, with important implications for a woodland's long-term sustainability. As the Chase proprietors pointed out, damage may either slow growth or prevent it altogether. Faced with an excessive number of deer, due consideration must be given to the suitability of various tree species, the means of managing those trees, and the costs associated with protecting them once established. A plant unable to tolerate browsing will not reach its full potential for growth and productivity. In a natural setting, it will succumb to competition from hardier plants and will eventually disappear. In a managed setting, such as a coppice or plantation, man may intervene, utilising some form of protection to prevent or at least reduce damage. However, protecting the plant may prove too costly and therefore economically unviable, the point argued by the proprietors with reference to fences. Even today, fences provide only temporary respite before they become financially impractical. As Joys *et al* (2004, p31) comment, 'the continued use of brushwood fencing is ... likely to provide only limited protection after the first few years of its construction, and a more permanent solution will probably be required. This may take the form of wire post fencing around the compartments or a more drastic measure of fencing the wood in its entirety.' Interestingly, they (*ibid*) believe that 'deer browsing currently poses the greatest threat to the successful re-growth of ... coppice in England', a sentiment in keeping with the proprietors' own.

The Deer-Wood Relationship: Competitive Herbivory

However, deer may not have been solely to blame for the woodland damage purportedly so rampant on Cranborne Chase. As early as 1573, Tusser warned that 'if Cattel or Cony may enter to crop [/] Young oak is in danger of losing his top' (quoted in Nesbit 1900, p296). Damage caused by all manner of herbivores remained of particular concern well into the modern period. Despite praising their enthusiasm, Davis nonetheless laments the Wiltshire planters' ignorance of certain aspects of woodland management; he (1811, pp84-85) writes,

> many parts of the outskirts of the county abound with large and valuable woods, which are in general very thriving, though great injury is done to many of them, by their being subject to common-rights for cattle, and in some instances for deer. Enclosure acts, and agreements for divisions of commonable lands, will in time get rid of these incumberances; but many improvements of this kind have hitherto been neglected, under an idea that cattle do very little injury to woods after they are seven years old, the usual time at which they begin to be commonable. If the owners of such woods saw this injury in its proper light, they would not hesitate to make ample compensation to the commoners, to induce them to abandon their rights of pasturage therein.

Marshall (quoted in James 1981, p179) similarly complains that,

> the depredations and ravages committed by the deer and cattle upon the young sprigs and coppices at so early an age, not only prevent even the smallest possibility of obtaining a regular succession of oak timber but cause a daily diminution in the growth of the underwood. The injury sustained by the deer being admitted into the young spring wood in the first instance is very considerable, but that injury is small indeed when compared to the destructive havock made by the devouring jaws of a herd of hungry cattle, admitted into the young coppice just as the leaves have begun to appear ... All the townships using a commonage in these woods ... are in an open field state and ... in consequence of the inability of the occupier of an open field farm to procure a sufficiency of food for their support in the winter season [the cattle] are reduced to an extreme state of leaness and poverty at the time they are turned into the woods, when whole herds of them rush forward like a torrent and everything that is vegetable and within their reach, inevitably falls a sacrifice to their voracious and devouring appetite.

Pigs entered the woods in a similarly ravenous state according to Lord Nelson, who wrote of the Forest of Dean that, as well as the deer barking all the young trees, 'vast droves of hogs are allowed to go into the woods in the autumn, and if any fortunate acorn escapes their search, and takes root, then flocks of sheep are allowed to go into the Forest, and they bite off the tender shoot' (quoted in Nicholls 1858, p87).

These quotes are particularly interesting in light of the proprietors' arguments, which rarely mention livestock, instead blaming Lord Rivers's deer entirely for local browse damage. Recall the

emphasis on deer in Mr. Sergeant Best's accusation 'that the growth of wood should be protected only for the benefit of the deer; that if any man turned his sheep into his own woods, they should be impounded by the owner of the deer; [and] that the growth of timber should for ever be prevented by the browsing of the deer'. Yet note Best's second point and its implication that owners of woods would encourage – let alone tolerate – sheep browse, and this despite the fact that 'sheep, with their close 'bite', are very damaging' (Edlin 1947, p72) to woodlands. Indeed,

> a fundamental natural law appears to govern the effect which certain creatures have upon their habitat. True woodland animals, such as deer, cattle, and swine, so long as their numbers are restricted by their natural enemies, do not harm the forest to any serious extent. If they did so, they would destroy their habitat, and their race would suffer accordingly. This law can only operate to a limited extent in Britain, for the natural enemies of these animals ... have been exterminated by man. Conversely, creatures of the plains, such as the rabbit, hare, sheep, goat, and horse, [may greatly] damage the woodland, for their feeding habits are adapted to grassland, which is their natural home. In an undeveloped country, they shun the shade of trees, for they rely for safety on speed and a keen observation. But if they are protected or domesticated by man, and kept either through fear or by enclosing fences in wooded country, the damage they do is devastating (*ibid*, p66).

Of particular note is Edlin's belief that cattle and swine only 'do harm when *confined* to feed in the woods' (emphasis added, *ibid*, p72), a case prevented on the Chase by their legal exclusion during the early years of coppice growth, the fence month (fifteen days before and after Midsummer), and winter heyning (Martinmas to May Day) – the latter two making up approximately eight and 47 per cent of the year, respectively. In other words, cattle could graze open coppices for less than half the year (see Appendix 2). Edlin (1947, p67) also asserts that 'so long as their numbers do not become excessive, the toll [deer] take on forest and farm crops is a light one'; Putman and Moore (1998, p142) agree:

> despite the apparent severity of damage caused to agriculture or forestry, the actual economic significance of such damage would appear in many cases to be negligible or small ... and although woodland crops may be checked and quality of the timber may be reduced as a consequence of earlier browsing damage, losses may be far less than they first appear.

In fact, a 1992 Forestry Commission survey labelled rabbits a bigger culprit, browse damage attributable to them being 'between three and 10 times as high as that caused by deer' (*ibid*, p150) in coniferous woodlands throughout England and Wales. Thus, the rabbit

> ranks as the deadliest foe of the forest, the one creature that can never be permitted in young plantations, even in the smallest numbers. The reason is simple and clear. Naturally a creature of the grass country, [the rabbit] eats everything down to ground level, disdaining only a few

> distasteful herbs. Grasses survive this ruthless treatment [but] Young trees are exterminated by it (Edlin 1947, p68).

Rabbits certainly made their presence felt on Cranborne Chase – and had done so for some time – a sixteenth century report concluding of 'Blackden [Blagdon] Park ... there hath been in the said Park of Old time three Coppices ... which Coppices be utterly destroyed by reason of the Great encrease of Coneys' (NA LRRO 5/39). Later, in 1787, Lord Pembroke learned that

> the Rabbits at Fovant, have done a vast deal of damage to the Underwood, especially to the new plantations, and a good deal of mischief to the Farmers Corn: I have for a few weeks past permitted the Farmers of Fovant, to go out on particular days attended with the Gamekeeper, in order to destroy the Rabbits, and should recommend it to be continued untill the Pheasants and Partridges begin to make their nests; and after the breeding season, to be renewed and continued 'till they are entirely destroyed (WSRO 2057/E1/11).

Of course, some landowners actively preserved both rabbits and hares in warrens, sometimes for sport but more often for profit. Either way, the implications for the local landscape could be deplorable. Hudson (1910, p20) certainly held strong views on the matter, deeming warrens 'the most fatal policy of all', and exclaiming,

> how hideous they are – those great stretches of downland, enclosed in big wire fences and rabbit netting, with little but wiry weeds, moss and lichen growing on them, the earth dug up everywhere by the disorderly little beasts! For a while there is a profit – "It will serve me my time", the owner says – but the end is utter barrenness.

On a quite different note, Defoe (1724, p196) recalls the dismay evoked by Lord Pembroke's warren at Wilton, 'the gentlemen [complaining] that it marrs their game, for that as soon as they put up a hare for their sport, if it be any where within two or three miles, away she runs for the warren, and there is an end of their pursuits'.

Nisbet (1900, p307) likewise deemed game birds a nuisance to forestry, not because they damaged the trees but because they interfered with their management:

> on estates where game preservation is one of the main objects in view, the forestry work is expected to be carried out between the end of the shooting season and the beginning of the nesting period, so that all thinning, felling, and planting operations have to be crowded into about six weeks of February and March, quite regardless of whether or not that may be the most suitable time for doing the work. It is not the best time, but it is the only 'seasonable' time from the gamekeeper's point of view.

The Deer-Wood Relationship: Lord Rivers versus the Proprietors

Part of the challenge in trying to balance woodland and herbivore management is the prevention of so-called 'ecological traps': ecosystems 'with a badly managed ratio of settling stimulus to available food' (Reimoser and Gossow 1996, p107) in which 'the food needed for the overabundant ungulate game is taken increasingly, though unnaturally, by twig browsing and bark peeling' (*ibid*, p115). Ecological traps arise when a woodland's attractiveness to a herbivore population, in this case deer, outweighs its appropriateness as a habitat for that population. As Crawley (1983, p299) points out,

> overgrazing is a term used by the managers of wild or domesticated herbivore populations to describe changes in the plant community which they view as deleterious ... We do not talk of natural ecosystems as being overgrazed or undergrazed ... the fraction of primary production that is consumed by herbivores varies greatly from one community to the other. The equilibrium vegetation that persists in an ecosystem is both a cause and a consequence of the prevalent rates of feeding; high rates of consumption are not [necessarily] 'unnatural' nor are they [necessarily] associated with 'instability'.

In providing a mosaic of habitats, an area of coppice woodland cut on a regular rotation may prove a very suitable habitat for fallow deer, especially when surrounded by agricultural land, as was the case on Cranborne Chase. Whether or not its attractiveness outweighs its appropriateness depends on sensible, integrated deer management. According to Ratcliffe (1992, p233),

> group selective felling, i.e. the periodic felling of small groups of trees, thereby creating canopy gaps, is probably the best silvicultural system for providing deer with an ideal interspersion of food, shelter ... and cover ... in space and time, but undoubtedly coppice management can produce similar results in providing a continuous succession of early growth stages. In such habitats deer can achieve high levels of performance ... and density.

Interestingly, he prefaces this explanation by asserting that 'although coppicing has seldom been practised purposely to increase deer densities in the UK, this has been the case [elsewhere]' (*ibid*). Mr. Sergeant Best, amongst others, would likely disagree, instead arguing that every aspect of land management, including the choice of sylvicultural system, on Cranborne Chase related in some way to the protection and promotion of the deer. Because the deer ranked foremost in the Chase and because coppices served as ideal habitats for them, coppices continued to be managed specifically for them, with any by-products thereof being an added bonus for Lord Rivers, the commoners, and the

commoners' hungry livestock. In contrast, the proprietors bore the bulk of the cost of maintaining the coppices but received what they deemed very little in return.

Hence, their argument that disfranchisement would make enclosure and, therefore, the extinguishing of common rights easier; then they might do whatever they wished with their land, deciding for themselves whether animals should or should not be present. The commoners would benefit through their exposure to progressive agricultural techniques, and, of course, Lord Rivers would receive both appropriate compensation for the loss of his deer and the opportunity to manage his own land in a more modern way. However, Lord Rivers might equally use the above examples to diminish his deer's culpability while simultaneously emphasising the benefits felt by the commoners both indirectly through their commonable livestock and directly through their access to various woodland products. Lord Rivers and his supporters liked to believe that everyone derived some advantage from the Chase's continued existence, and Thompson (1975, p160) shares this belief, remarking that 'if the keepers were attentive, the deer did not need to compete with the timber. The land, thereby, could carry a double crop, the one slowly maturing, the other with a rapid turnover, as, each year, mature hinds and young bucks were culled – and both crops prestigious and ornamental.' One system's supremacy did not necessitate the other's exclusion.

We shall return to the advantages held by the commoners and proprietors later, but first, we consider the advantages held by those directly connected with Lord Rivers, namely, his deer and his servants; for at least one of Mr. Best's claims could ring true even amongst the opposing camp, that 'the benefit of the deer of Lord Rivers should be paramount'. They were, after all, the reason for the Chase's existence in the first place.

5.2 Woodland Management

5.2.1 Defining Vert

In emphasising the significance of the deer on Cranborne Chase, we must not forget that vert, as well as venison, was an important perquisite of forest and chase franchises. Cox (1697, p14) defines vert as 'any thing that beareth green Leaf, but especially of great and thick Coverts', adding that it may be

> of divers kinds; some that beareth Fruit that may serve for food bothe for Man and Beasts, as *Service-trees, Nut-trees, Crab-trees*, &c. and for the shelter and defence of the Game. Some

> called *Hautboys* for Browse, Shelter, and Defence only; as *Ashes, Poplars*, &c. Of *Sub-boys*, some for Browse and Food of the Game, and for Shelter and Defence; as *Maples* &c. Some for Browse and Defence; as *Birch, Sallow, Willow*, &c. Of Bushes and other Vegetables, some for Food and Shelter, as the *Hawthorn, Black-thorn*, &c. Some for hiding and shelter, as *Brakes, Gorse, Heath*, &c.

Manwood (1615, pp50-52) elaborates still further, firstly clarifying that 'plants, which are of the nature of hearbs, as thistels, and such like' are not classified as vert because they cannot 'hide or cover a Deere' and, secondly, defining 'three speciall causes, why the Forest Lawes have so carefully provided for the preservation of the Vert of the Forest':

> the first is, because that the very nature of the wild beasts of the forest is, to resort unto the woods and great coverts, wherein they doe take their chiefest delight and felicitie to be secret and quiet in their couches ... And as the wild beasts do delight to have their abode in the coverts and great woods, so the same is againe a most speciall shelter for them, in the winter from the cold, & in the Sommer from the heat ... The second cause is, for that the wood and covers of the Forest, or at the leastwise those, that are accompted especially Vert, doe beare fruit, which is food for the Deere in winter, when there is little grasse or other meat for them to feed upon, and then they doe feed upon Acornes, Hawes and Sloes, and such like. And when there is not sufficient food for the Deere, neither of grasse, nor of such fruits, then the Foresters, that have the charge of the wild beasts, must provide Browsewood to bee cut downe for them to feed upon: So that the woods and coverts of the Forest, are not onely preserved to be coverts, to hide & succor the Deere in: but also, to be food for them in the great frosts and snowes; and in the hard weather when the ground is covered, when they cannot get any other food otherwise.

The third cause, rather uniquely, has nothing to do with deer, being simply

> the comlinesse and beauty of the [vert] in a Forest, for the very sight and beholding of the goodly greene and pleasant woods in Forest, is no lesse pleasant and delightful in the eye of a Prince, then the view of the wild beasts of Forest and Chase, and therefore the grace of a forest is, to bee decked and trimmed up with those of pleasant greene coverts, as it were greene Arbors of pleasure, for the King to delight himselfe in (*ibid*).

Like Cox, Manwood then goes on to distinguish between various types of vert. 'Over vert', he (*ibid*, pp52-53) explains, 'is all manner of Hault Boys, or great wood, as well such as beareth fruit, as such as beareth none. Old Ashes and Hollie trees they are accompted Over vert. Nether vert is that, which the Lawiers doe call South Boys, and that is properly all maner of underwood, & also Bushes, Thornes, Gorse, and such like.' In addition, 'speciall vert', which may be either over or nether vert, 'is every tree and bush within the Forest, that doth beare fruit to feed the Deere withall, as Pearetrees, Crabtrees, Hawthornes, Blackbush, and such like' (*ibid*).

5.2.2 Coppicing

We have already alluded to the suitability of coppice woodland for deer and will later consider in more detail its importance for local commoners, but first let us examine its place in the history of forestry and the means by which it continues to be grown, albeit to a much lesser extent, centuries after its introduction.

Read and Frater (1999, p70) describe coppicing as 'one of the classic woodland management techniques', while Evans (1992, p18) asserts that 'the ability of broadleaved trees to ... coppice, has had a great influence on woodlands in Britain. Evidence of the use of coppice products for numerous rural needs can be found throughout the Bronze Age, Roman and Saxon periods.' The system was certainly well established by the Norman period: the origin of the word *coppice* lying rather nicely in the French word, *couper*: 'to cut'. Coppice woodland dominated sylvicultural practice well into the early modern period, having been first legally recognised in the 1482 '"Act for inclosing of woods in forests, chases, and purlieus," which permitted landowners to fence in [coppices] for a limited period of years to exclude grazing animals whilst the trees were newly-planted or recently cut-over' (Edlin 1947, p81). However, because coppice growth produces underwood rather than timber and because of the increased need for the latter during the modern period, pure coppice eventually gave way first to coppice-with-standards – standards being timber-producing trees interspersed amongst the underwood – and then to purely timber plantations, what Edlin (*ibid*) refers to as high forest.

Coppicing as an Economic System

The main premise of coppicing is that certain tree species, when cut down to ground level, can survive and regenerate, thus producing a seemingly endless crop, mainly of small poles and brushwood. As Buckley (1992, pxi) remarks,

> all coppice woodlands have one thing in common – they are repeatedly cut down, in the very reasonable expectation that the trees will regrow by themselves. Whether this regrowth is the result of new shoots sprouting from cut stumps [(stools)] or tree roots is unimportant: the point is that the new canopy forms rapidly and, for the main part, vegetatively from the old, without the need for any great management effort. The process is almost infinitely repeatable.

Coppicing can yield a relatively quick return without the need to clear and replant land; it is, therefore, a highly sustainable system, providing numerous wood products of local significance. The predominant species on Cranborne Chase was the particularly versatile hazel. Amongst its many uses: bean and pea

sticks, thatching spars, hurdles, various types of rods, faggots for fuel, and, of course, nuts. We will consider these uses in more detail later; first let us consider the specific techniques employed to manage both the coppices and the deer, simultaneously preserving both the Chase's landscape and its purpose.

Coppicing as an Ecological System

One of the main features associated with traditional coppice management is its accompanying biodiversity.

> Many coppices are remnants of the original natural woodlands. They are populated by species which have presumably descended directly from the primitive woodlands. Certainly they contain a disproportionately high share of the rare and local native plant and invertebrate species, many of which are known to have very limited powers of dispersal and colonization. Most coppices were not greatly modified by planting until the 18th century, so the distribution of species (including the trees) within them bore some relationship to natural factors such as soil texture and drainage (Peterken 1992, p4).

However, 'despite this direct link, coppices were ... only semi-natural' (*ibid*), being, by definition, man-made and -managed. Management nonetheless incorporated a variety of other plants, mainly in the form of undergrowth and border. We have already mentioned the role of shrubby undergrowth – what Manwood refers to as 'Nether Vert' – in providing cover, shelter, and food for the deer. Undergrowth remained an important component of the coppice ecosystem until some time after canopy closure, when only shade-tolerant species continued to thrive. After coppicing, less shade-tolerant species reappeared, colonising the temporarily open space left by cutting. More permanent open spaces also existed within coppices in the form of rides and glades, separating one coppice block from another. Unlike newly cut areas, rides and glades were predominantly grassy, being well browsed by the deer and kept clear for ease of access. In order to protect the plants within the newly cut coppices from similar browse pressure, woodmen often erected hedged fences around the coppices.

> The coppiced underwood was generally bounded by a hedge surmounting a bank ... These coppice hedges were linked to the network of hedges around adjacent fields and to strips of scrub woodland which commonly formed the margins of streams and rivers. In 'old' countryside this network extended throughout the landscape, linking one wood with another (Peterken 1992, pp5-6).

In keeping with this account, hedges formed a prominent feature throughout Cranborne Chase. Fortunately, several documents survive describing the purpose, structure, and maintenance of these numerous landscape elements, and it is to these documents that we now turn our attention.

5.2.3 Plant and Animal Management on Cranborne Chase

Entrusted with protecting Lord Rivers's rights to both vert and venison while also maintaining good neighbourly relations amongst the various landowners, the network of keepers, underkeepers, and woodsmen had quite a task. Coordinating coppice felling and fencing, deer and livestock browse, and locals' access to the woods required a good deal of time, effort, and money. However, a strict set of customs and regulations remained in place throughout the centuries, helping to ensure the Chase's continuation. Although references to these customs and regulations appear scattered throughout the documentation, four documents in particular help to shed light on these subjects; they are a 1594 account, an 1816 statement, an 1816 memorandum, and an 1828 deposition, which together reveal a great deal about the ways in which the Chase woods – and to a lesser extent the fields – were managed to simultaneously promote land productivity, deer browse, and common rights.

The Herbivorous Landscape

Recall that, in introducing the Chase, we considered the implications of its having both inner and outer bounds. According to James Webb, the sometime Ranger of all but Chettered Walk, quite separate from these inner and outer bounds was another means of dividing the Chase: that is, into deer-fed and non-deer-fed areas. These did not necessarily coincide with the former classification; hence, much of the conflict that ensued between various local interests. Yet, the deer-fed part comprised only a relatively small proportion of the Chase's vast area, and even where deer did feed, they often fed alongside sheep, pigs, cattle, and horses. In 1819, 'the Common Woods [formed] nearly the whole of the Chace Woods & there [was] very little Wood comparatively in which Deer alone [were] permitted to feed' (DRO D/PIT/L56). Moreover, although 'the Deer [kept] close to their Woods the greatest part of the day … in Hot Weather, they then [went] out on the Open Downs for Air in large Herds' (DRO D/PIT/M38). These downs, which formed

> a very great portion of the Deer fed part, are constantly fed by large Flocks of Sheep. The Commons which are also a very Great portion of the Deer fed part; are fed by Sheep and

> every other Sort of farming Stock – The Common Woods, which is a very large portion of the Deer fed part, are also fed by Cattle of every description, except Sheep in the Summer, The Woods that are not Common, are fed by the Deer only, and the Woods from 3 to 4 years' Growth, that are leaped and creeped, are fed by Deer only (*ibid*).

As previously mentioned, fences played an important part in ensuring that animals did not have access to, and consequently feed upon, newly cut coppices and farmers' fields. The maintenance of fences thus formed one of the keepers' and woodmen's most crucial responsibilities. As early as 1594, Thomas West (NA LRRO 67/23) testifies that

> all the Copses within the bounds of the East End of the Chace [from Bugdeane by divers Coppices to Chettle and Grimesditch] the herbage is the Queen's and if there be any Cowe fields Closes or Groves within the aforesaid bounds the Queen doth allow the borderers to make sufficient hedges and ditches to keep the deer forth so that the hedge be so lawful on the inside that a doe and fawn may leap over and the Queen doth allow certain Lordships to common into those Copses of the Chace the Lordships of Barwicke – Ebsborne – Fifead – Burchalk – Woodyeates – Hanley and Pentridge – The Queen doth allow all these Lordships for as many Cattle as they may keep upon their tenements to put them in the Chace all the year long and also their Swine so they be lawfully pegged save only in the fence month and then if they be lawfully warned they must fetch them away upon pain of forfeiting the said Swine and every Lordship must wood their Cattle in their own Lordship's Woods and if they stray out they must return them as soon as they can ... Also if any Lord do mistrust the Keeper for the use of his Copse then that Lord may bring a Man of his own to be sworn to be true to the Queen's Game and to present all such trespasses as he doth know to be committed in his Lord's Woods So doing he may have Colt or Calf so far as the keeper.

Although by the nineteenth century the Crown no longer held any interest in the Chase, West introduces several useful points about the Chase's management, which persisted over the ensuing two hundred years. Of particular interest here are, firstly, that cattle and swine could enter the woods only at certain times of the year, and secondly, that certain perquisites existed to the advantage of the Chase employees.

Fences and Borders

We can address these points together by returning to the subject of fences. In 1828, a local man named Isaac recounted for Lord Anglesey

> that the General rule of fencing the Coppices in the Chase, with some exceptions is this: That the Owner, on felling the Coppice, is bound to make a Bush fence round it, so as to secure it agt the Deer, and keep it in repair during 3 years when the Chase Keepers have a right to make gaps in the fence for the Deer, but not for the common Cattle to get in, wch is called the right to leap & creep That the fence remains in this state one year, when it is intirely removed by the owners Woodman, whose perquisite it is considered to be. From this time 'till the coppice is cut again it is open, not only to the Deer, but to the common Cattle, and the Owner is

> precluded from fencing it, & it falls on the owner of the adjoining Lands, if he wishes to keep out the Deer and commonable cattle to make a proper bush fence for that purpose. For making the first Bush fence on felling the Coppice, 2 Lugs of wood in width next adjoining are always allowed, wch are cut, and the hedge made at the owners expence: but besides this the owner of the Coppice is obliged during the first 3 years to repair all defects in such fence (DRO D/ANG/B5/40 – also see Table 5.2 for further reference to 'the Custom in the Chace to allow the two outside lugs of Wood round the Coppices for Fencing').

Some contradiction exists as to timing, the 1816 *Memoranda respecting the Customs of the Chace Woods* (DRO D/PIT/M38) asserting that

> for three Years after a Copse is cut, the owner has a Right to fence out the Deer, & all other Cattle, [in some parts of the Chace this term has by encroachment increased to 5Yrs] in order to improve the Growth of the Wood, which if fed by the Deer at so early a period, would be of little or no Value – At the 3 Years end the Keepers have a Right to make Leaps & creeps, and at 5 Years end, sometimes at 7, the Fences are taken up, & the Woods laid open to the Deer.

The seven-year period mentioned in this latter quote reflects the seven years of exclusion specified in the aforementioned 1482 Act, and when, in 1788, Lord Shaftesbury attempted to exclude deer from his newly enclosed coppices at Berwick St John, Lord Rivers's lawyer offered the following opinion:

> I do not think Lord Shaftesbury is authorized under the Inclosure act to Erect Fences to prevent the Deer feeding on any Spot over which the Chase extends or to make them so high as to prevent the passage of the same But by the 22.E.4.c.7. The Owners of woods in Forests & Chases are empowered after having Cut them to Enclose them for the Space of 7 years for the preservation of the young Spring so as to Exclude all manner of beasts and Cattle; and the Custom which has prevailed in the Chase to lay them open to the Deer at the End of 3 years cannot narrow the Right given by the Statute. Lord Shaftesbury may therefore keep his Woods so fenced for 7 years after cutting them but no longer and Lord Rivers will be justified in removing a sufficient part of the fences to enable the Deer to feed & pass backwards & forwards on the Lands newly Enclosed, and into the woods and Coppice from which the Deer have been excluded for a period of 7 years since their Cutting (DRO D/PIT/L15).

Why Lord Rivers met with so little resistance on this point generally, we cannot say; however, the fact that local custom and ancient law seemed to override national law relating to enclosure so easily is remarkable.

Whatever the specific timing involved, though, the pattern of excluding both deer and livestock during a coppice's early years and then allowing deer some advantage over cattle via leaping and creeping seems to have been a general one. Although many allusions to leaping and creeping – a term apparently unique to Cranborne Chase – exist, there is little written about its underlying procedure. Chafin (1818, p67) reveals only that

> when the copses are felled, they are enclosed with a high wreathed fence against the deer, which none ever leap over unless pursued and distressed. On the third Autumn of the wood's growth, these hedges are in divers parts lowered down, to give entrance to the stout deer, and creep-holes are made for the fawns and weak ones ... On the fourth Autumn the fences are entirely removed, the substance of them made into faggots and disposed of as fuel.

Smart (1841, p138) similarly states that

> the coppices were enclosed with wattled fences (no other kind of fence being allowed within the chase,) of such a height as a Deer would not leap over, unless hard pressed by hounds ... their exclusion continued until the third years' growth of the wood, when it was customary to admit them ... by lowering so much of the fences in certain places and making spaces through them.

Even after the initial period of exclusion, livestock could feed in the woods only at certain times of the year. As James (1981, p43) explains, 'the common of herbage or right to pasture in the forest was called agistment although this word was also used to denote the money that was due in respect of such animals. The animals that were allowed to be agisted in a forest were for the most part cattle although a limited number of horses were [also] permitted.' These animals could feed in the woods from May Day to fifteen days before Midsummer and from fifteen days after Midsummer to Martinmas. The intervening periods were known as the fence month and winter heyning, respectively. During the former, livestock were excluded in order to minimise disturbance to fawning does; during the latter, they were excluded in order to minimise competition with deer for the now less abundant browse. Pigs could also enter the woods, but as their main food sources were acorns and beech mast, their agistment was limited to the autumn: from Holy Rood to Martinmas. This period was known as the time of pannage (see Appendix 2). On Cranborne Chase the promoter (sometimes permoter) was the officer responsible for overseeing proper agistment and for presenting transgressions thereof at the Chase court. As an aside, human, as well as livestock, activity on the Chase was also restricted during the fence month, a fee, known as cheminage, being paid by all those entering on anything but foot.

Quite distinct from the dead hedges surrounding the newly-cut coppices was a series of more permanent live hedges called borders. Resulting from the clearing of rides, these borders helped to maintain open spaces, and were, additionally, an important food source for the deer. Chafin (1818, p3) believes

> there can be no doubt but that at a time in ancient days, when the Chase was in the hands of Royalty, it was an immense tract of wood-lands, without any roads or passages through them;

> and that they were afterwards by Royal commandment, cut into commodious Ridings through the whole of the Chase, and those Ridings planted on both sides with various evergreens, as browse for the support of the deer in the winter.

Webb (DRO D/PIT/M38) further explains that

> these Borders form a Road or Ride round every Coppice, except the Outside of the Outside Coppices, and are of great Service in getting the Wood out of the Coppices when Cut, into the regular Roads, and also to ride after the Hounds ... There are no Borders through the Coppices, but there are many Coppices that have Roads through them, such as Bridle or foot paths, to lead to some particular place, Lodge or Road, but these are not called either Rides or Borders, but merely foot paths – There are no Rides Roads or paths cut for the Deer in any part of the Chace.

Yet, although their principal function was in wood rather than deer management, the variety of plants the borders contained provided the animals with a continual food supply. As the 1816 *Memoranda respecting the Customs of the Chace Woods* (DRO D/PIT/M38) points out,

> the Borders are preserved exclusively for the benefit of the Deer, & are not to be cut by the Woodmen – The Keepers alone have a right to shroud them for the maintenance or browsing the Deer. – They consist principally of Evergreens & berry bearing Plants, of which the following are most common Holly - Ivy - Thorn - Crab or Wilding - White-beam or Whiting Tree & Maple – These if standing in the Borders of a Copse, no Woodman has a right to fell – tho' when the Fences are made, they sometimes take the Thorns to assist in making them, and to stop gaps occasionally The two first of the aforementioned Plants are called Vert, and are of most service to the Deer – the others are generally named Berry, and the Deer in the Season resort to the Trees in great numbers for the Fruit, particularly to the White Beam Trees.

Interestingly, the last species listed, maple, is neither vert nor berry, for, as Webb observes, it has no use as deer feed. Instead, the keepers cut steps into its trunk so they could more easily climb to shoot the deer – hence a use quite apart from timber for these so-called standing, or standard, trees.

5.2.4 Cranborne Chase: Wood Resources

Lord Rivers's Keepers and Woodmen

Both the keepers and the woodmen were responsible for maintaining the hedges and for ensuring that both deer and livestock grazed only where and when appropriate. According to the 1800 *Mem:a respecting the Keepers*, the keepers 'all ought to stop the Gaps in the Hedges, where they are not unreasonably large, to preserve the Deer from straying [and] They all ought to impound trespassing Cattle, as well as the Permoter, tho' this is his peculiar Office' (DRO D/PIT/M38). In fact, the network of Chase employees, although hierarchical in structure, was relatively fluid, with individuals taking on

numerous roles under various circumstances. Employment was also often family-based. For example, in the 1820s alone, the Dunfords provided one keeper (John), one underkeeper (Elias), and one assistant (John Junr) to Staplefoot Walk, one underkeeper (David) to West Walk, and another (Joseph) to Burseystool. Meanwhile, Thomas White, an underkeeper at Rushmore from 1803 to 1814 and in 1820 (he had been keeper between 1791 and 1802 and between 1815 and 1818), became gamekeeper in 1821, and additionally oversaw Rushmore House where his wife was the housekeeper and his daughter a maid. William White – probably Thomas's father – had overseen Rushmore House two decades earlier, his wife also working as a servant; meanwhile, James White acted as the Rushmore postman. Another particularly versatile employee was Stephen Burden, who appears in the Chase Court Book (DRO D/PIT/M17) as a woodman from 1810 to 1818, and in the Chase accounts (DRO D/PIT/E178-185) as an assistant to the keepers in 1820, 1821, and 1823, an assistant to the gardener in 1820, gardener in 1827, an assistant at Rushmore House in 1826, and promoter in 1827 and 1828. In consequence of 'his large family', he received extra wages in 1826 and extra wood in 1827. Although Thomas White and Stephen Burden were both particularly busy, neither was extraordinary; many of the names appearing in one context of Chase management also appear in another.

In return for their various duties, the Chase employees received not only a basic wage but also various perquisites. According to the 1800 *Mem:a* (DRO D/PIT/M38), '[the keepers] are allowed to kill Woodcocks Rabbits &c, but not Game'; in addition, 'in the Woods of Rushmore & Staplefoot Walks [where] no Cattle are allowed to feed, but by permission of Lord Rivers The Keepers are generally suffered to have 2 Horses, or rather one riding Horse a Brood Mare with a Colt at her Foot and one Cow – the Colt to be sold when a year old' (*ibid*). However, this latter perquisite 'is none of the invariable Customs of the Chace but depends on the Will of the Lord, & may be altered or abolished if he chuses' (*ibid*). In 1822 and 1823, for example, the Burseystool Keeper received 'hay in lieu of Run for Keeper's Horses in the Woods not now permitted', worth £12.0.0. and £17.10.0., respectively (DRO D/PIT/E180-181). Meanwhile, the woodmen, although charged with erecting and maintaining the woods' outer bounds in order 'to save them from the depredations of Sheep & Black Cattle' (*ibid*), were not allowed to shroud them, instead having to wait until the coppices were opened to collect their reward. In addition, both keepers and woodmen often had wood reserved for them by his Lordship. In 1812 Lord Pembroke's Chase keeper, Moses Read, received 500 faggots, 115 ash shrouds, 4 coalfires, and at least 17½ feet of hard wood, together valued at £19.1.2.; his woodman,

Jeremiah Soffe, received a lott of hard wood, 73 lugs of hedge and fire wood, and 760 faggots, together valued at £12.13.5. (WSRO 2057/A3/24).

In the four years 1823, 1824, 1826, and 1827, Lord Rivers spent a total £61.0.5. on faggots and another £34.0.0. on their carriage (annual totals of £7.3.6., £13.18.2., £36.17.9., and £37.1.0., respectively) for his keepers' private use (DRO D/PIT/E181-184). The 1824 entry lists the number of faggots: 1,513 in total, 840 of which went to the Rushmore keeper at 2d. each, 373 to a Rushmore underkeeper, also 2d. each, and 300 to the Staplefoot keeper, at 1s. each. Meanwhile, the 1826 and 1827 entries list cost of carriage, 1826 specifying 'John Cox 20 days with Team Carrying Fagots to Keepers ... £15.0.0.' – the faggots themselves only cost £21.0.0. The cost of carriage actually exceeded that of the load the following year: £19.0.0. compared with £18.1.0. The significance of this perquisite is apparent from Webb's remark: '[the keepers] are permitted to gather Fuel in Costards for the use of the Kennel – But not, as I think, for themselves' (DRO D/PIT/M38).

The Local Population

The local population also benefited from the Chase's continued existence, not only through the right to graze common livestock but also through access to various woodland products. Because

> most of the inhabitants of a country district were born, lived and died within the narrow confines of their own localities ... the rural neighbourhood was something far more than a social entity; it was an economic entity as well, for most of the day to day needs of the community could be met by members of that community itself ... the countryman had animals that [supplied] him with milk, meat, skins and wool [and] he had fields, gardens and orchards that supplied him with cereals, root crops, fruit and vegetables (Jenkins 1978, p2).

On Cranborne Chase, 'a great number of young kine [were] reared in the woods, many cows in the summer milked in them, and much butter and cheese produced, to the great benefit of the neighbouring Parishes to whom the rights of common [belonged]' (Chafin 1818, p68). However, in addition to Jenkins's animals, fields, gardens, and orchards, the countryman on Cranborne Chase also had coppices, which supplied him with wood, fuel, and food. As West (NA LRRO 67/23) points out, 'the inhabitants ... do chiefly depend upon the Coppices of the Chace for Firewood, Hedgebote, Wathings Hurdlings Breedings Speekes for thatching and such like necessaries', as well as various undergrowth plants for everyday foods and medicines.

With hazel so predominant on the Chase, hurdle making was a particularly important local industry, with various subsidiaries.

> Much of the popularity of hazel was due to the ease with which it can be split. A skilled craftsman can take a slender hazel rod five or six feet long and less than an inch in diameter at its thickest end, and with a billhook can split it neatly from end to end. The split hazel, very supple and very durable, can then be used for weaving hurdle-work (Whitlock 1979, p69).

Jenkins offers us a detailed insight into the world of the traditional craftsman, highlighting several coppice products produced on Cranborne Chase, the two most important being hurdles and spars. As he (1978, p26) explains, because

> on the chalk downs of southern England there was very little stone or timber growth which could be used [to enclose the ubiquitous sheep herds.] The prosperous sheep farmers of the downs had to look for another source of raw material and, from the twelfth century onwards, it became the custom to reserve the lower, more productive parts of each downland parish for the planting of coppice wood. The hazel and ash grown in these coppices could then be used to supply the needs of such craftsmen as hurdle and gate makers, sheep crib makers and many others.

Giles Winterborne, in Thomas Hardy's *The Woodlanders*, is just such a craftsman, having

> been asked to execute during [the] winter a very large order for hurdles and other copse-ware, for which purpose he had been obliged to buy several acres of brushwood standing. He was now engaged in the cutting and manufacture of the same, proceeding with the work daily like an automaton. The hazel-tree did not belie its name today. The whole of the copse-wood where the mist had cleared returned purest tints of that hue, amid which Winterborne himself was in the act of making a hurdle, the stakes being driven firmly into the ground in a row, over which he bent and wove the twigs. Beside him was a square, compact pile ... formed of hurdles already finished, which bristled on all sides with the sharp points of their stakes. At a little distance the men in his employ were assisting him to carry out his contract. Rows of copse-wood lay on the ground as it had fallen under the axe (1887, pp252-253).

Spar making was often 'carried on in conjunction with ... wattle hurdle making' (Jenkins 1978, p39), a point noted by Hardy, again in *The Woodlanders*. This time describing Marty South, he (1887, p9) writes,

> with a bill-hook in one hand and a leather glove ... on the other, she was making spars, such as are used by thatchers, with great rapidity ... On her left hand lay a bundle of the straight, smooth sticks called spar-gads – the raw material of her manufacture; on her right, a heap of chips and ends – the refuse with which the fire was maintained; in front, a pile of the finished articles. To produce them she took up each gad, looked critically at it from end to end, cut it to length, split it into four, and sharpened each of the quarters with dexterous blows, which brought it to a triangular point precisely resembling that of a bayonet.

Chafin (1818, p65) heartily commends both activities, writing of the first:

> the making of wreath hurdles is a profitable business, and is carried on to a very great extent, and the demand for them is not confined to the neighbouring districts, but they are sent much further; they are of general use, not only for folding of sheep, but for all sorts of temporary and moveable fences, and bear a high price.

He then paints a particularly pretty picture of spar making:

> the industrious peasant who from his earnings by early and late hard labour at time of the harvest, hath acquired a small pittance, sufficient to enable him to purchase a few spar gads for employment in the long winter evenings, reaps some gain from his manufacturing of them, but more comfort from the operation itself, though temporary, to perhaps a numerous young family, for while the master of the cottage is attentive to his work, and his good dame busy in her household concerns, the children are employed in picking up the chips and shreds of the gads as they are called, and with handfuls at a time feed the lingering fire underneath the little crock, containing a few potatoes or other vegetables, the produce of their small garden plat, so as to keep it in a constant simmering, and the little blaze from each handful adds a temporary lustre to the dimness of their farthing candle, and the gleam from it illuminates the placid countenances of the groupe of happy offspring round the fire-side. With what joy and gladness must the honest parents look on and behold the effect of their industry in the present happy state of their progeny, and the fair prospect, by the blessing of God, of its continuance: who when they have regaled themselves on their frugal meal, can with clear consciences, and therefore light hearts, betake themselves to their hard pallets stuffed with the chaff of oats, and enjoy more comfortable repose that the high and mighty ones on their sumptuous beds, filled with the softest down of the eider duck. This is a scene not unworthy the pencil of an artist (*ibid*, pp66-67).

This account is in keeping with Chafin's generally romantic view of, and support for, Lord Rivers's franchise. He repeatedly demonstrates how the local peasant population derived not only sustenance and income from the Chase's many plants, but also a simple delight. For example, writing of the yearly hazel nut harvest, he portrays the Chase's apparently Arcadian inhabitants as 'happier than most of the Princes of Europe' – despite the obvious difference in wealth and comfort. He (*ibid*, pp62-63) continues:

> the Woods consist chiefly of hazel, which produce nuts in great profusion, to the relief and benefit of all the hamlets and villages for miles around it. It is their second harvest; for when all the corn hath been got in, and the leasing of the fields at an end, the inhabitants betake themselves to the woods; whole families from distant places flock to the Chase; bring their little cots, provisions, utensils, and every necessary for their comfort that they can provide themselves with, and make their abode there for whole weeks at a time if the weather will permit. Fuel they have at hand in great plenty; and after the fatigue of the day, they make large fires, which they sit round, eat their scanty meal, then slip from the green shells their day's gathering, talk over their success, crack their jokes as well as their nuts, and, clothed with innocence and simplicity ... may well join in the old song, and say or sing, "For who are so happy, so happy as we?"

John Clare's (2004, p131) sentiments are similarly reminiscent, his poem, *Nutting*, reading:

> When from the hazelly wood we glad descried / The ivied gateway by the pasture side
> Long had we sought for nutts amid the shade / Where silence fled the rustle that we made
> When torn by briars and brushed by sedges rank / We left the wood and on the velvet bank
> Of short-swarded pasture-ground we sat us down / To shell our nutts before we reached the town.

Neeson (1996, p181) emphasises the importance of events such as nutting in the commoners' calendar, explaining that

> gathering, like gleaning, had its seasons. And because it had seasons people tended to work together to bring each harvest in, and often to mix work with pleasure. [For example,] August was the month when men and boys cut furze and forest fuel. In later August and early September girls and boys went nutting; it was also the time to hunt mushrooms. In October they brought in the acorn harvest and herded pigs to the beech trees for the mast harvest. Men cut the reed in winter and boys played football on the green. In March or April they set fires on the heath to burn off the old furze or ling and encourage new growth to "afford much tender browse" for cattle ... All these occasions of contact, familiarity and exchange established some obligation, some connection on the basis of equality – a mutuality between landless commoners and everyone else. Literally and metaphorically they met on common ground.

Sociability aside, these products also provided important monetary income. 'An acre of coppice ... could yield up to 30 cwt of hazel nuts' (Neeson 1996, p169) – a gentleman attending the 1826 Tollard Hunt dinner reported that 'he and another person had, one year, collected from the nutters, and sold 1,000 sacks' (*The Times* Digital Archive, 7 September 1826) – and 'the neighbouring towns, particularly the sea ports, [were] a sure and ready market for [the nutters'] wares' (Chafin 1818, p63). In addition, 'the price [was] generally on a par with wheat, the same kind of weather being most favourable for the growth and increase of both' (*ibid*). In fact, such a profit might be had, that a resourceful few carried on their nutting well past the initial harvest:

> when the winter hath brought down all the nuts from the bushes and trees, some experienced persons still continue to get a store of the very best in a most cruel manner, by robbing the hoards of the industrious mice; and these nuts bear a better price than others, because the mice by natural instinct select the best, and no faulty one is ever found amongst them. Those are called Mouse-hole nuts, which are dug from the poor animals' store-houses: but it requires some sagacity and experience in the finding out the right holes in which the stores are kept (*ibid*, 63-64).

Thus, it was a solitary lane indeed where 'the hazel nuts had remained on the boughs till they slipped from their shells, and the blackberries hung in heavy clusters' (Hardy 1891, p218).

Numerous other treasures might also be found in the undergrowth. Not only were there what Chafin (1818, p62) describes as 'substances of a dubious nature, called Trufles [held] in much esteem by epicures, and [bearing] a high price', but also 'the best Valerian Roots in the kingdom', used to treat a variety of nervous disorders. In addition, spurge laurel was supplied to nurseries, and whitethorn quickset in competition with nurseries, supposedly thriving better and growing faster when taken from the wild.

The truffle trade was probably not a stable one – Chafin (*ibid*) reports that 'a few sedulous persons make some gain from them; but it is a very precarious pursuit, and of short duration'; however, it does seem to have been locally significant, not only on Cranborne Chase but also in surrounding areas, as described by Whitlock (1979, pp46-47):

> [one] incidental and minor forest industry which survived in certain southern woods, especially those ... in the Forest of Clarendon [just north of Cranborne Chase], until well into the present century was truffle-hunting. Truffles are, of course, underground fungi found in autumn under woodland trees, notably beeches and oaks. Of the several methods of locating them that by using specially trained and specifically bred dogs is traditional. Several families of *Truffle-hunters* lived in the village of Winterslow, near Salisbury, and worked in woods over a wide area, using a breed of small dogs which they claimed, perhaps correctly, had originated in France. In 1860 they petitioned Parliament to be excused the annual tax of 12 shillings recently imposed on dogs on the grounds that they were labouring men "living in a woody district of the country where there is a great many English truffles grown, which we cannot find without dogs, we do therefore keep and use a small pudle, sort of dog wholy and solely for that and no other".

Wiltshire (1975) also highlights the area around Salisbury, additionally noting that 'the season for hunting truffles began in November, and ended in February', and asserting that although 'some sows had a 'nose' for the delicacy', poodles were indeed the animal of choice. As for profit, she (*ibid*) reports that 'in Victorian times a truffler could make five shillings a day, which he then considered riches – a farm worker often had only a wage of ten shillings a week – [and] one man said ... he had sold them for three shillings a pound'.

Valerian root likewise provided those in the know with a considerable, though sporadic, profit. Used as a medicinal stimulant and antispasmodic, its relative rarity likely contributed to its great demand. For as Chafin (1818, pp59-60) explains, 'Cranbourne Chase hath been ever famous for producing the best Valerian Roots in the kingdom [and] Druggists in London have commissioned persons in the County to buy all the roots they could get; these roots [however] were no where to be

found in perfection but in the one year old copses'. With his usual romantic view of the peasantry, Chafin (*ibid*) then continues:

> this traffic had one good effect; it found employ for many industrious poor people, at a dead time of the year, when there was no other work for them, in the months of October and November; for women were chiefly engaged in collecting the roots, who used to earn their livelihood at home in their houses by spinning of wool; but since the great improvement in mechanics, and the invention of machines for that purpose, they have been deprived of that resource, and driven to distress.

Finally, there appears to have been a thriving trade in live plants, both to nurseries and in competition with nurseries. Chafin (*ibid*, pp60-61), once again praising the Chase for its bountiful and varied resources, writes:

> plants also of *Aurelia*, the Spurge Laurel, grow in great plenty in some parts of the Chase, of which some understanding persons make much profit. They draw the young plants at a proper time, and sell them to nursery-men and gardeners; and there has lately been an unusual demand for them, because it has been discovered that by grafting on these hardy stocks all the various plants of Daphne, tender and hothouse plants take well upon them, and their staminas are greatly improved. Great quantities also of the common Mezereon, which is a Daphne, grow in the Chase, and the young plants are annually drawn up and disposed of in like manner ... The Chase also supplies the neighbourhood with excellent Whitethorn quickset plants, which thrive better and grow faster than those raised in nursery gardens.

The scale of the local market for these plants is indicated by a notice in the 1828 *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* (25 February 1828, HRO 116M86/24), advertising the sale of 'about Twenty Thousand healthy, well-rooted Laurel Plants, from two to three feet high. From the present time [late February] to the end of April is one of the two best seasons in the year, for transplanting [them].'

Of course, strictly speaking, none of these latter products was a commonable resource, the local population acting on its own initiative to find, gather, and sell them (hence, Thomas West asserted in 1594 that 'no man may gather any acorns crabs or nuts without Licence' (NA LRRO 67/23)). However, as Chafin (*ibid*, p61) points out, although 'all these valuable articles are obtained in a clandestine and illegal manner ... I know not that any depredators have ever as yet been called to account for these lawless transgressions'. In Needwood Forest, many similarly '[helped] themselves to small quantities of [brushwood] who [lived] adjacent to the forest and it [had] never been thought an object worthy of notice' (Staffs RO 11/339/1/50, quoted in Neeson 1996, p166). This was because 'brushwood, like hazel, was unfit for browse for deer so forest keepers lost nothing when commoners took it' (Neeson 1996, p166). Perhaps Lord Rivers was likewise happy to have the otherwise idle

population occupied in something other than deer stealing and so let it carry on with these less offensive transgressions. Besides, was it not to his advantage to demonstrate the Chase's benefits to individuals other than himself?

Given the great reliance of the local population on such secondary sources of income, Chafin's (1818, p68) concern that 'if the Chase was to be destroyed, what distress and misery would it not therefore bring upon these poor commoners, to be deprived at once of all their worldly dependance!' is hardly surprising.

> Productive commons had always been the insurance, the reserves, the hidden wealth of commoners ... They gave commoners the fuel, food and materials that kept them out of the market for labour and out of the market for consumption too. And the more productive the common the more independent the commoners (Neeson 1996, p177).

Nor were Chafin's *poor* commoners the only ones to suffer when disfranchisement and subsequent enclosure extinguished their common rights: true that

> looking back from enclosure, the poor seem to have felt the loss most [but] the evidence of usage *before* enclosure, suggests that many commoners valued the common, not only the poorest. This is important because it means that common usage of commons was not a charity for the weakest in the village, it was a resource for almost everyone (*ibid*, p174).

In the case of Cranborne Chase, Chafin need not have worried, for even a decade after disfranchisement, Smart (1841, pp140-141) notes that 'the woods afford a great means of support to numerous families, whose privileges it were unwise as well as ungenerous to abridge'. Indeed, '[coppices] were cultural artefacts formed by a silvicultural system which had been part of the British scene since prehistory ... They co-evolved with the communities which used them' (Peterken 1992, pp4-5), thus ensuring both their own survival and that of a traditional way of life.

Lord Rivers and the Proprietors

The woods might likewise afford some benefit to the proprietors – perhaps not as great as if the land had been managed solely for timber or converted for agriculture, but an income nonetheless, and important for the supply of local craft materials. Fortunately, we can determine to at least some extent the productivity of these woods, both physically and financially. The most extensive documentary source available is Lord Rivers's Cranborne Chase accounts, with income and

expenditure recorded for most years between 1786 and 1830 (DRO D/PIT/E146-186; all subsequent references to Lord Rivers's accounts are to these records). Although these entries vary in their specificity (and for the years 1825 and 1829 are missing altogether) – in some instances including only totals and in other instances including detailed lists of species cut, products yielded, and work involved – they enable the analysis of various aspects of local woodland maintenance and productivity.

We already know that the predominant sylvicultural system in place on Cranborne Chase was coppice; hence Rackham's (1995, p93) reference to it as 'that stronghold of hazel-woods'. Unsurprisingly, underwood accounted for the majority of wood sales. During the period 1786-1830, 77 per cent of income from the sale of Lord Rivers's Chase wood came from it, followed by eighteen per cent from timber, and three per cent from bark (a further two per cent is unspecified). We have already discussed the first two, but have thus far neglected the last, which, although a relatively minor product, nonetheless deserves some attention. As Clarkson (1989, pp475-476) explains,

> most bark was peeled from oaks felled for timber and fuel, though small quantities were taken from wind-blown trees. Woodland owners frequently sold bark while still on growing trees that had been marked for felling. It was stripped in the spring, dried, chopped, and bagged ready for transport. Bark-peeling created considerable seasonal employment in woodland regions, though its casual nature makes the calculation of even approximate numbers impossible ... in Hardy's vivid description of bark-peeling [in *The Woodlanders*], George Melbury, "timber, bark, and coppice-ware merchant", employed at least five men and women in one clearing alone.

Burrows (1877, p827) suggests that 'where men and strong lads only are engaged, and where the timber is generally of medium size, we find that six or seven men, with two or three strong boys, will cut down, strip, and stack a ton of bark per day in a favourable season'.

> The importance of bark peeling as a casual employment can be seen from the felling and peeling accounts for Southern Close Wood on the outskirts of Durham. For eighteen days between 30 May and 21 June 1817, four carpenters, eight labourers, thirty-seven peelers, and two draught horses were employed at a total cost of £39 9s. 4d. That the work was a family affair is suggested by the fact that the forty-nine people possessed thirty-two surnames between them, and that among the peelers were twenty-eight women and girls and eight boys. Adult carpenters were paid between 2s. and 2s. 8d. a day, and labourers from 1s. to 2s. 6d.; the daily rate for peelers was 6d. or 8d. for children, and 1s. for adults. Individual wages for peelers ranged from 3s. 6d. to 15s. 10d. Small though these earnings were, they provided a useful supplement to family incomes in the lean months before the high demand for agricultural labour generated by the grain harvest (Clarkson 1974, p150).

After being sold – Lord Rivers sent his to Brockhampton and Sturminster in 1788 and to Salisbury in 1801 – tannin extracted from the bark was used in the leather-tanning trade, the growth of

which 'together with the discovery that coppice bark was richer in tannin than timber bark, gave a mighty impetus to the cultivation of oak-coppice in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries' (Collins 1989, p487). According to Clarkson (1974, p139) 'the best bark came from the young trees of twenty years' growth cultivated in coppices'. Burrows (1877, p825) agrees:

> it has been ascertained that the bark of trees under twenty years old has not arrived at perfection; while after thirty years it becomes more corky, and diminishes in the yield of both tannin and extractive. Spring-stripped bark, also, contains more than four times the quantity of tannin which can be found in the same weight of bark cut from trees in winter ... Monteath maintained that the bark from a natural stool of oak wood, at the age of twenty-four years, equalled in weight that from an oak tree fifty years old, while the quality of the former was greatly superior.

In 1812, bark from Lord Pembroke's estates sold for just over £2 per load (WSRO 2057/A3/24). (And as an aside, Aubrey (1656) notes of 'Buckthorne very common in South Wiltshire ... the glovers use it to colour their leather yellow', hence further involving the Chase in the local leather industry.)

Interestingly – given the predominance of coppice in the area – the period 1786-1830 saw a rise in the Chase's contribution to overall wood sales from all of Lord Rivers's estates. This is attributable partly to decreased overall sales towards the end of the period; nevertheless, Chase sales did rise and then remain relatively stable (Figs. 5.1 and 5.2). This rise may seem counterintuitive, especially considering the general pressure to plant timber; however, this was not the only trend influencing woodland management. As Collins (1989, p484) points out, 'coppicing was, in essence, a system of tree-farming, the object of which was to produce a regular crop of young wood'.

> Crafts and industries making use of coppice-wood as their raw material had existed in most area of England and Wales since ... medieval times. But up to the eighteenth century the overwhelming majority of coppice-wood had been used for fuel and only a small proportion for the production of artefacts. So great had been the dependence on wood-fuel that, in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, it was confidently predicted that the advance of coal and the decline of the charcoal-iron industry would soon reduce the value of coppice-woodlands almost to nothing. Landowners were urged to grub up their coppices and, in the national interest as well as their own, convert them to agriculture ... In view of the decline of its traditional markets it is not a little curious that, in the main, prices should have held reasonably steady after 1750 and, from the 1790s, have risen very strongly, increasing during the Napoleonic Wars by at least 50 per cent and in some instances more than doubling ... Landowners ... in contrast to the eighteenth-century advice, were now being urged not merely to preserve their woodlands, but to increase them. One of the attractions of coppice was that it afforded a quicker and more regular return than timber, and this, together with the lure of high prices, led to a spate of new planting, the adoption of more efficient and productive techniques of coppice management and, in established woodlands, a reduction in the number of standards to encourage the underwood. [Thus,] far from declining, coppice production became both more specialized and intensive (*ibid*, pp485-486).

Fig. 5.1 Total and Chase Income from Wood Sales

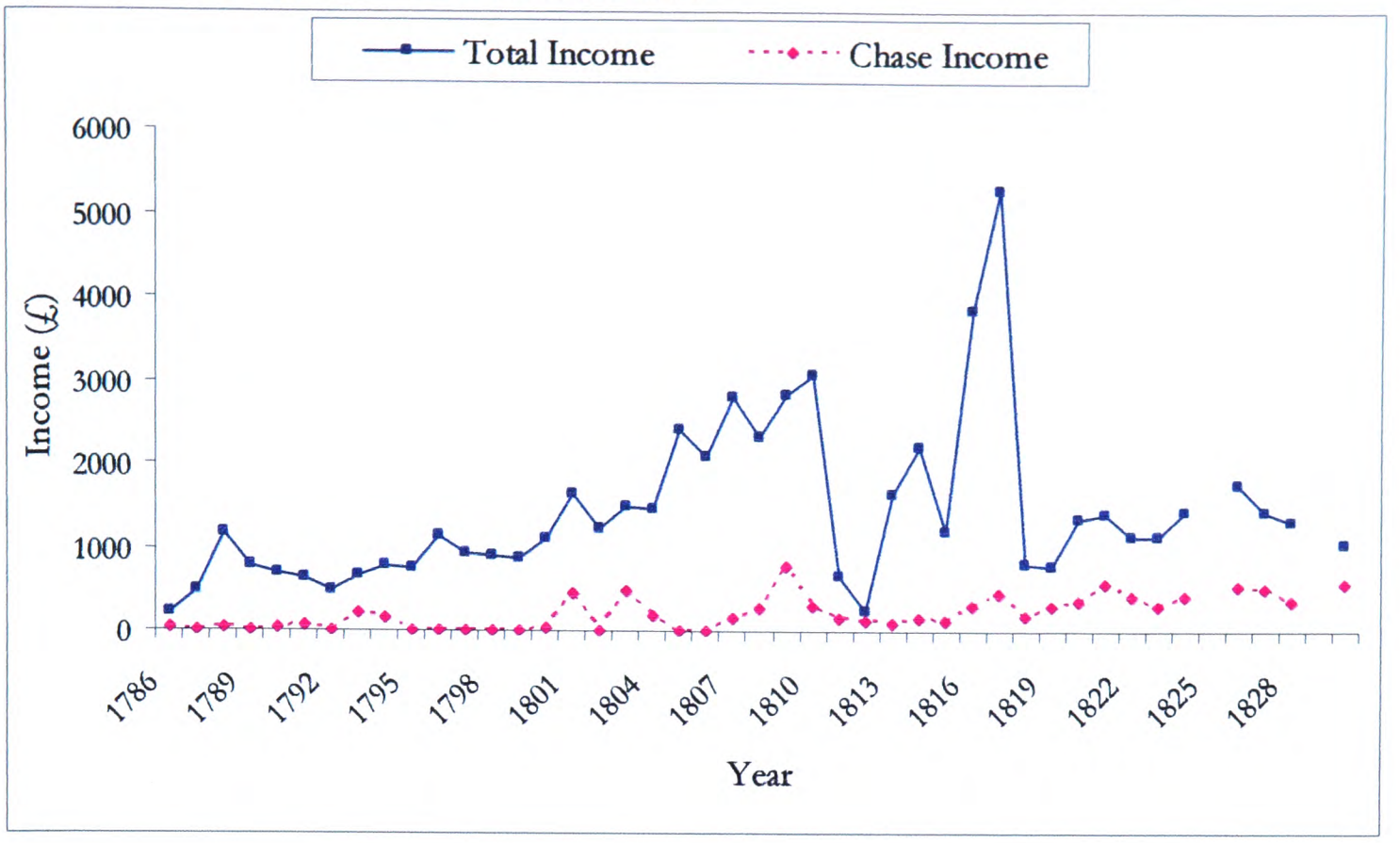
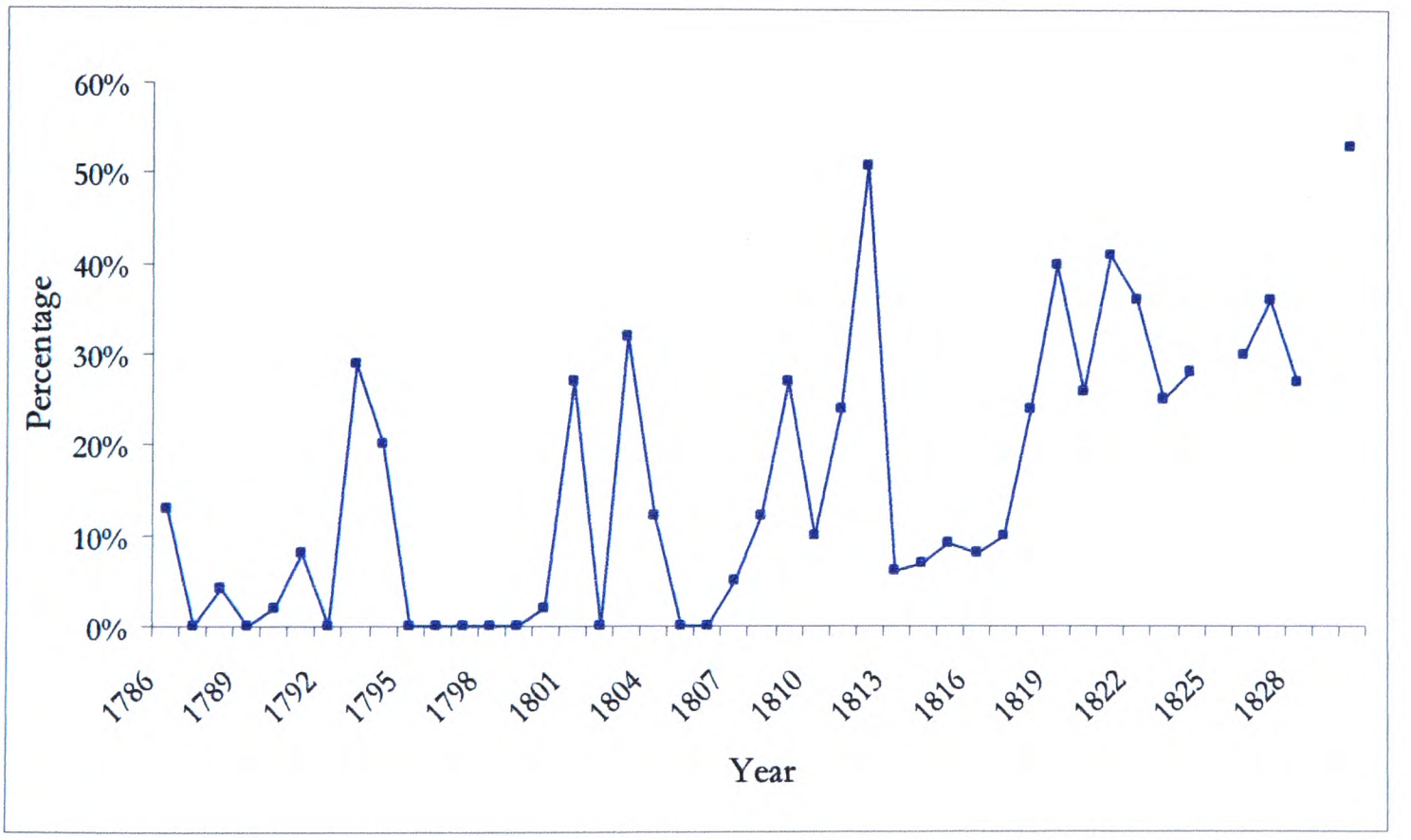


Fig. 5.2 Chase Income as a Percentage of Total Wood Income



Unfortunately, due to a lack of direct evidence, the applicability of this explanation, or any other, to Cranborne Chase can only be conjecture, but it nonetheless offers some insight into possible factors influencing woodland management at the time. Underwood products were certainly important in the local economy, as already shown. Also of note was the continued significance of underwood for fuel. Despite the coal industry's expansion, Lord Rivers continued to rely predominantly on faggot

wood, as indicated by entries for fuel supplied to Rushmore House during the period 1819-1828 (Table 5.1). The woodmen also supplied faggots on Lord Rivers's behalf, including to the keepers (worth £53.16.11., 1824-1827), to the kennels (worth £43.2.5. plus 1,960 faggots, value unknown, 1821-1827), to the estate gardeners and bakers (worth £3.7.0., 1824-1826), and to the Berwick and Tollard poor (worth £49.15.6., 1823-1827). In addition to the cost of the wood, the cost of carriage totalled £54.0.0. for the above supplies. (Note that these and similar costs are not included in the wood expenditure analyses because they appear in sections other than those summarising the woodman's accounts, for example, the housekeeping and keepers' accounts.)

Of course, an important determinant of woodland productivity, in terms of both product and value, was coppice rotation. Recall the proprietors' concern over rotation length. In their *Remarks on Damage done by the Deer* (DRO D/PIT/E3) they observe that

> there is now another purpose to which underwood is applied ... making what are called Smart Hoops for the West India Trade whereby Underwood of all kinds which is not fit for hurdles will yield as much per acre at 6 years growth as at 12 but for which purpose Woods which have been cropped when young are ... not at all applicable –

and such, they argued, was the case on Cranborne Chase. Jenkins (1978, pp30-31) confirms that 'the heyday of the dry barrel trade was the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' and that 'the most popular raw material used for making hoops was coppice-grown hazel', but asserts that the most appropriate age was 'eight or more years old'. Collins (1989, p488) likewise highlights this relatively new product:

> another important species of coppice ware was the barrel hoop, that is, splits, commonly of hazel or ash, 2½ to 18 feet long, used to bind the 'slack' barrels which, up to the nineteenth century were the standard containers for the carriage and storage of dry goods. As between four and six hoops were required per barrel, and were renewed after each journey, the consumption, increasing *pari passu* with the growth of commerce, was prodigious.
>
> There were, in fact, two main types of hoop – the 'truss' hoop, heavy and robust, made usually of steamed ash and used by coopers to set up casks; and the 'smart' hoop, a flimsy affair, made of split hazel or ash, and used for binding barrels. The former was made exclusively in workshops. The manufacture of smart hoops, on the other hand, was both a seasonal outdoor-labouring trade and a full-time workshop-craft trade; one difference being that in winter the hoops could be bent green and so could be made in the woods, whereas in the summer, when the sap had dried out, the wood had first to be soaked in water or even steamed prior to bending (*ibid*, p498).

Table 5.1 Wood and Coal Supplied as Fuel to Rushmore House, 1819-1828 (DRO D/PIT/E177-185)

Year	Wood and Coal Supplied	Cost of Wood and Coal Supplied (£.s.d.)	Cost of Carriage (£.s.d.)
1819	Faggots and wood	59.0.0.	-
1820	Faggots (5,360)	43.13.6.	19.16.0.
1821	Faggots (6,265)	62.10.0.	15.1.0.
	Coal	5.17.1.	-
1822	Faggots (5,120)	38.8.0.	16.15.0.
	Dead faggots (1,000)	6.5.0.	-
1823	Faggots and logs	72.0.4.	-
1824	Faggots (3,504)	35.0.6.	47.19.0.
	Logs	20.0.0.	-
	Charcoal	1.8.6.	-
	Coal	6.15.4.	-
1826	Faggots (3,120)	27.11.6.	18.0.0.
	Coal	7.8.8.	-
1827	Faggots and wood	23.4.0.	18.0.0.
	Coal	6.2.0.	-
1828	Faggots and wood	26.16.0.	6.0.0.
	Coal	10.14.0.	-

Values in parentheses indicate numbers of faggots supplied, where specified

The proprietors' concern over their inability to grow wood for this lucrative trade due to the deer both stunting coppice growth and prolonging coppice rotation is understandable. They sought as quick a return as possible on their coppices, hence their mention here of six years and their earlier mention of nine and twelve years as significantly shorter than the more common sixteen. Interestingly, much of the current literature lists the average recommended age of hazel at the time of coppicing as six to seven years old, which would undoubtedly please the proprietors, although 'it is possible to use the produce from hazel up to the age of about 12', in which case 'stems are fewer but larger, and can be used to make higher value products such as rustic poles' (http://www.coppice.org.uk). However, the current literature also advises that 'in practice it seems unlikely that an owner would gain by delaying the sale beyond year 7, because the sale price offered for standing coppice tends to diminish rapidly after that age' (*ibid*). Compare this with Smart's (1841, p138) observation that only 'after fourteen, fifteen, or sixteen years' growth [was] the underwood, consisting principally of hazel ... deemed to

have attained maturity, when it was felled and sold to dealers'. Meanwhile, the 1816 *Memoranda respecting the Customs of the Chace Woods* (DRO D/PIT/M38) suggests that whereas

> the Copses of the Chace are generally felled at 15 or 16 Years growth Lord Pembrokes are kept till 20Yrs, & indeed it would be better if the Rushmore Copses were to stand as long, tho' during the four years interval the yearly income would stop, as the increased profit of the Wood would more than compensate for the delay.

In fact, increased rotation length may have been a general trend, perhaps due to the aforementioned expansion of the underwood market. As Rackham (1995, p82) points out,

> in Eastern England, coppicing cycles lengthened and became more regular. In Hayley Wood, the seven-year rotation in the fourteenth century had lengthened to 10-11 years by 1584 and to 15 years by 1765. This is entirely typical: before 1500 it was unusual to fell a wood less often than every nine years, whereas by the eighteenth century rotations of nine years or less were rare, and those of 15-20 years not uncommon. Logs were being produced instead of faggots.

Both were being produced on Cranborne Chase – but with what financial gain? Claridge (1793, p32), writing about Dorset woodlands generally, suggested that 'the underwood cut at ten or twelve years growth ... produces about five or six pounds an acre for faggots'. The odd bit of data can be extracted from Lord Rivers's accounts: in 1806, the value of underwood varied from 6d. to 8d. per lug, or from £4.0.0. to £5.6.8. per acre. By 1811, the value had risen to nearly £10.0.0. per acre, but by 1830 it had fallen to only £1.0.0. per acre. Meanwhile, in 1812, Lord Pembroke reserved 95 lugs at 6d. per lug – £4.0.0. per acre – from Lower Stonedean Coppice 'to help make and mend the coppice hedges', but reserved 73 lugs at 9d. per lug – £6.0.0. per acre – from Middleway Coppice for his woodman, Jeremiah Soffe (WSRO 2057/A3/24). The variation may be due to varying demand; it may also reflect the different values of different underwood products. Indeed, in 1786, Lord Weymouth's faggot wood was worth £0.12.6. per hundred while his poles were worth between 4d. and 7d. each (WSRO 2057/E3/3), and in 1812, thorns cut in Lord Pembroke's woods sold at between £0.10.4. and £1.5.9. per load, rods sold at approximately £0.1.0. per hundred, and faggots sold at only 1d. or 2d. per score. However, the faggots reserved for Jeremiah Soffe were valued at £0.2.4. per score (WSRO 2057/A3/24).

Of course, in addition to faggots and other underwood, Cranborne Chase also produced some timber. Claridge (1793, p32) complains of Dorset generally that 'as to timber, I could wish I had it in my power to be able to describe from my own observation, a greater quantity than I am able to do'.

Stevenson (1812, p334) implies some improvement twenty years later, for although Cranborne Chase 'consists principally of hazel wood, with some black thorns,' there are 'a few timber trees', principally ash and oak. Both Lord Rivers's and Lord Pembroke's woods produced some timber, a portion of which was sold and the remainder reserved for 'My Lord's use' in estate repairs (in 1812 Lord Pembroke reserved 11 tons and 25 feet of timber, valued at £62.1.3., for repairs around his estates (WSRO 2057/A3/24)). However, a 1786 document (WSRO 2057/E3/3) valuing land offered for exchange between Lords Weymouth and Pembroke is the most useful documentary resource, highlighting the presence of both ash and oak in some detail (Tables 5.2-5.4). The coppices in question (often with standards, as implied by the presence of 'Maiden Oaks') provided wood products of various size, quantity, and value, yielding an overall net return, as indicated by the *Account* and *Valuation* data. Interestingly, the *Account* data indicates that, in contrast to wood on the Chase generally, the majority of the coppices' 1786 value was in the form of timber, particularly ash timber (57 per cent of income compared with nearly fourteen per cent for oak, including pollards). Although oak timber was the single most valuable product at 35s. per 'tun', ash, at only 25s. per 'tun', far outnumbered it. The value of underwood also remained relatively high, though, poles, and particularly faggots, together accounting for nearly a third of the total (Fig. 5.4; also Fig. 5.3, which highlights the presence of such timber-rich years in Lord Rivers's accounts, 1809 in particular). Of course, because of the rotational basis of cutting, not all of this value was realised at once (note that Table 5.2 thus depicts a somewhat skewed interpretation of value by including single estimates of income and expenditure and representing them as actual income and expenditure for the year 1786). Using the data provided in Table 5.4, we can diagrammatically represent the coppices' progression through their rotation in order to create a snapshot of wood management (Fig. 5.5). We can then better appreciate the mosaic of both coppice growth and deer access in the area. Of an approximate 86 acres of coppice land, 9 acres had been open to deer for 1-5 years, 34 acres had been open for 6-10 years, 32 acres had been open for 11-15 years, 6 acres had been open for 16-20 years, and 5 acres had been open for 36-40 years by 1786.

This brings us to an interesting point: that the fact newly cut coppices were effectively enclosed for three years before being exposed to deer browse is of particular consequence. The proprietors repeatedly point out the damage done by the deer through browsing, bark stripping, and fraying. Yet, Manwood and Webb tell us that alternative food sources were available for deer during hard times, for example holly and ivy (both common border plants) cut as browse, and also hay (in

1821, Lord Rivers paid 'Mr Gillingham for 5 10 8 [ton cut lb] of Hay for Deer at £3 15 0 per Ton' at Rushmore and Staplefoot Walks, '2 5 1 of Hay for [the] Keepers' Horses and Deer' at West Walk, and '2 17 0 [again] for [the] Keepers Horses and Deer' generally, at a total cost of £37.8.0. (DRO D/PIT/E179)) so bark stripping should not have been a significant problem – similarly with fraying, which, although potentially very damaging, is generally isolated. This leaves only ongoing deer browse damage to account for the proprietors' complaints. Much of today's literature does indeed attribute shoot damage to deer browse; however, the deer on Cranborne Chase did not have access to these shoots. In fact, the coppice trees would have likely grown to a height inaccessible to most deer by the time the animals gained access via leaping and creeping.

> When browsing, deer select leading shoots and upper leaves because they are actively growing, and therefore the most nutritious. Coppice regrowth is most vulnerable to attack in the spring and early summer after coppicing. By late summer the shoots should have grown above the browsing level. However protection for two seasons' growth after coppicing is preferable (http://handbooks.btcv.org.uk/handbooks/content/section/3759 – corroborated by personal correspondence with Drs. Savill and Newman).

To what extent fallow deer damage coppice trees, particularly hazel, after three years' growth may seem a straightforward enquiry, but is of great consequence. If, as the above quote suggests, trees were out of the deer's reach by the time they gained access, then the proprietors' complaints may very well have been exaggerated, indicating that this was only one of many factors exasperating them. In fact, Stevenson (1812, p334) actually assigns an advantage to the deer, explaining that 'it is supposed that they do some good by keeping down the blackthorns', a benefit echoed by Mitford (1824, p65) in her description of an ungrazed coppice:

> here we are in the copse. Ah! only one half of the underwood was cut last year, and the other is at its full growth: hazel, brier, woodbine, bramble, forming one impenetrable thicket, and almost uniting with the lower branches of the elms, and oaks, and beeches, which rise at regular distances overhead. No foot can penetrate that dense and thorny entanglement.

Perhaps, by browsing and therefore containing the undergrowth, the deer actually aided the woodmen in their work.

The question of deer damage aside, woodland management was a costly business, especially when restricted by Chase law. Fig. 5.7 shows that throughout the period 1786-1830, income typically outweighed expenditure in Lord Rivers's Chase woods – a pattern repeated in the cases of Lords

Weymouth and Pembroke in 1786 and 1812, respectively. However, Fig. 5.7 fails to show that although both income and expenditure fluctuated, reflecting 'good' and 'bad' productive and financial years, base expenditure remained relatively stable. Lord Rivers's accounts for the aforementioned period show that only one cost appears annually (or nearly so – where it does not appear it can generally be averaged out, some years being accounted for on a delayed basis; see Fig. 5.8), with all

Fig. 5.3 Annual Chase Income by Wood Type

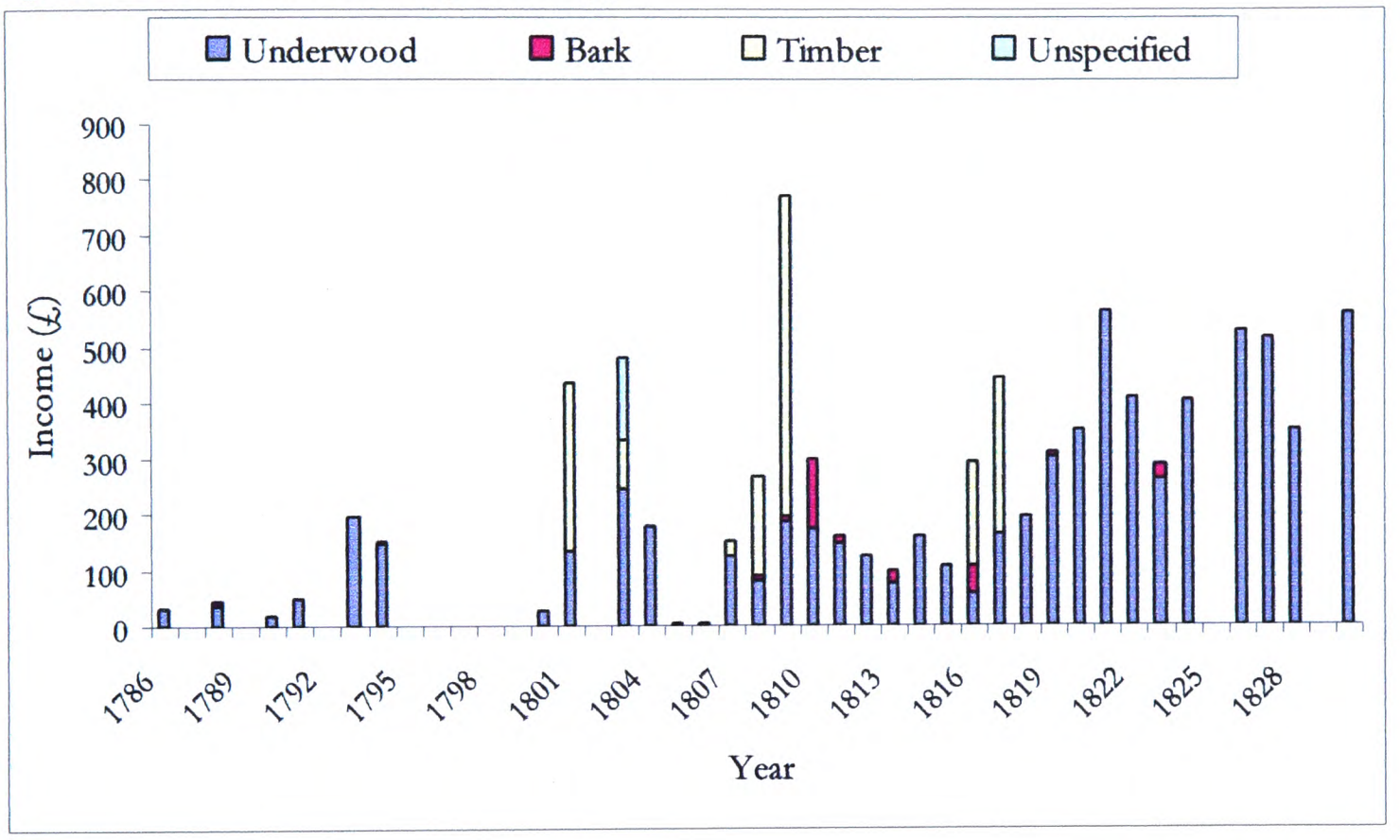
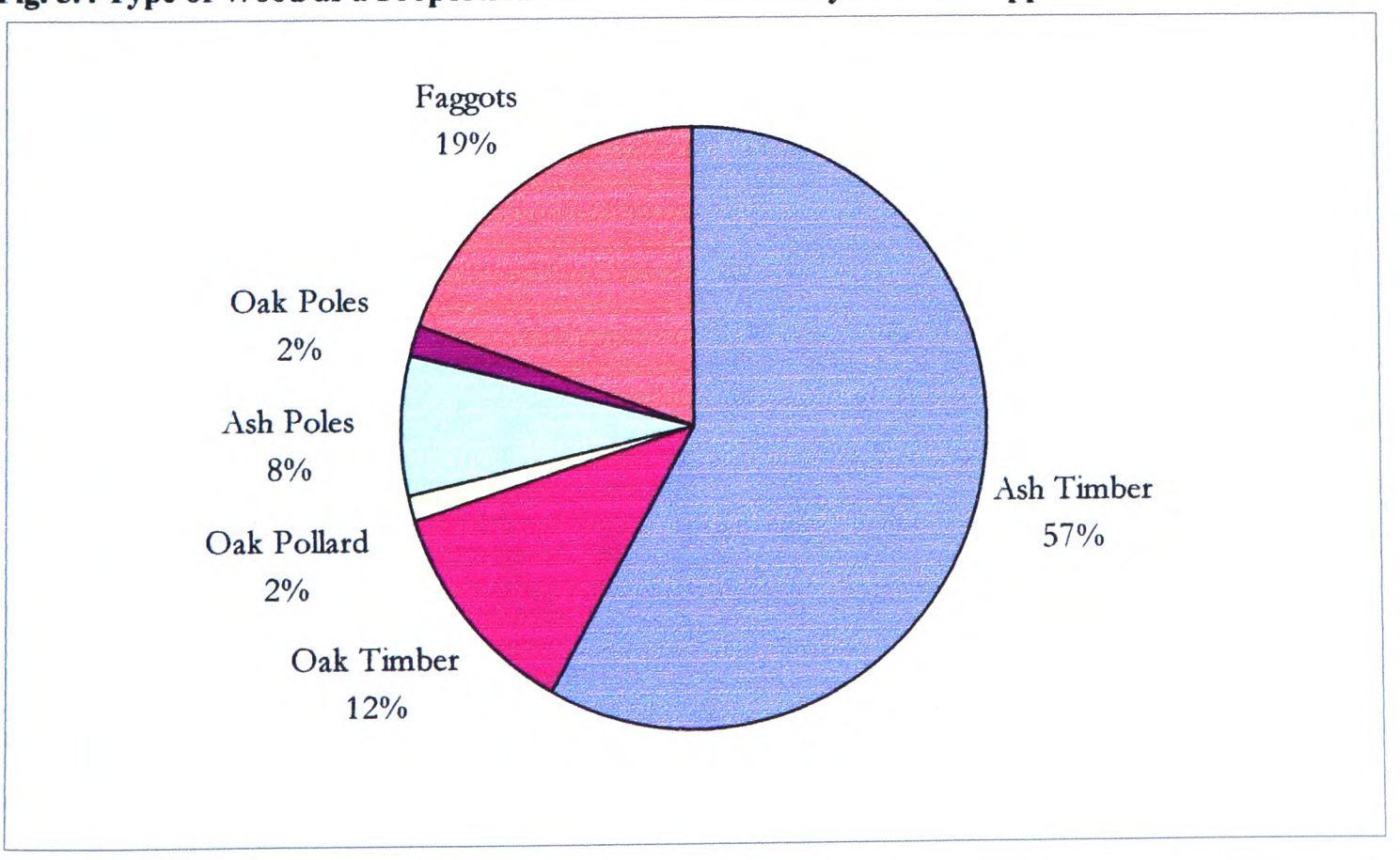


Fig. 5.4 Type of Wood as a Proportion of Value in Lord Weymouth's Coppices 1786



Rinding bark	0.18.8.	0.8.0.	-	-	0.18.8.	2.5.4.	0.9
Cutting away underwood	0.11.0.	-	-	-	-	0.11.0.	0.2
Cutting and cleaving coalfire and hard wood	0.12.8.	-	-	-	1.8.0.+(4.8.2.)	2.0.8. (6.8.10.)	0.8 (2.4)
Attendance in bad weather and showing where to load	4.12.0.	1.12.0.	0.18.0.	-	-	7.2.0.	2.7
Expenses with wood stealers	1.16.0.	-	-	-	-	1.16.0.	0.7
Cutting and sharpening fold shores[#]	-	0.2.6.	-	-	-	0.2.6.	0.0
Repairing bank	-	-	0.18.0.	-	-	0.18.0.	0.3
Loading faggots, coal wood, and bark	-	-	1.2.0.	-	0.9.0.	1.11.0.	0.6
Sawing off posts for sawyers	-	-	-	-	0.8.0.	0.8.0.	0.2
Knotting[^] timber	-	-	-	-	0.4.10.	0.4.10.	0.1
Total	150.6.6½.	21.18.10½.	54.15.4.	23.13.6.	15.17.7.	266.11.10.	-

An additional £24.0.0. wages for the woodman, £2.2.0. allowance for attending Knighton Hill and for his care about the fence between Cobley and Vernditch, and £1.10.0. allowance for expenses in collecting money, gives a grand total of £294.3.10.

**Knighton Hill* values in parentheses apply to more than one category (row) but cannot be further separated; *Total* values in parentheses are a maximum assuming a maximum share of the *Knighton Hill* values in parentheses within any single category (row), and similarly with *Percenaget of Overall Total* values in parentheses

[†]Rod: 'A straight, slender shoot or wand, growing upon or cut from a tree, bush, etc.' (OED)

[‡]Writh(e): 'Something twisted, wreathed, or formed into a circular shape … 1844 W. BARNES *Dorset Gloss.* 370 *Writh*, the bond of a faggot' (OED)

[§]Flake: 'A wattled hurdle … The same used as a temporary gate' (OED)

[#]Fold Shore: '1813 T. DAVIS *Agric. Wilts.* 63 … *Fold-shores*, the stakes to which the hurdles are fastened with a loose twig-wreath at the top' (OED)

[^]Knotting: 'The process of covering the knots in wood with a special preparation, previously to painting … the preparation used for this' (OED)

Table 5.5 Summary of Disbursements for Lord Pembroke's Bower Chalk and Vernditch Coppices, 1811-1812 (£.s.d.) (WSRO 2057/A3/24)

	Lower Stonedean, 41 acres 5 lugs	Middleway, 11 acres 41 lugs	West Benbows, 10 acres 35 lugs	North Higher Wakesdean and Three Ash	Knighton Hill*	Total	Percentage of Overall Total (%)
Valuing wood	1.4.0.	0.8.0.	0.17.0.	-	-	2.9.0.	0.9
Felling and making lugs for deer hedge fences	26.6.2½.	10.13.9½.	9.16.3.	19.4.0.	3.9.5.+(3.2.6.)	69.9.8. (72.12.2.)	26.1 (27.2)
Throwing out rods† and thorns from faggots	4.12.4.	1.6.7½.	1.0.10½.	-	-	6.19.10.	2.6
Picking up rods	1.18.0.	0.3.0.	-	-	-	2.1.0.	0.8
Trimming and cleaving rods	-	-	-	-	(3.2.6.)	≤(3.2.6.)	≤(1.2)
Loading and carrying rough wood and thorns for hedges	3.18.0.	1.17.0.	8.10.11.	-	1.2.6.	15.8.5.	5.8
Making faggots	19.6.8.	4.13.3½.	1.3.4½.	3.11.6.	(4.14.8.)	28.14.10. (33.9.6.)	10.8 (12.6)
Shrouding borders to make faggots	-	-	-	0.18.0.	-	0.18.0.	0.3
Cutting writhes‡	0.11.0.	0.2.8.	-	-	(0.6.6.)	0.13.8. (1.0.2.)	0.3 (0.4)
Cutting and heading ash	8.13.0.	-	1.1.0.	-	-	9.14.0.	3.6
Cutting and heading oak	0.10.0.	0.6.0.	-	-	-	0.16.0.	0.3
Rates and taxes	72.3.0.	-	27.19.11.	-	-	100.2.11.	37.6
Making coppice flakes§	0.6.0.	0.1.0.	-	-	-	0.7.0.	0.1
Carrying flints and mending road	2.8.0.	0.5.0.	1.8.0.	-	-	4.1.0.	1.5

Table 5.3 'Account of the Timber in Lord Weymouths Coppices in the Chace.' (WSRO 2057/E3/3)

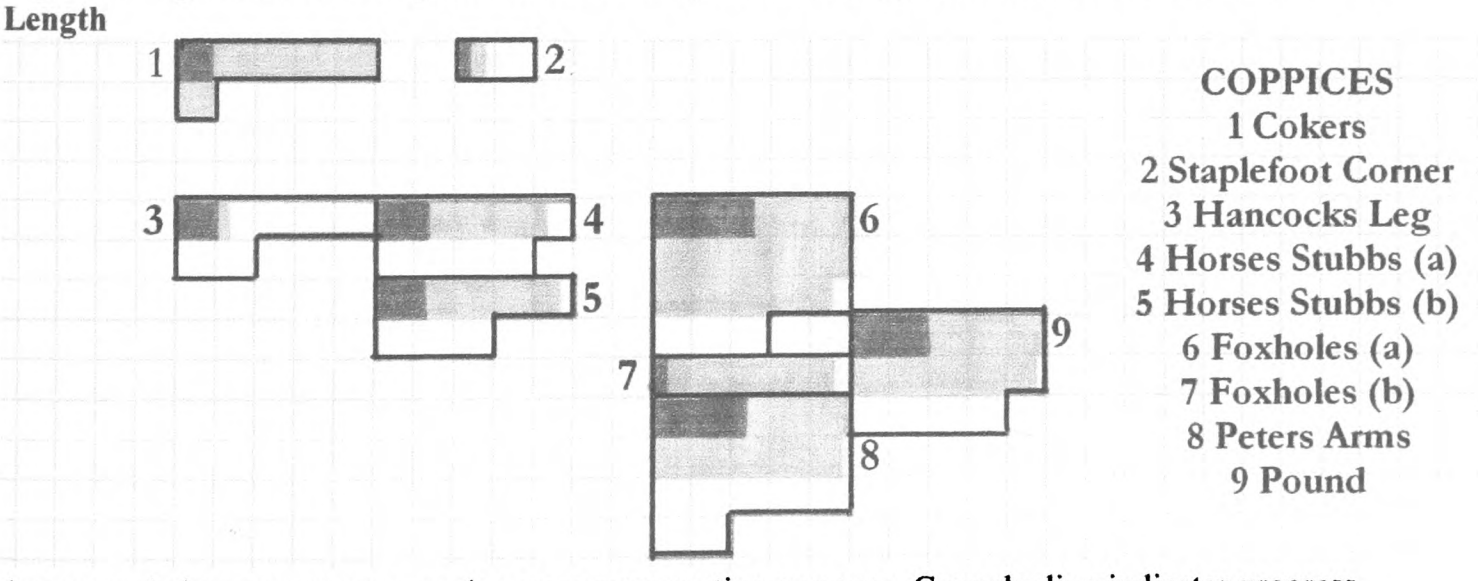
	Produce	Quantity	Value per unit	Value (£.s.d.)
Pound Coppice				
	33 Ash Trees	76 feet	25s. tun	2.6.11.
	4 Maiden Oaks	9 feet	35s. tun	0.7.9.
	4 Oak Pollards	17 feet	20s. tun	0.8.6.
	174 Faggots	-	12/6 hundred	1.1.10.
	150 Ash Poles	-	3d. each	1.17.6.
	6 Oak Poles	-	6d. each	0.3.0.
Higher Horses Stubs				
	62 Ash Trees	156 feet	25s. tun	4.17.5.
	16 Maiden Oaks	27.5 feet	35s. tun	1.4.0.
	7 Oak Pollards	13 feet	20s. tun	0.6.6.
	335 Faggots	-	12/6 hundred	2.0.0.
	55 Ash Poles	-	4d. each	0.18.4.
	18 Oak Poles	-	6d. each	0.9.0.
Lower Horses Stubbs				
	17 Ash Trees	50 feet	25s. tun	1.11.3.
	15 Maiden Oaks	15.5 feet	35s. tun	0.13.6.
	1 Oak Pollard	3 feet	20s. tun	0.1.6.
	121 Faggots	-	12/6 hundred	0.14.6.
	23 Ash Poles	-	4d. each	0.7.8.
	6 Oak Poles	-	7d. each	0.3.6.
Hancocks Leg				
	6 Ash Trees	62 feet	25s. tun	1.18.9.
	12 Maiden Oaks	88 feet	35s. tun	3.16.0.
	1 Oak Pollard	1 feet	20s. tun	0.0.6.
	240 Faggots	-	12/6 hundred	1.10.0.
	3 Ash Poles	-	5d. each	0.1.3.
Cokers				
	22 Ash Trees	187 feet	25s. tun	5.16.9.
	2 Maiden Oaks	15 feet	35s. tun	0.5.3.
	238 Faggots	-	12/6 hundred	1.8.0.
	40 Ash Poles	-	4d. each	0.2.0.
Staplefoot Corner				
	35 Ash Trees	132 feet	25s. tun	4.2.6.
	3 Maiden Oaks	32.5 feet	35s. tun	1.10.0.
	311 Faggots	-	12/6 hundred	1.18.0.
	40 Ash Poles	-	6d. each	1.0.0.

Foxholes				
	61 Ash Trees	12 tuns 8 feet	25s. tun	15.5.0.
	2 Oak Pollards	6 feet	20s. tun	0.3.0.
	627 Faggots	-	12/6 hundred	3.18.6.
	13 Ash Poles	-	5d. each	0.5.5.
	5 Oak Poles	-	6d. each	0.2.6.
Peters Arms				
	26 Ash Trees	2 tuns 11 feet	25s. tun	2.17.0.
	150 Faggots	-	12/6 hundred	0.18.9.
	20 Ash Poles	-	4d. each	0.6.8.
Total	-	-	-	66.18.6.

Table 5.4 Progression of Lord Weymouth's Coppices through their Rotation in 1786 (WSRO 2057/E3/3)

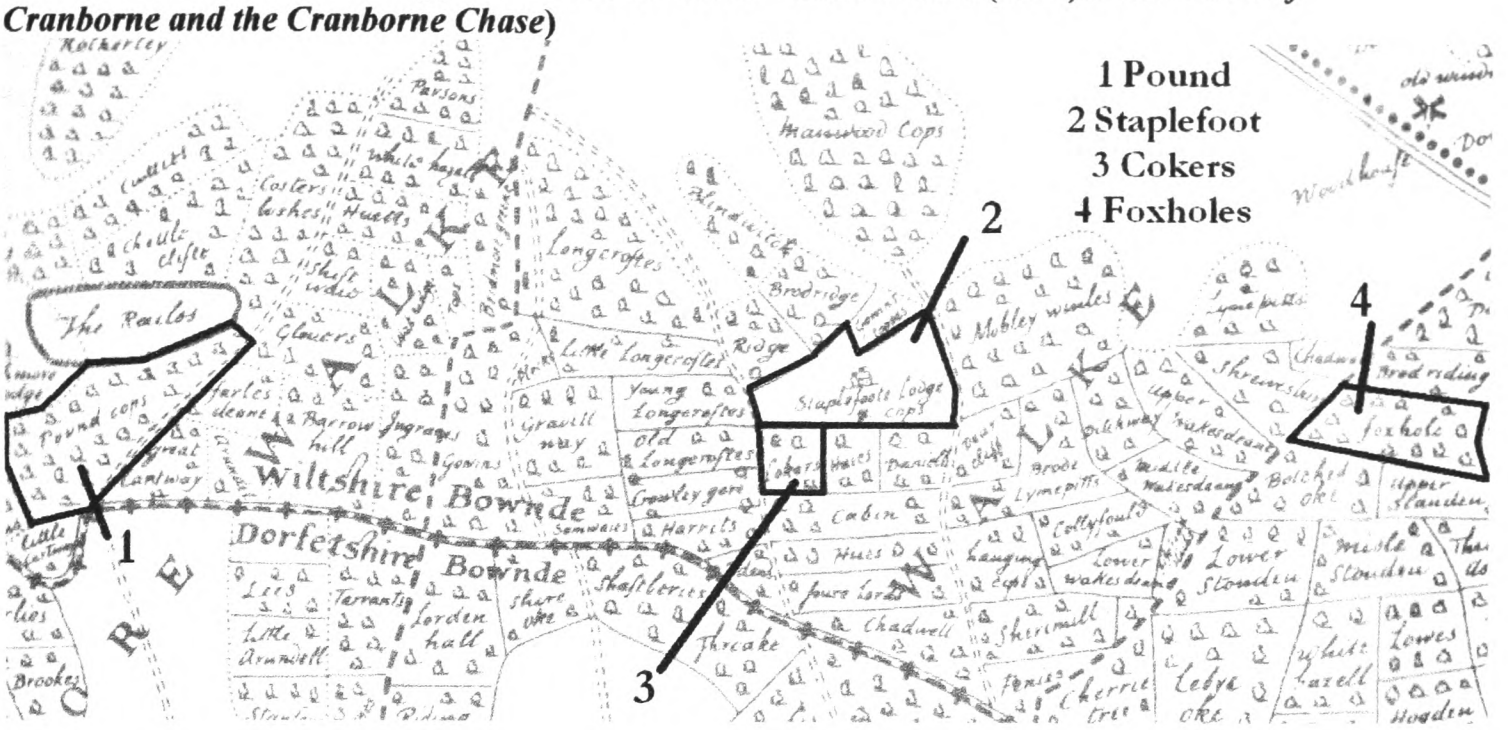
Coppice	Measure (A.R.P)	Age (Years) in 1786	Expected Age (Years) When Cut
Pound Coppice	14.0.35	14 or 15	21
Horses Stubbs (a&b)	17.0.33	9 acres at 10; 8 acres at 12	21
Hancock's Leg	7.1.6	4	21
Cokers Coppice	6.2.18	20	20
Staplefoot Corner	2.3.26	8	21
Foxholes (a&b)	23.1.31	18 acres at 17; 5 acres at 40	18 acres at 21; 5 acres at 44
Peters Arms	17.2.37	12	21

Fig. 5.5 Diagrammatic 'Snapshot' of Lord Weymouth's Coppices with Reference to Rotation Length



Area rounded to nearest acre, each square representing one acre. Grey shading indicates progress through coppice rotation as a percentage; black shading indicates proportion of rotation for which deer excluded as a percentage (assuming three years' exclusion). The relative position of coppices is as shown in a sketch in WSRO 2057/E3/3

Fig. 5.6 Detail from Aldwell's 1618 Map of Cranborne Chase (altered to emphasise the boundaries of four of the coppices discussed above – from West's (1841) *A Chronicle of Cranborne and the Cranborne Chase*)



other costs being supplementary. This one cost is the woodman's wage. Lord Rivers paid his Chase woodman a relatively measly-sounding £1.10.0. per year during the period 1786-1803 and £2.0.0. per year during the period 1804-1818, but recall that woodmen enjoyed various rights, including that to dead wood from dismantled coppice fences. The significance of this and other perquisites can be appreciated with reference to Lord Weymouth's woodman, who in 1786 received 'half a Guinea a Year, and the earnest of 11s. per acre, with the dead hedge faggots' amounting to £38.7.0. – substantially more than his basic 10/6 wage (WSRO 2057/E3/3). From 1819 onwards, two Chase woodmen appear in Lord Rivers's accounts, one of whom continued to receive a wage of between £2.0.0. and £4.0.0., whilst the other received between £16.0.0. and £30.0.0., the extra perhaps being in lieu of normal perquisites or in compensation for extra responsibilities (again, due to a lack of direct evidence these can only be guesses). A third woodman, who typically received £7.8.0. for overseeing the Tollard coppices, appears between 1820 and 1830, and Lord Rivers and his fellow rangers also employed woodmen at each of the walks, as recorded in the Chase Court Book (DRO D/PIT/M17). Although relatively numerous – in 1786 Rushmore had four, Staplefoot five, Cobley five, West seven (including John Prince, the Chase woodman), Chettered two, and Burseystool six – many individuals serviced more than one walk, and none except John Prince appears in the accounts.

As an aside, examination of the wage data with reference to Figs. 5.8 and 5.9 highlights some important methodological considerations. For example, the 1822 outlying data-point in Fig. 5.8 can be explained by the value given in the accounts being for 'Arthur Prince the Woodman's Bill for Salary

and making Hedges … [£]63.2.10.' rather than for salary only, which is more often the case. Although we might make an educated guess about the contribution of Arthur Prince's salary to this bill based on his salary in previous and subsequent years, we cannot be certain that for some reason it was not substantially higher in this particular year. The statistically most appropriate solution is to take the mean value, in this case £31.11.5. and use this for both 'Wages' and 'Making Hedges'. The actual

Fig. 5.7 Chase Income versus Chase Expenditure: Wood

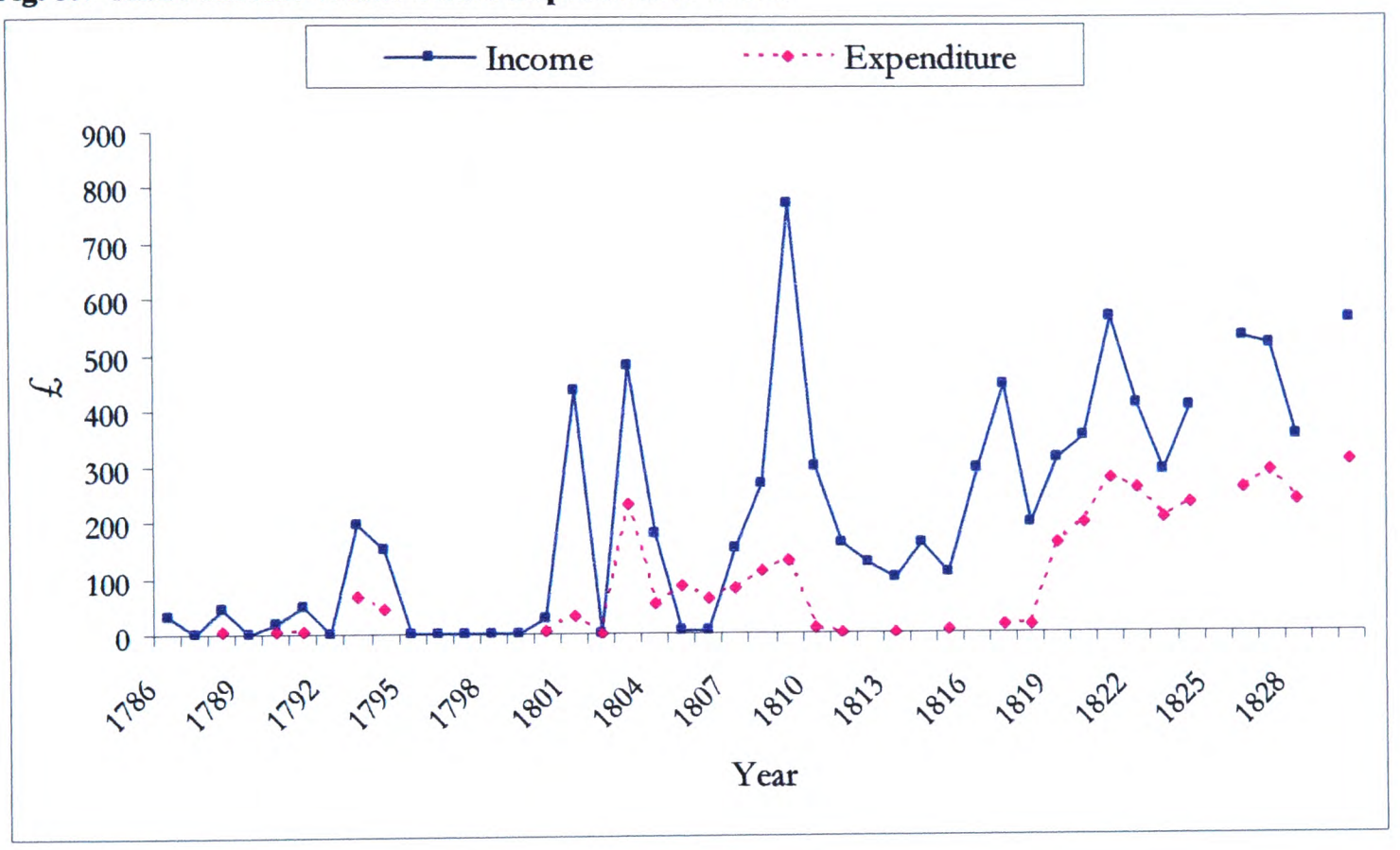


Fig. 5.8 Cranborne Chase Woodmen's Wages

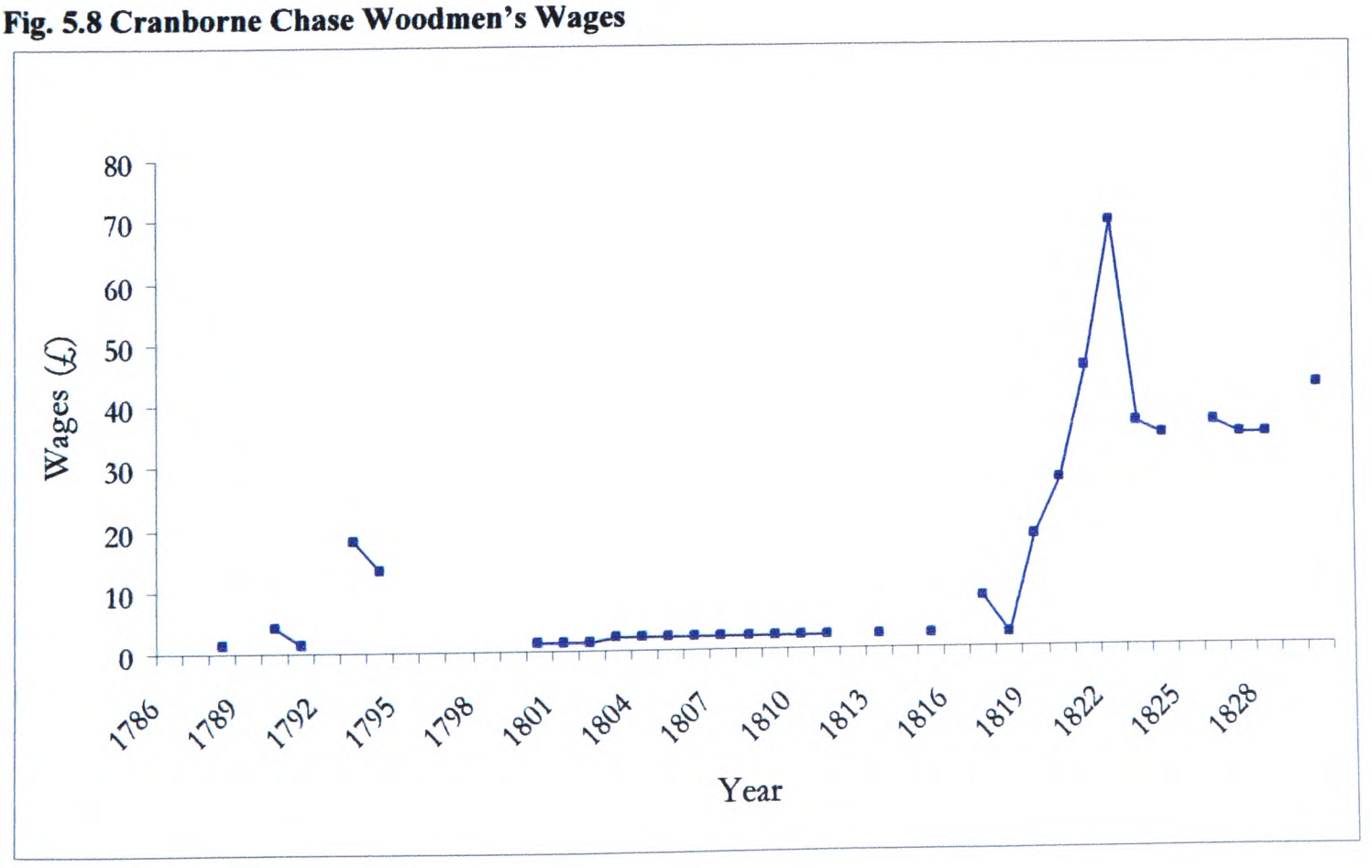
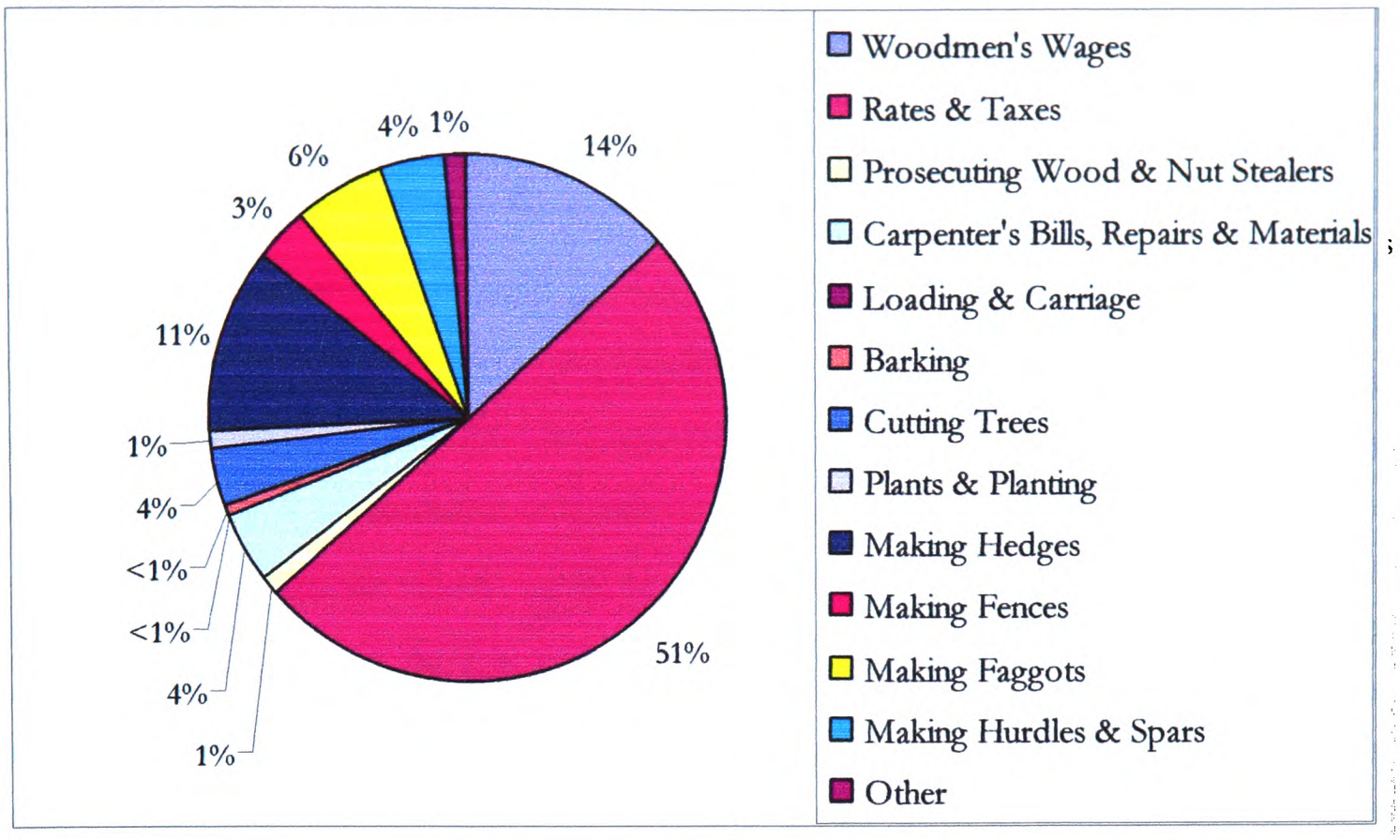


Fig. 5.9 Chase Expenditure 1786-1830



wage is probably closer to £2, as discussed above, which, when combined with the £30 paid to the second woodman, Henry Ferrett, and the £7.8.0. paid to the Tollard woodman, would give a total of £39.8.0. rather than £68.19.5. – the former value fitting the 'expected' much better. Indeed, based on the relative stability of the surrounding data-points in Fig. 5.8, this method probably substantially inflates the total value for 'Wages' and deflates that for 'Making Hedges' in Fig. 5.9, so that the results do appear somewhat skewed. However, as with much of the data in the Cranborne Chase accounts, the lack of specificity and additional explanation means that we must simply do our best with the information available. By acknowledging this problem, we can proceed and still draw some useful conclusions. Note that the outlying points for the years 1793-1794 can be similarly explained by the one-off inclusion of Berwick expenses.

Returning to the expenditure data, and particularly to Fig. 5.9, it is clear that wood costs were in fact quite varied, including work done to maintain and protect the coppices and to prepare and manufacture coppice products, as well as more general payments, for example wages and rates and taxes. Coppice maintenance and protection involved making fences and hedges, carpentry, and the prosecution of wood stealers and nutters (although note that prosecution expenses listed in the accounts all come after 1818 and so do not contradict Chafin's belief that such offences went largely unchallenged prior to that time). The proprietors were particularly fond of pointing out the costs of fencing and hedging, and perhaps quite rightly given that these, along with bills for carpentry, repairs,

and materials, amounted to eighteen per cent of expenditure. The harvesting of coppices – including cutting and barking wood, transporting it, and grubbing up roots – and their subsequent conversion into local craft materials – including hurdles, spars, and faggots – comprised a similar percentage. The accounts themselves offer some more specific information about these processes. For example, a man could earn between 3d. and 16d. per goad, pole, or lug of hedge made during the period 1788-1804, and 5d. per lug of fence in 1791. In 1793, he could earn £0.1.2. per day grubbing up land, and in 1801 he could earn 1s. per tree cut and £2.1.9. per hundred of faggot wood made, although this latter value dropped to only £0.2.6. per hundred in 1803. Of course, where timber grew, it had to be replanted after cutting, but, interestingly, the value for purchasing and planting plants is relatively low, accounting for only one per cent of the total. This is in fact as would be expected in predominantly coppice woodlands, the coppice trees being self-regenerating. (For an even more detailed breakdown of 'work' costs, see Table 5.5, which summarises Lord Pembroke's expenses in 1812.)

A substantial workforce was required to perform these various tasks. However, the accounts shed relatively little light on this subject. Entries typically list woodmen's names, but may or may not list others', the highest number of named men being eight in 1803 – two of whom merely supplied materials – and that being a relatively busy year in terms of supplementary tasks. Perhaps the most enlightening entry is from 1819; it reads 'Bill for *Labourers* cutting wood making Fences Faggots Hurdles &c &c ... [£]63.4.9.' (emphasis added). As pointed out earlier by Clarkson, the seasonal nature of much of the work meant that although work was predictable, it was not constant. Bearing this in mind, Lord Rivers's workforce probably consisted of a few permanent woodmen, a selection of other skilled men, for example a carpenter (who was also generally named where listed), and a group of casual, seasonal labourers who worked in the woods when they were not otherwise employed in the fields or as keepers.

Not all of the wood expenses given in Lord Rivers's accounts relate to work, though. In fact, the greatest expense, accounting for approximately half of total expenditure, was 'rates and taxes', which included an annual selection of rates, rents, taxes, and tithes. Poor rates usually comprised the majority of this expense, followed rather laggedly by land and property tax, and then by the remaining rates, tithes, and quit rents. Although poor rates appeared every year, and land tax almost as often, the remainder were rather more variable, both from one year to the next, and between the West Walk, Rushmore Walk, Tollard Farnham, and Tollard Royal woods. In Lord Pembroke's case (see Table 5.5),

Table 5.2 'Valuation of Lord Weymouth's Coppice's in the Chace, and Arable Close adjoining Bowerchalke Fields ... 22 Novr. 1786.' (WSRO 2057/E3/3)

	Measure (A.R.P)	**Probable Average Value per acre, at ... 21 Years, according to ... present appearance (£.s.d.)**	**Value of the several Coppices at the age of 21 Years (£.s.d.)**
Cokers Coppice	6.2.18	2.13.4.	17.12.8.
Staplefoot Corner	2.3.26	5.6.8.	15.10.8.
Hancock's Leg	7.1.6	4.0.0.	29.3.0.
Horses Stubbs	17.0.33	2.6.8.	40.2.11.
Foxholes	23.1.31	3.6.8.	78.2.11.
Peter's Arms	17.2.37	1.4.6.	21.14.4.
Pound/Pond Coppice	14.0.35	1.4.6.	17.8.2.
Total	***89.1.25***	-	***219.14.8.***
Deduct for Tythe	-	-	-21.19.5.
It is the Custom in the Chace to allow the two outside lugs of Wood round the Coppices for Fencing ... the value of six acres at least must be allowed for [these] Coppices	-	-	-20.0.0.
Woodman's Wages, half a Guinea a Year, and the earnest of 11s per acre, with the dead hedge faggots	-	-	-38.7.0.
Land tax	-	-	-20.0.0.
Poor rates	-	-	-10.0.0.
Total of Disbursements for the whole round of Cuttings	-	-	***-110.6.5.***

Nett amount ... for the whole round of Cuttings ... which is 1.4.5 per acre, or [1s/2d] per acre per annum	-	-	***109.8.3.***
89.1.25 of Coppice wood worth [1s/2d] per acre per annum upon an average [in] the present round of cuttings, but as they will in all probability be worth 6d or 9d per acre more in the round of cuttings next after the present, I think an additional Sum of 4d per acre should be added to the present value which will make the Coppices worth [1s/6d] per acre per annum upon an average	-	-	6.14.1.
18.3.19 Close of arable Land called Woodhouse Grove worth per annum ... 10.18.6., Deduct for Land tax 1.5.0.	-	-	9.13.6.
Yearly Value	-	-	***16.7.7.***
Which at 28 Years Purchase comes to	-	-	***458.12.4.***
Value of the Timber upon the Premises	-	-	***66.0.0.***
Total Value of Lord Weymouth's Property	-	-	***524.12.4.***

rates and taxes accounted for a slightly lesser 38 per cent, but even this was as much as the two next highest payments combined (felling and making lugs for deer hedge fences 26-27 per cent and making faggots eleven to thirteen per cent). Moreover, rates and taxes appear for only two of the five coppices in question, although all of them would have been liable. Whether the rates and taxes for the remaining three coppices are accounted for elsewhere, ignored, or incorporated in those of the two mentioned, is uncertain.

5.3 Summary

In summary, 'the history of the coppice and underwood trades demonstrates that, in the early stage of industrialization, traditional as well as modern industries [contributed] in their different ways to economic development' (Collins 1989, p501). Despite the proprietors' many concerns over the presence of deer in their coppices, those coppices – although managed in a predominantly premodern way – were nonetheless productive, meeting not only local demand for traditional craft materials but also market demand for a variety of timber and underwood products. This productivity was in large part due to an initial, temporary period of coppice enclosure, preventing deer damage during the trees' most vulnerable phase. Deer can certainly be a destructive force, as indicated by much of today's research; however, woodland can meet the needs of both man and animal when properly managed. The Cranborne Chase coppices were unlikely to have been managed at an optimum financial level, but given Lord Rivers's refusal to surrender his Chase rights, their continued productivity despite the deer's presence is remarkable. Nor were potential gains strictly financial; although Chafin's descriptions tend towards the romantic, they nonetheless highlight the significance of various common rights and customs to the local population. Sifting through the available documentary evidence, we cannot be certain whether Lord Rivers or the proprietors painted a more accurate picture of deer and woodland management on Cranborne Chase during the period 1786-1830. We can, however, piece together a picture of a working premodern landscape, successfully meeting many of the needs of a variety of conflicting parties, some of which would prefer to modernise and others not, but all of which were linked together by Lord Rivers's franchise. But, as earlier pointed out by Best, woods were not the only landscape component facing these pressures.

5.4 The Proprietors' Arguments: Fields

5.4.1 Historical Context

Although the emphasis thus far has been on woodland management, the proprietors were equally concerned about deer damage to fields. Both grains and greens tempted the deer into the fields, especially 'in the Spring when their food [was] short in the Woods & Commons and in a still more destructive manner when the Wheat [was] in Ear, & sometimes when it [was] nearly fit to be reaped' (DRO D/PIT/E3). Turnip crops suffered similar damage; hence Stevenson's (1812, pp334-335) remark, 'the Chase is pernicious to the farmers in the neighbourhood, and is the occasion that few turnips are sown, as the depredations of the deer on this crop are great, and cannot be prevented'. West (1816, ppv-vi) likewise concludes that 'the cultivation of turnips is almost impracticable, unless in very small proportion [and] The corn suffers much'. Meanwhile, the proprietors considered turnips completely out of the question, dismissing their cultivation as 'absolutely impossible'.

As with their 'Spirit of Planting' trees, it was not for lack of ambition that the proprietors did not convert their land on Cranborne Chase. Arthur Young (quoted in Kerr 1993, p27) described the east Dorset heaths as 'vast tracts of waste land that call aloud for improvements', opining that 'fortunes are here to be made by spirited improvers!' In their 'Proposals to be submitted to Lord Rivers' (DRO D/PIT/E3), the proprietors expressed similar sentiments, appealing to both Lord Rivers's financial and patriotic sense:

> by bringing into Cultivation some Thousands of Acres of Wood Land and Commons, on Waste Land within the Chace which are well adapted for Tillage and fit for the growth of Corn and Turnips, as well as Artificial Grasses those Lands would be worth, at least on an Average about Twenty Shillings per Acre, which now on Account of the Deer feed and other Chace Rights, are worth very little in their present State ... and Food for some thousands of Persons would be procured from Lands now producing little or none, [which] at a time when the Country is found insufficient to provide Bread for its Inhabitants is a matter very desirable to be obtained.

The proprietors' emphasis on turnips is unsurprising given their reputation as a new 'wonder' crop. Indeed, they formed an integral part of the Norfolk and similar rotation systems, the essence of which was

> in making ... naturally rather poor soils profitable by a rotation which combined the production of wheat and barley as cash crops with the cultivation of fodder crops – turnips, clover and rye grass. These fodder crops supported sheep and other livestock, and the manure of the flocks helped to improve soil fertility. In addition, the clover had the effect of fixing

> nitrogen in the soil, an additional aid to fertility. The combination of grain and fodder crops made bare fallows – the resting of the soil from cultivation – unnecessary, and the hoeing of the turnips had the incidental effect of destroying weeds, which was one of the objects of a periodical bare fallow. Moreover, the feeding of the sheep ... on the turnips helped to consolidate the loose, blowing sand, as did the binding effects of the clover roots (Mingay 1975, p57).

However, not everyone shared the proprietors' enthusiasm; as Stevenson (1812, p251) observes

> this kind of crop, which is of the very first importance in the cultivation of light soil, is comparatively of late introduction in the county of Dorset. Mr. Park of St. Giles's, who has been many years land steward to the Earl of Shaftesbury, says, that thirty years ago it was common for the farmers to say *they could not live by turnips*. At this time a gentleman, whose name Mr. Park did not recollect, cultivated some turnips, and gave them to some farmers, free of expense, that they might thus ascertain their value.

But, although 'Mr. Park adds, that late as they were in beginning to sow turnips, the improvement of the county, by these means, has been very rapid of late years', he concludes that there 'is, however, much still remaining to be done' (*ibid*). Davis (1811, p48) expresses similar doubt over the uptake of turnips in southern Wiltshire:

> a common-field system undoubtedly excludes, in a great measure, the cultivation of Turnips. But it has been remarked, that even in the inclosed farms of this district, a turnip crop seldom makes a regular part of the general system; notwithstanding there are very few parts of South Wilts where their cultivation is not understood, and practised *at times*, and that a turnip crop seems rather a matter of accident than of system ... The principal reason seems to be, a peculiar unfavourableness in the soil of many parts of the district to the growth of turnips.

Recall from Chapter 3 the local significance of downland pasture, and of its associated sheep-fold system, in particular. In addition to the soil's possible unsuitability was its varied potential, so that even those generally in favour of enclosure and subsequent improvement did not consider conversion to tillage a blanket solution. Hence, Claridge's aforementioned caveat, 'I do not mean, however, to recommend the breaking up of any of the best of the downs, as they are valuable in their present state' (p21).

Sheep's local significance had further implications for the local landscape: as Davis (1811, p83) points out,

> in the article of *expence*, of a general division of commonable lands, (which in some counties is a very serious consideration) South Wiltshire, and the other *sheep folding districts*, have great advantage, as it is seldom necessary to *fence* the new allotments, except, perhaps, a small quantity of land near home. In these counties, where sheep are folded every night, and never

> without a shepherd in the day, hedges are seldom necessary for the distant lands. And, indeed there are many situations in South Wiltshire, in which the hedges would never grow to perfection.

However, he (*ibid*, p77) also observes that whereas the downs may already be at peak productivity 'there are, in every part of this district, common meadows, which, though valuable in their present state, might be made much more so, if put in a state of severalty'.

5.4.2 Modern Context

As with their 'woodland' complaints, many of the proprietors' 'field' complaints remain relevant today, as highlighted in Putman and Moore's 1998 survey of the 'impact of deer in lowland Britain'. In it they assert that 'Fallow Deer are the species most associated with damage to arable agriculture', and 'grazing is particularly heavy during the period of vegetative growth in winter and spring, but both Fallow and Red Deer may return to cereal crops just as the ears are ripening' (*ibid*, pp146-147) – a remark very similar to the one made by the proprietors in their 1803 report. They (*ibid*, p148) likewise confirm the proprietors' concern that 'field root crops such as turnips, carrots and swedes may ... be damaged by deer, with economic loss considerably greater than simply the weight of root eaten since deer commonly take only one or a few bites from individual roots and many more roots may be damaged than are actually consumed'. In addition, 'all species may also cause damage to ripening crops by crushing stems in bedding sites or by rolling in the crop' (*ibid*, p147). Rather forebodingly, they (*ibid*, p159) conclude that

> Fallow Deer are probably the species most widely implicated in damage in lowland Britain in terms of damage both to agricultural crops and to forestry. In areas where they occur ... their potential for damage to farm woodlands and commercial plantations is great, as is their potential impact on cereal agriculture.

5.5 Fencing the Fields of Cranborne Chase

Another similarity between the proprietors' woods and fields was the one means of defence they could employ in each: fencing. In 1812, Stevenson (pp173-174) reports that in Dorset,

> a part of the open fields next to the downs, are often fenced with low dead hedges, on a broad sod bank. Hedges of this kind, made of hazel, and sometimes with real hedge hurdles, will last three years, if repaired with proper attention. The price of making the bank is said to vary from 8d. to 15d. for seven yards; the hedges cost, in wood and workmanship, 2s.3d. per rood of seven yards. Barred gates cost 20s.. each, and an inferior kind (which are called stavered)

> 11s. a piece ... The hedges in some places consist of thorn, but hazel hedges, spread to a considerable width, are very general on the chalky soils; and in many other parts of the county, they are frequently mixed with dogwood, maple, &c. and sometimes consist entirely of privet.

Such fences certainly existed on the Chase: 'John Targett of Bower Chalk ... [making] Oath and [saying] that a certain piece of Arable ground called Pitcombe Field ... hath been fenced in and inclosed partly with a Quick Fence and partly with a Dead Fence from time beyond the Memory of Man' (SRO MSS/DD/WY).

However, the legality of fences became rather a sticking point around the turn of the nineteenth century. Just as in his bid for improvement Lord Arundell believed that enclosure exempted his Berwick woods from deer feed, so the proprietors repeatedly argued that enclosure exempted their fields. As Claridge (1793, pp43-44) observes 'of the commons in Dorsetshire ... The land in general over-run with furze and ant-hills, does not in its present state, return more than seven or eight shillings per acre; but most of them highly proper to cultivate, and if converted would be worth eighteen or twenty shillings an acre' – it is not surprising then, that one of the proprietors' main aims was enclosure. Hence, returning to the proprietors' 1803 Cranborne Chase report, this time to the 'Commons' section, we can trace arguments similar to those used for 'Woods'. The proprietors admit that 'the damage done to the Commons is not felt in their uninclosed state to its full extent' (DRO D/PIT/E3), cattle grazing alongside the deer for at least part of the year. But

> in looking forward to an Inclosure of those Commons the greater part of the advantage to be derived from any improvement by cultivation will be wonderfully reduced not only by the expence of fencing against the Deer but by the almost absolute Impossibility of keeping up those fences when the Land is under turnips or other green Crops, from which mode of cultivation the greatest part of the improvement is to be derived (*ibid*).

The proprietors' understanding of the difference between commons and cultivated fields becomes particularly significant with reference to deer feed, for, according to the report, Chase law dictates the deer's right to feed both in the woods and commons, but 'strictly speaking [the enclosed fields] are liable to this injury not by Law but by their own prescription' (*ibid*): that is, simply by the difficulty of keeping the deer out. Not that enclosure provided a be all and end all solution: according to the 1796 Enclosure Act for Sixpenny Handley, although

> if the said Commissioners shall think it proper that any of the Allotments to be set out by virtue of this Act should be inclosed with Fences ... nothing in this Act contained shall authorize or impower the said Commissioners to hear or determine any Claim, Dispute, or Difference touching any Right of Deer Feed in, over, or upon any of the Lands and Grounds hereby intended to be divided and allotted...without the Consent in Writing, first had and obtained, of the Owner or Owners of such Right (DRO D/PIT/E42) –

a consent highly unlikely to be given, thus leaving even fenced enclosures still potentially liable to deer feed.

5.5.1 Fences as Barriers

The debate over fences on Cranborne Chase finally came to a head during the 1811 enclosure of Pimperne. The Pimperne Enclosure Act did in fact read:

> provided always and be it further enacted and declared, That nothing in this Act contained shall prejudice, lessen, or defeat the Right, Title, or Interest of the Right Honourable, George Lord Rivers, the Lord or Proprietor of Cramborne, otherwise Cranborne Chase, situate in the several Counties of Dorset, Wilts & Southampton his Heirs or Assigns, and his and their Rangers, Keepers, & Servants of, in and to the Seigniories, Rights, Previleges, and Royalties incident, or belonging to the said Chace within and over the said Lands and Grounds, but that such Seigniories, Rights, Privileges, and Royalties Shall remain and be enjoyed by him and them in as full, ample, and beneficial a manner to all Intents & Purposes, as he & they might, could, or ought to have held and enjoyed the same in case this Act had not been made (DRO D/PIT/L35).

Despite these provisions, the proprietors insisted on erecting a series of fences in an obvious attempt to prevent Lord Rivers's deer from feeding in their fields.

As early as December 1810, Francis Webb advised the proprietors' representative, Charles Bowles, that 'Lord Rivers as Proprietor of Cranborne Chace will not permit Fences to be made for inclosing any part of the Down Land, nor any of it to be broken up' (*ibid*). Bowles (*ibid*) replied several weeks later, explaining that

> as the Proviso in the Act of Parliament reserved for the Lord of the Chace all such Rights and Privileges as belonged to him, I could hardly have conceived any Objection would have been made to our ploughing up a part of the Down, particularly when no Deer has in my Remembrance even been seen [there]. If my Lord Rivers's object be a recognition of his right of Feed I have no doubt the Proprietors would readily give such Recognition but if his Lordship really means to contend that ... the Proprietors not ... divide the Common Fields with quick Fences, I should think the Proprietors would in an amicable way try this Question with his Lordship.

Webb (*ibid*) then pointed out that

> The Downs of Pimperne are within the Bounds of Cranborne Chace and it is presumed that Lord Rivers as owner of the Chace has a Right for his Deer to feed on those Downs. The situation of some parts of these Downs is between West Walk and Chetterwood Walk and Deer in passing from one of these Walks to the other sometimes must cross Pimperne Downs and tho' this does not happen very often and it would be difficult to be proved legally and tho' these Downs do not adjoin the great Woods in which the Deer generally take Shelter and feed yet they lie open to the Woods without any Obstructions to prevent the Deer from feeding on every part of these Downs.

Lord Rivers's main concern was that rebellion against his franchise in Pimperne might spark similar moves elsewhere. As Webb (*ibid*) continues,

> if these Downs or any part of them continue to be inclosed with common Fences such as Strong Deer could easily leap over and should be converted to Tillage it may be expected that the Occupiers of such new Inclosures would make stronger and higher Fences to prevent the Deer from injuring the Crops of Corn or Turnips &c and thereby totally exclude Deer from coming over such new inclosed Lands and therefore deminish the Quantity of Ground over which the Deer would be at Liberty to feed as well as narrow the Space of which the Deer may be hunted by the Lord of the Chace, or his Rangers, or Keepers and if the Land Owners in Pimperne are suffered to inclose the Downs in that Parish no doubt but the Land Owners in other Parishes would take Advantage of doing the same thing so that the Chace where Deer could feed would be very materially deminished.

Having sought appropriate legal advice, Lord Rivers's response was to deliver 'notice To take down and remove all the Fences lately erected or made upon all the Down Lands within the Parish of Pimperne', otherwise 'the same will be taken down by directions of the said George Lord Rivers' (*ibid*). In the end, Lord Rivers's steward

> attended Mr Richard Webb and the keepers of the Chase and removed some of the Hurdles and the Guard fence and ... made a Breach in all the Banks sufficient for the Keepers Horses to pass. [He] remained with the Keepers the whole time to prevent them from doing any wanton injury either to the Hurdles or young Thorn plants, in order to give the Owners an Opportunity of removing them (*ibid*).

The financial significance of this outcome for the proprietors can best be appreciated with reference to the Revd Mr. Bingham's complaint that 'his Estate will be injured many Thousand pounds by having the Fences on the new Inclosures destroyed and [although] he has let his new Inclosures on the Down at 40s an Acre to be broke up and cultivated ... if the Fences are destroyed his Tenant will not give him more than 8s an Acre' (*ibid*).

5.5.2 Fences as Deterrents

The above correspondence usefully illustrates the conflict over Chase rights, particularly the problem of interpreting those rights. The proprietors believed they should have some means of defence against the deer and consequently resented the fact that although they must bear the financial responsibility for that means of defence, it should be restricted and made ineffective. In Ashmore alone, 'a five foot fence had to be maintained for nearly five and a half miles' (Hawkins 1998, p65) to protect the fields, the cost of which would certainly add up. (And not even that may have been sufficient; according to Vesey-Fitzgerald (1946, p192), 'the fallow deer is a magnificent jumper, far better than the red deer. A seven-foot fence is cleared easily.') However, writing in 1816, James Webb interprets the proprietors' complaint not as a question of the fences' effectiveness but as a question of their being allowed or disallowed in the first place. Recall his earlier differentiation between deer-fed and non-deer-fed areas. Interestingly, he (DRO D/PIT/M38) asserts that on the latter,

> instead of our not allowing them to raise a fence to exclude the Deer from those extensive Lands, we on the Contrary wish they would fence, and the Stronger and higher they made their fence the more they would please us, we only say, if they do let the Deer into their fields (and that of course must be through their own fences) they shall not kill them.

Thus, far from discouraging fences, Webb in fact promoted them as a means of making both the keepers' and the farmers' work easier – although arguably only where the deer were less likely to feed anyway. Yet, even where fields did adjoin the coppices, the keepers worked to minimise browse damage. As Webb (*ibid*) continues,

> the Deer fed part is surrounded by Corn fields, in some part fenced with Strong Buck fences, and in others not fenced ... but still we do our endeavours to keep [deer] out of those fields, notwithstanding the farmers are so neglectful of their own property. When a Coppice Butts on a Corn field, we in General do not leap or Creep the Hedges, or cut browse, because by doing either we should entice the Deer into the fields, which would of Course be a great Injury to the farmers, and expose the Deer to Danger, for they are much more exposed to Danger in the fields, and in the Woods that Butt on the fields, than in the larger Covers.

In addition,

> as often as we find the Deer go into the Corn Fields, we go with the Buck Hounds, and drive them into the larger Woods, If it is in the Winter we Cut Browse as near as we can Judge in the Road they take to the fields to prevent them from going there ... If it is in Summer and Venison in Season ... we then take the Hounds and Guns to Hunt and kill them if we can (*ibid*).

These assertions seem to placate the proprietors whilst also defending Lord Rivers's franchise, Webb simultaneously arguing in favour of both fences and access. One thus suspects that he views fences not as a barrier but as a deterrent, reducing deer browse but not completely preventing it – as was the case with the 'leapt and crept' coppice fences. For, although he seems to contradict Lord Rivers's Pimperne argument initially, his concluding remarks indicate an overriding belief in his Lordship's Chase rights. The proprietors might have fences, but only on Lord Rivers's terms, which were not generally open to negotiation. Hence, the ongoing resentment, which eventually culminated in the devastating *King* case.

5.6 Conclusion

Whether or not Cranborne Chase was an economically productive landscape, especially by late eighteenth and early nineteenth century standards, is not immediately apparent. However, by searching beyond the surface arguments both for and against the Chase's survival, we realise that not only was it perhaps even more productive than we might otherwise expect, but it was carefully organised to be so. Two very different worldviews, one coloured predominantly by personal wealth and patriotism, the other by tradition and patronage – and both by overriding principles of property – dominated the Chase's final years. The sums of money over which Lord Rivers and the proprietors quibbled were often negligible; they did nonetheless form an important part of the disfranchisement debate – particularly the proprietors' arguments, as we shall see again in later chapters. But just because the Chase's outputs were not enjoyed either directly or solely by the proprietors did not mean that they were insignificant. The proprietors discounted the socioeconomic implications not only of common rights and coppice products but also of both the financial and symbolic value of deer. As a system, the Chase incorporated most segments of local society, no matter what the individuals' age, sex, occupation, or class: a point to which we will return subsequently. Unfortunately for Lord Rivers, and, by implication, his deer, his chase employees, and members of the local labouring class, the proprietors had general public opinion and the increasing pressure to modernise on their side.

Nonetheless, whilst still in existence as an intricately woven and balanced network of man, plant, animal, and physical environment, the landscape of Cranborne Chase formed an integral part of its inhabitants' daily lives and was in turn continually shaped and renewed by the daily, seasonal, and

annual work wrought upon it. Hutchins (1868, p570) encompasses the landscape of much of the Chase in his description of the land around Chettle, which lay just outside the inner bounds:

> the principal fuel is wood; the appearance of the country is open, rather flat, and no new inclosures here. There is an intermixture of wood, arable, some pasture and meadow, all fertile, no boggy or fenny land ... The soil is chiefly chalk. The chief produce is wheat and barley ... No new cultivation except that of turnips. The timber is elm, ash, beech, yew, fir, holly, &c. The number of sheep fed is about 1,200, on clover and turnips, and 300 bred.

The emphasis on agriculture, rather than sylviculture (and hence also the failure to mention hazel), likely stems from the concentration of coppices within the inner bounds and the predominance of fields and downs elsewhere. This is an important point to bear in mind, for although Lord Rivers laid claim to the entire extent of the outer bounds (excluding Vernditch and Alderholt), the documentation indicates a focus on the area within and immediately around the inner bounds. Fallow deer are generalist grazers that will venture into fields, but they nonetheless depend on woodlands for cover and some browse. Because the woodlands were so concentrated on Cranborne Chase, the deer also remained concentrated. Thus, not only did the presence of deer on Cranborne Chase help to shape the local landscape, but the landscape also helped to shape the deer's geographical distribution. Both factors, in turn, had important implications for the local human population. Hence the appropriateness of Bergh's (quoted in Langton 1988, p240) belief that 'the landscape, that tract in which we live, affects our lives, not just in the superficial sense of enforcing on us certain fixed conditions ... That drama which daily is in front of our eyes puts its mark on our inner being ... Every landscape is a state of mind.' It is to the criminal mindset, which this landscape supposedly engendered, that we next turn our attention.

Chapter 6 Crime and the Law on Cranborne Chase

6.1 Introduction

As we saw in the previous chapter, both premodern and modern factors shaped Cranborne Chase's late eighteenth and early nineteenth century landscape, as well as the livelihoods of its inhabitants. The same is true of crime (which provided part of some of those livelihoods). Contemporary observers often perceived a link between the premodern character of forest systems and the immoral character of forest dwellers; they concluded that modernising the land would also modernise its inhabitants. However, criminals did not necessarily distinguish between premodern forest franchises and more modern game preserving and plantation growing estates. Thus, although Lord Rivers and the proprietors were in many respects opponents – each determined to protect his property against encroachment by the other – both were plagued by poaching and wood stealing. (Lord Rivers and his rangers were, of course, additionally plagued by deer stealing, which in many respects resembled game stealing and so will be included as such for the time being.)

Just as they played an important role in Chase *management*, the law and its interpretation were similarly important in Chase *preservation*, and, again, the interrelationship between man, plants, and animals in the functioning of the Chase is clear. Although we will later consider the ways in which Lord Rivers and the proprietors used the law to defend their property in conflicts with one another, we first consider their shared problem of defence against game and wood thieves. We also consider the ways in which custom and circumstance shaped these latter individuals' view of crime, and the ways in which they helped to shape the Chase's criminal landscape.

6.2 The Proprietors' Arguments: Crime

6.2.1 Cranborne Chase: A Criminal Landscape

> A meeting of the proprietors ... held ... July, 1787 ... Resolved unanimously, That the Chace-rights tend to discourage industry, promote idleness, and immorality, and are injurious to the community. That they are highly detrimental to private property, and that it will be beneficial to the public, and to the proprietors of lands within the said Chace, that the same be disfranchised (Chapman 1791, p7).

These remarks, together with Mr. Sergeant Best's complaint 'that the benefit of the deer of Lord Rivers should be paramount to all the rights of property, and make the industry of the husbandman of no avail', seem to lend the Chase a certain bleakness, both socially and economically. We might from

these assertions infer that any produce of the land, be it sylvicultural or agricultural, fattened neither the proprietors' purses nor the labourers' stomachs, but merely the deer's stomachs. But, as we saw in the previous chapter, although deer damage to timber, grain, and turnips was a particular concern for the local community, it was not insurmountable. Even so, the offshoot of this purportedly futile situation was the alleged deflection of local people into criminal activities. According to Chapman (*ibid*, pp22-23),

> the rights of the Chace being very injurious to the woods which belong to proprietors of estates within it, they are willing to make your Lordship a fair, and adequate compensation in lieu thereof. But a greater mischief arises from those rights to the public, the Chace having been for many years a nursery for, and temptation to, all kinds of vice, profligacy, and immorality, whole parishes in, and adjacent to it, being nests of deer-stealers, bred to it by their parents, and initiating their children in it, they naturally contract habits of idleness, and become pests of society ... These being evils which should not be permitted in any civilized country, as no private property ought to exist so prejudicial to the community at large, we trust your lordship will concur with us in remedying so great a mischief.

Did the Chase population truly comprise only the idle and insolent, or was Chapman's belief somewhat skewed? The answer lies at least partly in the view of forest criminality prevalent at that time. We will later consider in detail the extent to which this view held true for Cranborne Chase, but we must first consider its origin and wider implications, particularly in defining 'crime'.

6.2.2 Forests and Chases: Criminal Landscapes

The abundance of negative writing on forest and, by extrapolation, chase dwellers suggests that, rather than being unique to Cranborne Chase, problems of immorality extended throughout the forests of the realm, and had done so for some time. Norden's (quoted in Lohmann 1999, p167) description of early seventeenth century forests 'wherein infinite poor yet most idle inhabitants have thrust themselves, living covertly without law or religion ... that coming ripe grow vagabonds, and infect the Commonwealth with most dangerous leprosies', is perhaps the best-known lament. Two centuries later, in 1838, Mudie (quoted in Kenchington 1945, p83) similarly observes that 'it seems a general law of human nature, that if a man either remains in the wild forest or returns to it, there is no alternative to his being or becoming a ferocious savage'. 'As well as being the scene of protracted social conflict, the forests were also disliked because they provided a refuge for outlaws and a base for dangerous criminals ... Untamed woodlands were thus seen as obstacles to human progress' (Thomas 1983, p195), and the men who dwelt in them were little better than the animals amongst which they

lived. Nonetheless, if we believe the proprietors, immorality was particularly rife on Cranborne Chase; hence Chapman's (1791, pp102-103) demand of Lord Rivers:

> is it not notorious ... That boys, as soon as they are able to give any assistance, are taken out by their fathers, and being employed whole nights must lay a-bed in the day, and by that means contract habits of idleness, which is the source of every evil? That the farmers, feeling the great damage the deer do to their farms by breaking into, and feeding upon, their corn; and having not ability for defending their property, or seeking legal redress, permit, and even abet, and encourage the deer-stealers, it being very common for the farmers to declare, the deer-stealers are their best friends; for if it was not for them, they should be overrun with deer, and not able to live on their farms? Add to this, the misery that arises to many unhappy wives and children from their husbands and fathers being detected in hunting and killing deer; and either committed to gaol, or drove out of the country: By which means, they are left in great distress; and are thrown as grievous burdens upon the parishes to which they belong. Surely a good mind would forego a great deal, rather than be, in any degree, instrumental, or the cause of so much evil!

Indeed, the greatest sin committed by Lord Rivers was his 'debauching the morals of the lower class of people, and tempting them to idleness, and the commission of every kind of theft' (*ibid*, p83).

Poaching and Wood Stealing: Social Crime?

But who comprised this 'lower class', and to what extent did it deserve its criminal reputation? An abundance of literature exists concerning crime in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, much of which addresses both common right and popular legitimacy, two issues at the very heart of poaching and wood stealing. According to much of the literature, both activities are classifiable as 'social' crime, as opposed to 'real' or 'ordinary' crime. Rule (in Emsley 1987, p3) distinguishes two types of social crime apparent during this period: 'first, those crimes which drew collective legitimation from their explicit protest nature, and second, crimes which, although actions against the law, were not regarded as criminal by those committing them', or by those amongst whom they lived. 'The value of the concept of social crime is that it draws attention to the fact that laws were not universally accepted and that some offences, on some occasions, could be legitimised by social groups and communities' (Emsley 1987, p5); what Lord Rivers and the proprietors deemed crime, those actually committing it often deemed custom, or even right. However, although wood stealing adheres quite nicely to the 'social crime' model, poaching sometimes does and sometimes does not:

> the poor may not have regarded poaching as a crime ... But poaching did not merely involve poor men taking game to eke out their meagre diet. There were plenty of gentlemen poachers who were prosecuted under the Game Laws ... Moreover from the mid eighteenth century

> until the legislation of 1831 which greatly reduced its profitability [by legalising the buying and selling of game], poaching was increasingly a business carried on by organised gangs ... Whether members of an organised gang, pursuing a business and satisfying a large market, can be adequately described as social criminals is, to say the least, a moot point (*ibid*, p3).

Hudson (1910, p69) thus distinguishes between two types of poachers, the opportunistic and the professional (or, in Freeman's (1996) nomenclature, the pleb and the predator):

> you will find the best of men among the shepherds and labourers freely helping themselves to any wild creature that falls in their way, yet sharing the game-preserver's hatred of the real poacher [for] The village poacher as a rule is an idle, dissolute fellow, and the sober, industrious, righteous shepherd or ploughman or carter does not like to be put on a level with such a person.

However, the numerous potential reasons for poaching meant that poachers might also fall anywhere between these two categories. As Rule (1997, p167) points out,

> a man might poach as an individual; he might poach as a member of a gang; he might be seeking meat for his own pot; he might want the shillings afforded by the black market in game; he might be consciously acting in defiance of the landed gentry; he might enjoy the excitement of the sport; or he might ... be working off a personal grudge.

Gilbert White (1788, pp25-26) uses 'excitement of the sport' to account for increased deer stealing in and around his native Selborne (in Woolmer Forest):

> the temptation is irresistible; for most men are sportsmen by constitution: and there is such an inherent spirit for hunting in human nature, as scarce any inhabitants can restrain. Hence, towards the beginning of this century all this country went wild about deer-stealing. Unless he was a hunter, as they affected to call themselves, no young person was allowed to be possessed of manhood or gallantry.

Such was also the case on Cranborne Chase. According to Chafin (1818, p72),

> clandestine Deer-hunting in those days was not deemed a disgrace ... many respectable persons followed the nocturnal amusement (for such it was); and, if discovered, had thirty pounds in their pockets to pay the penalty, and were then at liberty to repeat their sports the following night if they chose to venture.

However, the notorious Black Act [9 Geo. 1. c.22. (1723)] greatly increased the risks associated with this pastime by classifying repeat offenders as felons liable to punishment by transportation. 'Deer-stealing, in consequence, ceased to be "a gentlemanly amusement" and was resorted to only by the

vulgar and the desperate' (Pitt-Rivers 1929, p11). Hudson's lower-class poachers – whether happening upon an animal or purposely seeking one out – are therefore more typical of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

But no matter what the reason for poaching, it still had to gain a sense of legitimacy in order to fit the definition of social crime. Some of this legitimacy came from self-defence; hence the aforementioned farmers' befriending of deer stealers. The remainder came from the Bible; hence Crabbe's (quoted in Rule 1997, p158) observation: 'The poacher questions with perverted mind, / Were not the gifts of heaven for all design'd?'. Hence also Hudson's (1910, p69) comment:

> we know that about this matter the law of the land does not square with the moral law as it is written in the heart of the peasant. A wounded partridge or other bird which he finds in his walks abroad or which comes by chance to him is his by a natural right, and he will take and eat or dispose of it without scruple. With rabbits he is very free ... and a hare, too, may be picked up at any moment; only in this case he must be very sure that no one is looking. Knowing the law, and being perhaps a respectable, religious person, he is anxious to abstain from all appearance of evil. This taking a hare or rabbit or wounded partridge is in his mind a very different thing from systematic poaching; but he is aware that to the classes above him it is not so – the law has made them one. It is a hard, arbitrary, unnatural law, made by and for them, his betters, and outwardly he must conform to it ... But there is no escape from the hard and fast rule in such things, and however open and truthful he may be in everything else, in this one matter he is obliged to practise a certain sense of deception.

Unfortunately for the opportunistic poacher, the professional or even semi-professional poacher did cause lords of franchises and manors a good deal of aggravation. Chapman (1791, p102) believed that 'the principal sinners that I can recollect are the deer-stealers; and (for I had almost forgot to mention those who in his Lordship's estimation are most grievous sinners indeed) buyers of stolen venison'. Although Chapman means the latter as a slur against Lord Rivers, the truth is that deer stealing was fuelled by a strong black market – the buying and selling of venison remaining a crime until 1827 [7 & 8 Geo. 4. c.27.]. With such advertisements as the following appearing in the 1 September 1788 issue of *The Salisbury and Winchester Journal* (HRO 116M86/125), the abundance of deer stealing is hardly surprising:

> Venison. Wright, of Charing-Cross, dealer in Venison, desires to inform the Public, he has now on Sale a quantity of fine choice Old Deer, Park and Forest, approved by gentlemen of distinguishing palates for the richness of flavor. – Whole Bucks or part will be Sent (warranted sweet and good) to all the watering places, or the most distant part of the kingdom; and for the conveniency of country orders, it will arrive fresh every day. N.B. On proper notice sent to Paris.

A subsequent advertisement announces the additional availability of 'Chace Deer' and proclaims that the business has been in place nearly thirty years. Such flagrant disdain for the law on the part of dealers, combined with a high demand for venison from gentlemen unqualified to hunt it themselves, ensured a steady exchange of meat for money; hence Hudson's (1910, p136) 'old man' Reed,

> a deer-stealer of the days when that offence was common in the country [but who] was never caught; he would labour his full time and steal away after dark over the downs, to return in the small hours with a deer on his back. It was not for his own consumption; he wanted the money for which he sold it in Salisbury; and it is probable that he was in league with other poachers, as it is hard to believe that he could capture the animals single-handed.

Of course, the same might be said of the black market for game, the buying and selling of which remained illegal even longer, until 1831.

Poaching and Wood Stealing: Isolated Acts?

Nor did critics believe poaching and wood stealing to be isolated acts; 'contemporary gentlemen recognised that the want of regular employment could contribute to crime, but this was because the working class lacked moral fibre as a result of their ignorance, idleness, dissoluteness and drunkenness – habits which the young often picked up from bad parents' (Emsley 1987, p58). Periods of economic distress simply amplified these tendencies so that even in situations of enforced unemployment, the people's inherent immorality rather than any sense of desperation was to blame:

> the longer an economic crisis continued, the greater the temptation: "The occasional act becomes a constant habit; principle is overlaid, and conscience drugged and stupefied ... Nor does the return to prosperity obliterate the evil which a long cycle of distress has produced. Work may be resumed, and the former comforts gladden the household, but the *trail and slime* of the moral evil which has dwelt in the heart and ruled there, remains, and will evidence itself in a thousand forms" (*ibid*).

As Symons (quoted in *ibid*, p57) concluded, 'we are dealing with a class whose vocation is labour; and whose vices and virtues are infallibly connected with indolence or industry'. In keeping with such sentiments, the proprietors argued in their 1790 *Proposals to Lord Rivers* (DRO D/PIT/E3) that

> should the Chase be disfranchised, honest employment would be found for hundreds of hands instead of idle and mischievous habits which too many persons have time immemorially been tempted to follow in Deer Stealing and Poaching, which bad habits have, unfortunately, led to the loss of lives and the transportation and imprisonment of many persons at various times who otherwise would probably have been useful Members of Society.

However, as Archer (1989, pp61-62) points out,

> the relationship between poaching and other rural crimes is a complex one and contemporary opinion was [in fact] often divided on the subject. Few strict preservers would have disagreed with the 1846 Select Committee's conclusion that poaching was "the first stage in the career of a rural criminal" ... Contrasting with this opinion was the adamant assertion of many professional poachers who claimed that "a poacher is not a thief and a thief is not a poacher".

Again, the belief that he might take game as a common if not natural right led many an (opportunistic) poacher to distinguish himself from other criminals (including professional poachers). As Archer (*ibid*) continues,

> both opinions contain an element of truth. Certainly the forces which brought the young unemployed together to form temporary and violent gangs would have inclined them towards the stealing of fowls and sheep. But for the genuinely addicted there was probably little other involvement since the practicalities of poaching were different from those of other forms of theft.

So, was it their status as forest and chase dwellers or the economic circumstances in which they lived – regardless of forest and chase boundaries – that predisposed these individuals to crime? Without wanting to engage in a nature versus nurture debate, it is worth bearing in mind Bovill's (1962, p183) belief that 'in spite of the terrible penalties attached to poaching, the acuteness of the distress in many districts was such that some men had to poach to keep alive'; and likewise Birrell's (1996, p88) belief that although 'foresters made sweeping assertions, often complaining that specific villages were nest of poachers ... there is obviously an element of exaggeration here; such claims would appear to reveal a feeling of exasperation on the part of the foresters in the face of what they saw as a serious problem'.

Because, like Bovill and Birrell, we can recognise bias in historical texts, we must be careful to consider any data with that bias in mind. In addition, although we can recognise that an alternative definition of crime was adopted by many game and wood thieves, 'the definition of crime as behaviour violating the criminal law has the advantage for the historian of relating behaviour to laws in force at a particular time; thus 'criminal' behaviour is tied firmly to its historical context' (Emsley 1987, p2). It is, after all, this more formal definition of crime that provides us with gaol and court records, the main sources from which we can extrapolate crime data. However, before considering what these sources

can tell us about criminality on Cranborne Chase, we must first address a number of other issues associated with crime data analysis.

6.3 Crime Data Analysis

Although the data contained in crime records can provide a good deal of information about criminals and crime patterns, it can only ever be an indication, rather than an actual measure. Emsley (1987, p21) perhaps best summarises this potentially problematic situation: 'the chief difficulty with the principal forms of criminal statistics is the 'dark figure', that is the number of offences committed of which there is no record because no-one bothered to, wished to, or was able to report a particular offence'. Thus,

> the statistics of committals and indictments ... are obviously some way from any measurement of actual crime. They are the end product of a variety of filters and require, at the very least a victim prepared to prosecute or someone prepared to report an offence, and an individual who has been accused and apprehended. But individual prosecutions were also the product of a social, economic and political context which changed from decade to decade, even from year to year. In some years the context may have provoked a ferocious response to a particular offence, in others the response could have been far more lenient (*ibid*).

For example,

> a statistical increase in indictments for petty theft during the years of dearth in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries may reflect a genuine increase in theft brought about by necessity. It may also reflect some farmers and gentlemen determined to make examples by a prosecution, rather than by an admonition, so as to dissuade anyone else who might also be tempted to offend because of the severity of the time; though, conversely, some gentlemen appear to have been inclined to more leniency towards property offenders in times of distress (*ibid*, p22).

Indeed, a judicial pardon could function as an important means of patronage in cases where the upper classes dominated the bench and the lower classes the dock. The lack of exact fit between actual and recorded crime

> does not mean, however, that indictments do not reveal anything at all about the reality of crime. If the extent of the offenses actually committed were reflected even to *some* degree in the indictments brought to court, then fluctuations in the aggregate level of cases over time ... might suggest very broadly some of the circumstances under which property offenses increased or diminished and thus provide some evidence of their character in this period (Beattie 1986, p199).

Another more practical problem may arise when comparing different data sets. Cranborne Chase extended across three counties, each of which has different criminal records containing varied information. The main resources in Dorset are the Dorchester Criminal Process and Prison Registers (gaol delivery books: DRO NG/PR1/D1, NG/PR1/D2 – Dors GD hereafter), which include information about the crime, date of conviction, convicting judge, sentence, time spent in prison, and date of release. They also include personal information about the criminal: age, occupation, marital status, and in some cases physical appearance. But whereas they include the criminal's home parish, they do not include the parish in which the crime was committed. In contrast, the Hampshire (New Forest Group (n.d.) – Hants QS hereafter) and Wiltshire (WSRO A1/125 – Wilts QS hereafter) Quarter Session Calendars of Prisoners provide only limited personal information, if any (age is sometimes but not always listed), and although they do include the parish in which the crime was committed, they do not include the criminal's home parish. Meanwhile, the Wiltshire Summary Convictions (Wiltshire Family History Society (n.d.) – Wilts SC hereafter) usually include both the criminal's home and his crime parish, as well as his occupation. (These records are not the only ones to contain potentially useful information; however, other records, for example those of the Dorset Quarter Sessions, are less readily accessible, being neither as well preserved nor as ordered.)

Adding another layer of documentation further complicates the matter. For example, a seemingly minor scrap found amongst the Pitt-Rivers papers, entitled *Cranborne Chace. List of Convictions & Commitments* (DRO D/PIT/M38), includes the names of criminals and both their home and crime parishes, but not their crime. Although some of these individuals do appear in one of the aforementioned gaol or court records, many others do not. This lack of correspondence implies an underestimation of Chase-related crime; on the other hand, information contained in the list does help to corroborate a number of questionable (otherwise lacking enough information) crimes listed in other records, thereby allowing their inclusion in the overall analysis. Basically, we can only consider those criminals who were recorded committing the appropriate crime in the appropriate place at the appropriate time; entries in the records lacking any of this necessary information must be ignored, thus potentially underestimating the amount of criminal activity further. Thompson discusses further potential problems respecting crime data analysis, particularly with reference to criminals' occupations, in his 1975 *Whigs and Hunters*.

A final point to mention is that of boundaries. The records that list both home and crime parish show that criminals sometimes moved around, committing crimes in parishes adjacent to or even further afield from their own. Where only one of the parishes is listed, we cannot be certain of the other's location. Thus, any given person known to be living in one of the parishes of Cranborne Chase, committing one of the crimes of interest during the period of interest may have in fact committed that crime in a parish outside the Chase, and vice versa. This possibility may be all the more likely given the number of surrounding parks and, indeed, forests in the area. Although this does not greatly change our understanding of local criminality, it does, if we are being picky, affect the accuracy of our crime totals. Unfortunately, little can be done except to acknowledge the potential problem. Likewise with our inclusion of 75 parishes (compared with Hutchins's 72: see Appendix 1), some of which lie only partly within the Chase; while these factors combine to overestimate criminality, we cannot know to what extent.

6.4 Criminality on Cranborne Chase

6.4.1 The Data

Despite the various uncertainties associated with crime data analysis, we can nonetheless use what information we have in order to better understand Cranborne Chase's criminal landscape. With reference to the crimes being committed, the four most obvious questions to ask are what, when, who, and where, each of which we shall consider in turn. First, though, a brief note on the data. Our database of deer, game, and wood stealers includes 1,456 entries. That does not mean, however, that there are 1,456 separate individuals, many being repeat offenders. Nor does it mean that there are 1,456 separate crimes: criminals often worked together; for example, although the Wiltshire Quarter Sessions include seventeen 'deer' criminals, they include only thirteen separate 'deer' crimes. Without acknowledging this distinction, the number of *crimes* appears inflated; however, given that the proprietors were most interested in the criminals themselves, our interest also lies with them.

6.4.2 General Patterns

A few further points may usefully be made before considering each of the crimes. The first is that, despite the proprietors' optimism, overall criminality (measured by the average number of

Table 6.1 Number of Convictions for the Period 1786-1845, Classified by Type of Crime and by Documentary Source

Record	Deer Stealing	Game Stealing	Wood Stealing	Total
Hants Quart Sessions	0	23	10	33
Dors Gaol Delivery	130	334	181	645
Wilts Quart Sessions	17	47	62	126
Wilts Sum Convictions	61	363	228	652
Total	208	767	481	1456

Table 6.2 Total and Average Number of Convictions for the Period 1786-1845, Classified by Type of Crime and by whether Pre- or Post-Disfranchisement (October 1830)

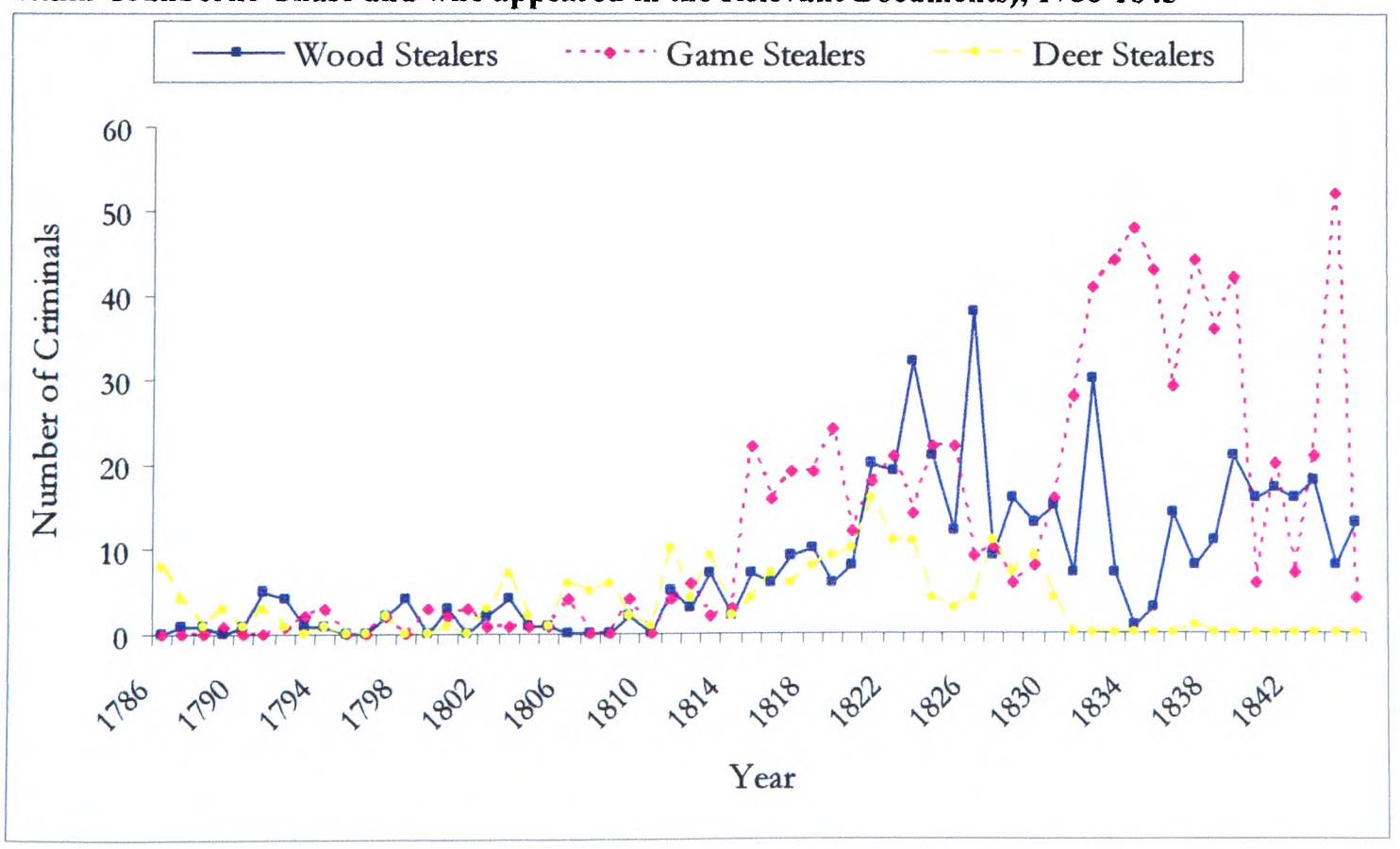
Type of Conviction	Total Number of Convictions	Average Number of Convictions per Year
Pre-Disfranchisement	799	17.76
Post-Disfranchisement	657	43.80
Deer Stealing	208	3.47
Game Stealing	767	12.78
Wood Stealing	481	8.02
Pre-Disfranchisement Deer	207	4.60
Pre-Disfranchisement Game	301	6.69
Pre-Disfranchisement Wood	291	6.47
Post-Disfranchisement Deer	1	0.07
Post-Disfranchisement Game	466	31.07
Post-Disfranchisement Wood	190	12.67
Total	1456	24.27

convictions per year) actually increased post-disfranchisement (Table 6.2). The exception, of course, was deer stealing, which dropped to nearly nought; this can be easily explained by the deer's clearance. Why the rise in game and wood stealing, though? Perhaps former deer stealers deflected into these and other crimes, although there is no obvious pattern in the records. Or perhaps, in pushing for disfranchisement, the proprietors created something of a Catch-22: true that disfranchisement meant they could manage their land, planting as many plantations and game coverts as they pleased, but the more wood and game there was available generally, the more wood and game there was available to steal. In getting rid of deer, they got rid of deer stealers but exacerbated the overall problem of crime. That is not to say, however, that disfranchisement signified a sudden, local up-turn; for all three crimes,

convictions began to rise well before 1830, generally in the 1810s (Fig. 6.1). In addition, while the legalisation of the venison and game markets in 1827 and 1831 respectively may have made stealing to sell less profitable, 1831 also saw a rise in the number of people who could keep game, meaning that there was more game available to steal; this may have led to an increased incidence of reporting crimes.

With respect to deer, two possible explanations exist for the rise in convictions, particularly after 1814. On the one hand, more convictions may indicate more criminals, which may in turn indicate Lord Rivers's relative impotence, at least between the inner and outer bounds, following the *King* ruling. On the other hand, more convictions may indicate Lord Rivers's increased determination to protect what remained of his franchise. Perhaps a bit of both, but either way these differing interpretations illustrate one of the many difficulties of crime data analysis. Unfortunately, without knowing where many of the crimes were committed, we cannot answer the question, although, interestingly, various legal opinions included in the records advise against prosecuting crimes committed between the inner and outer bounds at this time. Location is thus as important as date in considering many possible patterns and explanations; maps of convicts' home and crime parishes, where available, are therefore included in Appendix 3.

Fig. 6.1 Total Number of Wood, Game, and Deer Stealers (whose Home and/or Crime Parish lay within Cranborne Chase and who appeared in the Relevant Documents), 1786-1845



6.4.3 The Crimes

As owner of Cranborne Chase, Lord Rivers could claim both free chase and free warren, signifying his right to preserve not only vert and venison but also small game. However, royal grants to the owners of various estates located within the Chase perimeter restricted this latter right, as did Lord Rivers's own decision to let various of his walks and to relinquish his right to all game within those walks, bar rabbits and woodcocks, which were made the keepers' perquisite. Private gamekeepers appeared soon after, and by the late eighteenth century, game preservation was a common concern. Likewise with wood; as we saw in the previous chapter, numerous customs and regulations shaped the Chase's wooded landscape, particularly its coppices. Although this was as much for the deer's sake as the trees', local landowners who grew wood commercially were, of course, more concerned with the latter. And so, as stated at the outset of this chapter, Lord Rivers and the proprietors shared an interest in both wood and game preservation. Strictly speaking, only deer preservation remained Lord Rivers's (and his rangers') exclusive concern, making deer stealing the only Chase-specific crime (except where it occurred in Verndítch or in parks, of which we have one example; see below). We therefore turn our attention to it first.

6.4.4 Deer Stealing

We know that Chapman considered deer stealers amongst the worst criminals, but what were the laws that made them so? Whitehead (1980) examines the legislation in place from the seventeenth century onwards, much of which remained relevant to Cranborne Chase (see also Munsche's (1981) 'A guide to the laws relating to deer, rabbits and game 1660-1831'). This legislation was not limited to deer *stealing* as such. For example, 1 Jac. 1. c27 (1603) made it illegal to 'sell, or buy to sell again, any Deer, on Forfeiture of ten shillings, for each Deer, to be divided between the Prosecutor and the Poor' (quoted in Whitehead 1980, p170) – not that the aforementioned Mr. Wright seems to have taken any notice. Most legislation did relate directly to (potential) deer stealers, though. According to 13 Car. 2. c.10 (1661), anyone

> that course, kill, hunt or take away Red or Fallow Deer in any ground where Deer are kept, without consent of the owner ... shall forfeit £20 to be levied by Distress ... one Moiety to the Informer, the other to the owner of the Deer; and for want of Distress shall be committed to the House of Correction for six Months, or to the Common Gaol for a Year, and not be discharged till Security be given for their Good Behaviour for one Year after their Enlargement (quoted in *ibid*, p171).

3 & 4 Will. & Mar. c.10 (1692) elaborated further, declaring that

> if any Persons shall unlawfully course, hunt, take in Toils, kill, wound, or take away any Red or Fallow Deer, in any Forest, Chase, [*et cetera*] without the Consent of the Owner or Person Chiefly entrusted with the custody thereof, or shall be aiding or assisting therein ... shall forfeit for every such Offence the sum of £20. And for each Deer Wounded, Killed or Taken the sum of £30 to be levied by way of Distress upon the Goods and Chattels of every such Offender ... one third to the Informer, another to the Poor ... and the other to the Owner of the Deer [otherwise] they shall be imprisoned a Year, and set in the Pillory an Hour on some Market Day in the Town next the Place where the offence was done (quoted in *ibid*, pp171-172).

The Act also gave officers in possession of an appropriate warrant the power to search suspects' homes for 'any Venison, Skin of Deer or Toyles'. However, worse was yet to come; as previously mentioned, the Black Act made those convicted of a second deer stealing offence liable to seven years transportation, as did 10 Geo. 2. c.32 (1736), which applied to those found armed within a forest, chase, or park and who violently resisted arrest. Two later acts, 16 Geo. 3. c.30 (1776) and 42 Geo. 3. c.107 (1802), the latter repealing the former, reduced the penalty for a first offence of illegally hunting, shooting, or stealing deer but retained transportation as a punishment for repeat offenders. Despite limited time and space, these Acts are worth mentioning in such detail because, with the exception of the last, none of them repealed any extant law, thereby allowing judges to effectively pick and choose sentences, which our data certainly implies they did. Prosecutors might also pick and choose to some extent when determining at what level to prosecute; although summary convictions typically carried lesser penalties, they were much more expedient. As Lord Pembroke's steward writes, 'in a Conversation I had with Mr. Cecil, last Spring, about the great Expence of these prosecutions, where the Defendants are not able to pay ... He strongly recommended Summary Convictions before a Justice of the Peace, and I am glad to find that method approved of' (WSRO 2057/E1/5). An additional advantage was the absence of potentially biased juries, Lord Rivers's stewards observing in 1788 that

> most of the common People in this County [Wiltshire] are connected in some Measure with the Deer Stealers & a great Part of the Juries are summoned out of the Chase and its Neighbourhood. At the last Assizes it was with the utmost reluctance and on a great deal of Consideration that the Jury [would] convict a Deer Stealer upon the fullest Evidence & particularly when directed to do so by Mr. Jus. Buller (DRO D/PIT/L31).

Hence, the much higher number of summary convictions on the Chase (see Table 6.1).

The threat of conviction was not always a sufficient deterrent, though, and deer stealing remained an ongoing problem. In 1816, Webb writes of a particularly inveterate deer stealer: 'an Old Man ... of the Name of Dibbin, who told me he had been a Deer Hunter 50Years ... and had killed 5000 Deer, and was never detected, for when I took him it was from the Information of an Associate' (DRO D/PIT/M38). Dibbin's claim is surely exaggerated, although Webb seems sufficiently convinced. Despite the apparent thousands of crimes like Dibbin's, we have information on only 208 (149 of which were for straightforward hunting, stealing, killing, taking, and so on, 23 for additionally assaulting the keepers, and the remaining 36 for the possession of meat, skins, and traps); there is a good deal to consider nevertheless.

As a brief aside, the Chase keepers were not without extra incentives for taking deer stealers. The Chase accounts are full of payments to keepers for expenses incurred in capturing, transporting, and attending to criminals. The 1802 accounts include entries for both rewards ('Thomas White Fees for taking Deer Stealers ... [£]3.3.0.') and repayments ('Thomas White [for] Expences respecting Deer Stealers ... [£]1.6.3½.' and 'B Harrington [for] keepers Expences in conveying Deer Stealers to Prison ... [£]10.9.11.') (DRO D/PIT/E160).

Temporal Distribution: Seasonality

The first question to ask is 'when?'. Seasonality should play an important role in deer criminality for a number of reasons. To better appreciate this, we must first familiarise ourselves with the fallow deer life cycle. October and November comprise the breeding season, or rut, during which bucks attract does to their respective territories. The deer then remain together in small, often family, units throughout the winter, before dividing into more sexually distinct groups in March or April. The appearance of large herds throughout the year, especially at feeding grounds, results when these smaller units come together, more by chance than intent. Bucks cast off their antlers in late April or May, growing a new pair over the summer. Meanwhile, pregnant does drop their fawns in late May or June. Soon thereafter, a new cycle begins.

Recall from the previous chapter that habitat use also follows a seasonal pattern influenced by both food and cover availability; the deer are most likely to venture into the open during the summer and winter but spend the majority of their time in deciduous woods and glades. As Webb (DRO D/PIT/M38) observes, 'the Deer keep close to their Woods the greatest part of the day, unless in Hot

Weather, they then go out on the Open Downs for Air in large Herds ... as many as 200 at a time'. He also admits the deer's tendency to venture forth during the winter and early spring, mainly into neighbouring fields in search of food.

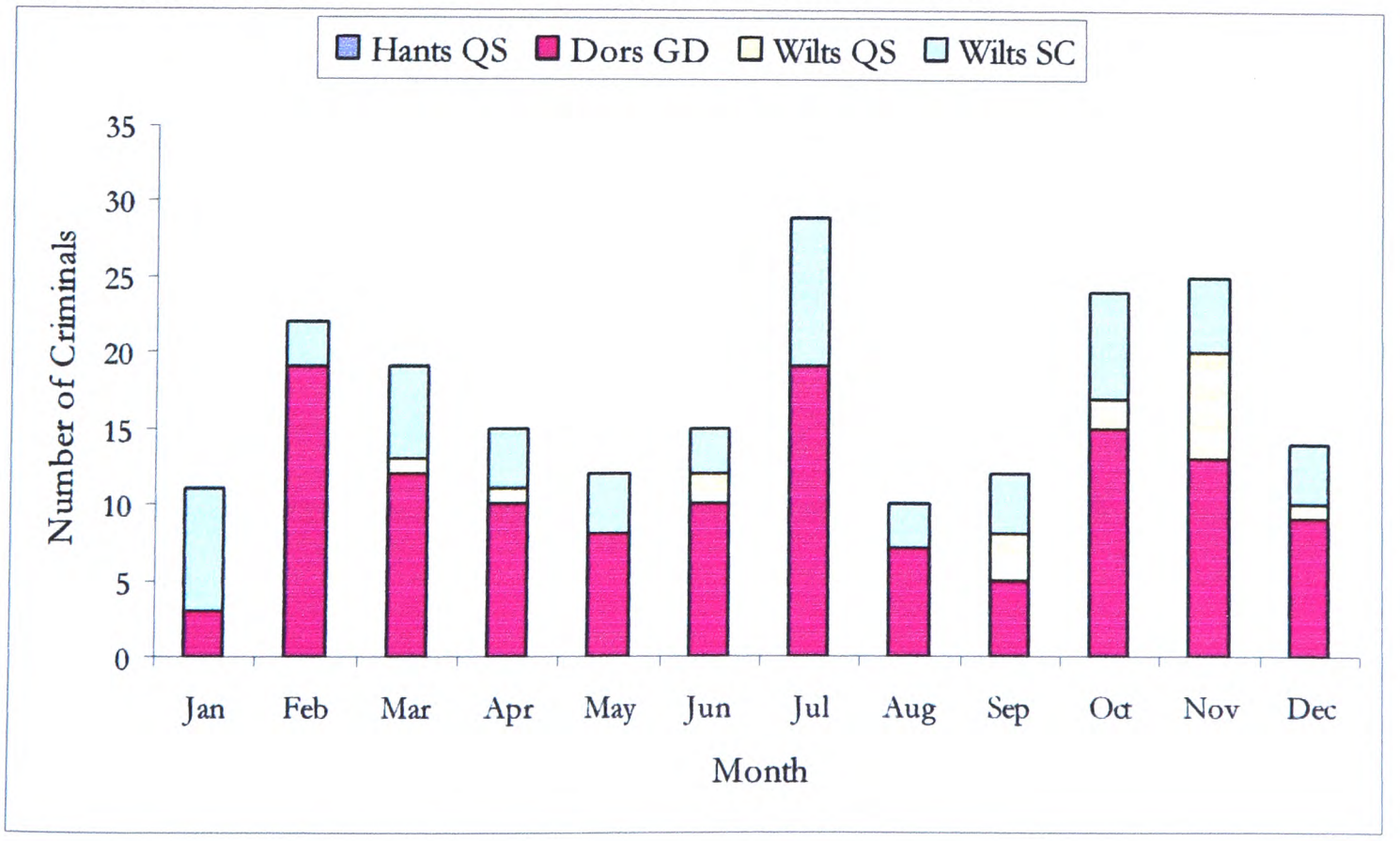
Of course, man-made seasons also existed: on Cranborne Chase 'the season for killing bucks commenced in the beginning of *July* ... The last buck was always killed on the first day of Shroton Fair, (*Sept. 25th.*) ... The season for killing dry does began at Martinstide, and ended at Candlemas' (Smart 1841, p141). Rather confusingly, different dates are sometimes given for these Saints' Days, some writers using the Old Style and others the New – the eleven or so days separating them having a potentially significant bearing on the seasons. For example, Martinstide is 11 November, the date given by Hutchins (1868), but 11 November in the New Style corresponded to 22 November in the Old Style; hence Martinstide is given as 22 November in a 'Loose Paper of Meradum' (DRO D/PIT/L38, probably dating from 1815) and as 23 November by Smart (1841). (For further discussion of these and other discrepancies, see Appendix 2.) If the Chase officers continued to observe the latter date, an additional third of November would be out-of-season. Either way, the seasons generally coincided with the times at which the deer would be in peak condition whilst avoiding interfering with both fawning and the rut.

But what has all this to do with crime? Quite simply, if deer stealers were stealing in order to supply the black market, they should be doing so in-season. Because the meat must suit the likes of Mr. Wright's 'gentlemen of distinguishing palates', it must be sufficiently 'rich of flavour'. The animals' leaner physique would make venison supplied out-of-season overly tough; demand would fall; and the market would fail. Austen (1813, p263) corroborates this preference for fatty meat, writing in *Pride and Prejudice* of 'venison ... roasted to a turn ... everybody said they never saw so fat a haunch'. (It is not, after all, mere chance that Wright's advertisement appears in September.) But what of the skins – might not they be supplied year-round? The late seventeenth century certainly saw a good trade; Aubrey (1656) reports that 'a glover at Tysbury will give sixpence more for a buckskin of Cranborne Chase than of Groveley; and he saies that he can afford it'. However, the degree to which deer stealers might supply this more legitimate trade remains unclear, especially in light of the 1692 Act prohibiting the illegal possession of skins. Certainly the first thing Hudson's (1910, p61) shepherd, returning from a clandestine excursion, did was to 'quickly skin and cut up the carcass, stow the meat away in some secret place, and bury the head, hide, and offal deep in the earth', thereby reducing the risk of

detection. With this man as our example, the likelihood of a black market in skins seems less than one in meat, but were the Cranborne Chase deer stealers working to supply even that?

Assuming that the conviction pattern does reflect the actual crime pattern, Fig. 6.2 suggests that the Chase deer stealers were not necessarily supplying those of 'distinguishing palate', or at least, not solely. The peaks occur in-season, but so do the troughs, and there remains a good deal of criminality out-of-season, too. There are a number of possible explanations, none of which we can regard as conclusive, but each of which is worth considering. Bearing in mind that in-season included all of August, December, and January, and at least part of July, September, and November, the relatively high numbers in July and November would satisfy our 'black market' hypothesis. (The same is true of October, which, although not in-season on Cranborne Chase, would nonetheless see both sexes in relatively good condition, as well as relatively stationary.) However, in both cases the numbers quickly fall, rising again only in February, by which time the deer would no longer be in prime condition; these deer were probably taken to satisfy hungry stomachs rather than distinguishing palates, and likewise throughout the spring, although Lord Pembroke's steward suggests another possible explanation: writing of four deer taken in May 1789, he says, 'the Deer at present is Carrion, and these fellows must either kill the Deer for mischief, or for training the Dogs' (WSRO 2057/E1/11).

Fig. 6.2 Number of Deer Stealers Committing Crimes in Each Month, 1786-1845



What of the troughs? With regard to our black market hypothesis, numbers for the in-season months of August, September, December, and January are lower than expected. Presumably, more people were out and about in-season, preparing for and taking part in legal hunts. Deer stealers might risk the increased chance of being seen at the start of the season, knowing that their catch would fetch a good price on the black market. But once the early market received its fill, the risks to deer stealers might outweigh any potential rewards; hence a drop in criminality later on.

Visibility was probably also a factor – for the deer, deer stealers, and keepers alike. The deer's tendency to come together throughout the year, not only in the woods but also in the fields and downs, would make them conspicuous targets, and perhaps, therefore, more tempting. Webb admits that both grains and greens attracted the deer into the fields, especially 'in the Spring when their food [was] short in the Woods & Commons and in a still more destructive manner when the Wheat [was] in Ear, & sometimes when it [was] nearly fit to be reaped', a situation that '[exposed] the Deer to Danger' (DRO D/PIT/E3). But just as the animals were easier to see, so, too, were those hunting them. As Hudson (1910, p60) explains:

> when deer were observed in the open, certain of the villagers would settle on some plan of action; watchers would be sent out not only to keep an eye on the deer but on the keepers too. Much depended on the state of the weather and the moon, as some light was necessary; then, when the conditions were favourable and the keepers had been watched to their cottages, the gang would go out for a night's hunting. But it was a dangerous sport, as the keepers also knew that deer were out of bounds, and they would form some counter-plan, and one peculiarly nasty plan they had was to go out about three or four o'clock in the morning and secrete themselves somewhere close to the village to intercept the poachers on their return.

Much better to adopt the strategy of Hudson's (*ibid*) shepherd, whose 'expeditions were made alone on some dark, unpromising night, when the regular poachers were in bed and asleep. He would steal away after bedtime, or would go out ostensibly to look after the sheep, and, if fortunate, would return in the small hours with a deer on his back.' Conspicuousness might sometimes be turned to the deer stealers' advantage, though, for keepers could appear equally plainly. As Webb (DRO D/PIT/M38) bemoans,

> a Man might go on killing Deer many years without being detected, particularly ... North of the Road leading from Shaftesbury to Downton for it is all open Down till you descend a very Steep Hill to those Coppices and fields, consequently it is almost impossible for a keeper to get to them without being seen, by the Hunters, and then they have time enough to get off.

(For further discussion of the seasonality of game stealing, much of which is equally relevant to deer stealing, see Osborne's (2000) 'The seasonality of nineteenth-century poaching', also discussed below.)

Social Distribution: The 'Typical' Deer Stealer

The above data analysis suggests that both professional and opportunistic deer stealers worked on Cranborne Chase. Can we say anything more about them? Although, as previously mentioned, each of the data sets differs in the amount and type of personal information it provides, we can nonetheless draw some simple conclusions – especially from the Dorset records – which we can then corroborate using other documents and literature. In brief, the majority of convicted 'deer' criminals can be described as single male labourers in their twenties. The lack of female convictions does not mean that women played no part in deer stealing, though. Webb, having found some deer halters in a hedge, and suspecting a certain Charles Trowbridge of having put them there, writes to Mr Bayly in 1819, recalling that he had

> ordered James Barret to lay in the Hedge all night to see if Trowbridge would take up any of the Halters, in the morning his Wife came & took up 3 of them, when Barret made his appearance & desired her to give him the Halter, which she did, & Barret then took up the rest for 8 in all, I never did Prosecute a Woman for Deer Stealing & was unwilling to begin in this instance, & contented myself by ordering the Bussey Stool Keepers, as well as the Rushmore Keepers, to keep a sharp look out after Trowbridge, & desired them to search him if they found him in any suspicious place (DRO D/PIT/L56).

Did Trowbridge send his wife knowing that she would arouse less suspicion, or, if caught would be released? It would seem so, and Trowbridge himself also went free as a result. Women may have had an important supplementary role in deer stealing, running errands like Trowbridge's wife, and dealing with carcasses, like the mother of Hudson's shepherd, who, having heard a rapping at her window, would take her son's catch and then help him to butcher it.

We can also discern family links amongst the male deer stealers. Chapman may have been right in referring to the Chase as 'a nursery for ... all kinds of vice ... deer-stealers [being] bred to it by their parents'. Although writing about medieval peasants, Birrell's observations hold true for our eighteenth and nineteenth century criminals:

> fathers passed on their skills to their sons, and ... fathers, sons and brothers often hunted together ... Close male relatives started with the advantage of knowing each other well, and perhaps also felt better able to trust each other in what was, after all, a dangerous enterprise ... Occasionally, we see the same surname recur over decades, suggesting the existence of little poaching dynasties (1996, pp86-7).

Trust could be of utmost importance should one's accomplices be caught. In a deer stealing case summarised in the 5 February 1821 *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* (HRO 116M86/19), two men initially convicted 'were informed by the committing Magistrate that on making such discovery of others concerned with them ... as would lead to their conviction, they would be entitled to their own liberation; upon which they impeached' four other men. It was, however, the testimony of 'another unconvicted accomplice of the name of Charles Weeks', which was 'mainly relied on', Weeks being 'by no means of an acute mind, yet gave a narrative so circumstantial, and concordant with the testimony of the other six witnesses, that the Magistrate received his evidence as fully credible'.

Like Dibbin, many of these men were 'habitual offenders'. In fact, a John Dibben, aged 79, appears in the Dorset records listed as a single labourer from Sixpenny Handley; his crime: deer stealing; his sentence: six months' imprisonment at Dorchester Gaol. Another John Dibben appears a decade earlier: aged 66, a widowed shoemaker, again from Sixpenny Handley; his crime: having in his possession the hind quarter of a fallow deer. This could very well be the same man, perhaps reduced to 'labourer' by old age or hardship, yet still correct in his boast of never having been caught *stealing* deer before. Three other Dibbens also appear; however, the most criminal family, or at least the one most often convicted, was the Weeks family, also from Sixpenny Handley. In 1803, brothers James, aged 22, and John, aged 24, were together convicted of stealing deer. A year later, another brother, Thomas, aged 28, was convicted of killing deer. Thomas appears again in 1817 and 1821, and John again in 1815 and 1823 (additional entries for Thomas and John also appear in 1819, and in 1807 and 1823, respectively, but without ages to confirm identity). There is also a Robert, aged 18 in 1828 and therefore belonging to the next generation, and a William of unknown age in 1830.

The fact that the Weeks brothers were all in their twenties when first convicted is unsurprising: of the 122 convicts of known age, over half were aged between 20 and 29, and, on a related point, over half of the 113 convicts of known marital status were single. The brothers were likewise typical in being labourers, as were some 79 per cent of the 117 convicts of known occupation. However, craftsmen also partook in the odd bit of deer stealing: of six men caught hunting at night in April 1816 'some of them [were] respble farmers sons & the rest ... above ye condn of day Labrs'

according to Webb (DRO D/PIT/L58); amongst our convicted deer stealers: four blacksmiths and carpenters, three shoemakers, two soldiers (one additionally listed as a labourer and the other as a bricklayer), and one basket maker, carrier, cattle drover, cheese dealer, cordwainer, farmer, game keeper, mason, sawyer, servant, stone maker, and thrasher.

Geographical Distribution: Nests of Deer Stealers

The Weeks family was typical in another way: that is, in hailing from Sixpenny Handley. In fact, 28 per cent of the 176 convicts of known home parish resided there (a disproportionately high amount, the parish containing only five per cent of the land and six per cent of the population of the Dorset part of the Chase and so even smaller percentages of the entire Chase) – certainly justification for Chapman's 'nests of deer-stealers' comment. Hence, too, Okeden's 1830 comments, 'Handley is a very peculiar place. – The Chace, & its results, harboured, there, a nest of Deer Stealers, Poachers, Smugglers, & every variety of lawless Character' and 'I only will once more say that Handley has a wild population very distinct from the rest of the Whole County' (DRO D/ANG/B5/42) (see Fig. 6.3). (Given Handley's reputation, was the law perhaps laid down with more force here, thereby further contributing to the high conviction rate?) Fontmell Magna, Bower Chalk, and Iwerne Minster followed rather distantly behind (see Appendix 3).

The 'crime parish' data is less revealing: recall that only the Wiltshire (and Hampshire, for which we have no deer crimes) records list place of crime, hence the (biased) implication that criminality was higher there. Nonetheless, the concentration of both home and crime parishes within and around the inner bounds is as we would expect, given the concentration of deer there.

Crime and Punishment

Finally, what happened to the men convicted of deer-related crimes? The vast majority, unable to pay their fines, served time in prison, sometimes at hard labour. Although fine/gaol sentence combinations varied greatly, certain sentences were more common than others. Of the 142 sentences involving fines, the breakdown was as follows: 41 sentences of £20, 40 of £50, 29 of £30, ten of £10, four each of £25 and £15, two of £1, and one of £3, as well as an additional eleven sentences of £50 reduced to either £25 or £20. Gaol sentences were similarly varied: of a total 131, 79 were for six months, 30 for twelve months, fourteen for four months, three for three months, two each for five and

two months, and one for one month. Sixteen men faced transportation, usually seven years'; one man was found not guilty and released; and a further eleven sentences are unknown. Lord Pembroke's steward suggested a particularly intriguing punishment: 'instead of Transporting the Felons, employ them in very strict discipline, in the Navigation work. The dread of being Slaves in their own Country, would I think operate more upon the idle and profligate, than Transportation' (WSRO 2057/E1/11); this rather alternative form of 'slavery' does not, however, seem to have been adopted.

The mention of Lord Pembroke brings us to another, more significant, point, though. Having stated at the beginning of this section that deer stealing was the only strictly Chase-specific crime, we must remember that Lord Pembroke held a permanent share in the Chase, his Vernditch Walk not being disfranchised until 1802. Although legally a separate entity, the records suggest that deer frequently crossed between Cobley and Vernditch Walks; so, too, did the deer stealers. As Lord Pembroke's steward complains in 1789, 'there are perpetual depredations committed, not only at Fernditch, but from one end of the Chace to the other, in some of the Neighbouring Walks, the Deer are almost annihilated' (WSRO 2057/E1/11). The records also include an instance of a tame deer being stolen from Lord Pembroke's park at Wilton.

Fig. 6.3 Proof of Handley's Criminal Past – found in Sixpenny Handley churchyard; the inscription reads: 'This stone was the cover of the tomb which was removed to afford space for the enlargement of the church in 1879 When deer stealing was prevalent the deer stealers used to remove it to place in the tomb the deer they had taken till they had an opportunity to remove them'



What of other crimes? We have already seen that throughout the period both game and wood stealing were rife, convictions far outnumbering those for deer stealing. Are any patterns discernable, and were deer stealers additionally involved in these crimes, as the proprietors suggested?

6.4.5 Game Stealing

We first consider game stealing, bearing in mind the following similarities with deer stealing: that the buying and selling of game remained illegal throughout much of our period, that the needs (food and shelter) of game animals determined their preferred habitat, and that, again, we would expect a seasonal pattern for crime and therefore convictions.

Despite Chapman's belief that the Lords of Manors seldom complained about poaching, they certainly made clear their intention to punish anyone engaged in it. Newspaper advertisements appear throughout the period, proclaiming, for example, that

> whereas the Practice of Poaching is now become so daring and notorious, that the Laws require to be inforced for the better preservation of the Game. A Meeting therefore of the Gentlemen of the South part of Wilts and of the neighbouring Counties, is requested ... for taking into consideration the most effectual means of preventing the killing [of] Game in the night; and also the conveyances of Game by Stage-Coachmen, Carriers, and Higlers, for the purpose of sale (*The Salisbury and Winchester Journal* 5 November 1787, HRO 116M86/124).

A 'Game Association' subsequently formed, but a number of individual advertisements continued to appear, particularly for Manors owned by Lords Shaftesbury and Arundell and by Mr Sturt, all three advertising in the 7 September 1812 issue of *The Salisbury and Winchester Journal* (HRO 116M86/14):

> whereas the Game ... has for many years past been destroyed, and it being the wish of the Proprietor to preserve the same, – All qualified Gentlemen are requested to refrain [from] sporting thereon the ensuing season; and all unqualified persons are hereby requested to take notice, that, if found trespassing ... they will be prosecuted according to law.

Game preservers believed that this 'great destruction' arose mainly 'from the encouragement held out by Innkeepers, Alehouse-keepers, Stage-Coach Drivers, Carriers and Higlers, who receive such game, and convey it in large quantities to London, Bath, Salisbury, [Southampton], Romsey, and other places' (*The Salisbury and Winchester Journal* 26 November 1787, HRO 116M86/124). Because the buying

and selling of game remained illegal until 1831, the black market remained particularly strong. As with venison,

> game could legally come to the table only as a gift from the few the law permitted to shoot it. This gave it a high prestige value which greatly enhanced its price in the black market. In the shooting season no dinner party with any pretensions to smartness was complete without a game course. None was more aware of this than the nouveaux riches whose inability to acquire game legally was matched by their determination to appear as if they could. They got it with what came to be called the silver gun, by paying for it (Bovill 1962, p176).

We have already seen that amongst the lower classes some poachers were deemed more disreputable than others; the former being the 'professional' poachers, who stole to supply the pots of these nouveaux riches, and the latter being the 'opportunistic' poachers, who stole to supply their own pots. As with the lesser deer stealers, these lesser poachers, received some degree of community support, particularly from the farmers whose crops the game damaged. As Vesey-Fitzgerald (1946, p171) observes,

> the rabbit is always hungry and will eat almost anything that is vegetable. The chief food is grass, and where rabbits abound weeds very soon replace grass and grain. There is no farm crop that they will not attack ... When eating turnip they do not strip the vegetable, but starting at the side eat right through.

'The hare', too, is 'a menace to agriculture' (*ibid*, p172): 'when eating turnips, unlike the rabbit, they tear down and leave the outside, and when eating wheat they leave the ears and take the stalks and leaves. The damage they can do to a field of grain has to be seen to be believed' (*ibid*, p174); 'they can only be preserved at the cost, often the extreme cost, of the farmer' (*ibid*, p175). Game birds could also be destructive, especially of grain crops.

So, what were poachers actually taking on Cranborne Chase? Of a total 765 poaching convictions, 164 specify the type of game as follows: 116 hares, 30 pheasants, twelve rabbits, and six partridges. (Note that rabbits were generally protected by separate legislation, having originally been 'introduced ... for their meat and fur' (Sheail 1978, p343), as well as for coursing. Not recorded in the feral state until the seventeenth century, their status was similar to that of park deer. However, as beasts of warren, they are included as game here.) Whether more hares were actually stolen, or whether, for some reason, they were simply more likely to be specified, we cannot tell. However, hares 'are creatures of habit. They have their particular exits and entrances to fields (a fact which makes them

easy to poach), and they stick to these under all circumstances' (Vesey-Fitzgerald 1946, p172), and based on his analysis of poaching in Suffolk during the nineteenth century, Osborne (2000, p37) concluded that 'undoubtedly the greatest proportion of all poaching offences, whether committed by habitual or occasional offenders, involved rabbits and hares'.

Interestingly, although Defoe (1724, p196) believed that the hare warren at Wilton 'makes all the countrymen turn poachers, and destroy the hares, by what means they can', he deemed it 'a [small] matter, and of no great import one way or other'. Perhaps he took a view similar to that of the Selborne huntsmen towards rabbits: 'another temptation to idleness and sporting was a number of rabbits, which possessed all the hillocks and dry places: but these being inconvenient to the huntsmen, on account of their burrows, when they came to take away the deer, they permitted the country-people to destroy them all' (White 1788, p26). Even Lord Rivers's keepers 'are annoyed by a young Man of the name of Goddard, who', according to Webb, 'keeps a few Rabbit Beagles & is constantly hunting in the Handley Woods with those dogs & his Gun,' not because he is after the keepers' own perquisite, but because his presence 'of course drives the Deer very much' (DRO D/PIT/L54).

Deer and Game Keepers

This mention of the keepers' perquisite brings us to another point. Chapman (1791, p102) asserts 'that most of the keepers are poachers; and, under pretence of guarding the deer, are prowling in, and about, the woods with guns and dogs, night and day; and in the constant habit of killing game, and selling it to the higglers for the Bath market'. Lord Pembroke's steward supports the claim, writing to his Lordship:

> in Mr Salisbury's letter to Mr Penruddocke he observes "that in many parts it is absolutely necessary to kill the Rabbets for the preservation of the Deer feed," Mr Salisbury very cautiously puts in the words "many parts" because he knows very well that Lord Rivers will not suffer one of the Deer Keepers to beat about with their Dogs and Guns, or to shoot a single Rabbit either in Staplefoot or Rushmore Walks, well knowing that under the pretence, of enjoying the priviledge of killing Rabbits and [wood]Cocks they destroy all the Game they can privately. Mr Webb an intelligent man who lives at Rushmore Lodge and is the Ranger or Principal Keeper of the whole of Cranbourne Chase, says, that in consequence of stopping the keepers from shooting, and other ways, preserving the Game, that they "now swarm" with Game at Rushmore, and that there is a good stock of Game in the Coppices in Staplefoot Walke ... Mr Webb is certainly right in his conjecture that the Chace Keepers under the Cloak of Killing Rabbits and Cocks they kill the Game; if he wanted an instance of it I could give him one. Harrington the Keeper of Cobley Lodge one Morning this Season told Shilley one of his Underkeepers that he wanted a Pheasant to take to Salisbury, Shilley went out and Shot one, but happened to be seen by the occupier of the Land where the Bird was killed, it was not

> on your Lordship's Land, but on Land adjoining. On Shilley being detected he said he did it by his Masters order (WSRO 2057/E1/5).

The question of the Chase keepers taking game was a problematic one. Until some time in the eighteenth century they could claim all game as their perquisite, but Lord Rivers, apparently concerned not by their taking too much game but by their neglecting the deer in doing so, limited this perquisite to rabbits and woodcocks. (As late as 1764, the deputation for Charles Wasse '[empowered] him ... to take and kill every kind of Deer and other Game within the said Walks called Rushmoor and Staplefoot Walks, and the libertys precincts and purlieus thereof' (DRO D/PIT/E2).) The appointment of gamekeepers by various proprietors further complicated the issue. Chafin (1818, pp12-13) explains that following an initial quarrel between Lord Melcombe and George Chafin (the author's father, then Ranger of the Chase)

> no more game-keepers were heard of for many years, not until the late Lord Rivers, then Mr. Pitt, was called upon to represent the County of Dorset in Parliament ... Mr. Julines Beckford, of Stepleton, took advantage of these occurrences, and placed a man as game-keeper ... to kill game in West Walk. This was too delicate a matter for Mr. Pitt to notice at this critical time; in consequence of which, many others were encouraged to take the same liberty ... And because the late Lord Rivers ... was under such a predicament as precluded him from taking any severe measures, it was generally presumed that he had waved his claim to the under-game.

Although Chafin deems this a 'false suggestion', a 1792 enquiry concluded that Lord Rivers 'must prove the Exercise of the Right of free Warren clearly & distinctly, in Opposition to which slight Evidence of Freeholders having shot over the Chace without any Licence from him will have considerable Weight' (DRO D/PIT/L15). A second enquiry, in 1815, concluded that 'the Mention of Free Warren in Grants of Antient Date will be of no avail unless the Right has been attended to' (*ibid*). And so the gamekeepers stayed.

Following this introduction, distinguishing between *deer*keepers and *game*keepers became financially and legally important. The main distinction was outlined as follows in a dispute over taxes:

> Game Keepers are appointed by Deputations under the hands and seals of the Lords or Ladies of Manors or Royalties under the authority of the Statute 22 & 23rd Charles 2nd Ch. 25 & their Deputations are directed to be enrolled with the Clerk of the Peace by the Act 9th Anne Ch. 25 [while] The Chace Keepers are appointed verbally & take an Oath on entering into Office & make Presentments at Lord Rivers's Annual Court (DRO D/PIT/L51).

The distinction had previously been emphasised when, in October 1814, one of Lord Rivers's *deer*keepers, James Still, was arrested and sentenced to one month's imprisonment for 'refusing to Pay the Penalty of £13.13.6. for Shooting Without Licence' (DRO NG/PRI/D1/2). The 1814 Chase accounts (DRO D/PIT/E172) refer to an additional conviction, listing a payment to 'the Governor of Dorchester Castle for the liberation of Josh Barrett a Keeper in the Chace committed for Shooting Rabbits without a certificate, Penalty and Costs ... [£]13.17.6.'. Lord Rivers's keepers had never before required licences (although they subsequently obtained them – typically between ten and twelve, at a total annual cost of between £37.5.0. and £44.14.0., as set out in the 1820-1828 Chase accounts (DRO D/PIT/E178-185)). The issue was set forth in an 1814 letter 'for Mr Serjt Lens's Opinion' (DRO D/PIT/L15):

> by the Act 52 Geo 3 Cap 93 Schedule L a duty is imposed upon every person who shall use any Dog Gun Net &c for the purpose of taking or killing any Game whatever or any Conies by virtue of any Deputation or Appointmt. duly registered or entered as a Gamekeeper for any Manor or Royalty ... By this Act of Parliament the following exception to the duties is allowed "The taking or Destroying of Conies by the Proprietors of Warrens or on any inclosed Ground whatever or by the Tenants of Lands either by himself herself or themselves or by his her or their Direction or Command" You are requested to advise whether the Keepers in Cranborne Chace if they kill only Deer & Rabbits are liable to any of the Duties imposed by the Act 52 Geo 3 Cap 93?

Lens's response: 'I am of opinion that the Keepers & under keepers appointed by the Owner of a legal Chace do not fall within the Description here stated from the 52 Geo 3 Cap 93 Sched L & that confining themselves to killing Deer & Rabbits within the Chace they are not required to have the particular Certificate'. Of course, in the case of James Still, the animal shot not being listed, we cannot be certain that it was a rabbit. Similar concerns arose a year later:

> an Information has been laid by a Vagabond Fellow against one of the Under keepers for using a Wire to Kill Game in the Limits of the Chace ... I rather think that the Keeper found the Wires set up and merely took them when he was observed by the Informer who is a Boy of 15 Years old and the Son of an Old Poacher and the keeper searched the Boy for Wires (DRO D/PIT/L15).

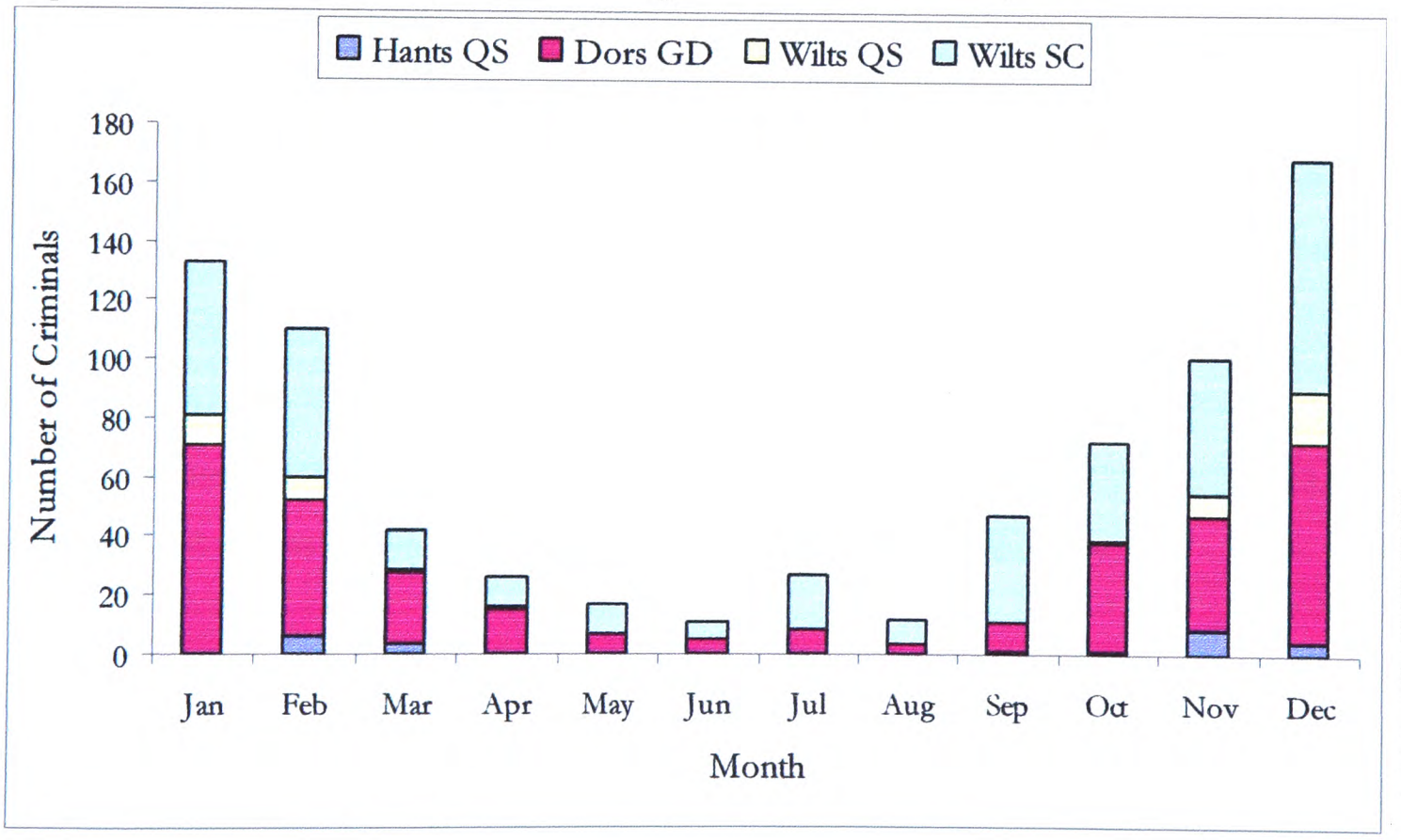
The trust placed in the keepers is admirable but may sometimes have been misplaced. Even Chafin (1818, p87), that great defender of the Chase, admitted the keepers' occasional weakness with respect to both deer and game:

> [a] very old Keeper ... attended the Chase Court which was annually held at Rushmore ... When the Court was dismissed, he joined other of his fraternity, and told them that "he had taken the old oath, which he had done just threescore following years; but that he must not mind that, for he could have no peace nor content at home, unless he made his old Jane's frying-pan hiss now and then; for she could not live without venison, having been so long used to it".

Hence Thompson's (1975, p160) conclusion that

> much must have depended upon the zeal of the keepers. It was commonly alleged that gamekeepers milked the spoils of office ... Defoe, in 1724, singled out "your Ranger, or park-keeper" as a worse offender than any 'Black': despite his many perquisites, "Unless you ... give him leave to sell a fat buck for you ... you shall feel the consequence of it; for you shall have the park never fail of being robb'd, three or four times in every season, and the best bucks carry'd off, four or five at a time. Then to solve his own credit, he has the impudence to accuse several of the young fellows round the country, who know nothing at all of the matter ... when at the same time your keeper has horses sent to fetch the venison, by his own order, and as punctually as his master himself, from certain pastry-cooks, and sly merchants in *London*, who deal in such goods; and perhaps you chance, if come to *London*, to give a couple of guineas to some or other of them, for a haunch of your own venison."

Fig. 6.4 Number of Game Stealers Committing Crimes in Each Month, 1786-1845



Social, Temporal, and Geographical Distribution

The aforementioned James Still and a William Orman, sentenced to six weeks' hard labour and a 1d. fine for killing a pheasant in 1817, were the only known keepers convicted of game-related crimes. Who were the remaining Cranborne Chase poachers; when did they poach, and where? Again, the vast majority of convicted poachers were young (299 of 375 known, aged 29 and under), single

(253 of 330 known), male (765 of 767) labourers (296 of 332 known), although a wider range of occupations appears for game stealers than for deer stealers. And, again, both repeat offenders and family networks appear, with individuals working both singly and in groups.

As for *when*, Fig. 6.4 shows a very strong seasonal pattern for criminal convictions, and, therefore, we assume, for crimes. The winter peak and summer trough tie in nicely with the in-seasons for hares (29 September to 24 June pre-1831; according to Jacob (1718), 'the best Time to commence your Hare-Hunting is about the Middle of *September*, and to end it about the Close of *February*'), partridges (2/15 September to 31 January/11 February [2 Geo. 3. c.19. (1762), 36 Geo. 3. c.39. (1796), 39 Geo. 3. c.34. (1799), 1 & 2 Will. 4. c.32. (1831)]), and pheasants (2 October to 31 January [2 Geo. 3. c.19. (1762), 1 & 2 Will. 4. c.32. (1831)]); rabbits could be hunted year-round. The Cranborne Chase poachers were thus taking game when the meat (and, in the case of hares and rabbits, the fur) would be at its best. In addition, the winter in-season meant longer nights, an advantage for poachers, who, of course, depended on not being seen. Of the 48 poaching crimes specified as being 'at night' all of them fall between the months of October and March, most of them (45) between November and February. Unfortunately, we cannot consider a black market hypothesis to the extent we could for deer; although game would fetch the highest price in-season, that is, during the winter, the winter months were also when opportunistic poachers would be most pressed to supplement their own meagre diet. The fact that post-1831 poaching remained highest in winter implies that both factors were important at one time or another.

Osborne (2000) provides a particularly interesting insight into the interrelatedness of crime, economics, and seasonality with respect to nineteenth century poaching, concluding that

> an environmental perspective is clearly a useful adjunct to other ways of interpreting the periodicity of certain types of rural crime. Traditionally, social historians in particular have tended to focus on the part played by economic cycles in determining seasonal patterns of offending. Poaching may have been a crime of economic motives, but its seasonal pattern was predominately defined by supply. It was a crime only viable when the rural environment allowed and when the mature quarry was available in sufficient numbers. The seasonal pattern of this particularly rural crime was largely determined by such factors (*ibid*, p41).

He (*ibid*, p34) argues that 'the fact that most prosecuted offences in East Suffolk were committed between September and March would' appear to support the traditional explanation linking winter peaks with 'increased poverty experienced by agricultural and other labouring groups at this time of the year' (*ibid*, p33).

> But even though poverty undoubtedly encouraged many to poach, it does not appear to have been the sole determinant of the crime's seasonality. A more detailed examination of the prosecutions in East Suffolk reveals that even within an already seasonally marked pattern of offending there were further subpatterns [indicating that] the annual periodicity of game poaching was as much determined by nature ... as by cycles of rural unemployment and poverty (*ibid*, p34).

For example, respecting partridges and pheasants,

> both species could only be legally shot and, following reform in 1831, sold, during the statutory game season which began in September for partridges and October for pheasants and ended in February for both. It seems likely that the majority of poachers targeting winged game, for which the rewards and risks were often greater, had commercial motives. Most poaching for these birds occurred between September and February due in part to the marketing opportunities which the statutory game season provided. But, it is important to recognize that the game season was not merely an incorporeal legal or cultural concept. The season's temporal span at least was fundamentally shaped by an understanding of nature. It reflected an understanding of when, for instance, it was actually practical or even possible to hunt and shoot in the countryside and, indeed, of when the birds were at a stage of maturity to suit the requirements of all concerned. Maturity, for example, was a critical determinant of when the season began. It was not until the autumn months that the young partridges and pheasants raised in the preceding summer were strong enough to fly at a level to test the sportsmen's guns. Nor until this time were they of a sufficient size to sell or satisfactorily eat, a matter which certainly concerned game dealers and poulterers as well as commercial poachers (*ibid*).

And not until this time was the landscape conducive to hunting – whether legally or illegally.

> The shooting and poaching of partridges ... were both critically dependent on the completion of the harvest, for it was only when the corn was gathered and the stubbles laid bare that these ground roosting birds became accessible or even visible. Before then they remained hidden in the standing corn for much of the time and were thus beyond the reach of either the licensed shooter or the poacher with nets ... Pheasants did not rely on the standing corn for cover to quite the same extent, but for legitimate shooting to be effective, it was necessary that the fields were clear. Driven pheasant shooting of the battue style often required the guns to be situated in the fields adjoining woodland coverts and to do this while the crop was still standing would have antagonized farmers and led to the loss of a good deal of the shot game. These were obviously not issues that directly concerned poachers, but changes in the landscape and the habits of the birds themselves after harvest also benefited their activity. The increasingly large numbers of pheasants reared artificially were released from their woodland pens in the late summer, and during the autumn months that followed both reared and wild birds assumed a greater visibility. This was in part due to the pheasant's natural tendency to stray from its coverts, which was encouraged further after harvest by the feeding opportunities on the stubbles and the abundance of natural food in the hedgerows. Once out of the coverts they provided a tempting target for the opportunistic offender. The commercial poacher, however, still often waited until the autumn gales had removed the leaves from the trees in which they roosted before attempting to take sizeable hauls from the coverts by night (*ibid*, pp34-35).

The facts that game might be found in a variety of habitats and that game preserving landowners lived throughout the Chase suggest that poaching crimes should be widespread – not

necessarily evenly spaced throughout the Chase, but occurring in all parts. This is, indeed, the case, as shown in Appendix 3.

Punishment

Those convicted of game-related crimes received a variety of punishments, although they were generally less onerous than for crimes against deer. Of 756 known sentences, seventeen were acquitted, discharged, found not guilty, or quashed; a further twelve were remanded in custody. Of the remainder, 364 carried fines of up to £20 – most of them £10 or less, four of which included extra costs. 655 carried gaol sentences of between one day and three years, many of which were in lieu of unpaid fines – three, two, and then one month sentences being most common. Eighteen required finding sureties or facing further time in prison. In addition, nine men faced whipping, four men conscription, and eight men seven years' transportation.

6.4.6 Wood Stealing

A number of parallels can be drawn between deer stealing and game stealing, but what patterns emerge for wood stealing? We considered wood's significance for the local population in the previous chapter, but, as Chafin pointed out, many plants taken from the Chase were removed illegally. Yet, as with poaching, what one side defined as crime, the other side defined as custom, even right. Although commoners could customarily gather dead wood either from the ground or by 'hook or crook' or 'snapping', 'it is probable that abuse resulted from generous interpretations' (Bushaway 1982, p213).

> Of most significance on a day-to-day basis was fuel-wood.
>
> Sir Frederick Eden noted of a family budget he recorded for Seend in Wiltshire: "Nothing is stated for fuel. If the labourer is employed in hedging he is allowed to take home a faggot every evening, while the work lasts: but this is by no means sufficient for his consumption: his children therefore, are sent into the fields, to collect wood where they can; and neither hedges nor trees are spared by the young marauders who are thus, in some degree, calculated in the art of thieving, till, from being accustomed to small thefts, they hesitate not to commit greater deprivations on the public" (*ibid*, p214).

Although Seend lies outside Cranborne Chase, the same was probably true of many Chase families.

The law protected more than *dead* wood, though. A 1663 statute 'gave "full power and authority to apprehend ... all and every person [suspected of] having or carrying, or any way

conveying, any burthen or bundles of wood, underwood, poles or young trees, or bark or mast of trees, or any gates, stiles, posts, pales, rails, or hedgewood, broom or furze"' (Bushaway 1982, p215). A 1766 statue additionally criminalised those who would '"wilfully cut or break down, bark, burn, pluck up, lop, top, crop, or otherwise deface, damage, despoil or destroy or carry away any Timber tree" ... The offence of taking wood from other than timber trees, that is, underwood, hedgewood, hollies and thorns was [also] punishable' but by a lesser penalty (*ibid*, pp217-218). The range of wood stolen on Cranborne Chase was certainly diverse. Species listed include alder, ash, beech, elm, fir, hazel, maple, oak, pine, sycamore, and willow. The crimes themselves ranged from lopping and topping, shrouding, and otherwise defacing live trees, to stealing timber, underwood, and even entire saplings, to stealing a variety of processed goods, including, but not limited to, bark, chips, faggots, hurdles, planks, poles, and posts. Individuals were also convicted for stealing acorns and other (unspecified) nuts. In addition, both live and dead hedges and fences were subject to raids, as were a number of other plants, including furze, thorn, and even valerian root. (The burning of furze on any waste between Candlemas and Midsummer was banned by 4 & 5 Will. & Mar. c.23 (1693) – although it produced better browse, it destroyed the covert.)

Enclosure, particularly for game preservation, is likely to have exacerbated the problem. As Hudson (1910, p140) explains,

> by and by pheasants as well as rabbits were strictly preserved, and the firewood-gatherers were excluded altogether. At present you find dead wood lying about all over the place, abundantly as in any primitive forest, where trees die of old age or disease, or are blown down or broken off by winds and are left to rot on the ground, overgrown with ivy and brambles. But of all this dead wood not a stick to boil a kettle may be taken by the neighbouring poor lest the pheasants should be disturbed or a rabbit picked up.

Social, Temporal, and Geographical Distribution

Again, the majority of convicted wood thieves were young (143 of 228 known, aged 29 and under), single (99 of 179 known), male (354 of 481 known) labourers (147 of 179 known). However, a comparatively high number of women – a quarter of the total – were also convicted. Instead of having a high market value, wood's value was predominantly domestic; women were often the ones to go out gathering – whether legally or illegally. Amongst both sexes, both repeat offenders and family networks appear, with individuals working both singly and in groups.

The temporal pattern of wood stealing is less marked than that for game although, again, numbers are generally higher in winter than in summer (Fig. 6.5). We would in fact expect a weaker trend simply because wood could be taken and used year-round. Fuel was needed for cooking even during the warmer months; the winter peaks simply indicate an increased need, fires providing heat to warm oneself as well as one's food. The geographical pattern is similarly general, wood stealers hailing from all parts of the Chase (Appendix 3).

Punishment

The penalties for wood stealing were generally less than those for deer and game stealing. Of 447 known sentences, thirteen were acquitted, discharged, found not guilty, or determined to have no bill, and one was bailed. 238 sentences included fines of up to £20, although most were less than £1, and all but five were less than £10; four included extra costs. Many went unpaid, though, time in prison replacing them. 316 gaol sentences are listed, ranging from one day to one year but one month being most common; two included time spent in solitary confinement. In addition, twelve men were whipped and five transported four for seven years and one for fourteen years.

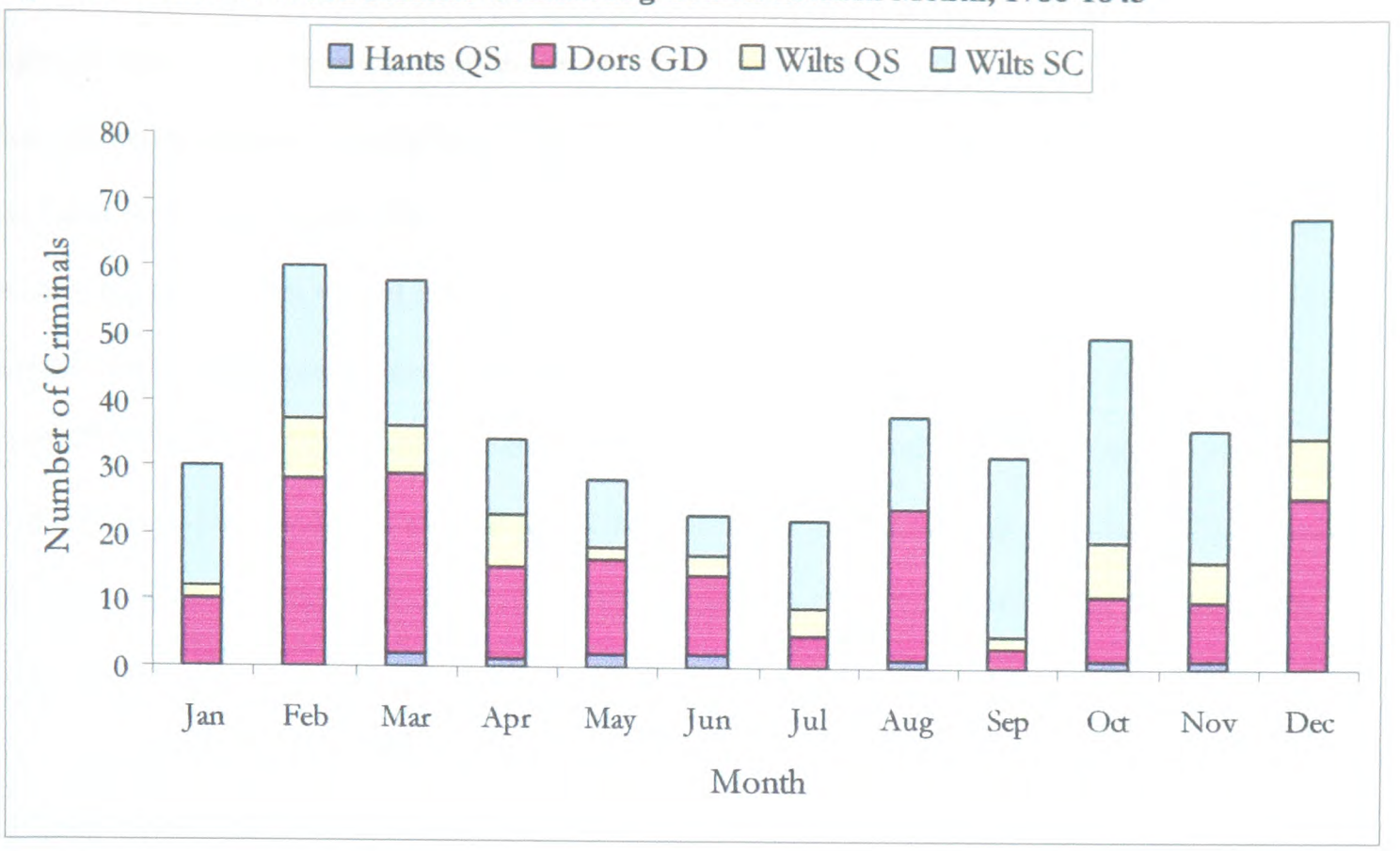
6.4.7 Deer, Game, and Wood Stealing on Cranborne Chase: Separate Activities?

Having set forth the three crimes that might in some way relate to the Chase's existence, what of the proprietors' concern that the local population, bred to a life of vice, was just as likely to partake in all three (if not more) as in just one? A comment made by Lord Pembroke's steward in 1787 is perhaps very telling:

> a few nights ago the Poachers shot again over the whole Manor of Fovant ... A party of thirteen or fourteen men, all dressed in Smock frocks and Trousers, *armed with Weapons that are generally made use of by Deer Stealers*, [went] towards the Chace, their Depredations that Night I imagine were on Lord Shaftesbury's and Lord Rivers's Walks, as they were not heard of at Fernditch (WSRO 2057/E1/11 – emphasis added).

The use of similar weapons by both game and deer stealers might be coincidental, but the fact that they are identified specifically as deer stealers' suggests that these men were equally happy hunting fallow or pheasants. The records do suggest that in some cases individuals, and even entire families, engaged in a variety of crimes. Returning to the Weeks family of Sixpenny Handley, between 1786 and 1845 they accounted for 27 deer, game, and wood stealing convictions as listed in the Dorchester Gaol

Fig. 6.5 Number of Wood Stealers Committing Crimes in Each Month, 1786-1845



Delivery and Wiltshire Summary Conviction records, as well as an additional ten other convictions, including assault, breach of peace, breaking and entering and burglary, stealing cabbages, stealing wheat, and stealing a silver thimble, again as listed in the Dorchester records. The 24 Weekses imprisoned at Dorchester included three generations but only fifteen individuals – some being repeat offenders in the same crime and others in different crimes. The Weekses are of course an extreme case. A quick glance through the records indicates that less than a quarter of convicted deer stealers were additionally convicted of game or wood thefts. As Chapman surmised, the more problematic individuals were typically those hailing from criminal hotbeds, be those hotbeds parents or parishes – why certain parishes were more criminal than others is itself an interesting question, but one beyond the scope of this study. What we must bear in mind is that with deer, game, and wood so concentrated geographically, the fact that individuals did commit multiple crimes is unsurprising.

6.5 The Role of Courts in the Defence of Property

6.5.1 The Cranborne Chase Court

Upholding Chase law did not necessarily entail criminal convictions, though. The Cranborne Chase Court was concerned with more administrative matters, oaths and presentments being made, and transgressions reported, but only relatively small fines collected. The Court met annually at Rushmore until 1818, when, for whatever reason, it appears to have ceased. Lord Rivers's steward presided over

the keepers, woodmen, and promoters, all of whom were required to attend. The Court had in fact lapsed in some of its objectives prior to our period; Webb (DRO D/PIT/M38) rather cynically remarks that 'the Woodmen are all bound to appear at the Chace Court ... and were sworn formerly to observe the Laws & Customs of the Chace – but at present as those Laws have not been strictly enforced, they seldom attend – at least were it not for the sake of a Dinner they would not' (the Court Dinner was an annual event, with recorded expenditure varying from £3.6.11 in 1801 to £19.4.3 in 1820 (DRO D/PIT/E159, D/PIT/E178)). Nor were the woodmen free of reprimand even when they did attend; in 1787, 'it [was] presented by Wm Hunt one of the Keepers of Staplefoot Walk that Joseph West one of the Woodmen in the said Walk destroyed the border between Cokers and Long Croft contrary to the custom and usage of the said Chace' (DRO D/PIT/M17).

But although by the late eighteenth century, 'for many years back punishments & the levying of Fines imposed at this Court [had] been disused' (DRO D/PIT/L15), and nor were deer numbers reported anymore, several entries between 1786 and 1818 are of note. Below is a partial transcription of the various presentments made in 1786 (Table 6.3). Many of them relate to the three crimes against vert, namely purpresture, waste, and assart. Although they can be defined, respectively, as encroachment, wood stealing, and grubbing up land without permission, a memorandum written by Lord Shaftesbury's steward in the late seventeenth century provides further detail. Purpresture (or 'Purpresturis') is 'when any person claymes a thing as his right. & useth it to the prejudice of the Chase, when he hath no right so to do', including 'to make a Parke or Warren To build any house without Lycense To inclose lands that ought to ly open To inclose his coppices longer than he ought to do [and] To make too high a hedge' (that is, one that deer could not leap). Waste (or 'Wast') is 'cutting any furze heath or frone, or wood without the view of the keeper', and assart is 'where any wood Bushes furze or brakes [are] grubbed up by the rootes & so the Deere utterly discovered' (WSRO 1369/8/10). The five entries for which the Court received payment in 'Acknowledgement' (sometimes referred to as 'Chase Rent') in 1786 are examples of purpresture and assart, while the two made by the promoter are examples of waste.

Presentments are much more numerous during the eighteenth century, only two years recording them in the nineteenth century. Whether there were simply no presentments to make or whether, for some reason, they went unrecorded is unclear, but the entry for 1812 almost makes up for the lack in other years, including 28 separate presentments, all relating to the enclosure without

permission of lands in Bower Chalk, Chettle, Gussage St Michael, Iwerne Minster, Moor Crichel, Pimperne, Tarrant Gunville, Tarrant Launceston, Tarrant Monckton, Tollard Farnham, Sixpenny Handley, Stubhampton, or Witchampton – a total of 640½ acres of 'common down land', 'down land', and 'furzy common land', and all with hedges and ditches. Local landowners had certainly been busy.

Table 6.3 Extract from the Cranborne Chase Court Book, 1786 (DRO D/PIT/M17)

The Court of the Chace of the Right Honourable George Lord Rivers ... held at Rushmore Lodge ... the 9th day of October 1786 ...

At this Court Reced one penny of Wm Oxford being one years Acknowledgement for a Garden inclosed by him in the Parish of Ashmore within the Limits of the said Chace

Also reced of Humphrey Sturt Esqre by Moses Prince one shilling as one years Acknowledgement for inclosing his Park ...

Also reced of D° by D° sixpence being one years Acknowledgement for grubbing up a certain Copse called Square Copse ...

Also reced of D° by D° one penny being one years Acknowledgement for grubbing up an Acre of a certain Copse called Prince's Copse ...

Also reced of the Revd Wm Chafin sixpence being one years Acknowledgement for inclosing about four Acres of Land near his Dwellinghouse ...

It is presented that the several Circumstances presented at the last Court are still continued

Also It is presented by Elias Bailey Keeper of West Walk that Anthony Chapman Esqre refuses to permit him to make leaps and creaps in Lime Pit Copse ... Ordered that the fences of the said Copse be leaped and crept notwithstanding the said Mr. Chapman's refusal, the same being within the limits of the Chace and subject to the Jurisdiction of this Court.

Also It is presented by George Stubbs Keeper in Bursey Stool Walk, that ... John Brickle and Saml Angier of Shaftesbury Elias Green & John Green & John Rabbets of Tollard Royal, together with Divers other persons, hunted and destroyed several Deer in the said Walk [and] did at that time assault and strike John Bayley one of the Under Keepers ... And that the said George Stubbs himself was assaulted ...

Also It is presented by John Newhook the Permoter, that John Stainer of Ashmore has destroyed vert in Bursey Stool Walk – Ordered that he be fined six shillings and eight pence for such offence against this Court

Also It is presented by the said John Newhook that Henry Maidment has destroyed a quantity of vert in Rushmore Walk ... Ordered that the said Henry Maidment be fined thirteen shillings and four pence ...

Indeed, an important role of the Chase Court was to mediate local social relations, reinforcing Chase law at all levels of society and therefore requiring acceptance from all levels of society. Their social status did not excuse local landowners from admitting Lord Rivers's rights, and the payments

they made in acknowledgement, although seemingly minimal, were concessions nonetheless. However, the Chase Court was not the only arena in which Lord Rivers defended his franchise against his own class, a point which we will consider in the remainder of this chapter.

6.5.2 The Gentry's Use of the Common Law Courts

Amongst the gentry, the law was not merely a tool for punishing but also one for negotiating – much bigger questions – at the heart of which lay the concept of private property – being tested at much higher courts. Were it not for the Chase, the proprietors would surely join Mr Arundell, who desired 'always, to be conducive to Peace and good Harmony with my Neighbours, more especially with Them, whose Families have been so many years acquainted' (WSRO 2667/20/47). However, Lord Rivers's reluctance to relinquish his rights would ensure conflict for many years to come.

Yet, the law was not always used aggressively. Take, for example, the 1777 agreement between Lords Rivers and Pembroke concerning land lying between Cobley and Vernditch Walks:

> the two Lords determine, with each other, to avoid any Law Suit, and agree to refer the dispute between them to two Gentlemen, each of the two Lords to have the liberty of naming one, and a third to be named by the two chosen Referees, in Case of a Difference between the two first. And the two Lords agree to be absolutely determined in an amicable manner by their decision (WSRO 2057/E1/5).

Lord Rivers appears equally affable when writing to J.E. Arundell (Lord Arundell's uncle) in 1791:

> since nothing can be more desirable than harmony and good understanding between Friends and Neighbours, or more to be dreaded than the Causes which too often interrupt that happy state, I will submit to your cool and mature consideration the following proposal ... we shod refer our claims to the decision of competent Arbitrators, or submit them in the most amicable manner possible to a legal determination in a Court of Justice. If you consent to this proposal I shall immediately suspend the orders I have given to drive my Deer from the Woods in question until this dispute shall be decided. And as a farther proof of my inclination to support a just and liberal Character, I will be the first to congratulate you upon your success [should] the decision be in your favour, and the last to take the smallest unbecoming advantage of a determination in mine (DRO D/PIT/L15).

Lord Rivers's tone soon changed, though. Having discovered that Mr Arundell was 'united with some Noblemen and Gentlemen for defending our Property from what we deem illegal claims thereon', Lord Rivers '[lamented] extremely the continuation of a Correspondence, which I am convinced is equally irksome to us both' (*ibid*).

Unfortunately for Lord Rivers, this was not the only instance in which the Arundells would prove irksome. However, provided that any given issue was decided in his favour, he was not beyond forgiving and forgetting, as proven following the Tollard Hunt dispute.

The Tollard Hunt

Chafin (1818, p3) observes that 'there is a venerable old wych-elm tree ... under which Lord Arundel, the present possessor of Tollard Royal, holds a Court annually, on the first Monday in the month of September'. Trouble began in 1786 when 'Saml Luke Angier, Wm Wyatt, Jno Green, and Elias Green' (see Table 6.3)

> with force & arms entered the Chase ... within the Par: of Tollard Farnham ... & then & there ... with certain dogs ... without the leave or licence & agt the will of the sd Geo: Lord Rivers did unlawfully chase hunt kill take and carry away the deer to wit 20 deer ... of the value of £100 ... 10 [other] deer ... of the value of £50 ... 100 Hares, 500 Conies, 100 Brace of Partridges and 100 brace of Pheasants ... of the value of £50 [and] 20 Bucks, 20 Does, 20 Fawns, 100 Hares, 100 Conies, 100 brace of Partridges & 100 Brace of Pheasants ... of the value of ... £100 (WSRO 2667/20/47).

Chafin subsequently convicted Wyatt of illegally coursing a hare, but the conviction was quashed upon appeal:

> the Respondent [Chafin] is now the Owner of a Walk in Cranborne Chace called Bursey Stool Walk lying partly within the Precincts of the said Liberty and Manors of Tollard Royal & Tollard Farnham; and he and his Family by Agreement & Consent of his Lordship, to prevent the Destruction of Deer ... within their Walk, came with his Keepers & Hounds to the Court yearly, and killed a Brace of Bucks ... for his Lordship & Officers ... (in lieu of a General Hunt) after which the Hunt ended. But a disagreement having since happened from the Keepers ... having killed improper or younger Deer than Bucks, the Tenants resented it, and insisted on a General Hunt as usual ... As there has been from Time immemorial a Hunt called Tollard Hunt & his Lordships Officers and Tenants licenced by presentment at the Court so to do, its apprehended that the Appellant as a Tenant has a Right to hunt with a Dog for that Day or as long as the Court was kept open; and that his so hunting can't by any means be construed ... poaching (*ibid*).

Chafin obviously suffered by this decision; he writes, 'every Person in the Parishes of Tollard and Farnham is become an Enimy to me and both Parishes combine to do me all the mischief they can, not only by destroying the Deer, but by injuring me in my own private concerns' (DRO D/PIT/L31). Lord Rivers received a second chance, though. Whilst the aforementioned case was pending, Lord Arundell agreed that there would be no hunt. However, his orders having 'no effect with the Rabble' (WSRO 2667/20/47) and hunts taking place in both 1787 and 1788, 'Lord Rivers brought his action

and obtained verdicts' (Smart 1841, p233). The latter hunt was particularly raucous, as witnessed by Lord Rivers's stewards:

> we attended there to make an Account of their Actions, but the Men Women & Children [became] very riotous & began to throw Stones and insult the Keepers ... it required some little address to prevent ourselves being mobd out of the Manor of Tollard and for half a Mile after we left the Woods we were obliged to send the Keepers on before us whilst we kept the Mob in a Conversation between Joke and Earnest but at the same time getting away as fast as we decently [could] (DRO D/PIT/L31).

However, they did have time to note the particular disloyalty shown by 'Wm Card ... always employed to make the Liveries for the Keepers of ye Chase' (DRO D/PIT/L30). If Chase employees could not be trusted, what hope was there for anyone else?

Lord Rivers need not have worried, though. When the case came to trial in 1789, the defendant's oral evidence only '[went] back as far as the Memory of Man and his written Evidence not much further on account of the Civil Wars when the Deeds Records & Muniments of Lord Arundell were destroyed at Wardour Castle' (DRO D/PIT/L40). This lack of historical evidence meant the Tollard Hunt could be proven to date only from the previous century and not from 'Time immemorial'. Hence Lord Kenyon's decision:

> in all claims of this kind it must be presumed if the Custom is not coeval with the Chace itself that it originates in a grant from the owner of it. In process of time the Grant may be lost or destroyed & then this claim must be supported by Custom. It is not easy to imagine that the Chace [should] be created one day & the next Day the Owner of the Chace [should] make a grant effectually to destroy what he had just gained [which would] be the case if the custom now insisted on was to prevail ... to support such a monstrous Custom I must require the Strongest evidence of actual usage up to the Extent claimed (*ibid*).

Fortunately for Lord Rivers, the oral evidence suggested that although three deer had occasionally been taken, the norm was only two.

Throughout the ordeal, Lords Rivers and Arundell remained on relatively good terms, Rivers writing to Arundell in 1787:

> I hope I cannot be suspected of doing so little Justice to your Lordship's Rank and Knowledge of the world as to suppose it possible that <u>you</u> should have contenanc'd, much less have "authoris'd" such an Attack upon the Rights of one, who has never fail'd in that Respect & Attention towards your Lordship to which all Gentlemen have a reciprocal Claim (WSRO 2667/20/47).

To prove his amicability, Lord Rivers reinstated a Hunt, although on his own terms. A regular supply of beer surely helped maintain good relations, a payment of £5.4.6 to 'Edwin Andrews ... for 1 Hogshead of Beer for Tollard Hunt as usual' appearing in the 1821 Chase accounts (DRO D/PIT/E179), by which time, Lord Rivers was himself Lord of the Manor.

The Handley Hunt

Lord Rivers was not so forgiving following a similar success against the Handley Hunt some thirty years later. Despite the Handley residents' protests, the recent unfavourable decision in *Rivers v King* meant that Lord Rivers was in no mood to appease troublemakers. The social interactions involved in the dealings are nonetheless of interest. In 1819, Lord Anglesey received a letter signed 'a Dorsetshire Gentleman', accusing his steward of corruption:

> your Lordship's Confidence has been grossly abused by ... Castleman in respect to your accustomed Privilege of holding a Court at Handley ... which has been always supported with laudable Jealousy by your Lordship's Predecessors as a check upon the Chace ... your Steward came last year with Lord Rivers' Agents & did every Thing in his Power ... to destroy this long established Right ... no motive can be assigned for such conduct but the general Belief that He has received frequent Presents of venison from Lord Rivers Lodges by way of Bribery (DRO D/ANG/B5/25).

The 'Gentleman' appears unaware of a recent decision against Handley Hunt; perhaps he simply chooses to ignore it. Judging by the number of men who continued to disrupt Lord Anglesey's Court, the latter seems more likely. As Castleman recalls,

> I held the Hanley Court last year at the risque of my life, and was insulted in the grossest manner by a Mob of 4 or 500 lawless Fellows ... In defiance of my Remonstrances, the Jury, as soon as they were sworn, left the Court, with the rest of the Mob, to pursue their Diversion of Deer Hunting, and it was impossible for me to proceed with the Business ... I found in Enquiry this year, that it was intended to make the Court, as last year, the Instrument of infringing Lord Rivers's Rights, and I was sure, that I should ill execute the trust which your Lordship has reposed in me, by lending myself to such a purpose; for if I know any thing of your Lordship's Character, you would be as unwilling to encroach on the Rights of others, as you would be, to suffer your own to be assailed with Impunity (*ibid*).

Castleman admits 'there is one part of the charge to which I must plead Guilty, that of having received some Venison from Ld. Rivers' (*ibid*). The gift was merely a social nicety, though, Castleman having suggested to Lord Rivers's solicitor

> that having been fairly beated, I hoped there was no reason why Ld. Rivers should not give some Venison, in respect of your Lordship's Estates, as he was in the habit of doing, with respect to other Proprietors, whose Estates were injured by the Deer, and since that time Mr. Lowe received the half of one, and I have received the half of another Buck (*ibid*).

Anglesey's response to all of this was, quite simply, that: 'you have acted most correctly' (*ibid*).

6.6 Conclusion

Although in one respect the deer on Cranborne Chase created strife amongst the local gentry, and indeed the general population, in another respect they continued to cement important social relationships. Amongst the gentry, men like Lords Rivers, Arundell, and Anglesey appreciated each other's determination to guard what they perceived to be their rights. Even when disagreeing, they remained civil, Beckford writing to Lord Arundell in 1787: 'I beg leave to assure you that I am perfectly sensible of your Civility and Friendship on this [the Tollard Hunt dispute], as well as on every other occasion, and am only sorry we have both of us such troublesome People to deal with' (WSRO 2667/20/47). He refers, of course, to 'the Rabble', the men, women, and children who dared commit crimes against any of their Lordships' deer, game, or wood.

Although many of these individuals acted knowingly, their understanding of *crime* did not always coincide with that of the upper classes. While the latter used law to protect their property, the former often invoked custom; they also depended very much upon community support. Indeed, the literature is full of references to so-called 'social crimes' – activities that, although illegal, were not considered so by either those committing them or by the wider community; hence Mr Justice Buller's difficulty in obtaining verdicts against Wiltshire deer stealers when the jurors were themselves Wiltshire men. Lord Rivers's stewards attributed this to personal interest – one man being as bad as the next, especially amongst the stereotyped forest and chase dwellers – but any number of factors may have influenced the jurors' reluctance; although they may have felt some camaraderie, they may equally have deemed the offence too minor or the penalty too harsh. Gone were the days of an appearance before the Chase Court, typically resulting in a fine; now, the threat of lengthy prison sentences and transportation loomed large, but could the theft, or even disturbance, of a couple of deer really justify such severe punishments? As far as the governing class was concerned, the answer, where their private property was at risk, was invariably yes. That is not to say that these individuals would pardon all criminals. Indeed, also apparent throughout the literature is a distinction between

opportunists and professionals. While the former might take a deer or a bird they happened to come across and believe themselves justified by natural right, the latter would seek out that deer or bird for profit, resorting to violence if necessary. Both undoubtedly lived on Cranborne Chase.

We have seen from the above data analysis that convictions for deer stealing are in fact relatively few compared with those for game and wood stealing; perhaps it was simply not as widespread as the proprietors suggested. The Chase certainly could not sustain a large number of Dibbins, stealing hundreds of deer each year, but then why should deer stealers be any better at evading justice than their fellow criminals? A degree of exaggeration just may have crept in on both fronts. While Dibbin struck awe in Mr Webb with his claim of 5,000 deer dead, the proprietors sought to strike a different chord, that of guilt. But their arguments – ostensibly on behalf of society – failed to move Lord Rivers. Perhaps a more direct appeal to his financial sense would get them further.

Chapter 7 The Cost, Significance, and Changing Nature of Hunting on Cranborne Chase

7.1 The Cost of Hunting on Cranborne Chase

7.1.1 The Proprietors' Argument and Lord Rivers's Response

In his 1787 *Observations on the Land Revenue of the Crown*, John St. John recognised that a policy of widespread disfranchisement and enclosure of forests would

> probably meet with much discountenance from some great Lords, who may consult the gratification of their own pleasures, fancy, and pride, more than the public benefit. The amusements of the chace, which the forests afford, and the beautiful scenes with which they adorn the country, cannot be compensated by an allotment of land to those whose great estates need no addition: the patronage also which many great men possess in the forests, and the power of conferring favours, which they derive from offices, increase their influence in the country (p163).

Although Chapman must have been familiar with these observations – he opens his *Letter to the Proprietors* with a quote from the same work – and although he echoes St. John's sentiments in accusing Lord Rivers of putting his own gratification above the needs of his neighbours and dependents, he fails to recognise the significance of status value enjoyed by the Lord of a Chase. Consequently, the third prong of the proprietors' argument focused on the advantages Lord Rivers would himself gain by disfranchisement. Having failed to win him over with complaints of either their own financial suffering or the local population's moral decimation, the proprietors instead pointed out that the Chase 'not only is a great expence to [Lord Rivers] in maintaining it, without it's producing any thing; but it is not in his power to make it productive' (Chapman 1791, p3). Until 1827, the black market was the only forum for buying and selling venison; unless he, like the deer stealers, supplied this illegal trade, Lord Rivers had no obvious means of profiting by his deer. Thus, with his Lordship's best interests purportedly at heart, the proprietors developed a second – quite different – financial argument. Unfortunately, they failed to tie the two together.

Inherent in Chapman's above remark is the assumption that Lord Rivers minded spending large sums to maintain his franchise. However, in accordance with St. John's expectations, his Lordship was quick to claim quite the opposite:

> it was unnecessary to remind him of the little value of his rights of Chace, when compared to the expences attending them – that he had no objection to his Chace, with all its incumbrances – that if, out of consideration to his friends and neighbours, he makes that a mere feather

> which would have been heavier in some other hands, it is neither candid, nor liberal to depreciate his Franchise upon such grounds (*ibid*, p30).

Chapman had previously labelled the Chase 'a mere feather' to emphasise its financial impracticality; Lord Rivers now used that label to his own advantage, turning this 'mere feather' into a feather in his cap. In doing so, he offered a means of valuing his franchise quite different from that of the proprietors. Writing in 1790, he observed that

> the sale of the Royalty, & the Terms for an absolute & total Disfranchisement are very distinct considerations; In the first Case, there being nothing intrinsic in the Object, the value must be nearly ideal; in the latter, the advantages arising to the Proprietors of a large extent of Land are palpable, great & solid. These advantages are consequently an object of determinate valuation, & must, in a Matter of this Nature, be subjected to it, in some degree, to render the Transaction just on the part of the Proprietors, and in any shape prudent or advisable on that of the Lords of the Chace (DRO D/PIT/E3).

The Marquis of Bath's steward agreed:

> I think the Net Profit Ld R derives from the Chace has nothing to do with the Business. Perhaps the Gross Income viz. the real Value of all the Deer fed therein, may & this his Lordship can realize any day by letting the Chace, instead of keeping an expensive Establishment of Keepers, & this would be a much more serious Sum than the Landholders imagine. But this is not the Datum the Landholders ought to judge by. They ought to consider how <u>much Injury</u> they receive & then deduct the Expence they will be at in getting rid of this Grievance & whatever they are to pay <u>less</u> than the remainder, they ought to thank his Lordship for. And even admitting they paid for the <u>whole</u> benefit, they would still be Gainers for this Benefit will be an encreasing one for years to come. Their Lands will be better Tenanted, better cultivated & of course improved. Their Woods, which cannot feel much benefit immediately, will in a few years after the Deer are kept out, improve considerably in Value & continue so to do for many years to come (*ibid*).

Because Lord Rivers refused to sell the Chase and because he felt no particular inclination to disfranchise it, a good deal of persuasion was required on the proprietors' part. Lord Rivers did not share their view of Cranborne Chase as a financial burden; for him, the question was not for how much he was willing to sell, nor even for how much the proprietors were willing to buy, but for how much they were willing to compensate him. Faced with this logic, Chapman quickly changed his tune. In writing the following, his hypocrisy, in light of his many other remarks on the subject, is flagrant:

> I am convinced in my own mind, your Lordship has been misinformed respecting the private damage your Chace does, and the advantage that would accrue to the proprietors of lands in it by disfranchising; and my reason for thinking so is, there are persons, who from interested motives deprecate the Disfranchisement, and would leave no stone unturned to prevent it; and knowing they could by no argument or reasoning prevail on your Lordship to retain a property

> of no intrinsic value, and so very prejudicial to the country, on a fair compensation being given in lieu of it; they have endeavoured to persuade your Lordship's connections, and stewards, that the Chace is a very desirable and valuable Franchise: that the damage it does the estates in it is very great, and that the proprietors of those estates would be willing to give a very considerable sum to get rid of it ... what confirms me in my opinion is, one of your Lordship's stewards (Mr. Salisbury) intimated to me, that in case the deer were destroyed, we should be able to cut our woods at seven years growth, instead of thirteen or fourteen years which they stand to at present; this convinced me he was totally ignorant of the nature of the Chace woods, and misinformed; as no man that was the least acquainted with them would have hazarded so absurd an assertion ... and even admitting your Lordship's right of valuing by damage, I will venture to assert the damage done to the woods would not amount to half the money (1791, p46).

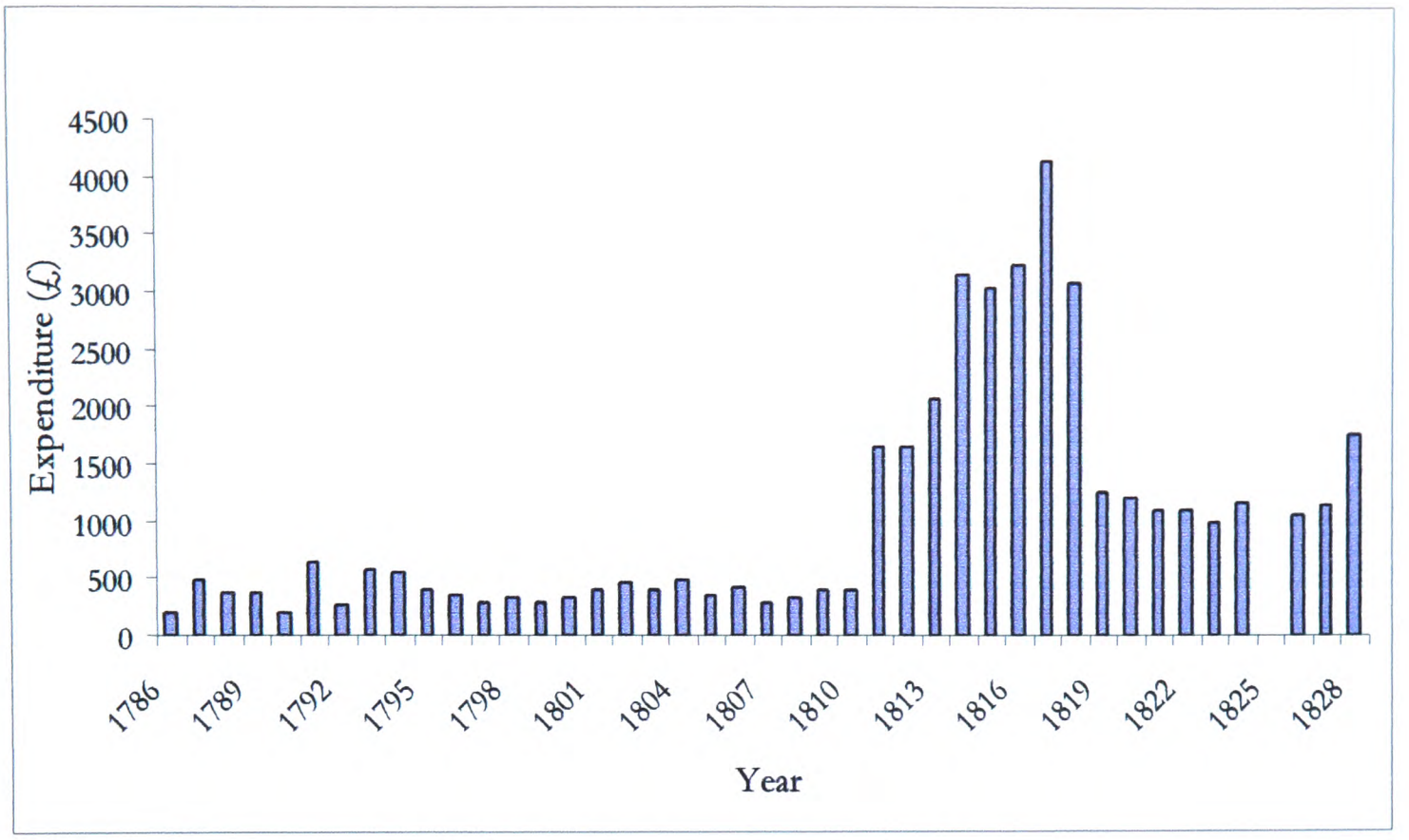
Yet Chapman later asserts that 'the proprietors [say] *it is a great injury to their estates* ... and that they are willing to make his Lordship a compensation for it equal to the full value' (*ibid*, p85 – emphasis added). Which is it? Either the Chase does cause considerable damage, in which case the financial relief to be gained by its disfranchisement should be included in its valuation, or it does not cause considerable damage, in which case the proprietors have little to gain by its disfranchisement and so pester Lord Rivers unnecessarily.

7.1.2 Lord Rivers's Chase Payments

Chapman's equivocation aside, the proprietors were right about one thing: Lord Rivers spent a great deal of money on his franchise. We have seen in previous chapters that a large network of keepers existed to maintain and protect the Chase, especially within and immediately around the inner bounds. Fortunately, account books survive for all but one year (1825) between 1786 and 1828 (DRO D/PIT/E4, E146-E185), shedding light on both the keepers' and others' expenses. Although these books include entries for Lord Rivers's numerous other Dorset, Wiltshire, and Gloucestershire estates, most entries relating to the Chase appear together under 'Chase Payments'.

Fig. 7.1 shows the three different phases through which the Chase Payments pass. The first, 1786-1810, is a period of relatively low and stable expenditure, whereas the second, 1811-1818, sees a sudden and quite dramatic rise, peaking in 1817. Although it falls and again stabilises from 1819 onwards, average expenditure throughout the 1820s is nonetheless more than double that of the first period. 1811 is significant in being the first year in which 'Rushmore House Bills' appear as separate – and substantial – costs. For the period 1811-1828, we can thus distinguish between 'Chase Expenses' and 'House Expenses'.

Fig. 7.1 Chase Payments for Walks 'in hand', 1786-1828

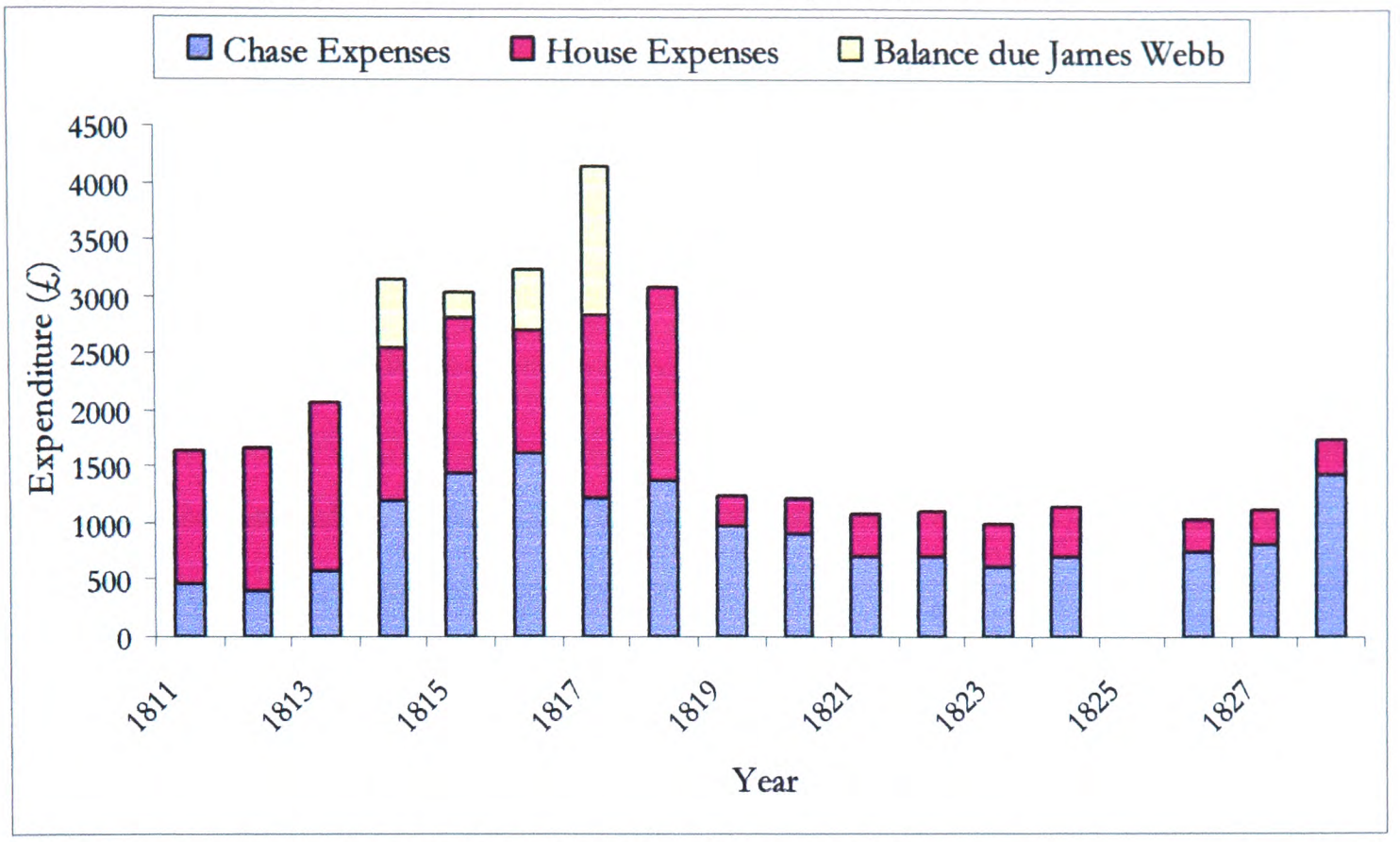


The 1818 Chase Payments include 1¼ years' costs, rather than a single year's

Fig. 7.2 separates Chase Payments into Chase and House Expenses, thereby providing a clearer indication of the cost of hunting. Although Chase Expenses – like the overall Chase Payments – peak during the 1810s, the inclusion of House Expenses exaggerates this rise, a pattern less marked from 1819 onwards. Indeed, whereas total expenditure exceeds £4,000 in 1817, Chase Expenses are little more than £1,000 in that year, having peaked the previous year at approximately £1,600. Prior to 1814, Chase Expenses rarely exceed £500, and although higher (£1,000-£1,500) over the next five years, they rarely reach, let alone exceed, £1,000 during the 1820s. The significance of the 'Balance due James Webb' between 1814 and 1817 is unclear: it may include further Chase Expenses, but without sufficient detail, we cannot be certain. The sums paid by Lord Rivers during these two decades were not, by hunting standards, extraordinary amounts.

> In 1826, Colonel John Cook, whose experience in keeping [fox]hounds had extended from 1800 to 1813, estimated that the costs of hunting a typical country ranged from £1170 per year if it were hunted twice per week, through £1625 for three days per week, to £1935 for four days per week, if no professional huntsmen were kept – £300 more if one was (Itzkowitz 1977, p78).

Fig. 7.2 Chase Expenses (Walks 'in hand') vs. House Expenses, 1811-1828



The 1818 Chase Expenses include 1¼ years' costs, rather than a single year's

As Itzkowitz (*ibid*, p79) points out,

> the variations in the cost of hunting depended upon many factors. The number of days hunted determined the number of hounds and horses needed. The style in which the establishment was kept, the quality of horses bought, the salaries paid the hunt servants, the quality of their uniforms, and the physical nature of the country, which determined the sums needed for earth-stopping or maintaining coverts, all influenced the final expenditure, as did the personal whims of the master.

Some of these costs are specific to foxhunting, but similar factors would have influenced Lord Rivers's expenses hunting deer.

We will return to the accounts later, with a more detailed look at expenses in the 1820s. In the meantime, suffice it to say that Cranborne Chase, particularly later in our period, was an expensive franchise, and would have been even more so had Lord Rivers not shared at least some of its costs.

7.2 The Significance of Hunting on Cranborne Chase

7.2.1 Venison: Cultural Value and Gentry Power

Why was Lord Rivers willing to spend such large amounts of money on Chase payments, especially given his inability 'to make it [legally] productive' prior to 1827? The answer, quite simply: the status it conferred within the 'economy of regard' (in which gift exchange 'arises out of the

intrinsic benefits of social and personal interaction, from the satisfactions of *regard*' (Offer 1997, p450)). Whyman describes gifts of venison as symbols of 'Cultural Value' and 'Gentry Power'; 'sociability was a fundamental element of power in a society based upon personal connections'; as a form of 'social commerce', such gifts were 'critical to and inseparable from the political world' (Whyman 1999, p4). Those privileged enough to own deer could underline their superiority over members of both their own class and the lower classes, garnering respect and loyalty in exchange for meat. This distinction became increasingly important following the arrival of the nouveaux riches and colonial nabobs – individuals made wealthy by trade rather than birth and who therefore had little connection to the land or its people. The 'deer and game nexus' (Lohmann 1999, p164) gave the landed gentry at least some advantage over these upstarts, who, prior to 1827 and 1831, respectively, resorted to 'the silver gun' for their venison and game – something to which a true gentleman need not stoop. (Gifts of venison are thus a prime example of Offer's (1997, p457) '*authority ranking*': 'distribution is governed by rank; relations are paternal and exchanges are asymmetric ... Authority and prestige are then underpinned by displays of generosity [and] The inability to reciprocate perpetuates subordination.')

Gifts of venison were often 'sent in gratitude for a favour or in expectation of a favour to come' (Whyman 1999, p27). Hence Castleman's receipt of a half-buck following the Handley Hunt case and Lord Arundell's receipt of 'part of the first buck' Beckford had killed in 'Bussy's Stool' in 1776 (WSRO 2667/20/47). The letter accompanying this latter gift goes on to discuss the Tollard Hunt, proclaiming that Beckford 'should be much concern'd should there be any dispute between us'; it concludes by promising that 'Mrs. Beckford who is but just recovered from her laying in, will take the first Opportunity of waiting on Lady Arundel'. The documentation is full of such niceties, key to maintaining good relations amongst local aristocratic society. Nor was this a new phenomenon; the 1672 Court Roll reports 42 deer killed by the keepers of the five inner walks and distributed as follows: one to the Steward, three to the Ranger, three to the Chief Forester, and two to the Chief Forester and Underkeepers jointly; two by custom to the inhabitants of Ashmore, one to the inhabitants of Berwick St John, and one to the inhabitants of Tollard Royal; 22 to various individuals residing near the Chase; four to local gentlemen; two by warrant of the Lord of the Chase (the Earl of Shaftesbury at this time); and one unspecified. Local gentlemen hunted and killed a further two by permission (Smart 1841).

Smart (*ibid*, p141) believes that 'many of my readers will doubtless remember the liberality with which this delicacy was dispensed [by Lord Rivers], and the hospitable feelings and social intercourse thereby engendered and called into lively play'. The 'fee deer' sent to Lord Rivers or on his behalf were so-called because of money paid to keepers and underkeepers for slaughtering, butchering, and transporting them (Table 7.1). Between 1793 and 1828, Lord Rivers spent a minimum £1250.4.8. on venison fees, baskets, carriage, and booking. This included, at the very end of the period, £6.16.6. for the venison cart, which, after many years' service, needed repairing. Although disfranchisement extinguished these often-customary gifts from Cranborne Chase, the practice continued elsewhere; the *List of those who are to claim Her Majesty's Venison in the Buck Season 1847* alone ordered the delivery of 731 bucks to a variety of dignitaries and servants (Anonymous 1853).

Of course, venison's distinction did not derive solely from its elitist connotations: 'the chase venison was ever held by competent judges in the highest estimation, for its unrivalled flavor and fine condition' (Smart 1841, p141). Yet jealousy sometimes tarnished these gifts, as when the anonymous 'Dorsetshire Gentleman' accused Castleman of accepting bribes. What would this 'Gentleman' make of the local custom 'to present the first [buck] of the season to the bench of Magistrates at the quarter sessions' (*ibid*)? Despite such occasional misrepresentations, Lord Rivers intended his gifts as diplomatic, and particularly neighbourly, tokens. As Whyman (1999, p32) concludes, 'gifts such as venison appear to have been viewed as everyday tools of patronage, in contrast to more blatant forms of corruption'; although having political undertones, they were 'one of the more delicate means by which the gentry expressed influence and solicited favour' (Thompson 1975, p175).

Invitations to hunt were likewise significant gestures. Chafin (1818, p15) recalls

> the festive board, which was amply provided every day in a sumptuous manner for the first three weeks in the month of September. This social meeting of sportsmen at Rushmore annually was regularly kept up until the late Lord Rivers was sent Ambassador to the Court of Turin [1761-1768], which caused a cessation during his absence; and the jovial meeting was never revived and held in the same manner as before.

Nonetheless, hunts continued to provide an excellent opportunity for sporting camaraderie. An article in *The Times* (Fig. 7.3), describing the 1826 Tollard Hunt, reports its commencement 'amidst the acclamations of the assembled multitude', who, together with the triumphant huntsmen, later 'partook of a public breakfast, at which venison-pasty and beef-steaks were most abundant'. Following a second successful run, the huntsmen enjoyed a further 'abundance of venison and wine in utmost profusion'

while the local peasantry 'enjoyed themselves in dancing, and other rural amusements'. Perhaps swayed by the day's festivities, and despite Lord Rivers's recent offer to disfranchise, 'the gentlemen at the Hunt ... expressed themselves as rather desirous that the stock of deer should be reduced to about 5,000, than that this ancient and splendid right should be given up entirely'.

Table 7.1 Source, Number, Sex, and Value of 'Fee Deer', where Specified (£.s.d.)

Year	Walk	Sex	Number	Fees Paid	Fee per Deer
1819	West	Bucks	17	35.14.0.	2.2.0.
	Burseystool	Bucks	13	3.5.0.	0.5.0.
	Cobley	Bucks	16	4.0.0.	0.5.0.
	Rushmore	Bucks	36	8.17.0.	0.4.11.
	Rushmore	Bucks	8	14.0.0.	1.15.0.
	Rushmore	Bucks	5½	12.1.6.	2.4.0.
1820	Cobley	Does	4	0.10.0.	0.2.6.
	Rushmore	Bucks	19	41.6.0.	2.3.5.
	Rushmore	Does	8	6.2.0.	0.15.3.
1828	Rushmore	Bucks	56	103.12.0.	1.17.0.
	Rushmore	Does	28	25.18.0.	0.18.6.
	West	Bucks	54	113.8.0.	2.2.0.
	West	Does	22	23.2.0.	1.1.0.
	Burseystool	Bucks	37	77.14.0.	2.2.0.
	Burseystool	Does	17	8.18.6.	0.10.6.

7.2.2 Venery and Veneration

Lord Rivers did in fact take advantage of others' desire to hunt by a means beneficial to both himself and his neighbours. As Smart (1841, pp 120-121) explains, the costly Chase payments 'induced the second Lord Rivers, and his father, to let off ... some of the walks to gentlemen in the neighbourhood, who preserved the Deer therein at their own expence, and dealt with them in every respect as their own'. Although Lord Rivers thereby shared the Chase's status value, he also shared its costs. Hence, a ranger might enjoy the

> authorities perquisites and Advantages to the said Office belonging ... Together with free liberty ... to hunt course kill take and carry away ... Bucks Does and other Game ... But nevertheless [he] shall ... bear pay and discharge all Expences whatsoever in maintaining and doing all and every act ... as occasion shall require for the preservation of the usual Stock (DRO D/PIT/E2).

Fig. 7.3 'The annual buck-hunt at Tollard Royal', from *The Times* Digital Archive, 7 September 1826

CRANBORNE CHASE.

The annual buck-hunt at Tollard Royal, in the Chase, took place on Monday morning last, and was very numerously attended by sportsmen of almost every description. This is the only public buck hunt now recognized in the Chase. At six o'clock in the morning, groups of sportsmen, on horseback and on foot, were seen drawing towards the large tree under which the court leet for the manor of Tollard Royal is, by immemorial custom, held. After the jury had been sworn and charged by Robert Harvey, Esq., the steward of Lord Rivers, a signal was made for the hunt to commence, which was done amidst the acclamations of the assembled multitude. A buck was soon started, and after a run of nearly an hour was killed in fine style. The sportsmen then flocked to Tollard-green, and under the trees, and in the keeper's house, partook of a public breakfast, at which venison-pasty and beef-steaks were most abundant. The morning was remarkably fine, and the view from the green, over the vast expanse of forest, and the immense woods which cover many hundred acres, gave to the whole scene an air of wildness and lofty grandeur better felt than described. This chase is said to extend over half a million of acres, and the present stock of deer is at least from ten to twelve thousand. After breakfast the hunt recommenced, and was kept up with great spirit for another hour, when the second buck was killed. At three o'clock a numerous party repaired to the farm-house at Tollard, which was formerly the palace of King John, and enjoyed the treat of the noble owner of the chase, consisting of an abundance of venison and wine in the utmost profusion. After the usual toasts at public dinners, "The long life and health of the noble sportsman, Lord Rivers: of Mr. Farquharson and his hunt: of the tenantry of the chase. Mr. Portman. Mr. Horace Beckford, the Steward, and many other gentlemen were drank, and about 10 o'clock the party separated, under a promise to meet again on every opportunity. Several gentlemen from a distance retired to Lord Rivers's house, at Rushmoor, where they passed the night. The peasantry in great numbers, from all parts of the chase, enjoyed themselves in dancing, and other rural amusements, upon Tollard-green, until a late hour.

The quantity of nuts in the chase woods may be imagined to be very great in this most abundant year: a gentleman at the dinner, who lives in the chase, said, that he and another person had, one year, collected from the nutters, and sold 1,000 sacks.

This immense right of chase, the greatest ever possessed even by any monarch of this country, extending over no less than 500,000 acres of land, is the sole property of George Lord Rivers, who has repeatedly refused offers of purchase made by other noblemen, but has recently proposed to the landowners to disfranchise it, on their binding themselves to a payment to him and his heirs of 1,000*l.* per annum. The gentlemen at the Hunt, however, expressed themselves as rather desirous that the stock of deer should be reduced to about 5,000, than that this ancient and splendid right should be given up entirely.

Smart (1841, pp120-121) attributes more than financial sense to the Lords Rivers in letting out their walks: 'the sentiments of kindness and liberality, and consideration for the feelings of others, equally if not more powerfully prompted them to this relinquishment of their rights; an act, which we are of opinion, was never so duly appreciated as it ought to have been'. Such sentiments aside, the very act of letting the walks was itself a form of patronage, surely reaching its pinnacle when HRH the Prince of Wales held Cobley Walk between 1796 and 1800. Table 7.2 lists the rangers holding each of the walks between 1786 and 1818.

The letting of individual walks coincided with the end of the Chase Rangership following George Chafin's death in 1766. The subsequent introduction of multiple rangers necessitated a reshuffle of the Chase hierarchy. The situation in 1816 was as follows:

> the Chace is divided into Six Walks, West Walk contains a Lodge and about 6000 Acres of Deer feed (about 140 Acres of it is Lord Rivers's own Land) Also a Master Keeper and three Underkeepers and in General from two to three Couple of Buck Hounds for the Hunting the Deer within that Walk – Bussey Stole Walk contains a Lodge, a Master Keeper, two Underkeepers, three hounds and about 2579 Acres of Deer feed – Rushmor Walk, Staplefoot Walk, & Cobley Walk contain three Lodges, Three Master Keepers five Underkeepers, from 5 to 6 Couple of Hounds and about 6000 Acres of Deer feed, about 900 Acres of which is Lord Rivers's own Land – Chittered Walk contains a Lodge, a Master Keeper, two Underkeepers, from 2 to 3 Couple of Hounds and about 2631 Acres of Deer feed (DRO D/PIT/M38).

7.3 Chase Payments in the 1820s

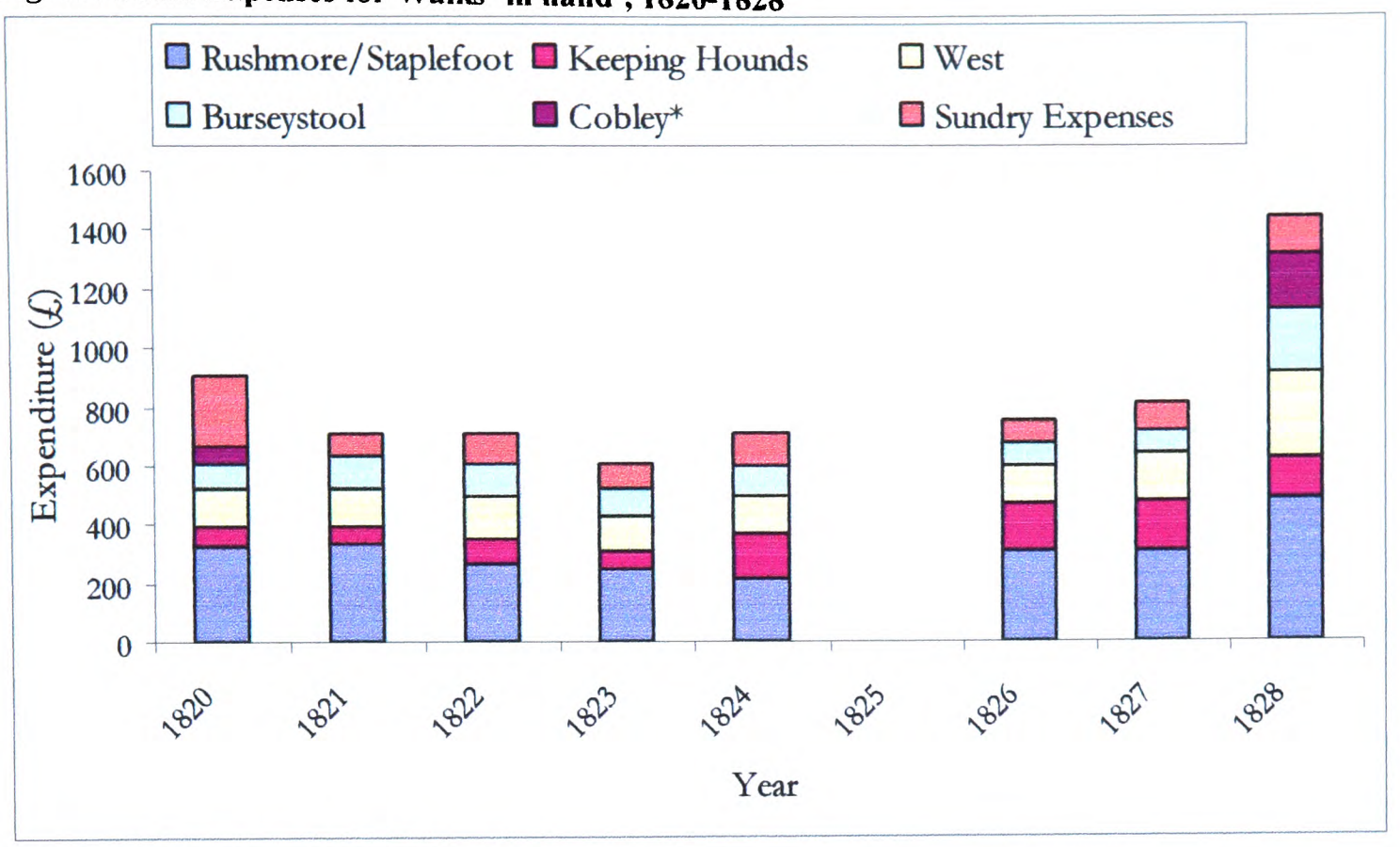
This summary dates from a particularly expensive and momentous year in the Chase's history, the unfavourable ruling in the *King* case effectively signalling its demise. Perhaps in expectation of disfranchisement negotiations, Lord Rivers's steward began to keep much more thorough accounts from the late 1810s onwards. Prior to this, entries varied significantly in both detail and format, making analysis and generalisation difficult. Comparisons are easiest for the 1820s; we therefore take as the basis for discussion a single, particularly detailed year, 1820, the intention being to consider each of various topics in turn with relation to that year, elaborating by reference to other years where necessary or interesting. (An additional advantage of choosing 1820 is that Lord Rivers had all five inner walks in hand, a circumstance repeated again only in 1828.) Through the ensuing discussion, we will follow the section titles into which the Chase Payments are themselves broken down, namely expenses at the walks, expenses keeping hounds, and expenses at Rushmore House. Most of these expenses are relatively straightforward: keepers needed paying, clothing, equipping, housing, and rewarding; dogs needed kennelling, feeding, and tending; and the house and gardens needed stocking and cleaning. Nonetheless, the accounts are full of details, which, together with contemporary observations, greatly enrich our understanding of the Chase – in particular, the enormous amounts of time, energy, and money that went into its daily, seasonal, and yearly management, even as disfranchisement seemed increasingly likely. A transcription of the 1820 Chase Payments appears in Appendix 4.

Table 7.2 Rangers and Deputy Rangers of Cranborne Chase Walks, 1786-1818 (DRO D/PIT/M17)

	Rushmore	**Staplefoot**	**Cobley**	**West**	**Chettered**	**Burseystool**
1786	in hand	in hand	Earl of Shaftesbury	John Pitt Esq	Humph Sturt Esq	Revd Wm Chafin
1787	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	Earl of Shaftesbury	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	Chas Sturt Esq	Revd Wm Chafin
1788	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	Earl of Shaftesbury	Hon Geo Damer	Chas Sturt Esq	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse
1789	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	Earl of Shaftesbury	Hon Geo Damer	Chas Sturt Esq	Hy Wm Portman Esq
1790	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	Hon Geo Damer	Chas Sturt Esq	Hy Wm Portman Esq
1791	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	Hy Wm Portman	Hon Geo Damer	Chas Sturt Esq	Hon Geo Pitt
1792	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	Hy Wm Portman	Lord Milton	Chas Sturt Esq	Wm Churchill Esq
1793	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	in hand	Lord Milton	Chas Sturt Esq	Wm Churchill Esq
1794	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	Lord Milton	Chas Sturt Esq	Wm Churchill Esq
1796	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	HRH Prince of Wales	Lord Milton	Chas Sturt Esq	Wm Churchill Esq
1797	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	HRH Prince of Wales	Lord Milton	Chas Sturt Esq	Wm Churchill Esq
1798	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	HRH Prince of Wales	Earl of Dorchester	Chas Sturt Esq	Wm Churchill Esq
1799	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	HRH Prince of Wales	Earl of Dorchester	-	Wm Churchill Esq
1800	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	Dep HRH Prince of Wales	Peter Beckford Esq	Chas Sturt Esq	Revd Wm Chafin
1802	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	(in hand) Dep Chas Wasse	in hand	Peter Beckford Esq	Chas Sturt Esq	in hand
1803	in hand	in hand	in hand	Peter Beckford Esq	Humph Sturt Esq	Peter Beckford Esq
1804	in hand	in hand	in hand	Peter Beckford Esq	Humph Sturt Esq	John Tompson/Thomson Esq
1805	in hand	in hand	in hand	Peter Beckford Esq	Humph Sturt Esq	John Tompson/Thomson Esq
1806	in hand	in hand	in hand	Peter Beckford Esq	Humph Sturt Esq	John Tompson/Thomson Esq
1807	in hand	in hand	Jas Farquharson Esq	Peter Beckford Esq	Humph Sturt Esq	Revd Wm Chafin
1808	in hand	in hand	Jas Farquharson Esq	Peter Beckford Esq	Humph Sturt Esq	Revd Wm Chafin
1809	in hand	in hand	John Jas Farquharson Esq	Peter Beckford Esq	Humph Sturt Esq	Revd Wm Chafin
1810	in hand	in hand	John Jas Farquharson Esq	Sir Chatham Paget	Chas Sturt Esq	Revd Wm Chafin
1811	in hand	in hand	John Jas Farquharson Esq	Sir Arthur Paget	Chas Sturt Esq	Revd Wm Chafin
1812	in hand	in hand	John Jas Farquharson Esq	Sir Arthur Paget	Calcraft Esq	Revd Wm Chafin
1813	in hand	in hand	-	in hand	Calcraft Esq	Revd Wm Chafin
1814	in hand	in hand	in hand	in hand	Calcraft Esq	in hand
1815	(in hand) Jas Webb	(in hand) Jas Webb	(in hand) Jas Webb	(in hand) Jas Webb	Calcraft Esq	(in hand) Jas Webb
1816	(in hand) Jas Webb	(in hand) Jas Webb	(in hand) Jas Webb	(in hand) Jas Webb	Calcraft Esq	(in hand) Jas Webb
1817	(in hand) Jas Webb	(in hand) Jas Webb	(in hand) Jas Webb	(in hand) Jas Webb	Calcraft Esq	(in hand) Jas Webb
1818	(in hand) Jas Webb	(in hand) Jas Webb	(in hand) Jas Webb	(in hand) Jas Webb	in hand	in hand

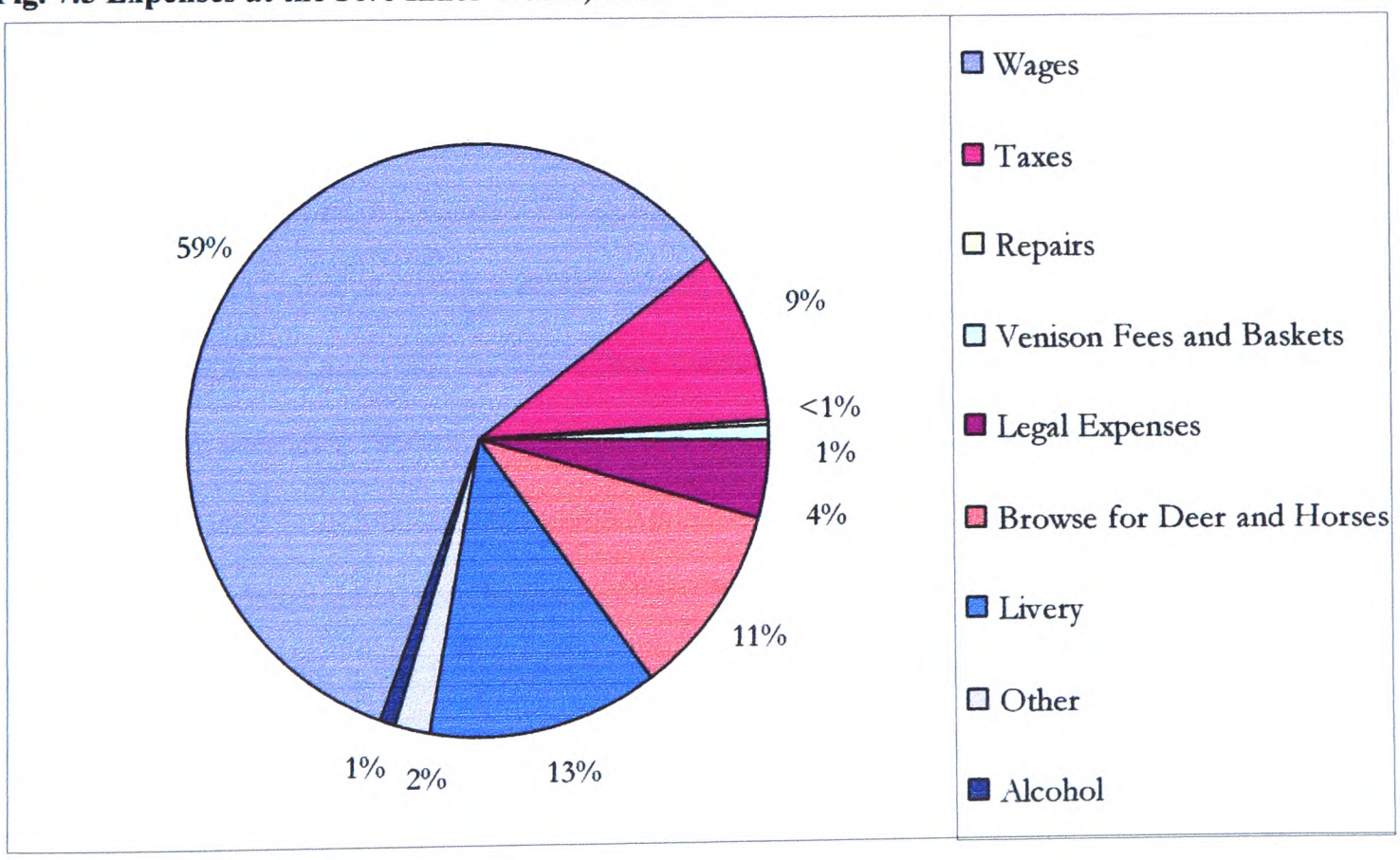
7.3.1 Expenses at the Walks

Fig. 7.4 Chase Expenses for Walks 'in hand', 1820-1828



*Cobley Walk not 'in hand' 1821-1827

Fig. 7.5 Expenses at the Five Inner Walks, 1820



Wages

In 1820, Lord Rivers employed five keepers, nine underkeepers, one promoter, and two assistants to man his five inner walks; their wages amounted to £505.6.6. Note from Tables 7.3 and 7.4 that during the period 1821-1827, total wages remained relatively constant, as did the wages and

numbers of employees for each of the walks. However, the totals for both 1820 and 1828 are noticeably higher. We might initially attribute this to the inclusion of Cobley in these years. In fact, although this is the case in 1828, in 1820, the Rushmore keeper simply received a particularly high quarterly wage (£42.10.0. compared with the £6-£14 received by other keepers). Thereafter, both keepers' and underkeepers' wages stabilise at £20-£35 and £30, respectively. (The tendency for keepers to receive lower wages than their subordinates is striking although likely explainable by the greater perquisites they enjoyed.) Other wages were less consistent; although the promoter's wages appear to rise from £5 in 1820 to £8.3.0. in 1827, two men often shared both the responsibilities and the earnings. Assistants' pay varied even more, perhaps depending on the type and amount of labour or perhaps simply on the man's age. The 1828 entries are the most detailed. At West Walk, James Wareham Senr received £3.0.0. and a new overcoat for 'assisting the Keepers at Night'. Meanwhile, his son received 4s. per week for twelve weeks' assistance – much less than David Dibbin, who received 12s. per week for nine weeks' assistance. Peter Roberts also received 12s. per week for 31 weeks at Burseystool, while Thomas Aslam (Adlam) received 8s. per week for 22 weeks.

Livery

The Cranborne Chase livery consisted of 'Green Coats Scarlet Waistcoats & Laced Hats' (DRO D/PIT/L51). Although between 1794 and 1804 its supply was clearly on an annual alternating basis, the odd years acting as top up, a similar pattern is less marked during the 1820s (Fig. 7.6). For example, between 1796 and 1802, the cost of hats alternated between £4.18.0. and £2.2.0., while the cost of breeches alternated between £7.0.0. and £3.0.0., but during the 1820s, the cost of hats varied from £6.6.0. in 1823 to 20.0.0. in 1824 to £8.5.0. in 1826 to £10.1.0. in 1827. Greater overall expenditure in the latter period may be due to generally higher costs or to the greater number of individuals to be clothed; in the former period, the number of underkeepers varied between four and eight whereas in the latter period it varied between six and ten. Either way, the obvious drop in 1828 is telling, disfranchisement by then being considered imminent. Rushmore, Staplefoot, and West Walk keepers sometimes received additional livery. Again, the reason is uncertain, as is the reason for keepers occasionally receiving money 'in lieu of livery'. Whether, in such cases, the keepers provided themselves with new attire or whether they pocketed the money and simply made do with the previous year's, we cannot say. The 1820 accounts include £11.12.8. for the tailor making general livery, £3.5.3.

for him making additional West Walk livery, and £85.18.10. for 'Messrs Stevens & Blackmore's Bill' for cloth.

Wounds Inflicted and Received

Of course, no keeper's outfit was complete without a weapon – Chafin mentions sticks, short hangers, staffs, and staves. Although no relevant entries appear prior to 1822, that year includes £3.9.3.

Table 7.3 Wages Paid to Keepers, Underkeepers, Promoters, and Assistants at Walks 'in hand', 1820-1828 (£.s.d.)

Year	Rushmore Staplefoot	West	Burseystool	Cobley*	Total
1820	295.4.6.	105.0.0.	68.12.0.	36.10.0.	505.6.6.
1821	149.0.0.	88.15.0.	62.17.0.	-	300.12.0.
1822	147.0.0.	80.0.0.	61.5.0.	-	288.5.0.
1823	148.0.6.	80.0.0.	58.14.6.	-	286.15.0.
1824	145.0.0.	80.0.0.	59.10.0.	-	284.10.0.
1825	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
1826	150.3.0.	83.0.0.	57.10.0.	-	290.13.0.
1827	162.11.5.	84.0.0.	65.1.0.	-	311.12.5.
1828	170.0.0.	90.16.0.	85.11.0.	172.0.0.	518.7.0.
Total	1366.19.5.	691.11.0.	519.0.6.	208.10.0.	2786.0.11.

*Cobley Walk not 'in hand' 1821-1827

Table 7.4 Numbers of Keepers (K), Underkeepers (U), Promoters (P), and Assistants (A) at Walks 'in hand', 1820-1828

Year	Rushmore Staplefoot				West				Burseystool				Cobley*				Total			
	K	U	P	A	K	U	P	A	K	U	P	A	K	U	P	A	K	U	P	A
1820	2	4	0	1	1	2	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	2	0	0	5	9	1	2
1821	2	3	0	1	1	2	1	0	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	4	6	2	2
1822	2	3	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	1	1	0	-	-	-	-	4	6	1	0
1823	2	3	0	2	1	2	0	0	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	4	6	1	3
1824	2	3	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	4	6	1	1
1825	No data				No data				No data				No data				No data			
1826	1	4	0	1	1	2	0	1	1	1	1	0	-	-	-	-	3	7	1	2
1827	1	4	0	1	1	2	0	1	1	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	3	7	2	3
1828	1	5	0	0	1	2	0	3	1	1	2	1	1	2	0	0	4	10	2	4
Total	13	29	0	6	8	16	2	5	8	8	9	6	2	4	0	0	31	57	11	17

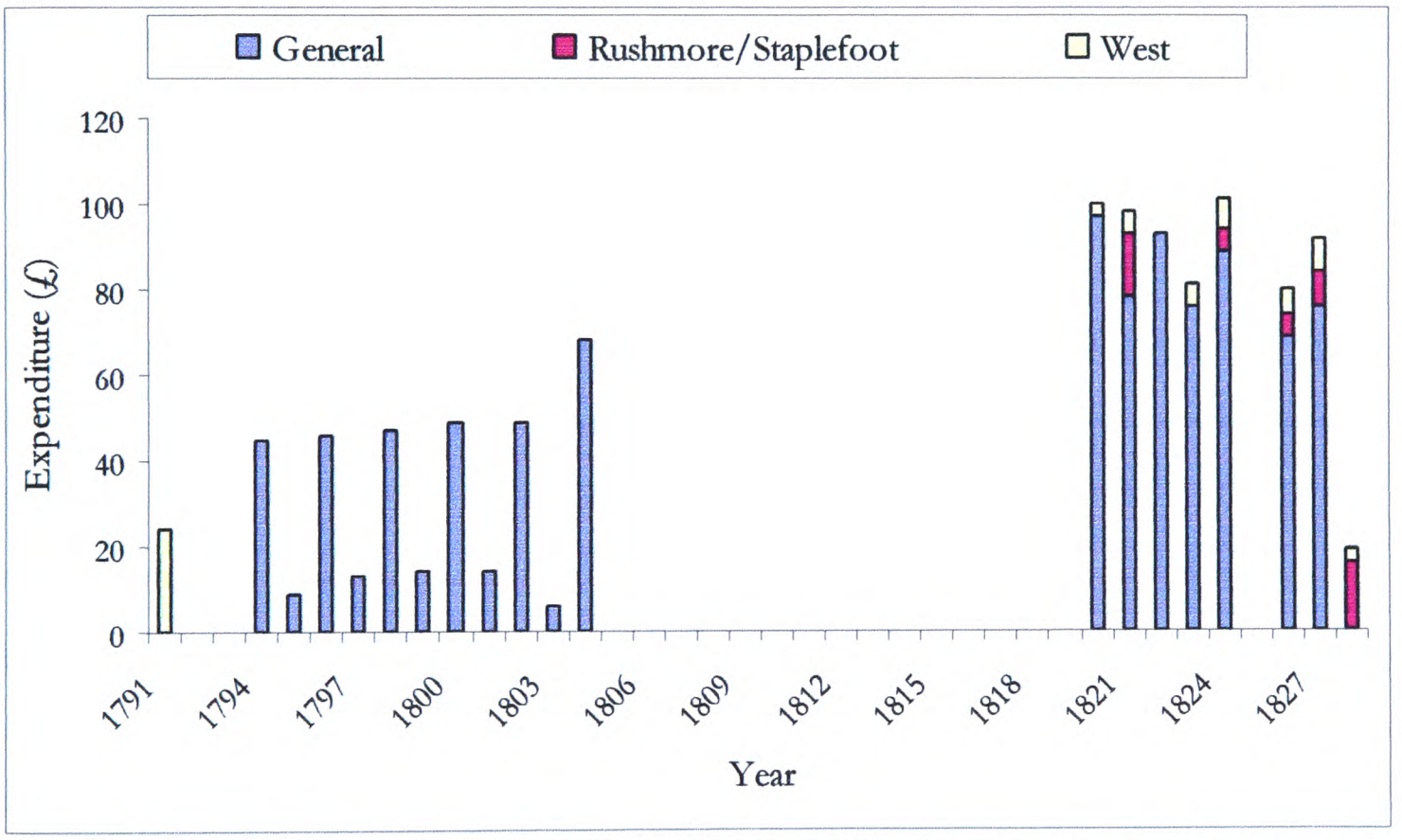
*Cobley Walk not 'in hand' 1821-1827

Table 7.5 Numbers of Keepers (K), Underkeepers (U), and Assistants (A) at Rushmore and Staplefoot Walks, and Wages Paid, 1820-1828 (£.s.d.)

Year	Rushmore				Staplefoot				Total
	Wages	K	U	A	Wages	K	U	A	Wages
1820	235.0.0.	1	3	0	60.4.6.	1	1	1	295.4.6.
1821	84.0.0.	1	2	1	65.0.0.	1	1	0	149.0.0.
1822	80.0.0.	1	2	0	67.0.0.	1	1	0	147.0.0.
1823	82.15.0.	1	2	1	65.0.0.	1	1	0	148.0.6.*
1824	80.0.0.	1	2	0	65.0.0.	1	1	0	145.0.0.
Total	561.15.0.				322.4.6.				884.5.0.

*Includes an additional £0.5.6. 'Henry Ferret's Bill for Stephen Burden assisting the Keepers' but unclear at which walk

Fig. 7.6 Cost of General and Extra Livery at Walks 'in hand', 1791-1828



Not shown on the graph: 1813 'Elias Bailey ½ a Years Wages Taxes Keepers Livery &c for West Walk by Account £82.19.3.'; 1822 'Robert Snow [West Walk] as a present on leaving his Place in lieu of livery House Rent &c £6.10.0.'; the amount comprised by livery being indistinguishable

for the gunsmith's bill; entries for powder and shot appear in 1823 (£8.19.8.), 1827 (£7.9.9.), and 1828 £4.0.10.), all for Rushmore and Staplefoot. Of course, both deer and deer stealers might be on the receiving end of keepers' gunfire – just as both deer and keepers might be on the receiving end of deer stealers' swindgels, 'deadly offensive weapons … resembling flails to thresh corn' (Chafin 1818, p35). Chafin (*ibid*, p39) recounts 'a most desperate engagement' in 1791, in which 'many wounds were given and received on both sides'. A decade earlier, in 1780, another notorious affray took place 'on Chettle Common, in Bursey-stool Walk, which was attended with very serious circumstances':

> the first blow that was struck was by the leader of the gang [of deer stealers], which broke a knee-cap of the stoutest man in the Chase, who was not only disabled from joining in the combat, but has been lame ever since. Another keeper received a blow from a swindgel, which broke three ribs, and was the cause of his death some time after (*ibid*, p35).

Such injuries required immediate medical attention. Hence, probably, the £6.1.0. for 'W Smart the Surgeon's Bill for Keepers' in 1822. (As an aside, might this 'W Smart' be Wake Smart, the author of *A Chronicle of Cranborne and the Cranborne Chase*? Although Wake Smart trained as a surgeon, he was only sixteen in 1822 – it would make rather a nice story, though.)

Accommodation

Another perquisite not mentioned before 1822 is house rent. However, the first entry, for 'Robert Snow as a present on leaving his Place in lieu of livery House Rent &c', implies that he had received it previously. Lord Rivers paid George Prince £5.0.0. 'House Rent' every year between 1823 and 1828; he also paid £8.0.0. for '2 Years Rent of [a] Cottage used as a Lodge for Jos Dunford' in 1826. In George Prince's case, this additional sum accounted for a relatively large proportion (seventeen per cent) of his wages, so a bonus indeed. Reference to 'Barrett's House' in both the 1822 and 1824 Rushmore House Repairs section suggests that James Barrett also enjoyed this perquisite. In fact, Lord Rivers probably provided accommodation for all of the (under)keepers, but unless he did not own the property or unless it needed repairs (Table 7.6), there was no reason for these buildings to appear in the accounts.

Alcohol

One final perquisite allowed the keepers was alcohol. Although entries appear throughout our period (totalling £254.18.11.), they do not specify 'for the keepers' until 1820, and even then, unspecified entries remain. Of the £161.14.3. spent on alcohol in the 1820s, approximately half (£79.1.6.) is designated for the keepers, all but £13.9.0. of which is for those at Rushmore and Staplefoot, the remainder going to those at Burseystool. Whereas this alcohol is in the form of beer in 1820, 1821 sees it substituted by malt, and later by malt and hops. Also of note is an 1826 entry of £6.18.8. 'for food supplied to Charles Samways and the other keepers' at West Walk.

Table 7.6 Cost of Repairs at the Walks and at Rushmore House, 1820-1828 (£.s.d.)

Year	Repairs at Walks	Repairs at House	Total
1820	16.4.9.	36.13.3.	52.18.0.
1821	14.14.8.	68.8.6.	83.3.2.
1822	20.7.9.	132.9.3.	152.17.0.
1823	4.19.2.	121.2.2.	126.1.4.
1824	53.10.0.	153.8.8.	206.18.8.
1825	No data	No data	No data
1826	4.0.0.+(16.0.0.)*	64.16.9.	68.16.9.+(16.0.0.)*
1827	51.10.6.	82.5.4.	133.15.10.
1828	6.16.2.	154.8.10.	161.5.0.
Total	172.3.0.+(16.0.0.)*	813.12.9.	985.15.9.+(16.0.0.)*

*£16.0.0. 'John Cox for 8 loads of Straw to the Kennell for Thatching, Dogs &c'; the amount comprised by straw for thatching being indistinguishable

Certificates and Taxes

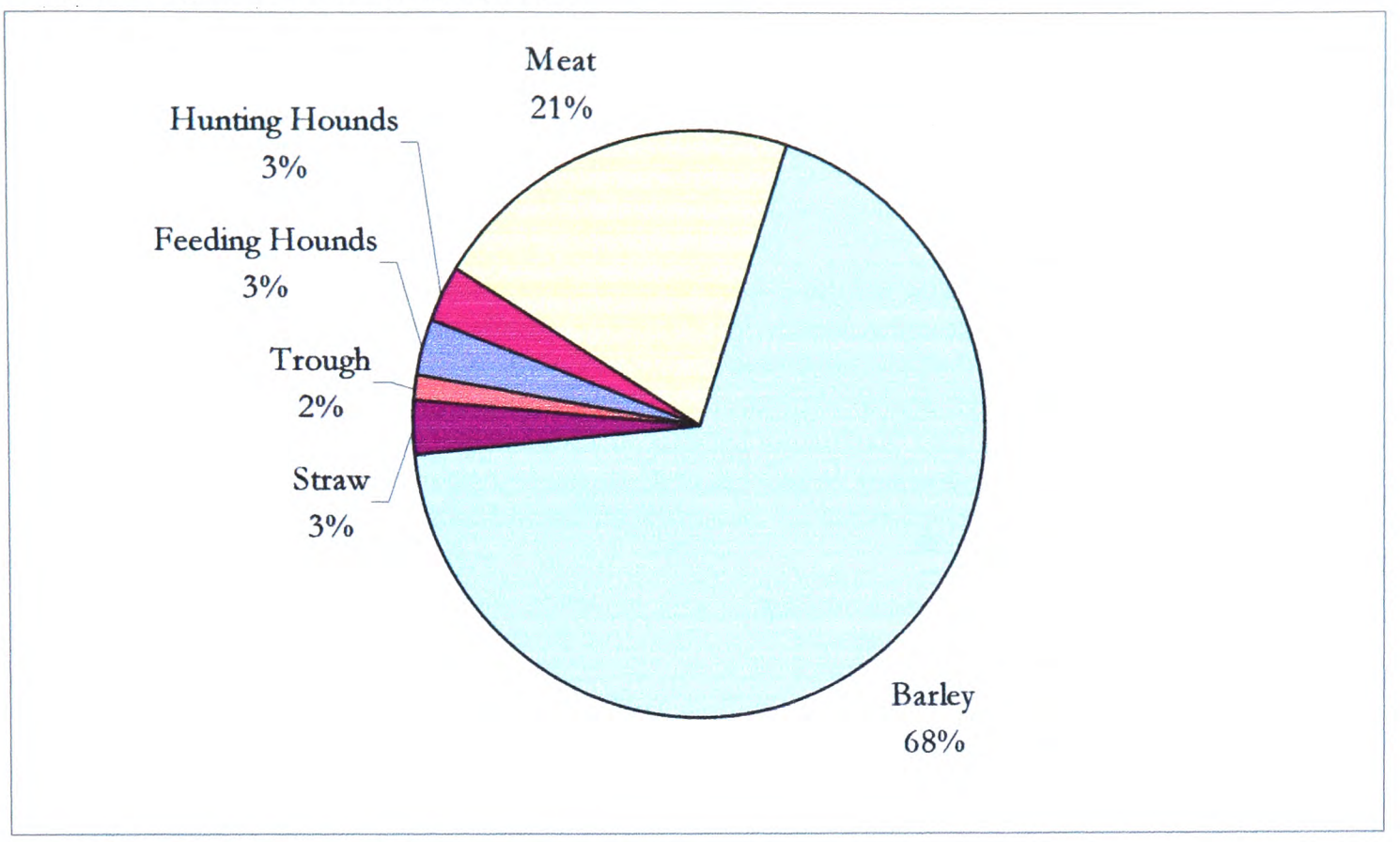
In 1820 Lord Rivers spent £30.4.8. on the keepers' horse tax, £40.19.6. on their game certificates, and a further £2.6.0. on other unspecified taxes. Table 7.7 summarises costs of horse and hound tax and game certificates from 1820 onwards. A number of other taxes, rates, and compositions also occasionally appear, mainly taxes charged at the individual lodges. Dog tax was charged at 14s. per hound between 1826 and 1828.

Table 7.7 Cost of Taxes and Game Certificates at Walks 'in hand', 1820-1828 (£.s.d.)

Year	Horse and Dog Tax	Game Certificates [no]	Other / Unspecified	Total
1820	30.4.8.	40.19.6. [11]	2.6.0.	73.10.2.
1821	8.11.9.+(5.2.9.)	44.14.0. [12]	10.13.3.+(5.2.9.)	69.1.9.
1822	24.12.0.	37.5.0. [10]	1.14.2.	63.11.2.
1823	10.11.6.+(21.11.7.)	26.1.6.[7]+(21.11.7.)	(21.11.7.)	58.4.7.
1824	12.5.0.+(7.11.0.)	37.5.0. [10]	6.14.4.+(7.11.0.)	63.15.4.
1825	No data	No data	No data	No data
1826	31.14.2.	37.5.0. [10]	0.15.7.	69.14.9.
1827	39.17.9.	37.5.0. [10]	1.1.8.	78.4.5.
1828	2.2.0.+(43.0.6.)	33.10.6. [9] +(43.0.6.)	20.10.6.	99.3.6.
Total	159.18.10.+(77.5.10.)	294.5.6. [79] +(64.12.1.)	43.15.6.+(34.5.4.)	575.5.8.

7.3.2 Expenses Keeping Hounds

Fig. 7.7 Expenses at the Kennels, 1820



Key to running a successful hunting establishment were the hounds, as emphasised in the 1713 *Orders & Instructions for the management of the Chase* (DRO D/PIT/M36), a copy of which hung in each of the lodges to remind keepers of their duties. Amongst these reminders:

> That the Ranger Keep a Pagg of Doggs at Rushmore Lodge and the same to consiste of Seaven Couple at the least and to be Kept constantly in Hunting
> Item That noe Keeper Under-Keeper or other person presume to Hunt otherwise than in the Company with his Ranger or Deputy and then with the Rangers Doggs only
> Item That all Warrants and Orders for Deer directed to the said Ranger be served by the said Doggs or immediately directed and Sent by the Ranger or his Deputy to the Severall Keepers as formerly

Only the costs associated with those dogs kennelled at Rushmore appear in the accounts – the exceptions being two 1820 entries of £5.0.0. each for 'Charles Longman [the keeper of Cobley Walk] keeping Hounds half a Year' and an 1821 entry of £0.15.0. for 'Thomas Bennett for Straw for thatching Bursey Stool Kennel'. Thus, the discussion below refers to the Rushmore and Staplefoot hounds only, these being the ones with which Lord Rivers hunted and the only ones constantly under his control (also see Fig. 7.7). Numbering sixteen in 1826 and nineteen in 1827, their feeding and hunting by both Rushmore and Staplefoot employees implies their joint kennelling.

Beckford, an expert on all things relating to kennels, provides an abundance of information about the housing, as well as hunting, of hounds in his 1781 *Thoughts upon Hunting*, and although his focus is on foxhounds, the same principles generally apply to deerhounds. First and foremost on his list of admonitions is cleanliness:

> not only absolutely necessary to the nose of the hound, but also to the preservation of his health. Dogs are naturally cleanly animals; they seldom, when they can help it, dung where they lie: air, and fresh straw, are necessary to keep them healthy. They are subject to the mange; a disorder to which poverty and nastiness will very much contribute. This, though easily stopped at its first appearance, if suffered to continue long, may lessen the powers of the animal; and the remedies which are then to be used, being in themselves violent, must injure his constitution. It had better be prevented: let the kennel therefore, be an object of your particular care (p14).

Straw

The 1820 account includes a payment of £2.15.0. 'for one Load of Straw for the kennel'. Although this straw may be for bedding, two additional entries listed under 'Rushmore Repairs' suggest a possible alternative use as thatch:

> Thomas Tayler the Thatchers Bill at the kennel and Garden Wall ... [£]3.17.10.
> Thomas Bennett for 3 loads of Straw for thatching Thompsons Cottage Garden Wall kennel and Woodcotts Lodge ... [£]12.0.0.

An 1826 entry of £16.0.0. reads, '8 loads of Straw to the Kennell for Thatching [*and*] Dogs &c'.

Fuel

Beckford (1781, p16) advises that 'if water should remain, through any fault in the floor, it should be carefully mopped up; for as warmth is in the greatest degree necessary to hounds after work, so damps are equally prejudicial'. Fires also kept cold and damp at bay, and were additionally useful in preparing the dogs' food. Entries for fuel wood supplied to the kennel appear in 1821, 1824, 1826, and 1827, totalling £77.10.5. – £62.10.5. of which was for faggots (1,250 in 1821 and 1,960 in 1824) and the remainder for carriage.

Disease

The prevention, containment, and treatment of disease were of great concern. While highlighting the mange as a particularly common ailment, Beckford describes distemper as 'the most

fatal (the plague only excepted) ... though not long known in this country, it is almost inconceivable what numbers have been destroyed by it in so short a period; several hundreds I can myself place to this mortifying account' (p89). Other local packs also suffered, EM Pleydell's mother writing to him in 1777/8: 'yr Fathers Hounds are many of them ill of the distemper' (DRO D/TRD/C8). Men like Robert Squar(r)ey, the druggist, were thus of vital importance. Beckford reviews common treatments for a variety of ailments, suggesting Peruvian bark or Norris's drops administered with Port to combat distemper and two mixtures containing train oil, turpentine, sulphur, quicksilver, and lard to combat the mange – the source of these various ingredients: the druggist. Although we know neither what he supplied nor to what end, Squarrey appears in the accounts in 1824, 1826, and 1828, receiving a total of £8.3.6. – more than the amount paid for the keepers' medical treatment, although in both cases, additional costs may have simply gone unrecorded. With cleanliness deemed so important in preventing disease, it was likely to have been Moses Brixey's incentive for killing 237 rats at the kennel during an 1827 infestation; he received £0.19.9. for his troubles.

Hunting and Feeding

As well as hunting the hounds, the keepers also cared for them. Beckford refers to two important figures in the day-to-day running of kennels, the feeder and the huntsman, both of whom Lord Rivers employed between 1820 and 1828. In 1820, he paid John Dunford, the Staplefoot keeper, £2.2.0. for 'hunting the hounds' and James Barrett, a Rushmore underkeeper, the same amount for 'feeding' them. In 1821, the huntsman received only £1.1.0., and in 1822 and 1823 a single underkeeper held both positions, but thereafter, Moses Brixey, the Rushmore keeper, took charge of hunting, leaving James Wright, an underkeeper, to feed. Again, Beckford proves an invaluable resource, shedding a great deal of light on this latter role. First, though, what did the hounds eat?

The 1820 account includes £9.11.0. for twelve horses and a cow, plus 8s. carriage; £2.7.6. for 124 deer; £2.3.0. for unspecified 'flesh'; and £45.15.3. for barley meal. 'Dog Horses' typically cost between 14s. and 16s., although they ranged from 10s. to 20s. (compare this with the £13.0.0. paid for a new horse for Moses Brixey in 1820). Horsemeat therefore constituted most of the cost of the dogs' meat intake both in this year and in others (Table 7.8). This use of horsemeat is something of which Beckford would surely approve, for, as he (1781, p40) explains, 'a horse fresh killed is an excellent meal for hounds, after a very hard day; but they should not hunt till the third day after it. The bones

broken are good food for poor hounds, as there is great proof in them.' He (*ibid*) further adds, 'sheep-trotters are very sweet food, and will be of service when horse-flesh is not to be had. Bullock's bellies may be also of some use, if you can get nothing else.' Hence, perhaps the cow supplied in 1820 and another in 1826. Hudson observes that dogs received their horsemeat in the field as well as in the kennel. He (1910, p84) writes, rather critically,

> a good many dogs used for hunting the deer were kept a few miles from Winterbourne Bishop [Martin] and were fed by the keepers in a very primitive manner. Old, worn-out horses were bought and slaughtered for the dogs. A horse would be killed and stripped of its hide somewhere away in the woods, and left for the hounds to fatten on its flesh, tearing at and fighting over it like so many jackals. When only partially consumed the carcass would become putrid; then another horse would be killed and skinned at a spot perhaps a mile away, and the pack would start feeding afresh there.

(As an ecological point of interest, 'the result of so much carrion lying about was that ravens were attracted in numbers to the place and were so numerous as to be seen in scores together. Later, when the deer-hunting sport declined in the neighbourhood, and dogs were no longer fed on carrion, the birds decreased year by year' (*ibid*).) Despite Hudson's disapproval, feeding hounds horsemeat appears to have been a widespread and long-standing practice, Sassoon (1928, p106) recalling the Master of the Potford whose 'whips were mounted on under-bred and raw-boned animals which might well have been sent to the kennels for the hounds to eat'.

Deer meat played a less significant part in the dogs' diet. Despite their being readily available, deer carcasses cease to appear in the accounts after 1821. The animals being Lord Rivers's own, the costs listed are for keepers' fees rather than for purchases, as indicated by the 1821 entry: 'James Barrett *collecting* 15 dead deer' (emphasis added), each one at 4s. Chafin (1818, pp29-30) highlights the importance of dogs acquiring a taste for venison, explaining that,

> it was customary, in the last century, for those sportsmen who were addicted to the sport of Buck-hunting, and who regularly followed it, to meet every season on the 29th day of May, King Charles's Restoration, with oak-boughs in their hats or caps, to shew their loyalty ... and to hunt young male deer, in order to enter the young hounds, and to stoop them to their right game, and to get the older ones in wind and exercise, preparatory to the commencement of the buck-killing season. This practice was termed *blooding the hounds*; and the young deer killed were called *blooding-deer*, and their venison was deemed fit for an epicure.

The reference to epicurean palates suggests that the dogs did not gorge on these deer in the way they did on Hudson's horses. Perhaps the deer were part-butchered on the spot and the dogs rewarded with

suitable off cuts, whereby they learned to associate their behaviour and their reward, but without sacrificing the best meat to them. This was certainly the case in medieval times: in a procedure known as 'the *curée* ... the paunch and small intestines were emptied, washed and chopped up, mixed with blood and bread and fed to the hounds. Sometimes the heart, lungs, and liver were included' (Almond 2003, p78).

> Precise directions in the late medieval hunting treatises as to the sequence of events ... signal both the practical and ceremonial importance of the *curée*. It fed and trained the hounds by the association of reward after a successful hunt, and it provided a pause and symbolic end after the physical excitement of the mounted chase (*ibid*, p79).

In addition, 'a piece of gristle called the 'corbyn bone' was always removed and flung to the crows or ravens as an offering' (*ibid*, p77). Hudson's horses likely served a similar purpose to the 'blooding-deer': teaching dogs to associate a trail with a kill and thus with a reward.

Such training aside, barley, not meat, accounted for the bulk of the dogs' diet. It also accounted for an increasingly large percentage of cost, steadily rising from 76 per cent in 1820 to 96 per cent in 1828. Although Beckford acknowledges barley's importance as a staple food, he personally believed that

> oatmeal ... makes the best meat for hounds: barley is certainly the cheapest; and in many kennels they give barley on that account; but it ... does not mix up so well, nor is there so much proof in it as in oatmeal. If mixed (an equal quantity of each), it will then do very well; but barley alone will not. Much also depends on the goodness of the meal itself, which is not often attended to. If you do not use your own, you should buy a large quantity of it any time before harvest, and keep it by you (1781, p40).

However, no matter what its quality, the barley must not be boiled, for 'boiling, which made oatmeal thick, made barley thin; and ... when you feed with barley only, it should not be put into the copper, but be scalded with the liquor, and mixed up in a bucket. I find there is in my kennel a large tub on purpose, which contains about half a hogshead' (*ibid*, pp42-43).

The composition of their diet aside, Beckford also asserts the importance of a well-established feeding regimen, his own dogs being

> fed at eight o'clock ... Their first feed is of barley and oatmeal mixed, an equal quantity of each. Flesh is afterwards mixed up with the remainder, for such hounds as are poor, who are then drafted off into another kennel, and let in to feed altogether. When the flesh is all eaten, the pack are again let in ... At three o'clock, those that are to hunt the next day are ... let into

> the feeding-yard, where a small quantity of oatmeal (about three buckets) is prepared for them, mixed up thick. Such as are tender, or bad feeders, have a handful of boiled flesh given to them afterwards. When they are not to hunt the next day, they are fed once only, at eleven o'clock (*ibid*, p37).

The dogs typically ate from troughs, which 'should be wide at the bottom, and have wooden covers' (*ibid*, p15). A new one was installed at Rushmore in 1820, at a cost of 10s.

Returning briefly to barley – looking at Table 7.8, we might wonder at the sudden rise in expenditure in 1824. The two most obvious possibilities are an increase in price and an increase in demand. Unless breeding suddenly increased, the latter is unlikely, the only entries for the purchase of new hounds dating from 1803 and 1826: in the former case seven dogs were purchased at £1.2.6. each (total £7.17.6.); in the latter case three dogs were purchased at £1.13.4. each (total £5.0.0.). Either way, barley continued to account for the majority of food costs, and food, the majority of overall costs in keeping hounds.

Table 7.8 Cost of Feeding Rushmore Hounds, 1820-1828 (£.s.d.)

Year	Horse and Cow Meat	Deer Meat	Unspecified 'Flesh'	Barley Meal	Total Spent on Food	Total Spent on Hounds
1820	9.19.0.	2.7.6.	2.3.0.	45.15.3.	60.4.9.	67.13.9. + (15.17.0.)
1821	(46.0.4.)*	0.5.0.	-	(46.0.4.)	46.5.4.	61.3.1.
1822	16.4.9.	-	-	69.1.3.	75.6.0.	79.10.0.
1823	7.13.2.	-	-	53.16.0.	61.9.2.	65.13.2.
1824	8.18.0.	-	-	120.5.3.	129.3.3.	154.0.0.
1825	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
1826	7.14.0.	-	-	126.18.6.	134.12.6.	188.18.8. + (24.0.10.)
1827	8.17.4.	-	-	138.10.9.†	147.8.1.	175.16.6.
1828	5.12.0.	-	-	129.19.6.	135.11.6.	144.7.0.
Total	64.18.3. + (46.0.4.)	2.12.6.	2.3.0.	684.6.6. + (46.0.4.)	790.0.7.	937.2.2. + (39.17.10.)

*£46.0.4. 'Moses Brixeys Bill for Barley Meal and Dog Horses' together
†£143.10.9. for one year's barley meal, deduct £5.0.0. for barley meal used by RR Harvey (the Steward)

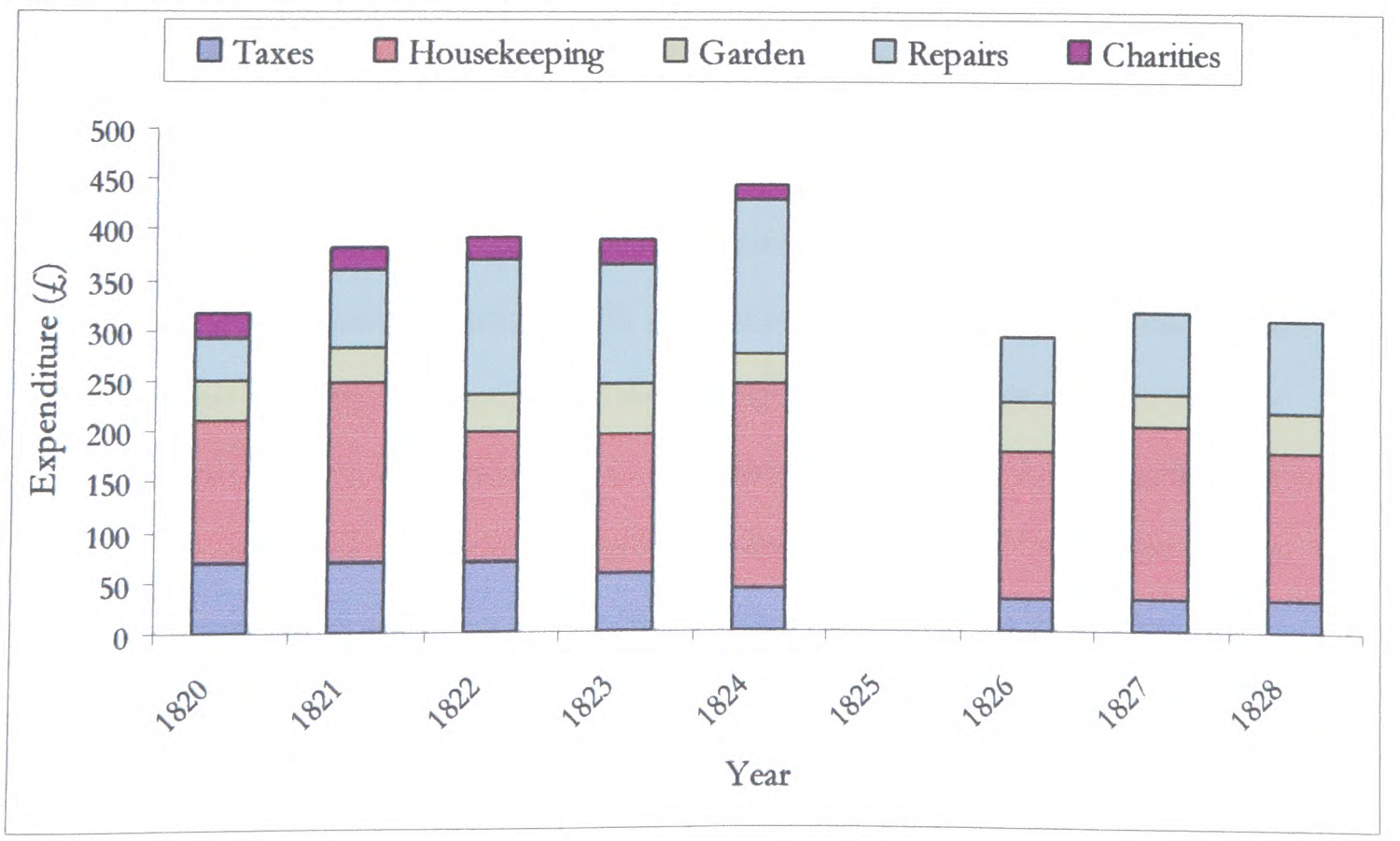
7.3.3 Expenses at Rushmore House

Not all costs listed as Chase Payments relate directly to the Chase. To successfully manage and maintain his franchise, Lord Rivers required keepers and hounds; he did not require a country

house complete with gardens and pleasure grounds; or did he? The literature is full of references to the social significance of country houses. Thus, although it was not integral to the daily running of Cranborne Chase, Rushmore had its part to play, not only in accommodating Lord Rivers when he visited, but also in accommodating his guests, and in such a way that emphasised his Lordship's social standing. (Recall that following the 1826 Tollard Hunt, 'several gentlemen from a distance retired to Lord Rivers's house, at Rushmoor, where they passed the night'.) From 1811 onwards, House Expenses appear in the Chase Payments. Yet, Lord Rivers lived elsewhere throughout most of our period. He sold his estate at Stratfield Saye only in 1814, and although housekeeping accounts suggest Rushmore's refurbishment and restocking in 1818, an 1821 entry still refers to the 'payment of his Lordship's Housekeeping Bill at Rushmore during *his stay there in Sept*' (emphasis added). This ties in nicely not only with the buck-hunting season generally but with the Tollard Hunt particularly. Rushmore House was, then, Lord Rivers's hunting lodge. As Hawkins (1980, p136) explains, 'in 1794 an Enclosure Act made it possible to add 776 acres of pasture and woodland so that it became – in Bowles's words – "a most desirable residence for any nobleman or gentleman who may be fond of retirement and rural sports". In fact it was mainly used as a summer residence and hunting-box.'

The House expenses consist of taxes, housekeeping bills, garden bills, repairs, and donations. The proportion comprised by each appears in Fig. 7.8.

Fig. 7.8 Rushmore House Expenses, 1820-1828



7.4 Disfranchisement Draws Near

7.4.1 1828 Deer Sales

Having considered several years' expenditure on Cranborne Chase, we now consider a year in which Lord Rivers might instead profit by his franchise. Indeed, 1827 brought an important change in the Chase's financial management: following 7 & 8 Geo. 4. c.27. venison could be legally bought and sold for the first time in more than two hundred years. In fact, the Chase accounts reveal that venison was sold from Cranborne Chase prior to 1827, sometimes in quite large quantities: £164.3.0. in 1815, £700.10.0. in 1816, £661.4.10. in 1817, £488.0.0. in 1818, £286.13.0. in 1819, and £85.18.0. in 1826. Lord Rivers's greatest customer was a Mr Grove of London, who paid £683.13.0. in 1818 and 1819. Messrs Hale and Jennings, who bought nine bucks in 1826, were probably also London dealers. Other sales were of only one or two deer at a time, and generally local – Beaminster, Weymouth, Dorchester, and Ebbesborne in 1826 (DRO D/PIT/E174-E177, E184). These previous sales aside, the implications of the new law for Lord Rivers were twofold: not only could he now (legally) profit from his franchise, but he could also value it in an economically legitimate way. This in turn had important implications for the Chase's disfranchisement, as revealed by two advertisements in *The Salisbury and Winchester Journal*. The first, dated 7 July 1828, explains that

> Cranbourne Chase Deer. In consequence of the Act having passed for the Disfranchisement of this Chase, the Deer, of all ages, will be Sold, between this and October, 1830. The Bucks of this Season will be on sale for London, Bath, Bristol, and the Market Towns of Dorset and Wilts. The Does of the next Season will be similarly disposed of at the proper time; and the Young Deer for stocking parks, &c. will be disposed of at any time. The season for killing bucks commences in July and ends on the 30th of September; and for does, from the 1st November till the 10th of February (HRO 116M86/24).

The second advertisement, dated 15 December 1828, confirms that 'the Fat Does of this Season are now for Sale' (*ibid*). However, an article in *The Times*, dated 13 August 1828, reveals that keepers struggled to meet the demand for venison, the deer having become more wary and therefore more difficult to catch (Fig. 7.9). Hence, probably, an 1828 entry in the accounts: 'John Mantell for Deer Nets £21.5.0.' – nets being more typically employed by deer stealers than by keepers, but perhaps proving more expedient in such times of need (Best (1948, p119) tells us that 'the method [of poaching] employed was to drive the deer along their established runs into nets or toils and then to dispatch them'). These problems aside, sales nonetheless yielded £1806.10.0., with a clear profit of £355.19.8.

The *1828 Account of Deer* (DRO D/PIT/E4 – Table 7.9) lists the number of bucks and does sold dead from five of the walks – assuming Staplefoot's inclusion under 'Rushmore' as in other accounts – as well as the number of deer of unspecified sex sold live from the Chase as a whole. In all, 291 bucks worth £1174.9.0. and 638 does worth £601.10.6. went to market, while 60 live deer worth

Fig. 7.9 'CRANBORNE CHASE. – The slaughter of the fawns', from *The Times* Digital Archive, 13 August 1828

CRANBORNE CHASE.—The slaughter of the fawns in this chase has continued longer than was first announced, and a great number are still living, in consequence of the shyness of the does amidst their many alarms, and the difficulty of finding them among the thickest recesses of the coppices to which they now resort for concealment, especially in those parts where the fern abounds, in which they lie closely during the day. From the same causes the killing of the bucks proceeds but slowly, as these animals are become fearful of visiting the open sheep-downs, and other pastures of the Dorsetshire hills, and confine themselves mostly to the covers. It is reported that the chase-keepers, therefore, find difficulty in supplying immediate demands for venison. It has been publicly announced during several weeks past, that the bucks of this season will be on sale for London and other principal cities, as well as for the market-towns of Dorset and Wilts, until the 30th of September next, and the does from the 1st of November to the 10th of February; also the young deer, for stock, at any time. It is the opinion of the neighbouring inhabitants that the killing or removal of the deer can scarcely be accomplished within the time proposed—viz., to the 10th of October, 1830; but as the privileges of the Chase will then have ceased, according to the act of Parliament recently passed, the owners and occupiers of the lands will have liberty to cultivate or otherwise enjoy them, and the few remaining deer will scarcely occasion any material inconvenience to the country.—*World.*

£89.0.0. went to other, unspecified, forests, chases, or parks. These totals reveal a marked difference in average price: bucks were worth roughly four times more than does at approximately £4.0.0. each, while live deer averaged approximately £1.10.0. In a letter dated February 1829, Lord Rivers's steward details 'the lowest price of the different ages of Deer in the Chace' to Mr William Wood Esq.: 'Bucks five years and upwards £5.0.0. each – four years £4.0.0. each – three years £5.0.0. [per] Brace and the Females £1.0.0. … I shall be happy to supply you to any extent' (GRO D2700/QB4/1/10). Although no obvious age differentiation appears in the 1828 account, the relatively low value of deer sold alive indicates a likely preponderance of does. Why so many more does than bucks were sold, both dead and alive, is unclear, and so, too, why Cobley deer were worth substantially less than their Rushmore, West, and Burseystool counterparts.

Unfortunately, no similar accounts survive for 1829 and 1830. Had they done, we might have compared both the sex and number of deer being sold, thereby forming a better picture of the Chase

population. Of course, a certain unknown number would be hunted by or on behalf of Lord Rivers, while a further unknown number would be taken by deer stealers. Although an 1828 estimate of between 12,000 and 20,000 deer seems too high (only two years earlier *The Times* suggests a slightly lesser minimum of 'ten to twelve thousand', whilst West, writing in 1816 (pv), observes that 'the deer of the Chace, of the fallow kind, [are] supposed to be in number from 5 to 8,000'), a seventeenth century estimate of only 2,000 seems too low, especially considering that 'in 1825 in one walk alone ... near the village of Ashmore, more than 500 carcases were counted, the victims of 'murrain', a term which included any disease ... to which a more precise description could not be applied' (Whitlock 1979, p78). Inclement weather might also trigger widespread death, although with one unusual benefit: 'in very severe winters, when food became scarce, the mortality amongst [the deer was] known to be excessive, and then their carcasses were eagerly sought after by agriculturalists for the purpose of manure' (Smart 1841, pp120-121). Under more pleasant conditions, Webb saw 'as many as 200 [deer] at a time spread over [Trow] Down like a flock of Sheep'. for, although 'the Deer [kept] close to their Woods the greatest part of the day ... in Hot Weather, they then [went] out on the Open Downs for Air in large Herds' (DRO D/PIT/M38).

The potential for relatively rapid change in population is highlighted by two seventeenth century censuses carried out in Vernditch (owned by Lord Pembroke): 'about the yeare 1650 there were in Verneditch-walke, which is a part of Cranborne Chase, a thousand or twelve hundred fallow deere', but by '1689, there [were] not above five hundred' (Aubrey 1656). If twelve hundred deer inhabited one walk in 1650, why not ten times more inhabiting six walks nearly two hundred years later? Although Whitlock deems this possibility 'gross overstocking', the aforementioned upper estimates were obviously accepted at the time. Recall that 'the gentlemen at the [1826 Tollard] Hunt ... expressed themselves as rather desirous that the stock of deer should be reduced to about 5,000' (*The Times* Digital Archive, 7 September 1826), indicating that numbers were substantially higher than that. In fact, Lord Rivers's estimates may have been inflated for political reasons, to emphasise the enormity of his franchise as negotiations over disfranchisement continued. His and others' estimates nonetheless provide a general picture of change over time, and may offer an insight into the relationship between the person counting and the authority he served.

Table 7.9 1828 Account of Deer (DRO D/PIT/E4)

Summary of Receipts

No. of Deer		**£.s.d.**	**£.s.d.**	**£.s.d.**
109	Rushmore Walk Buck Season		468.11.0.	
	Deduct Arrears	10.0.0.		
	Deduct Carriage	11.11.0 .	21.11.0.	447.0.0.
74½	West Walk Buck Season		321.16.0.	
	Deduct Arrears	10.0.0.		
	Deduct Carriage	5.5.6.	15.5.6.	306.10.6.
52	Bursey Stool Walk Buck Season		232.8.0.	
	Deduct Carriage	7.11.0 .	7.11.0.	224.17.0.
55½	Cobley Walk Buck Season		151.14.0.	151.14.0.

				1130.1.6.
252½	Rushmore Walk Doe Season		239.14.0.	
	Deduct Arrears	10.10.0.	10.10.0.	229.4.0.
210½	West Walk Doe Season		198.11.0.	198.11.0.
107	Bursey Stool Walk Doe Season		117.19.0.	
	Deduct Arrears	3.12.0.	3.12.0.	114.7.0.
68	Cobley Walk Doe Season		45.6.6.	45.6.6.

				587.8.6.
60	Live Deer Sold from the above Walks		89.0.0.	*89.0.0.*
---				---
989				*1806.10.0.*
Total Amount of Disbursements in 1828 Brought forward				*1450.10.4.*
Balance Carried to 1829 Record				*355.19.8.*

More recently, Kenchington (1945, p114) deemed deer censuses 'one of the unsettled problems of [forest history] one person's guess [being] as good as the other's'; as he (*ibid*) explains,

> evidence of the numbers of wild species with free range in wild and unenclosed lands is largely inferential even nowadays, since a standstill accurate census account of the whole area simultaneously is impossible. Mediaeval and even Jacobean counts must have been largely guesswork, and were probably inflated to some extent to please authority.

Mayle (1996, p188) agrees:

> in woodlands, drive censuses are impractical due to the difficulties of flushing deer from and coordinating large numbers of people in thick cover, together with the associated organisational and expense problems ... hence indirect methods are more usually used. [However,] Counts of signs such as fraying, scrapes and tracks are more likely to give an index of activity rather than deer numbers and damage assessment to indicate deer numbers is not practical due to the complex relationship between tree damage, deer numbers and other habitat variables.

7.4.2 1828-1830 Deer Culling, Hunting, and Survival

In the run up to disfranchisement, Lord Rivers despatched his remaining deer in a variety of ways. Some he sold alive to the likes of Mr Wood, but as a letter dated July 1830 reveals, most died in what more resembled a cull than a hunt:

> as for the quantity of deer that will be left after the 10th of Oct. next we cannot at present say as the keepers are very busily employed in destroying of them and gets all the help they can so that they beset a coppice all round and turns the hounds in and as they come out they endeavour to shoot them and then they go to another (Hall, quoted in Hawkins 1983, pxvi).

Of course, both bucks and does would be in relatively good condition in October, a fact likely to have been considered by Mr Drax before seeking 'permission of the Proprietors of Woods in Cranborne Chase to hunt the deer that may remain there after ... disfranchisement' (DRO D/ANG/B5/42). Mr Drax's application and its results warrant further mention for two reasons: firstly, they again highlight the important role of patronage in hunting, and secondly, they highlight some of the practical problems surrounding the clearance of deer. Writing to Lord Anglesey, Castleman describes Mr Drax, whose seat was at nearby Charborough Park, as 'a Gentleman of large property in this Neighbourhood' (*ibid*). Yet, despite his wealth, he is a stranger to his Lordship, not being of the same titled class. In fact, the Erle-Draxes were a well-established local family, one branch deriving its money from politics and the other from sugar plantations and northern estates. However, our Mr Drax was a relative newcomer, having married into the family in 1827, at which time he changed his name from Sawbridge to Drax in deference to his wife's substantial inheritance.

Lord Rivers and other 'Proprietors of Woods' emphasised their superiority in granting Drax permission to hunt; however, Castleman's letter suggests that their reasons were not merely political. Despite an initial widespread belief that 'the few remaining deer will scarcely occasion any material inconvenience to the country' (Fig. 7.9), Castleman now warned 'that a considerable Number of deer will remain after the 10th of October and as the deer fencing will then cease it is of importance to the proprietors by every possible means to effect their destruction as soon as possible to prevent their injuring the crops' (DRO D/ANG/B5/42). Although the area's status as a Chase exasperated the proprietors in many ways, their land was not without means of protection while that status continued. Disfranchisement signified an end to Lord Rivers's rights but not to the proprietors' problems.

Nor were the deer the only cause of trouble. Having received permission to hunt Lord Anglesey's woods, Drax encountered those who deemed themselves above seeking consent: our old friends, the residents of Sixpenny Handley. Drax complained to his Lordship that

> I had availed myself of your very obliging permission of hunting the Deer in your Lordship's Covers only a few times before I was annoyed by persons with guns shooting the Deer before my hounds were there, my huntsman informed me there were nearly twenty persons with guns & inconsequence he was obliged to call off the Hounds, being in danger of being shot ... The object I conceive the various parties have in [mind] is to deter my hunting there – My mode of catching the Deer is too expeditious to suit them & they would be desirous of having the entire disposal of the Deer & to kill them at their convenience (*ibid*).

In fact, Ashmore witnessed the only human casualty of disfranchisement: 'Samuel Stainer of Tollard Royal, 50 years, accidentally shot in Stickway Road on 19 October 1830, died on the 29th, when a party of the parish were assembled to destroy the deer on the disfranchisement of the Chase' (quoted in Hawkins 1980, p57).

7.5 The Changing Nature of Hunting on Cranborne Chase

7.5.1 Cranborne Chase: a Hunting Landscape

The remainder of this chapter focuses on hunting itself. We have already considered who hunted – both legally and illegally; we have considered the economic and symbolic value of hunting; and we have considered the costs of hunting. We have also considered when people hunted and, to some extent, what. The two questions yet to be answered are how they hunted and whether how and what they hunted changed during our period.

Lord Rivers happily spent a small fortune on Cranborne Chase, retaining centuries-old principles and structures in preserving his deer. But by the end of the eighteenth century, both game and fox preservation were also locally well established and vying for the sportsman's attention. Sport, like everything else, was modernising, influenced by changing class identities and by changing land use patterns – a trend that accelerated throughout the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, certain values remained in place; the area encompassed by Cranborne Chase was, after all, deeply rooted in its hunting past.

'Only those Dorset born, and those who are acquainted with the story and evolution of hunting, know what an important and interesting part the county has played in this connection. Dorset and sport, right down the ages, seem to have been synonymous and indivisible' (Fairfax-Blakeborough n.d., p3). This might particularly apply to Cranborne Chase, which was first and foremost a hunting franchise and remained so throughout its history. Even after Cranborne Chase's disfranchisement in 1830, hunting and shooting continued, but the fallow deer was no longer the quarry of choice. Thus, we first turn our attention to it, the single species that for centuries most influenced the local landscape and its human inhabitants, but which depended on the Chase's continued existence for its own.

7.5.2 Deer Hunting

Fallow Deer

According to Cox (1697, p13), 'venison ... is so called, from the means whereby the Beasts are taken, *quoniam ex Venatione capiuntur* [roughly: by hunting]; and being hunted, [is] most wholsome'; indeed, '*Buck*-Venison is incomparable Food' (*ibid*, p75) – Cranborne Chase venison rating particularly well in both the gift and the black markets. However, venison's nutritional significance diminished through the early modern period, with important implications for hunting:

> self-sufficiency was becoming no longer the imperative aim it had once been: fortified with the wealth of the later eighteenth century the households of the big landowners were not likely to go hungry from a lack of venison – agreeable though it might be to have it. It was the sheer pleasure of hunting that weighed increasingly heavily against economic advantage (Hawkins 1980, p80).

Although pleasure had always been integral to hunting, it now dominated. Keepers might worry about the quality, quantity, and supply of deer, but for Lord Rivers, the rangers, and their guests the quality of the chase was paramount.

Not only did this emphasis on recreation engender social camaraderie, it also stimulated ongoing improvement in horse and particularly hound breeding. Because success and failure both lay with the hounds, 'having hounds that are steady and remain on the line of not only fallow buck, but one particular buck, is *the whole essence and skill* of buck hunting' (Whitehead 1980, p137 – emphasis added). Chased deer carry a different scent from other deer, and because 'a buck, when first roused, will generally circle round looking for other deer before taking off' (*ibid*, p141), a sensitive nose is of utmost significance; hence Beckford's (1781, p13) conclusion that 'it is that faculty on which all our hopes depend'. But scent was equally important when *not* hunting deer, as Beckford elaborates: 'my hounds hunt frequently in Cranborn Chase, and are steady from deer' (*ibid*, p182) and 'my beagles were remarkably steady: they hunted hare in Cranborn Chase, where deer are in plenty, and would draw for hours, without taking the least notice of them' (*ibid*, p183). But, as he (*ibid*) continues,

> when tired of hare-hunting, I was inclined to try if I could find any diversion in hunting of fallow deer. I had been told that it would be impossible to do it with those hounds that had been made steady from them; and, to put it to the trial, I took them into a cover of my own, which has many ridings cut in it, and where are many deer. The first deer that we saw we halloo'd; and, by great encouragement and constant hallooing, there were but few of these steady hounds but would run the scent. They hunted deer constantly from that day, and never lost one afterwards.

In an effort to improve scent, hunting occurred at hours that favoured the hounds. Chafin (1818, pp28-29) recalls that in the seventeenth century, the hunt's

> time of meeting ... seems invariably to have been at four o'clock in the evening; and the custom of the sportsmen seems to have been that of taking a slight repast at two o'clock, and to have their dinners at the most fashionable hours of the present day. The hunting in an evening was certainly a well-judged measure, and advantageous to the sport [in] every way. The deer were at this time upon their legs, and more easily found; they were empty, and more able to run, and to shew sport; and as the evening advanced, and the dew fell, the scent gradually improved, and the cool air enabled the horses and the hounds to recover their wind, and to go through their work without injury.

By the end of the eighteenth century, 'the company generally [went] out very early for the benefit of the morning; sometimes a deer [was] ready lodged; if not, the coverts [were] drawn till one [was] roused' (Osbaldeston, quoted in Whitehead 1980, p144) – a situation more akin to that at the 1826 Tollard Hunt. Presumably, 'the benefit of the morning' was similar to that of the evening, as described by Chafin.

Second only to its sense of smell was a dog's 'extraordinary sagacity', which Beckford (1781, pp197-198) attributes to

> the manner in which he is treated: he is the constant companion of his instructor and benefactor; the man whom he was first taught to fear, and has since learned to love. Ought we to wonder that he should be obedient to him? Yet who can view without surprise, the hounds and the deer amusing themselves familiarly together upon the same lawn; living, as it were, in the most friendly intercourse; and know that a word from the keeper will dissolve the amity? The obedient dog, gentle when unprovoked, flies to the well-known summons: how changed from what he was! Roused from his peaceful state, and cheered by his master's voice, he is now urged on with a relentless fury, that only death can satisfy – the death of the *very deer* he is encouraged to pursue; and which the various scents that cross him in his way cannot tempt him to forsake. The business of the day over, see him follow, careless and contented, his master's steps, to repose upon the same lawn where the frightened deer again return, and are again indebted to *his* courtesy for their wonted pasture – wonderful proofs of obedience, sagacity, and penetration!

This combination of good scent and obedience was of particular importance in buck hunting, for although the fox's reputation is better known, the fallow is, allegedly, also cunning:

> a hunted fallow buck is full of wiles ... he will make for other deer and try to get hounds on to a fresh line. He will run into the water, but he will never stop in water for the hounds to come up to him ... He can swim well ... and he will swim for some distance up- and down-stream, but he will not stay in the water. He will also "soil" – that is, jump into water or a pool, roll and jump out with scarcely a pause ... A buck put up and bayed by a few hounds will fight fiercely, and many a ... hound has been killed and many more severely injured. But once under way a buck will run until he can go no farther. He moves with a lolloping gallop that appears slow [but] if you try to gallop your horse alongside a buck you will at once realise that slow-seeming gallop is really a tremendous pace (Vesey-Fitzgerald 1946, pp193-194).

Cuming (1928, pxiv) adds that 'a favourite trick of the hard-pressed buck was to make a great bound at a right angle to his course and lie flat as possible among undergrowth until hounds had overrun the scent, when he would start off in a new direction'.

Yet, despite the satisfaction often had from an evening's hunting, Chafin notes the fallow's decreasing popularity towards the end of the eighteenth century; he (1818, p26) writes, 'buck-hunting, in former days, was much more followed, and held in much greater repute, than it is at this present time', a feeling that is likely to have further influenced the disfranchisement debate.

Roe Deer

However, one species's loss was another's gain. Although relatively short-lived, roe hunting enjoyed a revival just as the fallow's popularity began to wane. This change was indicative of a wider trend, as Hawkins (1980, p58) explains,

> in the nineteenth century the fallow lost its last two strongholds in southern England with the surrender of preservation rights in Cranborne Chase in 1830 and in the New Forest [in 1851]. Since then the survival of the fallow has tended to rest principally on semi-domesticated herds in park-like conditions. It is the roe which has become the typical wild deer of Cranborne Chase and of Southern England generally. The turning point for the roe came in 1800 when Lord Dorchester released some at Milton Abbas and started a new trend in hunting.

Although Milton Abbas lay just outside Cranborne Chase, many of the names associated with roe hunting are familiar from Chase matters. Mr E.M. Pleydell of Milborne St Andrew (the recipient of various letters quoted here) first hunted them systematically with eighteen couple of Roebuck Hounds, a 'mixture of small foxhounds and large harriers' (Whitehead 1980, p234) between 1815 and 1829 – he killed his first roe deer on 6th November, 1815 (Whitehead 1964). Mr Drax took over the pack in 1830, hunting it from Charborough for another nine seasons. The former gentleman's reputation was much greater, though, even earning him the King's attention in 1826. As Lord Graves, writing from the Royal Lodge at Windsor, observed: 'His Majesty has understood that Mr Pleydell has in his Park ... some Roe bucks, & indeed is the only Gentleman in Dorsetshire, or I should say in England, who has Roebuck Hounds, and who follows the Chace of the beautiful animal' (DRO D/TRD/C12). Pleydell, together with his neighbour, Lady Damer, subsequently sent four roe to Windsor.

Despite the King's approval, opinion of roe as quarry appears divided. Snaffle (quoted in Whitehead 1980, p159) complained that 'it does not afford much test of the merits of the greyhound. The usual method is to locate the deer in a small and detached covert, and then beat this out towards a point where the coursing party is stationed. Once a roe is fairly away and separated by men from the woodland, the hound soon pulls it down.' In contrast, Page (1908, p315) asserts that 'those who have hunted the roe-buck say that at first the quarry runs short, not much in front of hounds, but once forced into the open will run very straight and far ... and even when surrounded his agility and strength enable him to evade hounds'. However, the former opinion prevailed, and by the turn of the twentieth century, roe deer hunting had ceased.

Red Deer

In contrast, red deer hunting never got underway. As Chafin (1818, p2) observed,

> Cranbourn Chase is not adapted to the natural habits of those Deer, and they will not stay in it. They cannot live and thrive unless they can go to soil very frequently; but in the Chase there are no rivers, lakes, morasses, in which they can indulge themselves. Some years ago seven young and healthy Red Deer were brought from Mr. Sturt's Park at Horton, and turned into the Chase. I saw them turned out; but, for want of the requisites before mentioned, they made a very short stay there, and betook themselves to the Vale, and were never heard of more, but were supposed to have lost their lives there.

Rather intriguingly, a 1777/8 letter to E.M. Pleydell from his mother reminds him that 'I wrote you Sr Tho had given through your Fathers application, his Stag Hounds to Mr Peter Beckford' (DRO D/TRD/C8) – intriguing because Beckford (1781, p131) claims in his *Thoughts upon Hunting*, 'you may wonder if I omit to say anything of *stag-hunting*. Believe me, if I do, it will not be for want of respect; but because I have seen very little of it.' Of course, his real interest lay with foxhounds, to which we next turn our attention.

7.5.3 Foxhunting

Notable Foxhunters on Cranborne Chase

1818 was a good year for the Cranborne Chase foxhounds, which, according to a report dated 27 April, 'lately had three remarkably fine runs, killing their fox each time handsomely' (*The Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, HRO 116M86/18). A report dated 5 October was likewise complimentary: 'on Friday last these hounds had an excellent day's sport, and killed their fox after two hour's hard running' (*ibid*). Writing in the early twentieth century, Dixon (1922, p8) described Cranborne Chase as 'a link with the past,' asserting that 'its glades and copses are a fine harbour for foxes', just as they had been for nearly two centuries.

'Fox-hunting was established in the Chase on the modern system by Thomas Fownes, esq. of Stepleton in 1730' (Hutchins 1868, p414). Page (1908, p300) elaborates:

> Dorsetshire may boast of being one of the first counties in Great Britain in which [fox]hunting under regular conditions was carried on; it is indeed claimed by some that the first pack of hounds, kept solely for the pursuit of the fox, was kennelled within its bounds at Cranborne Chase. These hounds were kept by Mr. Thomas Fownes ... a pioneer in the breeding of foxhounds, and his pack was supposed to have been the best of that day for looks and hunting qualities.

Chafin (1818, p42) rated them particularly highly, believing 'they were as handsome, and fully as complete in every respect, as any of the most celebrated packs of the present day'. Chafin was himself a keen huntsman, as revealed by a 1778 letter to E.M. Pleydell from his father: 'Wm Chafin ... I attended one day last week, but did not find. Foxes, I believe, scarce. Kill'd one with him the week, before' (DRO D/TRD/C9). Chafin's luck had apparently improved by 1804, when Lord Rivers paid £26.0.5. for one year's subscription to the 'Chettle Hounds' (Chettle being Chafin's estate).

Amongst other foxhunting enthusiasts inspired by Fownes was Peter Beckford,

> who in his boyhood, hunted a pack of beagles on his father's estate [and] At the age of twenty-five ... formed his own pack of foxhounds, which he hunted in Cranborne Chase and part of South Dorset from about 1770 ... During this period he made a scientific study of hound breeding, kennel management, and the art of handling hounds in the field (Greaves 1958, p16).

He published this study to great acclaim as *Thoughts upon Hunting* in 1781, but only two years later, he 'sold his hounds to Mr. Thomas Grove, who continued to hunt the country for a number of seasons' (Greaves 1958, p16). The hounds had apparently been for sale for some time, E.M. Pleydell hearing from his father in 1778 that 'I dine to morrow at Iwerne with Tom Bower to meet Mr Portman, who says He believes He shall keep a pack of Beagles as soon as he gets to Bryanston; He was in great doubt for sometime, whether He shou'd not take Beckfords now, but I find He is determin'd not to have them' (DRO D/TRD/C9). Although this particular Mr Portman refrained, hunting obviously ran in the family, for some eighty years later, his descendant, the first Viscount Portman 'took up the East Dorset country [and] acted as Field Master and Master for sixty-one seasons, [leaving] behind him a great tradition for good sport and one of the best kennels in England' (Dixon 1922, p12).

Portman thus rivalled perhaps the best-known local hunting personality: J.J. Farquharson. Aptly nicknamed the 'Meynell of the West' and the 'Squire',

> James John Farquharson lived within a few miles of Stepleton, the estate of Peter Beckford ... and though a younger man, knew him intimately. During his youth he had the advantage of Beckford's friendship and counsel, the first covert which his newly formed pack drew in 1806 belonged to Beckford, his feeder came from Beckford's kennels, a copy of Beckford's book, inscribed to him by the author, was amongst his most cherished possessions (Higginson 1936, p5).

Even a century after his retirement, Farquharson continued to inspire respect. In Greaves's (1958, p15) opinion, 'one is immediately impressed by the fact that the scene during the first half of the nineteenth

century is dominated by the figure of James John Farquharson, that colossus of a fox-hunter who bestrode for half a century the whole of Dorset'. Fairfax-Blakeborough (n.d., p3) expresses similar admiration: 'a hundred years ago (when in most parts of England not a tithe of the number hunting to-day, rode to hounds), there were fully two hundred out with Mr Farquharson most of them in scarlet, and nearly all wearing the uniform of the hunt, viz: white collars on their coats and F. on the button'. Part of Farquharson's popularity surely came from his success. During the period 1837 to 1857, he accounted for 2,678 foxes killed and an additional 624 earthed, '515 more foxes than days the hounds found' (quoted in Page 1908, p304). Moreover,

> as a master of foxhounds Mr. Farquharson was characterised by an equanimity of temper which was never ruffled, and an urbanity of manners and generosity of disposition seldom equalled, which, united with great punctuality and forbearance, made him as much respected by the labourers and yeomen of the county as amongst the sportsmen who met him at the "cover side" (Hutchins 1868, p458).

Hunting Countries on Cranborne Chase

Reference to Farquharson and Portman brings us to an important point: that of 'hunt countries', the territories over which individual packs held the exclusive right to draw coverts (Fig. 7.10). The increasing need for delineated countries arose from the fact that

> foxhunting could not be restricted by property boundaries. Even if the owner of a pack was able to find foxes on his own land, which was not always the case, it could not be expected that the foxes in their flight would remain there. Since the sport could not hope to survive if every chase had to be stopped as soon as the fox crossed the line into another man's property, some arrangement had to be worked out to allow the sportsman to ignore ordinary property considerations (Itzkowitz 1977, pp67-68).

The issue was further complicated on Cranborne Chase, where rights of free chase and warren were Lord Rivers's sole privileges until the introduction of gamekeepers sparked debate over the latter, which was then determined to have lapsed. Foxes being beasts of warren, they could not have been hunted without his permission. Yet, even with this potential restriction out of the way, the land encompassed by Cranborne Chase remained undivided throughout our period, and for some time thereafter. Only upon Farquharson's retirement as Master of Foxhounds in 1858 was Dorset officially divided. Much of what had been Cranborne Chase then became Portman Country.

However, although '[bestriding] for half a century the whole of Dorset' Farquharson was not alone: the fact that he hunted such a substantial area meant that he was never in a single neighbourhood

either long or regularly. Other packs could, and did, hunt in his absence, including the Cranborne Chase foxhounds and Mr Grove's foxhounds, which appear to have merged in late 1818 or early 1819 (the list of meetings in the 5 October 1818 *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* refers to them separately, whilst that dated 3 May 1819 refers to 'Mr. Grove's Cranborne Chace Fox Hounds' as a single pack (HRO 116M86/18)). Previously, both packs appear to have drawn coverts mainly in the Chase's inner bounds; Grove continued to do so while Farquharson drew the surrounding areas. For example, in the week of 12 April 1819, Grove's hounds met thrice: at Rushmore, West Lodge, and Staplefoot Lodge; Farquharson's hounds also met thrice: at Bere Wood, Stubhampton Town End, and Woodcotts Common. But whilst Farquharson also met at Woodcotts Common the week of 1 February 1819, Grove met there the weeks of 9 November 1818, 7 December 1818, 18 January 1819, and 1 March 1819. Two different packs drawing the same covert was something unheard of following the introduction of 'countries'; indeed, it was considered just cause for legal action. Interestingly, Thomas Grove was Farquharson's brother-in-law, although whether he or his father, also Thomas (1759-1847), was Master in any given season is unclear – after all, Thomas Senr was the one who bought Beckford's hounds in 1783, and although he would have been 61 in 1820, Farquharson himself hunted well into his seventies. Either way, the family connection surely helped maintain good relations in the field. An article published in the June 1832 *Sporting Magazine* (quoted in Higginson 1936, p54) reports that

> Mr. Grove has been playing the very deuce again amongst the dog foxes in Cranbourne Chase; so much so that that they hate the very sight of him, and in that respect stand alone. In the home country, Mr. Farquharson, having most handsomely and most liberally given up the whole of the Cranbourne Chase district to this gentleman, and so large a portion, to the right of the Great Western Road, to Mr. Portman, has become, comparatively speaking, somewhat circumscribed in country, and driven to distant coverts.

In fact, Farquharson maintained two kennels, one 'at home' at Eastbury (within Cranborne Chase) and the other at Cattistock. A commentator in the *Sporting Magazine* observed that 'in Mr. Farquharson's home country, the coverts are, generally speaking, very large, and foxes seldom break, so that very indifferent sport is often the consequence' (quoted in *ibid*, p43), but in 1811, Farquharson's hounds had a day's hunting from Pimperne Woods described by Higginson as 'a cracker'. 'After seven hours and a half of hard riding and good running the hounds returned to their kennels, having killed three foxes and afforded the best sport ever remembered, without the loss of a single hound' (quoted in *ibid*, p32). Yet, Paget (1899) likewise believed that

> the Cranborne Chase country was not, even in Beckford's day, an ideal spot for hunting, as he says himself; but being then less cultivated and fenced it was probably much better than as we know it now. They had, however, good sport and killed their foxes, so that it may be presumed they enjoyed themselves, which is after all the chief object for which we hunt.

Paget's reference to fencing, in particular, highlights a significant turning point in the history of foxhunting: the shift in focus from hounds to horses. Paget implies the merits of an open landscape prior to this shift; indeed, 'the more unenclosed the country the better then hounds could be watched and the greater the pleasure of hunting them' (Bovill 1962, p199). Of course, the hounds' acute sense of smell came to nought if a fox's trail disappeared along the way. Fortunately, 'Cranborne Chase, like most country of its class, carries a scent, especially when there is plenty of moisture in the air' (Dixon 1922, p8). The area showed various other advantages, as pointed out by Dixon (*ibid*, p10):

> there is one thing about the Portman country which has a peculiar charm, and that is that you must go out prepared for every kind of country it contains. There can be no better school for the sportsman than a country like this. He gets to look out and to watch hounds, and to study the run of foxes and many other of those little details which appear little in themselves, but which add so much to the true enjoyment of the sport when they are added up.

Beckford (1781, pp191-192) emphasises the importance of observation, not only to enjoyment but also to success:

> judicious huntsmen will observe where foxes like best to lie. In chases and forests, where you have a great tract of cover to draw, such observation is necessary, or you will lose much time in finding. Generally speaking, I think they are fondest of such as lie high, and are dry and thick at bottom; such also as lie out of the wind, and such as are on the sunny side of hills ... It is to little purpose to draw hazle coppices at the time when nuts are gathering; furze-covers, or two or three-years coppices, are then the only quiet places that a fox can kennel in: they also are disturbed when pheasant-shooting begins, and older covers are more likely. The season when foxes are most wild and strong, is about Christmas ... Young coppices, at this time of the year, are quite bare: the most likely places are, four or five-years coppices, and such as are furzy at bottom.

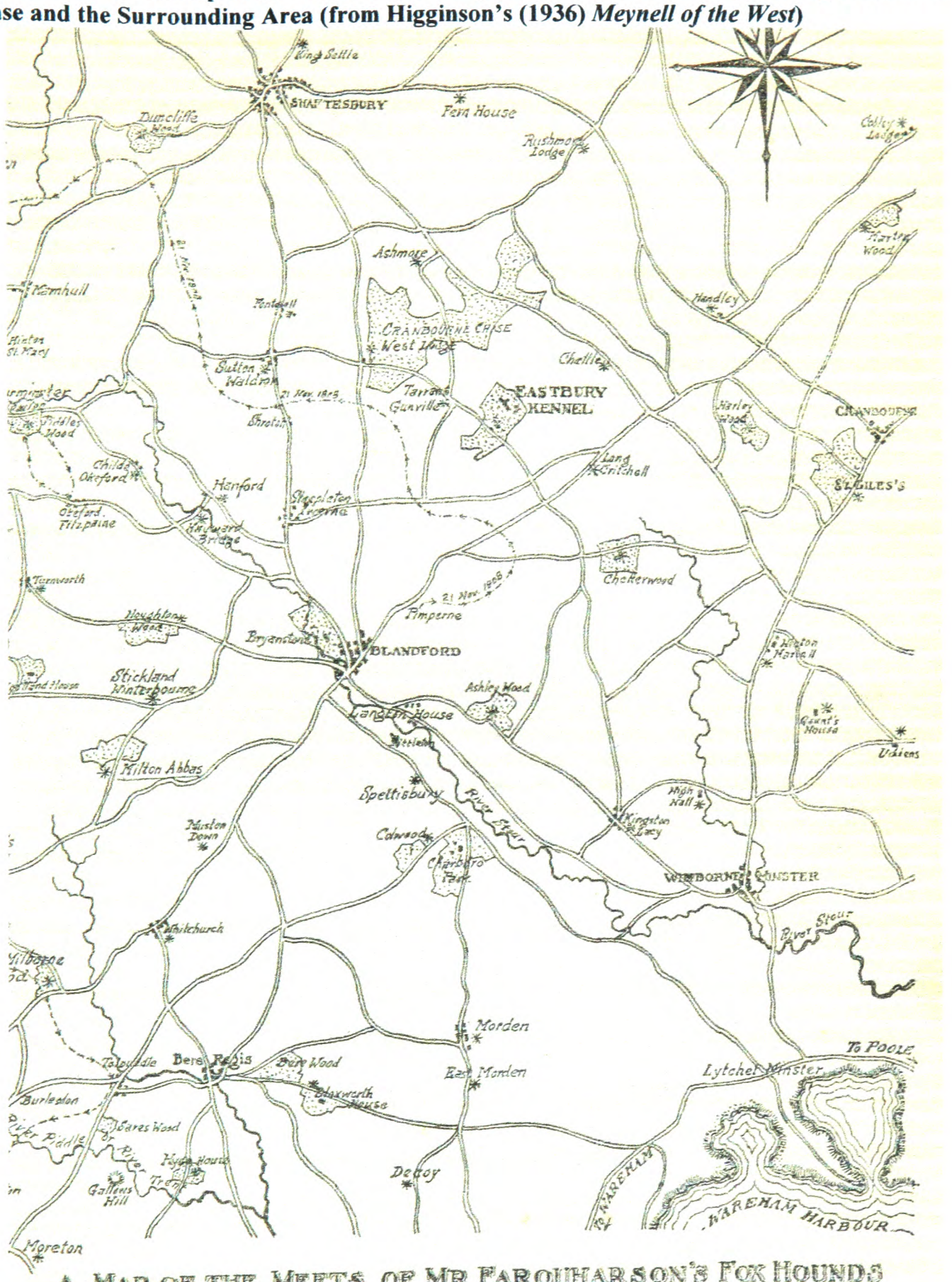
Foxhunting: a More Modern Sport

Foxhunting was set to change, though – indeed to modernise. The catalyst in this case, as in many others, was enclosure. As Bovill (1962, pp199-200) explains,

> the new fences were a hindrance; they slowed hounds down and made them difficult to see and follow ... Nevertheless, but for enclosure foxhunting would never have become a popular sport. Faster hounds and more fences, which as time went on became less easy to push through or avoid, combined to make foxhunting more hazardous. This gave it a thrill which appealed to the great horse-loving public far more than the slow but more scientific hound-

work of the past. An added source of pleasure was the need to be mounted on better-bred horses, both to gallop and to jump.

Fig. 7.10 Part of 'A Map of the Meets of Mr Farquharson's Fox Hounds', showing Cranborne Chase and the Surrounding Area (from Higginson's (1936) *Meynell of the West*)



A MAP OF THE MEETS OF MR FARQUHARSON'S FOX HOUNDS

Compiled from contemporary hunting maps

LEGEND

The names of the Meets are distinguished by a star *

Those underlined, thus, Sydling Barn, were reached from Cattistock Kennel

The others from Eastbury Kennel

SCALE OF ENGLISH MILES

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Compiled and Drawn by

19 JF 36

The sport's democratisation soon followed (undoubtedly aided 'by the fact that the fox offered no threat to the forester and the arable farmer, and gave no motive to the poacher (Hawkins 1980, p43)). Growing popularity and subsequent increased demand necessitated larger packs hunting larger areas; this, in turn, required more kennels, more staff, and, most importantly, more money. While some Masters continued to maintain private packs, others resorted to subscriptions, the implications of which were considerable.

> When every pack of hounds was the private property of a squire, who probably owned ... most of the land over which they hunted, the followers were limited to the few friends and neighbours he chose to invite to join him. These favoured few were enthusiasts who hunted out of pure love of the chase; their pleasure was watching hounds at work, not galloping across country (Bovill 1962, pp198-199).

One individual who embodied this 'pure love of the chase' was Henry Hastings, a seventeenth-century resident of nearby Woodlands. Here was a man whose taste in interior design included a

> great hall strewed with marrow-bones; full of hawkes' perches, hounds, spaniels, and terriers; the upper side of the hall hung with fox-skins, of this and the last year's killing; here and there a pole-cat intermixed; guns and keepers' and hunters' poles in great abundance. The parlour was a large room as properly furnished [as was] the chapel ... the pulpit, as the safest place, was never wanting of a cold chine of beef, venison-pasty, gammon of bacon, or a great apple-pye (Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper, quoted in Hawkins 1980, p81).

Despite his eccentricity and his unabashed pursuit of both 'his neighbours' wives and daughters' and their game, he nonetheless remained 'very popular; always speaking kindly to the husband, brother, or father, who was to boot very welcome to his house, [where] he found beef, pudding, and small beer in great plenty' (*ibid*). After all, 'a devotion to field sports ... was a totally absorbing way of life for those landowners who eschewed politics and preferred the country to the city ... those who believed the arts and pleasures of the chase to be the proper concern of all men worthy of the name' (Hawkins 1980, p82). Even Farquharson, hunting in the mid-nineteenth century, was described as 'one of the last of those country gentlemen who lived upon their own estates, disdaining the excitement of city life, and preferring to spend their money in the upkeep of their broad acres rather than to invest it in more lucrative, but possibly less beneficial, business investments ... a great Master of Foxhounds [and] a "Great Gentleman"' (Higginson 1936, p6).

Probably with such contemporaries as Farquharson in mind, Cecil (1854, p398) distinguishes between 'the sportsman, and the sporting man; one is the genuine, the other the assumed condition'. Whereas the former 'signifies a man who delights in the legitimate sports of the field [and who] enjoys the sport only when it is conducted according to fair and honourable practices, in which with becoming spirit he can participate' (*ibid*, p399), the latter 'professes to be fond of field sports because he imagines it raises him in the estimation of his unsophisticated companions, and he fancies he deceives others into the same impressions' (*ibid*, pp399-400).

Indeed, any man (or woman) who paid his fees could enjoy an occasional day's hunting with a nineteenth century subscription pack, no matter what his social or economic background. True, there often remained a nucleus of more elite and dedicated individuals, but 'total integration probably mattered less for most of the aspirants than being tolerated and seen by outsiders to be part of a glamorous social world' (Lowerson 1993, pp32-33). Nonetheless, for the first time in centuries many of the barriers to popular (populist) hunting disappeared. As implied by Cecil, one class that benefited particularly was that of the nouveaux riches. Siegfried Sassoon recalls first encountering this newer breed of huntsman in the form of Bill Jaggett, whom he (1928, p104) describes as

> one of the horrors of the Hunt. He was a hulking, coarse-featured, would-be thruster; newly rich, ill-conditioned, and foul-mouthed ... What with the vulgarly horsey cut and colour of his clothes and the bumptious and bullying manners which matched them, he was no ornament to the Dumborough Hunt; to me he was a positive incubus, for he typified everything that had alarmed and repelled me in my brief experience of fox-hunting ... He was one of a small contingent who fancied themselves as hard riders. Owing to the character of the country they always had to be looking for something to jump, whether the hounds were running or not, and they were often in trouble with Lord Dumborough for "larking" over unnecessary fences. In this they were conspicuous, for the other followers of the Hunt were a pusillanimous lot of riders, and there was always a queue of them at the gaps, over which they bobbed and bounced like a flock of sheep.

At first, Hastings and Jaggett may seem similarly unrefined, but the description of Hastings as 'well natured, but soon angry,' suggests that he, like Lord Dumborough, was not the sort of man to suffer a fool. Hastings's pleasure was his own, both to give and to receive, but he apparently gave it generously, unlike the selfish and supercilious Jaggett.

At least that greatest embodiment of the nouveau riche huntsman, Surtees's Mr Jorrocks, shared Hastings's enthusiasm, if not his experience. In one memorable scene from *Handley Cross*, Jorrocks informs the Chancellor of his preference for foxhunting, a pastime with which the older gentleman is relatively unfamiliar:

> "I suppose hunting's a fine amusement," observed the gentleman, after a pause. "Did you ever hunt with the stag-hounds?"
> "Once," replied Mr. Jorrocks. "Once, I should think, would be enough for anybody."
> "How so? I thought they were popular."
> "They may, but I thinks nothin' of them. The *fox* is the thing! Confound it! There goes," observed Mr. Jorrocks aloud to himself. – "Well, never mind, I'll tell you something," continued he, after a pause – "'Unting exemplifies wot the grammarians call the three degrees of comparison: – stag 'unting is positively bad, 'are-'unting is comparatively good, and fox-'unting superlatively so." (1854, p532)

Although often the subject of fun, Surtees used his character to document changing attitudes to hunting, observing that

> subscription packs ... are productive of more energy and less cavilling than private packs; every man feels his interest at stake both summer and winter, and will look to things all the year round, instead of lounging carelessly out during the season, leaving the breeding and protection of foxes, the propitiation of farmers and other etceteras to the private owner of the hounds, who in all probability leaves it to the huntsman, who deputes it to the earth-stopper, who leaves it to an assistant who leaves it undone. A subscription pack makes every man put his shoulder to the wheel, not only to keep down expense but to promote sport, each subscriber feeling his own credit identified with the credit of the establishment (quoted in Bovill 1962, p205).

As an aside, Beckford warrants further mention here as an interesting link between the nouveaux riches and the landed gentry. Born in 1740, the son of Julines Beckford, his uncle was William, Lord Mayor of London, and his cousin, also William, the rather eccentric author, art collector, and architect of Fonthill Abbey. The Beckford family money derived from the lucrative combination of Jamaican plantations and politics. In 1773, Peter made his own political match, marrying Louisa, the daughter of George Pitt, subsequently the first Lord Rivers. In 1828, the second Lord Rivers having failed to issue an heir, the title passed to Peter and Louisa's own son, William Horace, along with Cranborne Chase. As Paget (1899) points out, 'Julines Beckford does not appear to have kept a regular pack of hounds, but as his boyhood had been spent in Jamaica, it was perhaps a form of amusement that he did not understand'. His son, on the other hand 'must have been initiated early into the mysteries of sport'.

7.5.4 Game Preservation

Foxes or Pheasants?

Foxes differed from deer in one significant way: their original status as vermin – killers of domestic fowl and game birds, in particular. Indeed, part of foxhunting's original justification came

from its supposed intention of ridding the countryside of these pests. The fox, 'as the poets put it, was a "subtle, pilfering foe", a "conscious villain" and the highly-organized sport of fox-hunting could be seen as "just vengeance on the midnight thief"' (Thomas 1983, p163). However, the hunt's increased popularity necessitated the preservation of foxes in numbers sufficient to ensure their continuity. This did not always sit well with farmers, and certainly not with game-preservers. Hudson (1910, p79) highlights the resultant tension, explaining that

> there are ... estates where the fiction of fox-preserving is kept up no longer, where it is notorious that the landlord is devoted exclusively to the gun and to pheasant-breeding. On one of the big estates I am familiar with in Wiltshire the keepers openly say they will not suffer a fox, and every villager knows it and will give information of a fox to the keepers, and looks to be rewarded with a rabbit.

Hence, 'the bewilderment of those old labourers who remembered the struggle in their youth to keep gorse down on the open arable fields' where Drax – determined to make 'Bere into one of the most notable hunting districts in the county' – now insisted on planting it as cover. 'These old men, observing foxes cherished like princes, could also recall their fathers' tales of a fox's fetching a shilling when churchwardens paid for the extermination of vermin' (Kerr 1968, p 133;151). Such 'improvements' – whether on behalf of birds or foxes – were, by the mid-nineteenth century, increasingly commonplace, both in forests and chases and on private estates.

The 'Curse of the Pheasant'

In 1777/8, E.M. Pleydell's mother writes to him of a visitor at nearby Crichel: 'Mr Thornton, of Yorkshire', who brings with him 'a fine Pack of Fox Hounds & Several Hawks' (DRO D/TRD/C8). This assemblage is noteworthy because of its disparity: while foxhounds were a relatively new accessory with which a huntsman might equip himself, hawks were amongst the most ancient. Chafin (1818, pp45-46) writes of the latter's local significance:

> the Chase also in former days afforded the amusement of Hawking, which was the most predominant rural amusement for many ages, and was followed by all the gentry of the country at a great expense. There are many large tracts of land in and near the Chase, now called *Hawking Downs*, formerly covered with gorse and fern, and the resort of winged game, pheasants, and partridges; and the bordering woods produced woodcocks, which came to a flight for the hawks, in the open glades, when disturbed from the woods, and shewed great sport. This amusement was so fashionable, and carried to such an height, that no gentleman could be completely dressed for company without having a glove on his left hand, and a hawk sitting on it.

Yet, despite the birds' long history, Chafin's several 'formers' and 'wases' are telling. By the late seventeenth century, this once fashionable pastime was declining, a trend exacerbated in subsequent decades by the joint pressures of enclosure and improved gun technology. By the mid-eighteenth century, several advances resulting in a weapon that was both more effective and more manageable sealed the widespread switch from bird to gun – amongst the most important of these advances were the breechloader, drop shot, and shorter barrels. Although partridges were the initial favoured targets, they were not ideal, needing to be startled into flight by dogs and then only just skimming the tops of fields and meadows. Nor is the partridge a gregarious creature, maintaining relatively large territories and therefore not usually locally abundant. Even so, Farquharson enjoyed good sport:

> there was good rough shooting to be had in his meadows and coverts and he spent much of his time during the early part of the season, with a brace of spaniels in the field, [and] some of his many friends. In September of 1811 ... "the shooting match between Messrs. Holland and Farquharson against Messrs. Bennet and Mills was decided in Dorsetshire ... in favour of the two latter gentlemen. Messrs. Bennet and Mills killed forty-four brace of partridges, nine quails, and five hares; Messrs. Farquharson and Holland killed thirty-nine brace of partridges, and had birds not been scarce they would have killed many more" (Higginson 1936, p31).

The importation of the now notorious *battue* soon changed everything. Pheasants quickly surpassed partridges as the game bird of choice, for not only did they fly fast and high, thus providing more of a challenge, but they also occupied much smaller territories. This latter advantage became increasingly important as landowners enclosed and consolidated their country estates, turning them over to game preservation. Hudson's (1910, p187) 'curse of the pheasant' had taken hold.

As previously mentioned, landscapes like that typical of Cranborne Chase's inner bounds provided an ideal habitat for pheasants. 'Pheasants need woods but they do not live in their depths ... they are essentially a creature of the woodland edge' (Williamson 1995, p139), an abundance of which existed where rides criss-crossed the numerous coppices. As late as 1908, Page includes both Rushmore and Crichel in his list of notable 'shooting manors'. In fact, in keeping with initial hostility towards gamekeepers on the Chase, Lord Rivers hired his own only in 1821, appointing the then-underkeeper, Thomas White. This appointment signalled an important change in attitude; although the keepers might still take rabbits and woodcocks, Lord Rivers laid a very definite claim to pheasants and partridges, not merely preserving them as and when they occurred but actively promoting their survival and spread. Nonetheless, the 1820s were relatively early days, with gamekeeping costs appearing nominal next to those of deer keeping (see Table 7.10).

Many observers disapproved of the new obsession with game birds. Page (1908, p318) lamented the loss of 'a more sporting character when the old-fashioned country squire enjoyed moderate days with his neighbours who supported and participated in other sports as well', while Shaw-Lefevre (1910, p150) condemned Tollard Farnham's 1850 enclosure, 'the main object' of which 'seems to have been game preserving'. Meanwhile, Hudson (1910, p78), in his typically romantic style, delivers

> a melancholy outlook to those who love the country and old country sports, and who do not regard the pheasant-shooting as now followed as sport at all. It is a delusion of the landlords that the country people think most highly of the great pheasant-preserver who has two or three big shoots in a season, during which vast numbers of birds are slaughtered – every bird "costing a guinea", as the saying is. It brings money into the country, he or his apologist tells you, and provides employment for the village poor in October and November, when there is little doing ... This is not a sufficient return for the freedom to walk on the land and in the woods, which the villager possessed formerly, even in the worst days of his oppression, a liberty which has now been taken from him. The keeper is there now to prevent him; he was there before, and from of old, but the pheasant was not yet a sacred bird, and it didn't matter that a man walked on the turf or picked up a few fallen sticks in a wood. The keeper is there to tell him to keep to the road and sometimes to ask him, even when he is on the road, what is he looking over the hedge for. He slinks obediently away; he is only a poor labourer with his living to get, and he cannot afford to offend the man who stands between him and the lord and the lord's tenant.

Table 7.10 Rushmore Gamekeeper's Expenses, 1822-1828 (£.s.d.) (DRO D/PIT/E180-185)

Year	W	L	GC	HT	DT	B	PN	GB	G	LE
1822	50.0.0.	8.8.0.	3.14.6.	2.17.6.	-	3.0.0.	-	0.5.0.*	2.17.6.	0.8.6.
1823	50.0.0.	8.8.0.	3.14.6.	2.2.9.	-	1.10.0.	-	-	5.7.4.	-
1824	50.0.0.	8.8.0.	3.14.6.	1.8.9.	-	4.17.8.	-	(3.2.6.)	-	(3.2.6.)
1825	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
1826	50.0.0.	10.10.0.	3.14.6.	1.8.9.	-	11.16.0.†	0.3.0.	-	-	2.12.1.
1827	50.0.0.	10.10.0.	3.14.6.	1.8.9.	1.8.0.	12.14.6.	0.7.0.	0.3.6.*	2.2.0.	-
1828	50.0.0.	10.10.0.	3.14.6.	1.8.9.	3.10.0.	2.16.0.	-	-	0.17.6.	-

W=wages; L=livery; GC=game certificates; HT=horse tax; DT=dog tax; B=barley; PN=partridge nests; GB=game baskets; G=gun (repairs, and powder and shot); LE=legal expenses
*1822 12 baskets, each worth 5d; 1827 6 baskets, each worth 7d.
†1826 includes 'J Kellaways Bill for Barley meal (10.19.6.), Deduct for Barley Meal used by RR Harvey (4.0.0.) ... £6.19.6.' and 'John Cox for 8 Bushels of Barley & 9 Bushels of Buck Wheat for Game ... £4.16.6.'

Other Venery

Birds were not the only game hunted on Cranborne Chase. Chafin (1818, p42) records 'three sorts of animals of chase besides deer, *viz.* foxes, hares, and martin-cats' hunted 'in the proper seasons'.

Unfortunately, by 1818, 'the latter [was] nearly extinct; their skins were too valuable for them to be suffered to exist' (*ibid*). Meanwhile, although harriers were the forerunners of foxhounds and foxhounds were plentiful, according to Page (1908, p315), 'Dorset has very little history of hounds kept exclusively for hare-hunting'. Coursing certainly took place, though. Indeed, we learn from another of E.M. Pleydell's letters of 'a great Coursing match between Mr Beckford & Mr Beauclark, a 20 Guinea Bet, all the World went but ourselves, the Courses were to be decided by 3 Gentlemen Humphrey Sturt was one fixed on, he declined it, Mr Chafin Mr Bingham & I forget ye 3d, were the 3' (DRO D/TRD/C8). (Although Beckford's hounds did not hunt hare *exclusively* – recall that 'when tired of hare-hunting, [he] was inclined to try if [he] could find any diversion in hunting of fallow deer' – they certainly did hunt it, Beckford dedicating several letters in his *Thoughts upon Hunting* to the subject.) A 1796 advertisement further attests to hare-coursing's local popularity:

> Jan 18, 1796 Wanted Immediately. Six or Eight Couple of large Harriers, from 17 to 21 inches high. – Any person having such to dispose of will find a purchaser, by applying to Mr. Handy, Crown Inn, Blandford. [Also] Wanted. A Man who understands the Management of Hounds in Kennel, to act as Whipper-in, and look after horses occasionally (*The Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, HRO 116M86/4).

Mr Bastard hunted a 'capital pack of harriers' (Dashwood, quoted in Higginson 1936, p60); the 1827 and 1828 *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* lists meets at Blandford Racecourse, Stourpaine Bushes, Crawford Bridge, and Pimperne Fields and Parish, where his dogs were kennelled (all in Cranborne Chase) (HRO 116M86/23-24). Meanwhile, another advertisement, dated 24 February 1827, highlights the chasing of rabbits: 'Rabbit Beagles. To be sold, – Five Couple of well-bred and handsome Rabbit Beagles, which have been constantly hunted together for two seasons. For farther particulars apply to Mr. Barfoot, Saddler, &c. Blandford, Dorset' (*The Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, HRO 116M86/23). The most famous local warren was that at Wilton, in Wiltshire, not Dorset.

Interestingly, factors similar to those influencing the timing of deer hunting, both throughout the year and on a daily basis, also informed the hunting of other quarry. We previously referred to the seasonality of partridge and pheasant shooting. Jacob (1718, p36) adds that

> the best Time to commence your Hare-Hunting is about the Middle of *September*, and to end it about the Close of *February*. If you continue your Diversion beyond that Time, you'll destroy the early Brood of Leverets: And the sportsman ought to rise very early, or else he'll be depriv'd of the Scent, on which his Whole Pleasure depends.

7.6 Conclusion

Interesting parallels exist between the changes in deer and fox hunting, and with particular relevance to Cranborne Chase. In both cases, social and economic factors led to the expansion of hunting to others' benefit. The transition from private packs to subscription packs is certainly reminiscent of that from Lord Rivers hunting all of the walks exclusively to his letting out of certain walks so that others might share not only his privileges but also his expenses. However, the transition on Cranborne Chase remained confined to the upper classes, whereas subscription packs were a more democratic affair. Even so, we might view Masters of Foxhounds as enjoying opportunities for patronage similar to those enjoyed by Lord Rivers; hence, the celebration of men such as Farquharson and Portman. All three men were wealthy individuals, and although they may have been influenced by 'sentiments of kindness and liberality, and consideration for the feelings of others', social cachet was certainly also a factor. Game shooting underwent similar changes: in particular, the expansion of the field following the arrival of the battue.

In all three cases, the mid-nineteenth century saw saddened observers already recalling the more gentlemanly (premodern) days when hunting was about the chase rather than the quarry, with a focus on hounds and hawks rather than on horses and guns. Men like Hastings, and even Beckford and Chafin, were, by this time, something of an anachronism. Foxes and pheasants were the order of the day, never mind the fallow. Yet, the transition was a gradual one. After all, Beckford's father hired Cranborne Chase's first permanent gamekeeper, and both Beckford and Chafin were versatile hunters to say the least.

In fact, the number of individuals enjoying several forms of hunting is striking, including rangers who were game preservers and foxhunters, too. Hunting created a close social network, traditionally based upon mentorship and exchange. Granted, the network was a moneyed one, hunting being a costly pastime, but as we saw earlier, it was status, not money, that mattered most. Hunting was thus an important forum for bringing old and new wealth together.

Cranborne Chase was, then, a true hunting landscape, a microcosm in which these various transitions all played out, and over the course of only a few decades. It produced some of the country's best-known huntsmen, and although disfranchisement signalled the end of an era, the area's history left a lasting legacy of sport and sportsmanship for generations to come.

Chapter 8 Conclusion and Afterword

8.1 Conclusion

As its title suggests, this thesis set out to examine the linked changes in land, law, and life on Cranborne Chase, both in the run up to, and immediately after, disfranchisement. It also set out to examine modernity's role in bringing about those changes and geography's role in facilitating our understanding of them. Discussion focussed on three aspects of the local landscape: physical, criminal, and hunting, underlying all of which was a question of money, and both its economic and social implications.

Growing tension over ecological change and ownership, particularly in and around Cranborne Chase's inner bounds, finally came to a head during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with the emergence of the so-called disfranchisement debate. Although preserved with varying degrees of strictness as a premodern hunting franchise for several centuries, the Chase now found itself heavily pressured by modern views of sylviculture, agriculture, crime, and sport, each of which was in some way related to, and subsequently informed, the others.

Manwood (1615, p17) declared forests and chases outdated by the late sixteenth century, claiming that Forest Law had 'growne cleane out of knowledge in most places', and from the early seventeenth century there was a concerted attempt to remove these obstacles to progress through wholesale disfranchisement and enclosure. As Langton (forthcoming) points out, 'as forests were removed from the landscape, countermanded by law books, and superseded in government preoccupations, so they disappear from our texts'. And yet, some forests and chases – Cranborne Chase amongst them – continued not only to function but also to flourish well into the modern period. Despite standing in direct contrast to modern principles of property and consumerism, these franchises remained an important status symbol; recall, for example, Humphrey Sturt's 'splendid observatory' at Horton used to survey his neighbours' deer rather than the heavens. Meanwhile, his estate at Moor Crichel included 'the most palatial eighteenth-century house in Dorset' (Gant, quoted in *ibid*), very much in keeping with modern tastes. Hence Langton (*ibid*) observes that 'the importance of hunting (and the vast documentation to which it gave rise) come as a shock to anyone acquainted with literature on the origins of modernization, the aesthetics of country parks and houses, or metropolitan poets'. Cranborne Chase's well-documented and well-preserved past was integral to its in-depth study here.

8.1.1 Land Use

A review of changing land use patterns, their origins and their implications, might follow any of a number of links through the preceding discussion. The following example highlights the interrelatedness of land use, hunting, and crime, linking the pre- and post-disfranchisement periods. On the one hand, the proprietors argued that disfranchisement would benefit local farmers, enabling them to enclose and fence their fields and to introduce new crops and rotation systems. Meanwhile, the clearance of deer would reduce crop damage; it would, however, also leave a void in the hunting calendar. Fortunately, foxhunting was already well-established and gaining in popularity. Part of this increased popularity stemmed from a new emphasis on horses rather than hounds, and what better way to show off one's skill than by jumping ever higher and more numerous hedges, like those now being planted following enclosure? Although disfranchisement put an end to buck hunting, aptitude and enthusiasm for sport were already ingrained into local society, which simply adapted to changing trends. Local farmers benefited through improved agricultural techniques; local hunters benefited through improved sporting opportunities; and the local population benefited through a decreased temptation towards theft, foxes being of no value other than as quarry.

Of course, none of this could be realised as long as Chase law remained in place. Throughout the Chase's history, the law played a vital role in maintaining the look of the land and thus in preserving certain socioeconomic conditions. For example, hedges could be planted in some places, must be planted in others, and must not be planted in yet others. They must be planted in particular ways and at particular times, cut in particular ways and at particular times, and the wood reserved for particular individuals. This was especially true within and around the Chase's inner bounds: the remainder of its vast area being much more open, consisting of fields, downs, and heath. Indeed, as well as protecting Lord Rivers's deer, known collectively as *venison*, the law also protected the *vert*, or vegetation, upon which the deer depended. Interfering with either would have important implications for the area's physical landscape as well as for its inhabitants. Despite these restrictions, the predominant sylvicultural system in place on Cranborne Chase, coppice, was carefully balanced to benefit all parties. Although they might wish to be rid of the deer inhabiting their woodlands, even the proprietors could not deny the coppices' underlying value and productivity. Their concentration within the inner bounds contributed to increased deer damage, but managing the area's woodland in a way incompatible with deer preservation would surely have exacerbated tension.

8.1.2 The Land and its Inhabitants

Ridding the Chase of its deer would rid it of its deer stealers; thus argued the proprietors. But although they were correct, their logic did not extend beyond this basic premise. Chafin mockingly suggested that they should also rid the area of its sheep to rid it of its sheep stealers; but, of course, sheep were at the very heart of the local agrarian economy, an integral part of the fold system and therefore important to crop production as well as being profitable in their own right. Unsurprisingly, Chafin deemed his own suggestion absurd; but he nonetheless had a point, sheep stealing, like deer stealing, was a serious offence and not uncommon. True, deer were not as integral to the local economy as sheep; they were, however, integral to the local landscape at a much broader level. In fact, deer were arguably the single most influential factor in shaping Cranborne Chase's physical and social landscape for several hundred years. Moreover, although the mass clearance of deer as part of the disfranchisement process dramatically reduced deer stealing, the subsequent conversion of land to other uses, particularly game preservation, signalled an upturn in other poaching crimes. The extinguishing of many common rights previously protected by Chase law may similarly account for the upturn in post-disfranchisement wood stealing.

In Chapter 5, we considered the significance of these common rights (both legal and illegal) to the local population: for example, feeding cattle and pigs alongside deer, gathering harvests of hazel nuts, valerian, and truffles, and producing coppice products, particularly hurdles and spars – all of which supplemented an often meagre income. The network of Chase employees likewise benefited, not only through its direct employment but also through rights to graze limited livestock, take certain game, and procure fuel wood. Meanwhile, although restricted in their means of management, the owners of the various Chase coppices did generally profit from their woodlands.

In Chapter 6, we examined the relationship between land use and crime, especially with reference to the law's role in defining crime. Forest-dwellers were stereotyped as more prone to idleness, wretchedness, and general immorality, thanks in large part to their purportedly backward lifestyles. Abolishing forests and chases would civilise the indeed lowly lower classes – in other words, *modernise* both the land and its inhabitants. But interestingly, many of these individuals questioned their actions' illegality, believing that it was the ruling class that held a skewed view of right and rite. That is not to deny the existence of professional, as well as opportunistic, thieves on Cranborne Chase. A sector of society despised with equal fervour by ordinary people, who bore the brunt of the social

cost, and their wealthier neighbours, who bore the brunt of the financial cost, these were the men who battled with keepers to fill not their own pots but those of the very class so desperate to quash them.

Yet, in Chapter 7, we saw that hunting was also used to bind local society together. Not only was it a means of both bestowing and eliciting favours amongst the upper classes, it was also an important means of patronising the lower classes. Gifts of venison, or invitations to hunt it, were a significant social gesture, emphasising one party's supremacy over another. However, this system of perquisite and privilege was set to change, gradually evolving under modernity's influence. On Cranborne Chase, the fallow relinquished its place to foxes and pheasants, and although sport proceeded on a more egalitarian basis within the upper echelons of society, the traditional relationship between the landed gentry and its plebeian dependants deteriorated, especially following widespread enclosure.

8.1.3 Property and Profit

Indeed, running through all of the proprietors' and Lord Rivers's arguments is a monetary undertone. The former argued that planting timber and turnips would yield a higher profit. Meanwhile, the ability to enclose land would provide them with an opportunity to preserve game on a much larger scale, thereby sharing the social cachet previously reserved for Lord Rivers. He would of course benefit, too, in no longer having to pay great sums to maintain his franchise, which was, surely, a great financial burden. In contrast, Lord Rivers and his supporters, particularly Chafin, were keen to point out the financial benefits to local society as well as the land's current productivity.

What the issue really boiled down to was *property* and differing views of it. The proprietors argued in favour of private property, but was not Lord Rivers's franchise just that? Why, after so many centuries, should their property rights suddenly rate above his? At the same time, why might a man with enough resourcefulness or good luck to happen upon a dead rabbit or partridge not make the most of the opportunity without fear of repercussion, and similarly with respect to wood: why should private property rate above common property? Hence the importance of *ownership*: Lord Rivers owned a superior franchise which happened to extend over land that he did not own. Why should the proprietors of this land not be allowed to do with it what they pleased; and yet, why should Lord Rivers be the one made to yield?

Cranborne Chase certainly had its faults, and the disfranchisement process was complicated, antagonistic, and drawn-out. Yet, the Chase's continuation did help to maintain a way of life, which we now hark back to as somehow more harmonious than our own. So, what happened in the one hundred fifty years after disfranchisement?

8.2 Afterword

8.2.1 Disfranchisement, 1828-1830

In 1828, after forty years of costly quarrels and half-hearted negotiations, Lord Rivers finally agreed to disfranchisement by an Act of Parliament (9 Geo. IV). Not withstanding various confrontations between the Chase proprietors and both the current and the previous Lords Rivers, Mr Portman commended his neighbour's gentlemanly behaviour, taking the

> opportunity [of the third reading of the Cranborne Chase Disfranchisement Bill in the House of Commons] of expressing the gratitude which he, in common with a large body of landowners in Dorsetshire, felt to a noble Lord (Rivers), for enabling this bill to pass into a law; that noble Lord had sacrificed the most noble feather of the plume of honour which he bears, and such a one as no other subject could boast, for the sake of facilitating the cultivation and improvement of a large tract of land, and especially to remove a fertile source of crime, and thereby to improve the morality of the poor in the Chase (*The Salisbury and Winchester Journal* 12 May 1828, HRO 116M86/24).

Contrast this with an article of twelve years earlier – following the momentous *King* case – in which the Chase, instead of being the noblest feather of his Lordship's 'plume of honour', was deemed 'a *mere* feather of no value' (emphasis added, 5 August 1816, HRO 116M86/16). Lord Rivers certainly inspired two very different reactions – even many years after his death. Writing in 1841, Smart (pp242-243) believed that

> the disfranchisement of the Chase was entirely a voluntary concession on the part of its noble proprietor, who was doubtlessly induced to accede to their proposal, from the conviction of the instability of his rights, which the last decision of a Jury had invalidated, – a decision arrived at, we hesitate not to affirm, in opposition to the clearest testimony in support of an ancient right, that was ever produced before a court of Justice.

Meanwhile, as late as 1919, Hutton (p216) asserted that 'all this was done with reason. Lord Rivers was behaving in a most truculent and high handed manner.'

But no matter what the overriding opinion either of Lord Rivers or of his prized possession, once the terms had been agreed, the Act's passage proceeded with relative ease; rent was payable from

October 1829, and it came into full effect in October 1830 (the only glitch being Lord Pembroke's refusal to pay his full share of the £1,800 annual rent, which was divided amongst the other payees for expediency's sake). Rather fittingly, the second Lord Rivers did not see his Chase through to its inevitable end, dying soon after agreeing to its disfranchisement in 1828. William (Horace) Beckford (Peter Beckford's son) inherited his uncle's titles, overseeing the Chase's final dissolution but himself dying only a year later, in 1831. By reputation a charming but careless man, he was more interested in gambling than in hunting and is thought to have drowned himself in the Serpentine in a fit of despair. Hawkins (1980, p84) suggests that because 'as a young man [he] drew heavily on his prospects [and in] 1807 Lord Rivers had to cope with the massive debts of his nephew and heir: it is quite possible that this financial drain made disfranchisement appear more attractive with its promise of a new source of income'. An article in *The Times* (Digital Archive, 31 January 1831) appearing soon after Horace's death certainly lends weight to this suggestion, revealing that

> his Lordship, it is well known, was a great visiter to the gaming table, and frequently lost large sums of money. His uncle, whom he succeeded in the title, was aware of his love of play, and to prevent the estate from being injured by his nephew's losses, bequeathed to him only 4,000*l.* a year, and the bulk of his property, amounting to 40,000*l.* a year, he left to trustees for the benefit of the son of the late deceased nobleman, who now assumes the title. On the night before his lordship quitted home, he was engaged till a very late hour at a gaming-house [where he] was unsuccessful, and lost between 2,000*l.* and 3,000*l.* to his opponent.

We of course cannot know to what extent, if any, Beckford's recklessness did influence his uncle's decision to disfranchise, but it is an interesting possibility.

8.2.2 The Chase's Legacy: a Landscape with Figures

Individual Freedom and Common Rights

Despite the sense of optimism that accompanied the run up to disfranchisement, the extinction of Lord Rivers's rights was not in itself an immediate solution to many of the problems facing local people; in some cases, it actually created more. Although the near-extinction of the local deer population signified a dramatic drop in deer stealing, the conversion of land to other uses led to an associated rise in other crimes, particularly poaching and wood stealing. Consider, as an aside, the case of Robert Grass who, 'when many of his cousins were carving niches for themselves as powerful headkeepers on great country estates ... opted to pursue an equally spectacular career as a poacher on the part of Cranborne Chase which straddles the counties of Dorset, Hampshire and Wiltshire' (Jones

1994, p42). Although upon leaving school he initially joined his father and brother as a keeper at Rushmore, between August 1873 and February 1887, 'over thirty six successful poaching convictions were made against [him] ... In addition, [he] served five prison sentences for failing to maintain his children, [was] branded a "Rogue and a Vagabond" [and was convicted] for stealing a watch, chain and knife valued at 5/-' (*ibid*, p43). Thus, although 'the consequences of disfranchisement must seem at first sight to be wholly admirable', there were still many problems to overcome:

> the oppression of outmoded Forest Laws vanished overnight. Farms and villages were freed from the tyrannical rules and actual damage that stemmed from the preservation of deer. In accordance with modern agricultural practice landowners were at liberty to fell trees, clear scrubland, plough up old pastures and fence their properties, without consideration for anything but their own interest. [But] ironically this proclamation of individual liberty – bringing Cranborne Chase into harmony with the true spirit of nineteenth-century England – was not always so benevolent as the mediaeval customs it displaced. When the Marquess of Anglesey exercised his newly won right to enclose his woods in Sixpenny Handley he did so "to the extinction of the common feed". Under Chase law the villagers had rights of pasturage and pannage ... Lord Anglesey's new fences put an end to those ancient privileges. The commoners responded in no uncertain fashion by suing for damages [and] the Woodyates Inn, scene to that first meeting to launch the disfranchisement campaign, was now in 1834 to house a trial in which those forces of liberation were opposed and defeated. Mr Serjeant Bompas and a special jury gave the verdict to the people of Handley, upholding their traditional rights' (Hawkins 1980, p85).

Unfortunately for the people of Tollard Farnham, this decision was not repeated forty years later when they, with the support of the Commons and Footpaths Preservation Society, unsuccessfully claimed a prescriptive and common right to '[cut] furze and hazel tops, for the purpose of fuel, and for consumption in their own houses' (Shaw-Lefevre 1910, p146). The case warrants some further mention here as something of a throwback to the area's premodern past. '[An] action [*Lord Rivers v Adams and Others*] was brought by Lord Rivers, as lord of the manor ... to prevent the defendants, inhabitants of the village, from entering and trespassing on a certain enclosure of some seventy-five acres, part of Cranbourne Chase, enclosed by a former lord in 1856' (Anonymous 1878/9, p413), and there cutting and carrying away the aforementioned brushwood, known locally as 'haskets'. Although the trespass in question took place in 1867, the Commons Society was not called upon until 1874, by which time it was deemed a lost cause, being heard in the Court of Exchequer instead of the more sympathetic Court of Chancery – especially with no royal grant to prove a prescriptive right and the alleged common right having been abused for several years past. This is all quite straightforward-seeming, although two interesting details can be gleaned from the accompanying notes. Firstly a description of Tollard Farnham in the mid-nineteenth century, still notably premodern in its open state:

> up to the year 1850, the parish of Tollard Farnham was a very interesting case of Common Field cultivation [consisting] of 950 acres, of which 300 acres were held in severalty; 224 acres were in copses or woodlands, in the hands of the Lord of the Manor; 159 acres were in Common, the waste lands of the Manor; and 267 acres were laid out in Common Fields, which were allotted amongst the tenants of the Manor, and held by them in severalty for purposes of tillage. These were farmed upon the three-course system: one part being in wheat, another in barley, and a third fallow or in clover. When the crops were carried, the Common Fields were thrown open for the benefit of all the tenants of the Manor. Cattle were first turned in, and subsequently sheep (Shaw-Lefevre 1910, p149).

In contrast, when Lord Rivers acquired the manor from Lord Arundell in 1820, he immediately 'took steps to extinguish this system of tenure, and to get the land into his hands' and 'in 1850 the Common Fields were inclosed and allotted, under the Act for facilitating the inclosure of such Commonable lands' (*ibid*, p150). 'The main object of these operations', according to Shaw-Lefevre, 'appears to have been that of game preserving, as it was stated that the land quickly became covered with wood' (*ibid*). Hence the second point of interest: the land's conversion to a more modern (enclosed) state was for pleasure rather than profit. The battle between premodern and modern thus continued to play out on Cranborne Chase even after its disfranchisement, all the time reflecting its recent, premodern past.

But returning to crime in the 1830s, the period immediately following disfranchisement also saw local people heavily involved in the notorious Captain Swing Riots. Mr Castleman received 'a Swing letter' warning that 'Sunday night your House shall come down to the Ground for you are an inhuman monster and we will dash out your brains – Banks [probably of Kingston Lacy] and your sett aught to be sent to Hell. The Handley Torches have not forgot you' (quoted in Okeden 1930, pp88-89). A summary in the *Dorset County Chronicle* (quoted in *ibid*, p93) meanwhile reports:

> Dec. 2 [1830] – Alarm of rioters given at Blandford – a troop of mounted men under Mr. Portman, Mr. Farquharson, and Mr. Smith, had ridden round the district dispersing the mob, taking some prisoners – stacks and machines destroyed round Handley, Cranborne, East Stour, &c. ... 200 prisoners lodged in county prison.

This was, of course, a national crisis and although the main trouble in Dorset appears to have occurred in November and December 1830 – shortly after Cranborne Chase's disfranchisement – it was not restricted to the Cranborne Chase area. Even so, bearing in mind the reputation of the Chase's inhabitants, some might argue that they were particularly predisposed to riot.

Indeed, recall Chafin's (1818, p68) concern for 'the poor commoners' whose 'worldly dependance' rested with the Chase. Also dependant on its continued existence were the Chase employees. Fortunately, disfranchisement enabled the expansion of many local gamekeeping estates –

Rushmore amongst them – at least some of which presumably hired the already skilled Chase keepers, thereby averting a major employment crisis. Nonetheless, Cranborne Chase had for centuries created and sustained a significant network of local work and custom never again to exist on the same scale.

But despite some individual and collective losses, Smart, for one, saw a brighter future for the area's population, both rich and poor. Recall his assurance that the fate of Chafin's poor commoners was nowhere near as terrible as first envisaged – in fact, quite the opposite. Indeed, in 1841, 'the woods [still afforded] a great means of support to numerous families, whose privileges it were unwise as well as ungenerous to abridge' (Smart, pp140-141). He (*ibid*, p245) likewise asserts that, although

> the evils to which it has given rise have not yet been wholly eradicated, we do still confidently anticipate that in process of time the moral infection will have entirely exhausted itself, and become inert. Amongst the upper class of society too, a demoralizing agency was at work, evidencing its existence in the frequent outbreaks of litigation, and keeping up a feeling of animosity and ill-will, where friendship and kindness ought to have prevailed. Every one, then, of reflecting mind, and philanthropic sentiments, cannot lament that evils of sad extension and vital nature, have received their death-blow in the extinction of the cause from which they originated; and none but the disappointed gourmand, or the foe of those mutual bonds which knit together the framework of society, will deny the benefit of annihilating the principles of disunion, or will remember with serious regret the disfranchisement of Cranborne Chase.

General Pitt-Rivers and the Larmer Tree Gardens

By the end of the century, though, people could look back to the area's history with some sense of nostalgia. Amongst the Chase's greatest latter-day proponents was General Augustus Lane-Fox, who adopted the name Pitt-Rivers upon inheriting the sixth Lord Rivers's various properties, including Rushmore, in 1880. A leading figure in British archaeology, he was equally concerned with his own contemporaries; hence his development of the Larmer Tree Gardens at Tollard Royal. The Larmer Tree was traditionally said to be the site at which King John's huntsmen met and was where the Tollard Manor Court met. It now served as a focal point for summer entertainment, including music, theatre, games, and picnics. For example,

> if the visitor wished for music he could start an impromptu singsong ... or he might hear the general's private band performing ... Some of the bandsmen were Rushmore estate workers, others lived and worked in Tollard Royal ... They were given a uniform based on Romney's portrait of a Chase keeper – "big felt hats and swallowtail coats, breeches and gaiters" (Hawkins 1980, p144).

Fig 8.1 ***A Chase Keeper*****, by Romney (from Hawkins's (1980)** ***Cranborne Chase*****)**



The guest of honour in September 1895 was Thomas Hardy.

> An open-air theatre had just been erected ... in the gardens, to be added to the other ornamental buildings which included some brought to Tollard Royal from the Indian Exhibition at Earls Court in 1890 ... In the evening the gardens were illuminated with thousands of Vauxhall lamps, and ... Thomas Hardy led the house party into the dance ... with one of the general's daughters. [A] report in the *Dorset County Chronicle* ... claimed that "probably at no other spot in England could such a spectacle have been witnessed at any time. One could hardly believe that one was not in a suburb of Paris, instead of a corner in old-fashioned Wiltshire, nearly ten miles away from a railway-station in any direction" (*ibid*, pp22-23).

Four years later, in 1899, Hardy would have been one of nearly 45,000 visitors, 'the peak figure in a steadily rising sequence of annual attendances, which in 1887 had been 15,351' (*ibid*, p22).

The Transformation of the Land

Although General Pitt-Rivers was busy improving the minds of the local population, he and his neighbours were purportedly less concerned with improving the land. Of seemingly more

importance to both them and their immediate predecessors were landscapes maintained for their aesthetic value and for game preservation.

> In spite of disfranchisement the Victorian landowners did not direct their improving zeal towards forestry except in terms of ornamental planting and fox coverts [and] by 1900, the woodlands ... were degenerating into little more than a miscellaneous breeding place for pheasants, rabbits and foxes. The hazel still retained a commercial value while the shepherd needed hurdles; but as the sheep disappeared, and the old woodcrafts declined, many of the copses were allowed to grow on untended. The general agricultural depression intensified the atmosphere of neglect and apathy (*ibid*, p129).

This was of course an altogether different aspect of modernity from that argued for a century earlier – never mind timber and turnips, now was the time for frolic and foxes. Nonetheless, there were some improvements in both sylviculture and agriculture. According to Hutchins (quoted in Treves 1914, p80),

> in a wood near Mr. Chafin's house is a fine plantation of Scotch fir trees [which] were bought in a small box about 60 years ago, when they were about two inches high, by Geo. Chafin at the Cocoa Tree coffee house in London. They were sent to Dorset and planted in his kitchen garden, and when of proper growth were transplanted into the wood. Their prime cost was 2s. 6d.: they are now worth more than £1,000.

Lord Rivers also had several plantations, as indicated by his annual accounts, but whether these were intended more for timber production or for game cover is not altogether clear. What is clear is that it was the period between the two World Wars that finally heralded the sylvicultural expansion anticipated by the eighteenth century Chase proprietors. Hawkins (*ibid*, p129) highlights

> one remarkable family in particular, the Gardiners of Fontmell, [who] pioneered a creative attitude to forestry in the 1930s when few landowners considered it a subject worth thinking about. Balfour Gardiner showed what could be done to bring overgrown and generally neglected coppices back into production and his work was carried on by Rolf Gardiner – hence the appearance on recent Ordnance Survey maps of Balfour's Wood, Rolf's Wood and Gardiner Forest.

As Rolf Gardiner, writing in 1968 (p38) recalls, 'during this period of forty years [1920s-1960s], first Balfour, at my instigation, and then I alone, planted some three million trees on the chalk downs and among the hazel coppices of this impoverished north-west district of Cranborne Chase. We altered the whole appearance and configuration of the landscape.' With this new phase in local forestry came a revitalisation of traditional woodland crafts; Wright (1967, p638) thus observed that

> timber is still the backbone of the Chase, and most of the workers there are engaged in some facet of woodland industry. Cranborne Chase probably has the largest area of open woodland in Southern England, mostly small oak, rather thickly scattered, and carpeted with thick underwood of hazel. This hazel underwood supplies the craftsmen, many of them part-time (being farm-workers the rest of the time) with the material for hurdle-making from wattles. Most of our wattle hurdles come from Cranborne Chase.

Agricultural advances were more forthcoming. 'The giant sainfoin, an improved strain, was extensively grown in the area from Blandford to Wimborne having been introduced into Dorset from Berkshire about 1848. Although expensive at 25 shillings a bushel ... local farmers considered its yield to be twice as valuable as that of the common sainfoin' (Dodd 1980, p10). Sheep also retained their local significance.

> At Tarrant Monkton for example, in September, 1859, 100 ewes were bought in for £165, which by the year end could be expected to yield 100-150 lambs, whose summer value was £120. The sale of 100 ewes in mid-August yielded £150; 101 wethers were sold for £166.13s.0d. and 45 culled ewes brought in for £70. Wool sold at Blandford realised £67.16s.0d. The account thus shows Expenditure ... £231.0.0. ... Income ... £580.13.6. Added to this was the value of the manure, less cost of keep for the flock but in relation to the value of grain sold – £227 – it is clear where the advantages of the system lay (*ibid*).

'The [new] system of High Farming, or High Feeding ... embraced the use of imported oil-cake for feeding stock, with benefit to the corn crop from the much enriched manure of the stall-fed stock. It was first taken up by [amongst others] Lord Rivers of Rushmore [and] Henry Sturt of Critchell' (*ibid*, p133). Indeed, 'probably more so in Dorset than in many other counties the process of innovation in farming practice followed from the nature of the landowning structure of the county' (*ibid*, p12), an above-average proportion of the land being held in large estates.

The maintenance and reestablishment of large tracts of wood- and farmland had important implications not only for the area's geography and economy but also for its future. Writing in 1967, Wright (p638) suggested that 'Cranborne Chase could form the nucleus of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, on the Wessex Chalklands, to include land eastwards and northwards to the Avon and Wylye valleys, and to link up with Stourhead to the west' – something realised just over a decade later, in 1981. The first meeting of the Cranborne Chase Conservation Group was held, rather appropriately, in the Larmer Tree Gardens in 1974, the chairman arguing that

> the Chase was geographically, geologically and historically [a distinct] entity and that its character differed from the other downlands of England in that it was largely wooded ... Although the pattern of farming [had] changed immeasurably even since the war [and despite

> some suburban development around some of the attractive periphery towns], it remained , up to now, essentially rural and unspoilt ... Mr. Eric Ashby [meanwhile] stressed the importance The Chase held for plant and wild life generally, and expressed the hope that its environment might not only be preserved but actually improved by the spread of informed opinion (WSRO CC/Corresp 1284/50).

Thus, although Treves (1914, p39) lamented that 'the glory of Cranborne Chase has well-nigh departed. Cut into on all sides by the woodman's axe and the plough. Nibbled at on all opportunity by the land-grabber, it has dwindled at last to a little oasis of wild country on the borders of Wiltshire and Dorset', the area's long history as a carefully-maintained hunting ground continued to shape not only its physical environment but also its physical and cultural significance.

8.2.3 Forests and Historical Geography

We have here considered in detail and at length the close relationship between the land and its inhabitants, and with particular reference to hunting, changes in which brought about related changes in the physical environment. Many have observed the significance of such relationships: whilst Thomas (n.d., pp3-4) reminds us that 'because the laws were made for animals and not for people, the countryside changed very slowly and looked much as it had always looked', he also acknowledges that 'modern England and agriculture caught up with the Chase when it was disafforested in 1830, and the woodlands diminished to their present day size': disfranchisement signalled new trends in land management and sport, each of which continually informed the other. The transition towards modernity was nonetheless a gradual one. Writing in 1858 – three decades after disfranchisement – a visitor to Rushmore described it thus: 'this is, I believe, the only place in England 18 miles from a railway station. It takes as long to come from Salisbury as from London to Salisbury'; he adds, 'immediately within sight of the house the country is bleak open downs, but below there is an immense extent of beautiful wild wood, the remains of old Cranborne Chase' (Lord Stanley of Alderley, quoted in Hawkins 1980, p133). Meanwhile, in the twentieth century, Thomas (n.d., p4) still maintains that 'the long centuries as a hunting preserve have given the Chase ... a special aspect of its character which is not found elsewhere, and has ensured that it has remained a quiet corner in which plants and birds and beasts and men have a chance of living out their lives in harmony' (*ibid*), and Hawkins (1998, p17) concludes that

> the long tradition of hunting, and of field sports generally, has been an important factor in the shaping of the Chase. Paradoxical though it may be, the huntsman, the courser, the falconer and the man with the gun have in common an intention to create and sustain a countryside which is favourable to the wildlife they propose to kill.

Cranborne Chase was certainly managed with deer and game preservation in mind; nor did this change after 1830, the area's past combining with modern trends to continue to nurture the ambitions of keen (and particularly wealthy) young sportsmen well into the twentieth century. Cranborne Chase was amongst the last forests and chases in the country to be disfranchised; the fact that it remained intact so long and in so vast a state is itself remarkable. But as Langton (2003, p23) points out,

> far from subsiding into timely disappearance, forests survived as recalcitrant spaces, resistant to modernisation of all kinds. If recent historians of English culture are right, a fully-fledged counterculture flourished in the forests. Outside modernity's terms of reference, opaque to its scrutiny and resistant to its imperatives, forests were arenas for activities otherwise linked only by irrelevance to capitalism, improvement, conformity and propriety.

Hence, perhaps, the rebellious reputation of the Chase's inhabitants, chief amongst them the deer stealers and smugglers.

Looking back, there is a tendency to romanticise much of this history, just as General Pitt-Rivers and even Chafin did before us. This is surely due to its premodern aspects – an idyllic way of life in which man lived in harmony with nature, and yet a dramatic way of life with epic battles between men and animals, keepers and criminals – if as criminals we can rightly define them. We have considered a diversity of plants and animals: the fated fallow and its vulpine counterpart, hapless hares, rampaging rabbits, pheasants, partridges, and commoners' livestock; Chafin's dubious truffles and nuts fit for a king, hazel and holly, hedges and heaths – underlying all of which is, of course, the fundamental relationship between man and his environment.

Trueman (1949, p12) proposes that 'many never know an area until something of its meaning becomes clear to them ... For a country is not just a jumble of hills and valleys; the features have a plan, a system underlying their distribution, and once this is understood the region is seen more clearly and its variety more readily appreciated.' Thus, with a final focus on the local landscape, we come to appreciate that

> the man who should know the true history of the bit of chalk which every carpenter carries about in his breeches pocket, though ignorant of all other history, is likely, if he will think his knowledge out to its ultimate results, to have a truer, and therefore a better, conception of this

> wonderful universe, and of man's relation to it, than the most learned student who is deep-read in the records of humanity and ignorant of those of nature (Huxley, quoted in Smith 1980, pv).

Moreover, 'it is manifestly obvious from the foregoing account that, ironic as it may be, virtually every feature of the chalklands of ecological and aesthetic interest results from the intervention, intentional or otherwise, by man' (Smith 1980, p457).

And so we return to our starting point: historical geography. Changes in land use, in Cranborne Chase or anywhere else, are inevitably linked to changes in human pressures, innovations and desires. But although the alternately creative or destructive force in such changes is man, the matrix upon which these changes are wrought is the land itself – the physical environment. General Pitt-Rivers has been quoted as saying: 'what the people lack is history. They must learn the links between the past and the present' (Hawkins 1980, p145). Cranborne Chase provides an excellent focus both for delving into one particular history (human and environmental) and for linking that history to the present. Bradley (1943, p365) believes 'its story is racy enough'; it is also, undoubtedly, significant enough, both from an academic and from a popular point of view. As Chafin (1818, p41) concluded, 'I am well aware that there are many young persons who are very indifferent and care little about what was practised by their ancestors, or how they amused themselves; they are looking forward, and so do not choose to look back; but there may be some not so indifferent' – and all the better for it.

Appendix 1 The Inner and Outer Bounds and Parishes of Cranborne Chase

> The territory ... known as 'Cranborne Chase' comprised the north-east part of the county of Dorset, with portions of the adjoining counties of Wilts and Hants, and it may be generally described as bounded on the north and east by the river Avon and the Nadder, and on the south and west by the Stour. It contains ... 72 parishes ... and ... parts of the city and towns of Salisbury, Wilton, Shaftesbury, Blandford, Wimborne, Fordingbridge, and Downton (Hutchins 1868, p406).

Despite Hutchins's seemingly straightforward description, Cranborne Chase's outer bounds were repeatedly confused and contested throughout its long history, estimates of the total area contained therein varying between 250,000 and 800,000 acres.

Uncertainty surrounding the outer bounds became particularly apparent following the seventeenth century separation of Alderholt and Vernditch from the remainder of the Chase. As Chafin (1818, p5) points out,

> the very extensive boundaries of the Chase, which have lately been delineated in several public prints, and the subject of much converse in the county of Wilts, appertained only to the two great walks, Fernditch and Alderholt; and, when these Walks were destroyed, these oppressive boundaries, as they were deemed to be, became mere non-entities; and the expensive litigations which have lately passed, were for the shadow of a substance long extinct.

Similarly: 'in considering the Chace ... as contg 500,000 acres it must be remembered that 2 Walks (Alderholt & Fernditch) are included, altho' wholly exempt from the Chace Rights & they contain together about a third of the whole Chace' (DRO D/PIT/L56). However, the outer bounds *including* Alderholt and Vernditch were, and still are, much easier to distinguish than those *excluding* them.

> Most of the perambulation is easy to paraphrase in modern terms. Significantly it began at the ancient capital of Wiltshire, since New Sarum had not yet arisen to overshadow Wilton. From Bulbridge the line ran with the River Nadder to the mills at Dinton and Tisbury and on to the junction of the two rivers Nadder and Sem. The Sem now became the boundary up to its source at Kingsettle. With no suitable river line to follow the boundary skirted round the eastern side of Shaftesbury, past St Rumbold's church, to the little Strichel stream which helps to form the Manston Brook as a tributary of the Stour. Securely linked with a river system the boundary followed the Stour past the bridges at Shillingstone ... Blandford and Tarrant Crawford to the junction at Wimborne of the Stour with its tributary the Allen ... Here the boundary left the Stour to follow instead the Allen up to Witchampton and the stone bridge near Knowlton Church. The next stage, linking the Rivers Allen and Crane, is somewhat obscure in detail. The perambulation broke away from the Allen between Knowlton Church and the Horton Inn, kept to the north of Woodlands and met the Crane in the vicinity of Romford. Following the Crane to Ebblake the boundary then left the river and followed the road to the great bridge at Ringwood. At Ringwood it again had a clear and unmistakable river

> line – the Avon – to the three bridges at Fordingbridge, Downton and Harnham ... and so to the starting point at Wilton (Hawkins 1980, p76).

Although Edward I's *Quo Warranto* includes a detailed definition of both the outer and the inner bounds, many of its distinguishing landmarks are now obsolete. Nor do its descriptions clarify Alderholt and Vernditch's boundaries. Hawkins (*ibid*, p38) suggests that 'in terms of today's maps [the inner bounds] lie north of the A354 up to about the line of what is known as the Ox Drove'; meanwhile, Vernditch is 'situated between Cobley Walk and Harnham Bridge' (NA LRRO 67/23). Even in the eighteenth century, delineations were uncertain. The 1790 Chase Court book records a presentment of 'some Difficulties [having] been raised as to the Boundries between Staplefoot Walk and Cobley Walk' (DRO D/PIT/M17); meanwhile, several letters written between 1775 and 1777 detail an ongoing disagreement between Lords Rivers and Pembroke concerning Cobley and Vernditch Walks. In one such letter, Bathurst advises that

> it appears to me from the foregoing evidence, that the right of killing Deer, on that Tract of land in Cranbourne Chase, call'd Bower Chalk Cow-down belongs to Ld Pembroke ... the weight of the ... evidence, previous to Mr Bennets being appointed Keeper of Cobley Walk, about Seventeen Years Since, is greatly in favour of Ld Pembrokes right; The Witnesses on both Sides of the question agree that Since that time, there has been disputes between the Keepers of Vernditch and Cobley Walks concerning Bower Chalk Cow-down; Mr Gifford who, was a long while Keeper of the former, always claim'd it, as part of his Walk, and his Servants constantly kill'd Deer there, but would never prosecute the Cobley Keeper's for killing Deer there, because he said neither Ld Pembroke nor any of his Agents would ever listen to his complaints; and I am much inclined to believe That was his reason, having frequently heard, that the late Ld Pembroke, never gave himself the least trouble, to preserve game of any kind (WSRO 2057/E1/5).

Chafin (1818, pp5-6) offers some insight into the 'true' or 'lesser' outer bounds:

> the boundaries now existing must be those, and those only, appertaining to that remnant of the Chase which was sold to Mr. Freke, and which may be easily defined. The Eastern boundary of Lord Rivers's Chase, which seems to have been the bone for the late contention, extends no farther than the parishes of Berwick, Alveston, Ebbesbourn, Fifield, and the Chalks; and the rivulet which runs through those villages hath been the boundary line for time immemorial; consequently the Down, and small woods belonging to the said parishes, are within the limits of Lord Rivers's Chase.

However, his inclusion of 'the Chalks' conflicts with Bathurst's opinion that at least part of Bower Chalk lay outside Lord Rivers's franchise. Who was correct remains uncertain.

One basic problem is a lack of maps. Those few that do exist date from the early seventeenth century (Aldwell 1618, Corbet/Hardinge 1618, Norden 1605) and so are in many ways outdated, even

by eighteenth and nineteenth century standards; in addition, the former two having been drawn for opposing sides in a legal debate, they are purposely different and consequently somewhat confusing when viewed together. Nor are there any maps incorporating both physical features and parish boundaries. This latter point is particularly relevant to the crime data analysis undertaken herein.

Recall Hutchins's assertion of 72 parishes lying within the Chase's original outer bounds. Unfortunately, neither he nor anyone else lists these parishes. An attempt to do so here resulted in 75 being deemed either potentially or definitely, and either partly or wholly, within the original outer bounds. The problem is that although we can trace the bounds on a map using place names and physical features, we must then transfer this information on to another map that includes parish names and boundaries – one of the key pieces of information in our crime data analysis being 'home' and/or 'crime' parish. Yet, even once accomplished, an exact match does not necessarily emerge. For example, the decision whether to include the parish of Cann St Rumbold: recall from Hawkins's description above, that 'with no suitable river line to follow, the boundary skirted round the eastern side of Shaftesbury, past St Rumbold's church, to the little Strichel stream'. The reference to St Rumbold's church suggests that its namesake parish might very well lie within the bounds; however, according to Chafin (1818, p8), 'the parishes of Sutton Waldron, Fontmell, Compton, [and] Melbury [are] the boundaries North-westward'. After great deliberation, Cann was finally included as a strong possibility.

Even when a parish definitely did lie within the Chase bounds, it was still sometimes excluded from our analysis. In such cases, the problem lay not with maps but with the parish names and with insufficiently detailed entries in the original data. For example, Wiltshire had two parishes called Bishopstone. The records sometimes specify North or South, the latter being that within Cranborne Chase: more often, they do not. Therefore, any entries of 'Bishopstone' only were ignored; although they may well have applied to our Bishopstone, we could not be certain. A similar although less problematic situation emerged respecting Wimborne Minster and Wimborne St Giles, some entries being for 'Wimborne' only.

Nor were the parishes that lay within the Chase all affected to the same extent. As Hawkins (1980, p150) points out,

> beyond Alderholt and Verwood lies the Avon valley. The river's western bank is technically within the Chase but it is difficult to see the great riverine estates of Somerley and Breamore

> as having much kinship with the rest of the Chase ... What is true of the Avon valley applies equally to the Nadder ... the villages on its banks and those of its tributary, the River Sem, played no great part in the history of the Chase. In some degree they lay outside the effective application of Chase law: at most they were in the purlieu or percursus extremity of the Chase territory. It is indeed tempting to find a natural frontier in the great scarp from Whitesheet Hill to Salisbury and to dismiss the Vale below. To do so, however, would be to ignore Wardour Castle and Wilton, the homes of two of the most influential families in Chase history – the Arundells and the Pembrokes ... It is the villages clustered about the A30 – Ansty, Swallowcliffe, Sutton Mandeville, Fovant and Compton Chamberlayne – that represent the Chase's northern fringe.

Hawkins's suggestion that many parts of the Chase were thus in name only reminds us that our inclusion of all 75 potential, original parishes inevitably leads to an overestimation of crime levels within Cranborne Chase, which was greatly diminished in size by our period. To confuse matters even more, prior to Vemditch's 1802 disfranchisement, some cases of deer stealing may have taken place there rather than in Lord Rivers's franchise; however, without knowing exactly where each was, we can make no clear distinction. Our crime data analysis is based upon the original outer bounds as much as possible, not only for rigour's sake, but also for ease's. (See, also, Appendix 3.)

* * *

A list of the 75 parishes comprising Cranborne Chase's original outer bounds, as determined by the author: those marked with an asterisk lay partly within and partly without the outer bounds; those marked with a double asterisk were extra-parochial.

Dorset: Ashmore, Blandford Forum, Cann St Rumbold, Chettle, Child Okeford, Compton Abbas, Cranborne*, Edmondsham*, Farnham, Fontmell Magna, Gussage All Saints, Gussage St Michael, Handley, Hanford**, Iwerne Courtney, Iwerne Minster, Langton Long, Long Crichel, Melbury Abbas, Moor Crichel, Pentridge, Pimperne, Shapwick, Steepleton Iwerne, Stourpaine, Sutton Waldron, Tarrant Crawford, Tarrant Gunville, Tarrant Hinton, Tarrant Keyneston, Tarrant Launceston, Tarrant Monkton, Tarrant Rawston, Tarrant Rushton, West Woodyates**, Wimborne Minster*, Wimborne St Giles*, Witchampton

Hampshire: Breamore, Charford, Fordingbridge*, Harbridge, Rockbourne

Wiltshire: Alvediston, Ansty, Barford*, Berwick St John, Bishopstone, Bower Chalk, Britford, Broad Chalk, Burcombe*, Compton Chamberlain, Coombe Bissett, Donhead St Andrew, Donhead St Mary, Downton*, Ebbesborne Wake, Fifield Bavant, Fovant, Homington, Martin, Netherhampton, Nunton and Bodenham, Odstock, Semley, South Damerham, Stratford Tony, Sutton Mandeville, Swallowcliffe, Tollard Royal, Wardour, West Harnham, Whitsbury, Wilton

Appendix 2 The Cranborne Chase Calendar

Numerous different sources provide days and/or dates for events in the Chase's calendar. However, some confusion arises concerning the use of New and/or Old Style. The 1752 calendar reform [24 Geo. 2. c.23 (1751)] effectively erased eleven days from Britain's Julian calendar, thereby bringing it in line with the Continent's Gregorian calendar. 'The basic principle was that all events fixed to a particular date stayed on that date, while the calendar itself was pulled forward eleven days. Thus Guy Fawkes Night still fell on 5 November, but 5 November itself fell eleven days earlier in the autumn, on what had been 25 October' (Poole 1995, pp113-114). But as Poole (*ibid*, p114) points out, 'a second and contrary principle operated, that no property rights were to be affected', including, for example, grazing rights. This exemption also 'applied to all fairs, which were to maintain their place in the natural year and thus change their nominal date' (*ibid*). The reasoning was simple: calendar reform meant that, relative to the Julian calendar, the Gregorian calendar would initially appear desynchronised with the unchanged natural world; therefore, those calendar events that depended on the natural world should remain in synchronisation with it. Hence, the dislocation between the fair calendar and the Saints' Day calendar to which many fairs were previously linked. As William Parker, writing in 1753, explains,

> the Fair, for instance, may be appointed, by the stated day in the almanack, for the sale of ... wool, before the sheep are fit to be sheared [or] for the sale of fruits before they are fit to be gathered ... Therefore you may observe, it is provided, upon the present alteration of Stile, that the [nominal] days of many fairs shall be changed in proportion to that alteration (quoted in *ibid*).

* * *

Both New and Old Style dates appear in the Cranborne Chase calendar. Sometimes both are given for a single event so that the one actually in use during our period is uncertain; however, based on the above explanation, we can make at least an educated guess.

The dates relating to livestock are relatively straightforward. Smart (1841, p140) observes that 'on the 12th. of May, (old May-day) the fences were torn up, becoming the woodman's perquisite, and the cattle continued to feed in the woods until the 23rd. of November following, (Martinstide)'. Despite writing nearly a century after reform, he clearly uses the Old Style, as does the original documentation:

'copses in most instances are fed at 7 years old by Black Cattle from May Day O.S. (12 May) to St Martins Tide O.S. (22d. Novr)' (DRO D/PIT/L38, undated but c.1815). The Tollard Farnham Court presents as late as 1853 that 'Tollard Farnham Common shall be opened for the depasturing of Horses and Cows on the 12th Day of May yearly and that the said [animals] shall be removed ... on the twenty third Day of November' (DRO D/PIT/M80). Smart's recognition of the persistence of Old Style dates is laudable, most writers acknowledging only the New Style. Whether commencing on the 22nd or 23rd of November, winter heyning is worth further mention not for its start date but for its end date. In most other forests and chases, commonable livestock joined deer in feeding the woods on St George's Day; delaying this to May Day on Cranborne Chase benefited not only Lord Rivers's deer but also the proprietors' coppices.

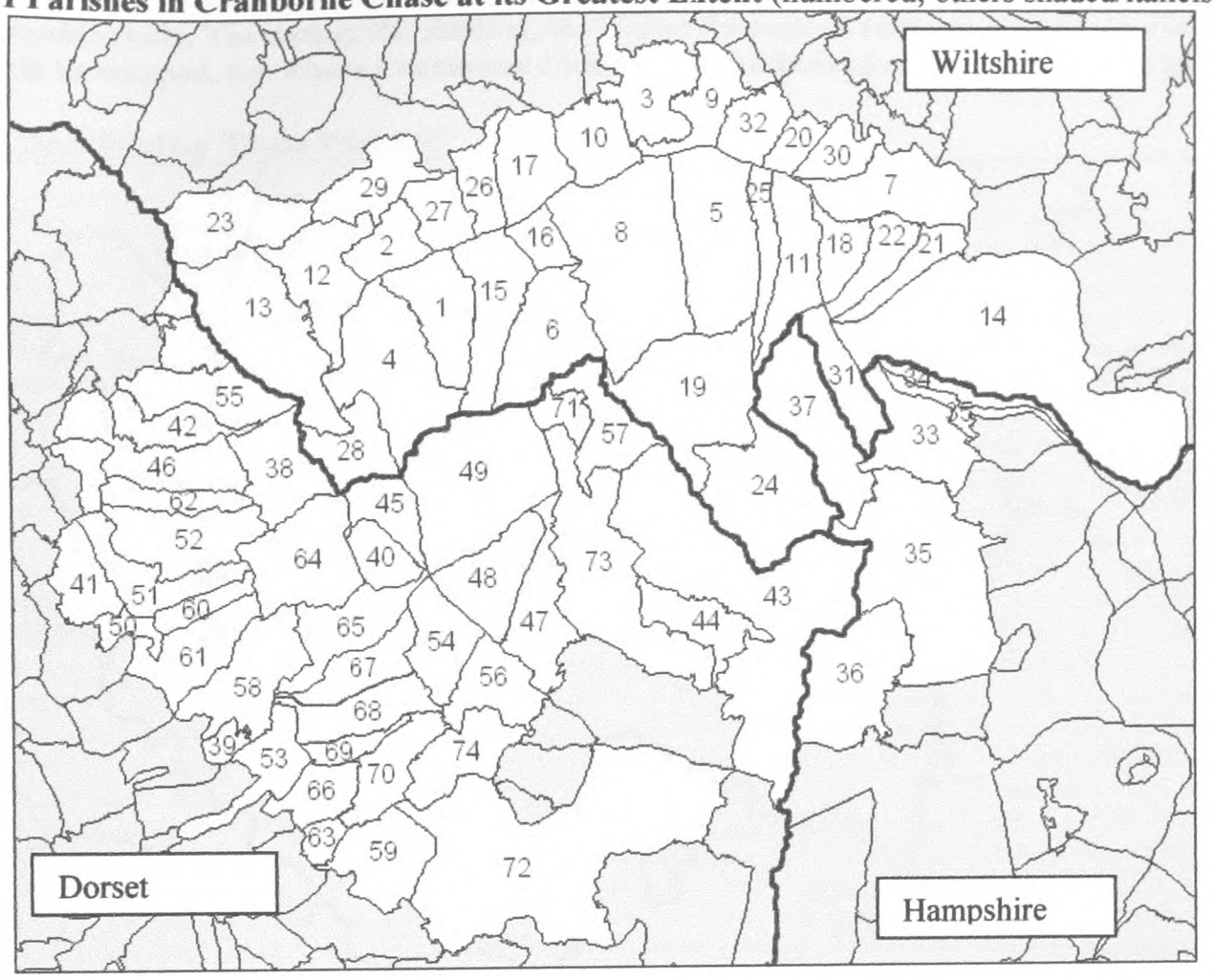
Of course, livestock was barred again during the fence month, fifteen days before and after Midsummer (also the Feast of St John the Baptist), 24 June. Smart offers two sets of dates: 20 June to 20 July and 9 June to 9 July; the former retains the link with the natural world and the latter, with its Saints Day. Based on the continued use of Old Style dates for grazing, we might expect a similar persistence for hunting. However, the only references to the start of buck hunting on Cranborne Chase are in Smart (*ibid*, p141) and Hutchins (1868, p414): 'the season for killing bucks commenced in the *beginning* of July' (my italics). 9 July thus seems more likely, but what was the situation in other forests and chases? Manwood (1615) and James Cox (1905) cite 24 June, but Nicholas Cox (1697) observes of '*the seasons of Beasts* [a] *Hart* or *Buck* beginneth at the end of Fencer Month, which is 15 days after *Midsummer*-day', i.e. 9 July. The 'beginning of July' given for Cranborne Chase may refer to a start date of 24 June shifted by eleven days, or it may refer to 9 July. Either way, a letter accompanying a gift of 'part of the first Buck' Beckford had killed in Burseystool Walk is dated 'July 16th', signifying that the season was underway by then (WSRO 2667/20/47).

'The season for killing does began at Martinstide (Nov. 11th) and ended at Candlemas', while 'the last [buck] was always killed on the first day of Shroton Fair, (Sept. 25th)' (Hutchins 1868, p414). However, the 1713 *Orders & Instructions for the management of the Chase* remind keepers 'that noe Buck be Killed after Holy Rood Day' (DRO D/PIT/M36). Holy Rood Day is 14 September, but a fair linked to it prior to reform would, after reform, take place on 25 September. Confusingly, although Hutchins gives an Old Style date for the end of buck-hunting, he gives a New Style date for the start of doe-hunting. Meanwhile, both Smart (1841) and Chafin (1818) refer to Royal Oak Day – when young

hounds were blooded – as 29 May, its New Style date. Perhaps eleven days made little difference in the deer's fawning and rutting seasons, which lasted weeks anyway. In addition, bucks were hunted during fawning and does during rutting, so the more vulnerable sex remained relatively unaffected in each case. Meanwhile, the fact that the end of the buck season coincided with an important local social event emphasises venison's patronage value. Of course, huntsmen themselves benefited, the season being longer than it otherwise would, although, as Smart (1841, p141) points out, 'the first day of Shroton Fair' was also 'the signal for the commencement of fox-hunting', another popular sport.

Appendix 3 The Geography of Crime on Cranborne Chase, Mapped by Parish

Fig. A.1 Parishes in Cranborne Chase at its Greatest Extent (numbered; others shaded/italicised)



1 Alvediston
2 Ansty
3 Barford(StMary)
4 BerwickStJohn
5 Bishopstone
6 BowerChalk
7 Britford
8 BroadChalk
9 Burcombe
10 Compton Chamberlain
11 CoombeBissett
12 DonheadSt Andrew
13 DonheadStMary
14 Downton (incl Standlynch)
15 Ebbesborne Wake
16 FifieldBavant
17 Fovant
18 Homington
19 Martin
20 Netherhampton
21 Nunton and Bodenham
22 Odstock
23 Semley
24 SouthDamerham
25 StratfordTony
26 Sutton Mandeville
27 Swallowcliffe
28 TollardRoyal
29 Wardour
30 WestHarnham
31 Whitsbury
32 Wilton
33 Breamore
34 SouthCharford
35 Fordingbridge
36 Harbridge
37 Rockbourne
38 Ashmore
39 BlandfordForum CannStRumbold CharltonMarshall
40 Chettle
41 ChildOkeford
42 ComptonAbbas
43 Cranborne
44 Edmondsham
45 Farnham
46 FontmellMagna
47 GussageAllSaints
48 GussageSt Michael
49 Handley
50 Hanford
51 IwerneCourtney (Shroton)
52 IwerneMinster
53 LangtonLong Blandford
54 LongCritchel
55 MelburyAbbas
56 MoorCritchel
57 Pentridge (or Pent/Cobley)
58 Pimperne
59 Shapwick
60 SteepletonIwerne
61 Stourpaine
62 SuttonWaldron
63 TarrantCrawford
64 TarrantGunville
65 TarrantHinton
66 TarrantKeynston
67 Launceston
68 TarrantMonkton
69 TarrantRawston
70 TarrantRushton
71 WestWoodyates
72 Wimborne and WimbMinster
73 WimborneStGiles
74 Witchampton
Durweston
Motcombe
Shaftesbury
StourPrevost
Forton(Hants)
Fritham(Hants)
Hale
Alderbury
Amesbury
Baverstock
BerwickStJames
Damerham
Dinton
DonheadLower (StMary or StAndrew?)
Fugglestone St Peter
GreatWishford
Groveley
Hannington
Landford
Pitton and Farley
Salisbury
SouthNewton
StratfordSub Castle
Tisbury
TollardFarnham part of TRoyal
Whiteparish
Winterbourne Dauntsey
W'bourneEarls

Parish boundaries are outlined in pink, county boundaries in yellow, the inner bounds in a broken line, and the outer bounds in a solid line. Recall that 'Crime Parish' data were available for Wiltshire and Hampshire only. The darker the shading, the higher the ratio of crime to population. Not all data could be mapped, e.g. where Cranborne Chase was listed instead of a distinguishable parish.

Fig. A.2 Deer Stealing 'Home Parishes'

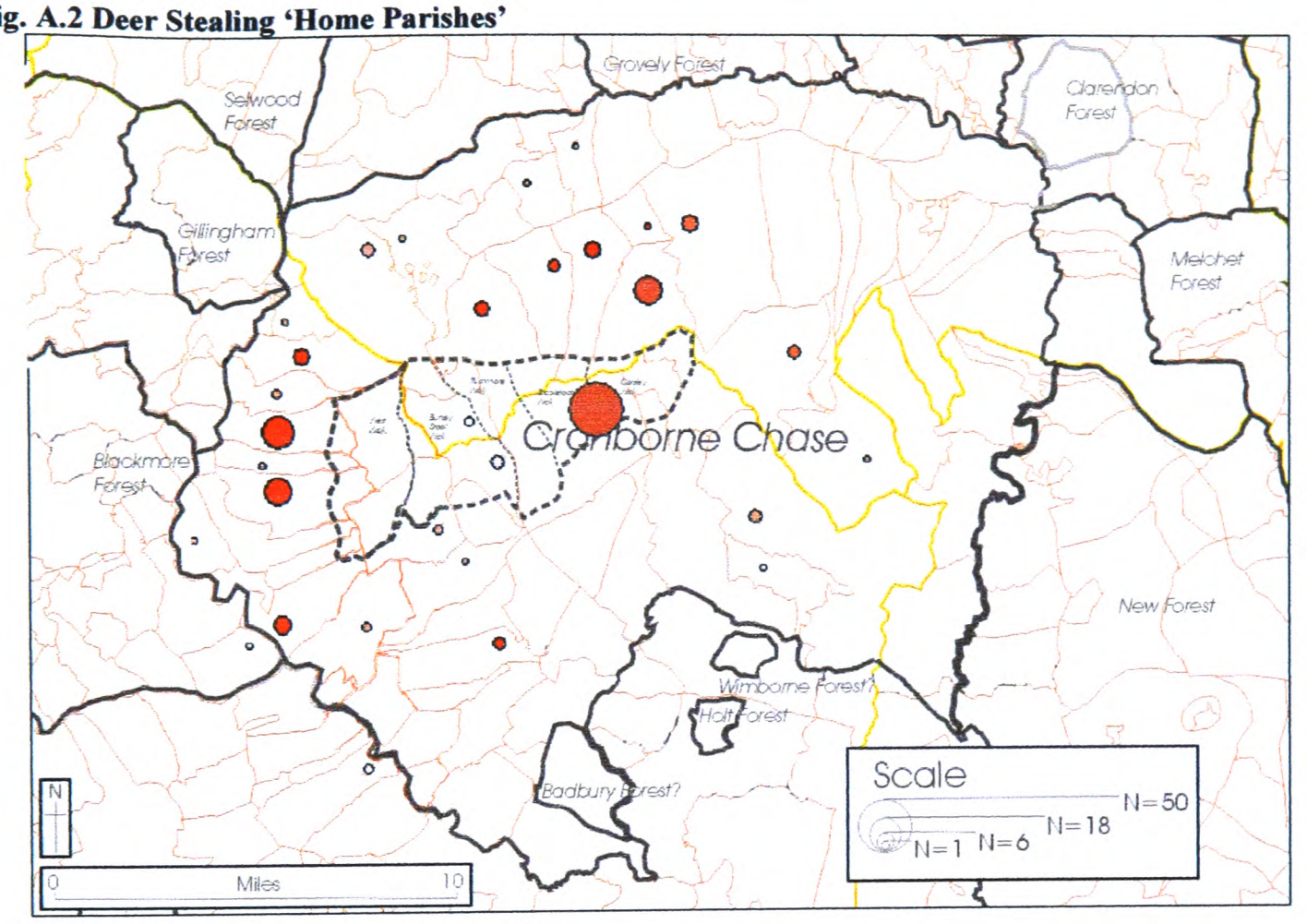


Fig. A.3 Deer Stealing 'Crime Parishes'

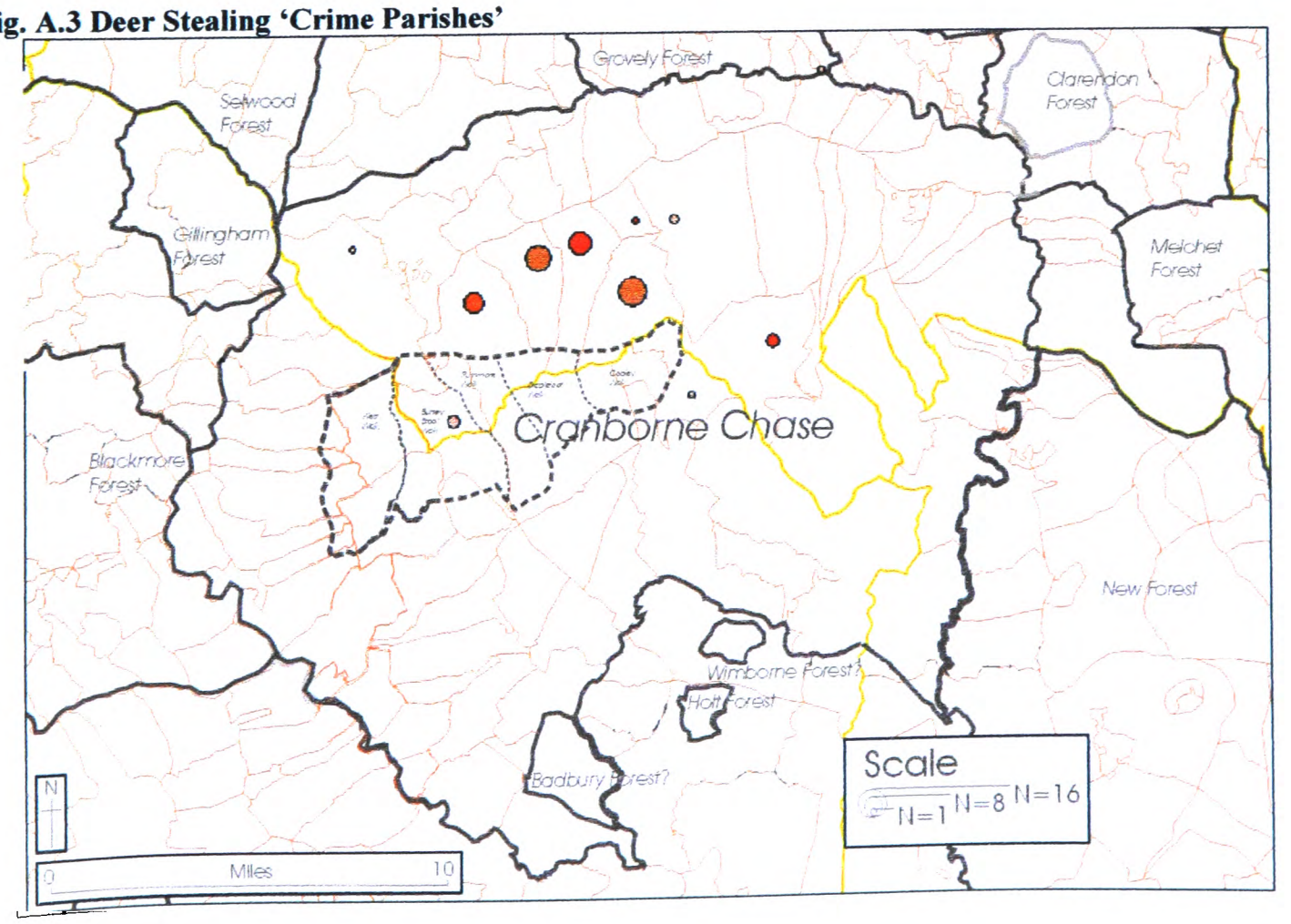


Fig. A.4 Game Stealing 'Home Parishes'

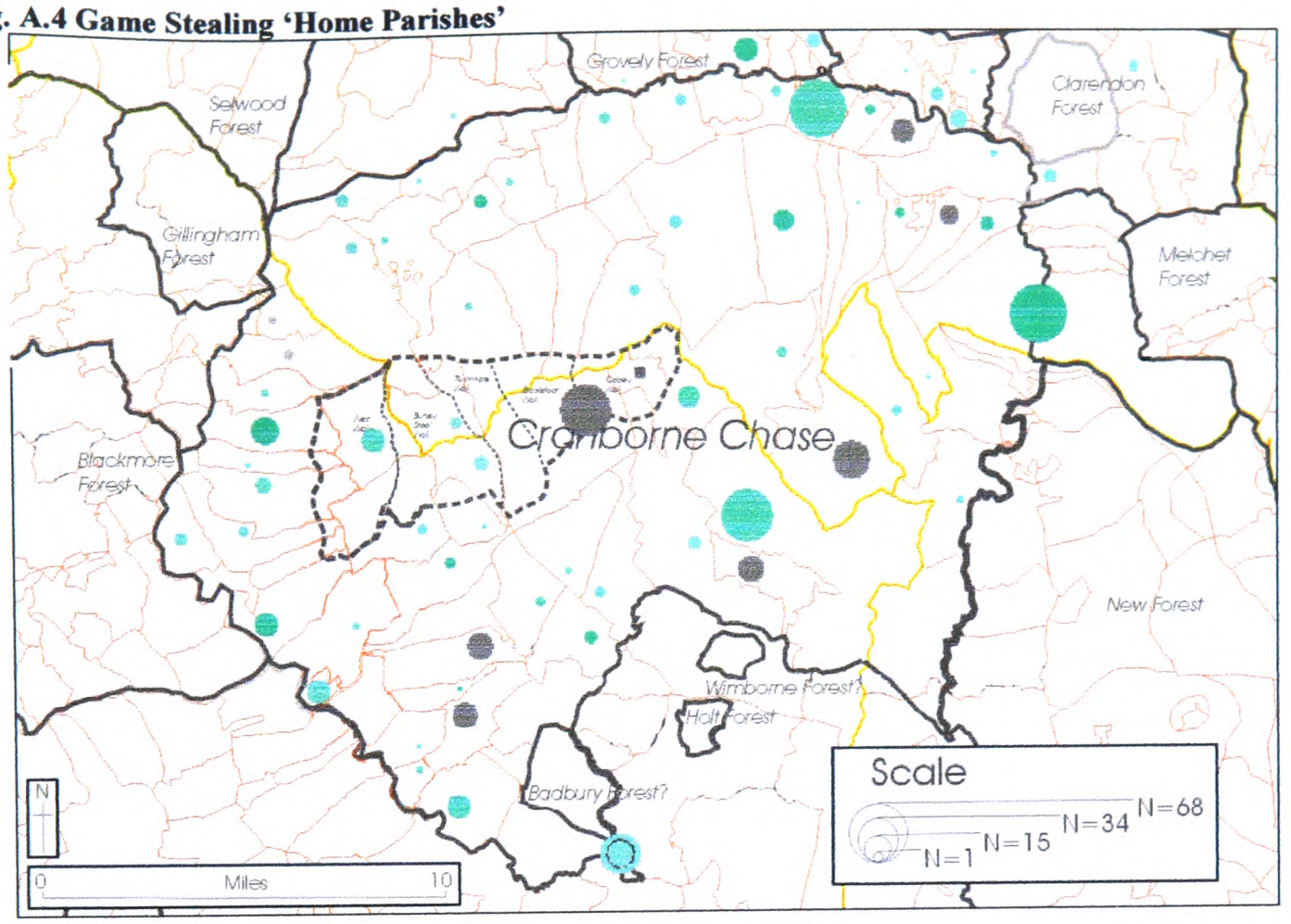


Fig. A.5 Game Stealing 'Crime Parishes'

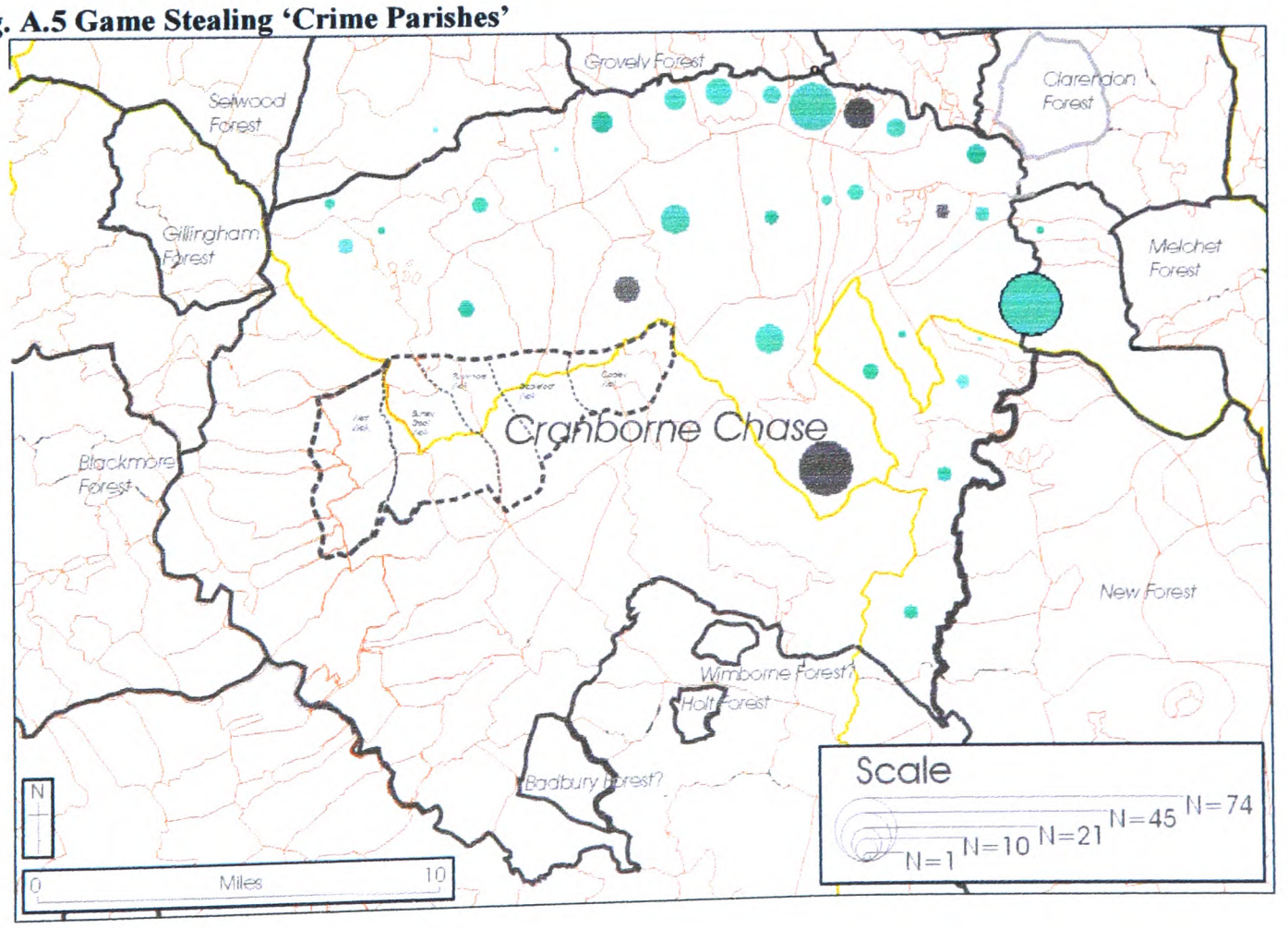


Fig. A.6 Wood Stealing 'Home Parishes'

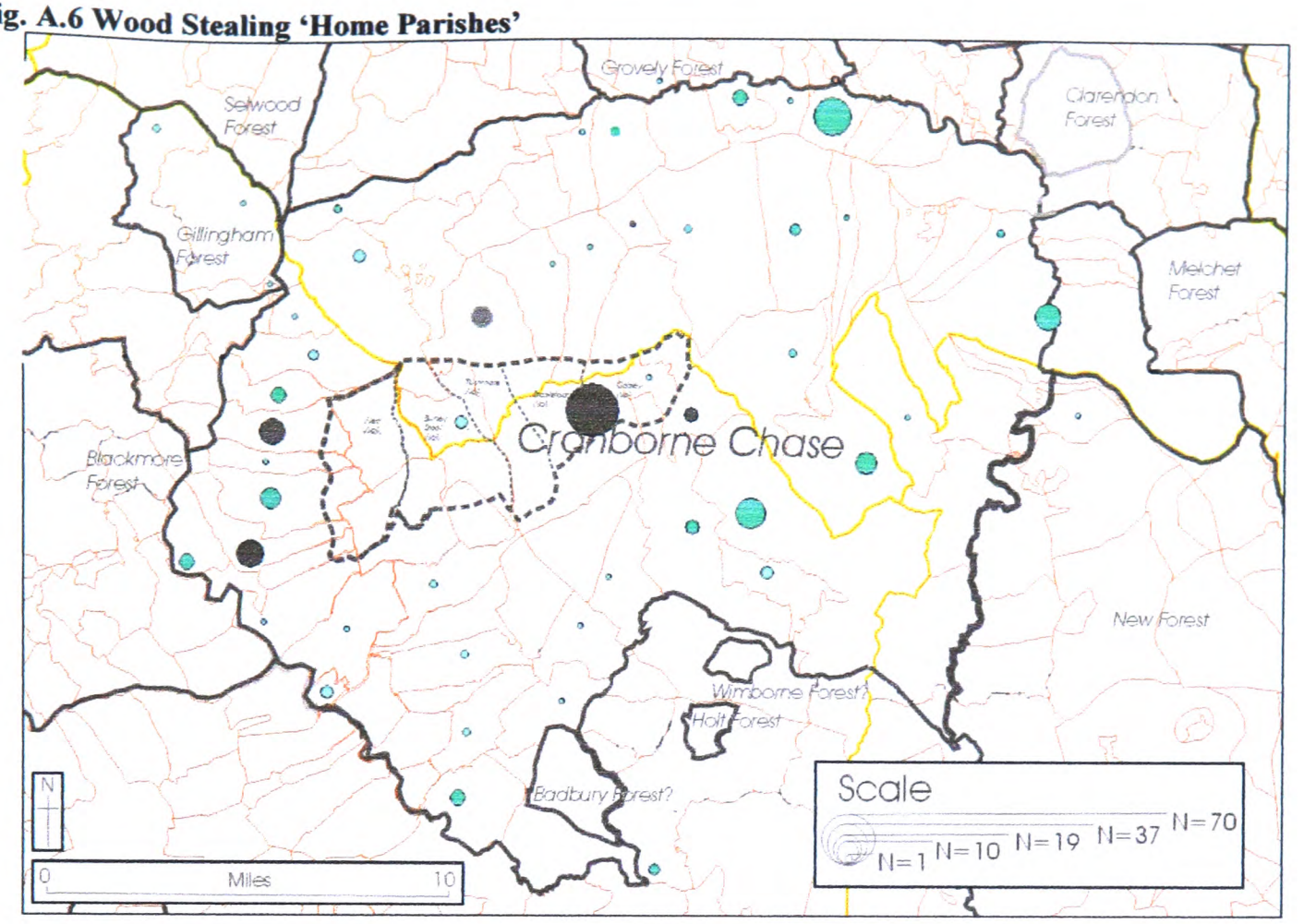
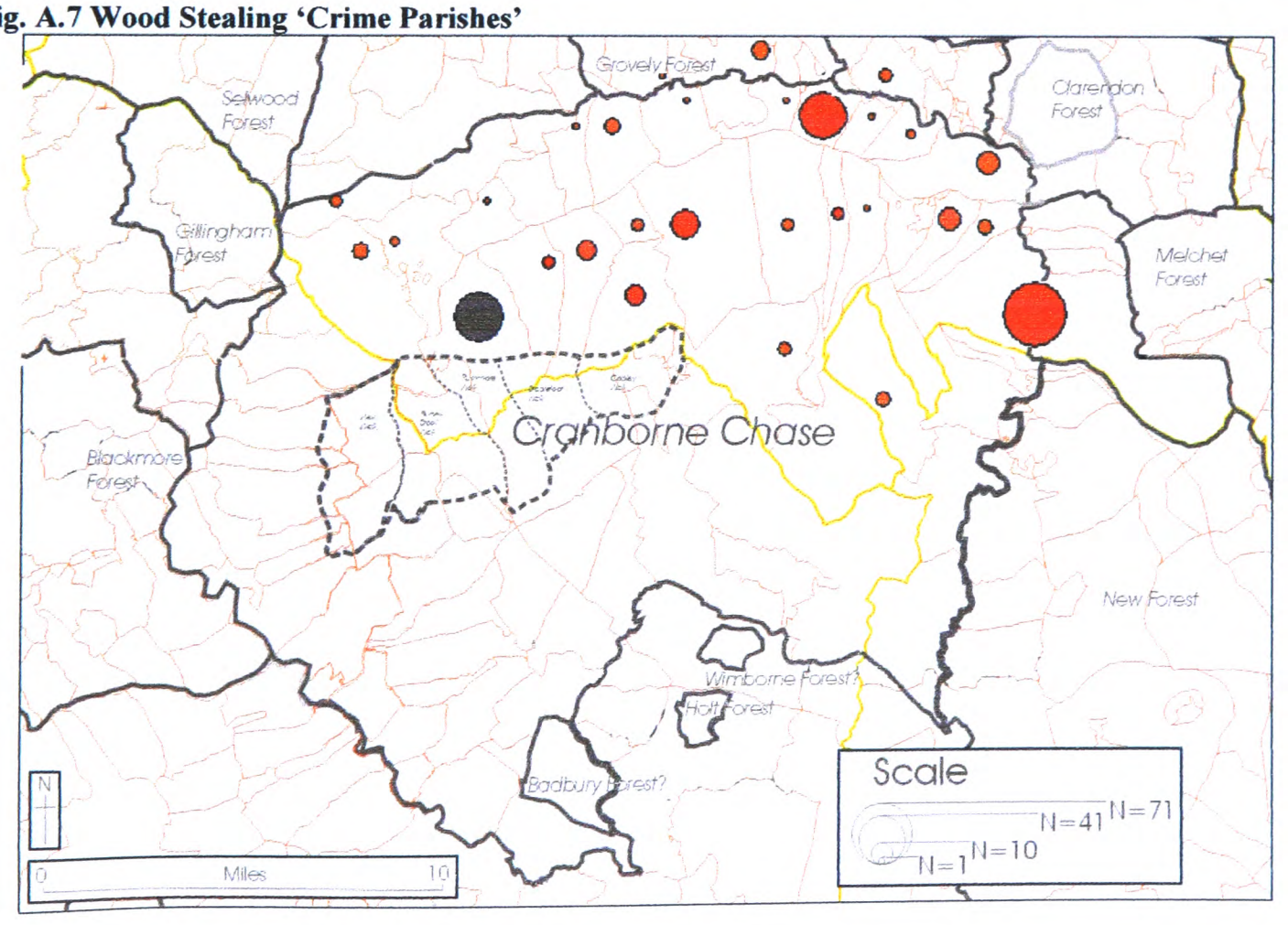


Fig. A.7 Wood Stealing 'Crime Parishes'



Appendix 4 1820 Cranborne Chase Accounts

Chase Payments

Rushmore Walk

[to Lady Day]			
James Webb one Quarters Wages	42	10	0
Thomas White Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	7	10	0
James Barrett Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	7	10	0
James Sargent Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	7	10	0
James Webb one Years Assessed Taxes for Keepers Horses	7	12	6
[to Midsummer]			
James Webb one Quarters Wages	42	10	0
Thomas White Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	7	10	0
James Barrett Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	7	10	0
James Sargent Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	7	10	0
[to Michaelmas]			
James Webb one Quarters Wages	42	10	0
Thomas White Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	7	10	0
James Barrett Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	7	10	0
James Sargent Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	7	10	0
Six Game Certificates for Keepers	22	7	0
Thomas White Horse Tax	2	17	6
[to Christmas]			
Moses Brixey one Quarters Wages	12	10	0
Thomas White Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	12	10	0
James Barrett Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	7	10	0
James Sargent Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	7	10	0

Staplefoot Walk

[to Lady Day]			
John Dunford one Quarters Wages	7	10	0
Elias Dunford Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	7	10	0
John Dunford Junior helping his Father	0	4	6
[to Midsummer]			
John Dunford one Quarters Wages	7	10	0

Elias Dunford Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	7	10	0
[to Michaelmas]			
John Dunford one Quarters Wages	7	10	0
Elias Dunford Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	7	10	0
[to Christmas]			
John Dunford one Quarters Wages	7	10	0
Elias Dunford Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	7	10	0

Expences keeping Hounds at Rushmore

[to Lady Day]			
James Webb for a Horse for the Hounds	0	15	0
James Webb for a Cow for the Hounds	0	10	0
James Webb for a Dog Trough	0	10	0
James Webb for a Horse for the Hounds	0	15	0
James Webb for a Horse for the Hounds	0	14	0
James Webb for a Horse for the Hounds	0	15	0
John Dunford hunting the Hounds half a Year	1	1	0
James Barrett feeding the Hounds one Quarter	0	10	6
James Webb 93 dead Deer for Hounds	1	16	0
James Webb for 31 dead Deer for Hounds	0	11	6
[to Midsummer]			
James Webb for a Horse for the Hounds	0	15	0
James Webb for a Horse for the Hounds	0	15	0
James Barrett feeding the Hounds one Quarter	0	10	6
Flesh for the Hounds	1	8	0
Flesh for the Hounds	0	15	0
[to Michaelmas]			
James Barrett feeding the Hounds one Quarter	0	10	6
John Dunford hunting the Hounds half a Year	1	1	0
James Webb for a Horse for the Hounds	0	15	0
James Webb Carriage of a Horse for the Hounds	0	8	0
James Webb for a Horse for the Hounds	0	15	0
James Webb for a Horse for the Hounds	0	10	0
James Webb for a Horse for the Hounds	1	0	0
James Webb for one Load of Straw for the kennel	2	15	0
[to Christmas]			
James Barrett feeding the Hounds one Quarter	0	10	6

Moses Brixey for a Horse for the Hounds	0	16	0
Moses Brixey for a Horse for the Hounds	0	16	0
James Kellaway's Bill for Barley Meal from Christmas to Christmas	45	15	3

West Walk

[to Lady Day]

Charles Samway Keeper on Account of Wages	7	0	0
Charles Samway for Assessed Taxes for Keepers Horses &c.	6	7	3
Charles Samway on further Account of Wages	7	0	0
John Prince Underkeeper one Quarter Wages	7	10	0
Robert Snow Underkeeper one Quarter Wages	7	10	0
John Dibben Permoter on Account of Wages	3	0	0

[to Midsummer]

Charles Samway Keeper on Account of Wages	6	0	0
George Prince Underkeeper one Quarter Wages	7	10	0
Robert Snow Underkeeper one Quarter Wages	7	10	0

[to Michaelmas]

Charles Samway on further Account	10	0	0
Robert Snow Underkeeper one Quarter Wages	7	10	0
George Prince Underkeeper one Quarter Wages	7	10	0
Charles Samway Horse Tax &c. Three Certificates for Keepers	15	17	4
John Dunford remainder of Wages to Michaelmas 1820	2	0	0
Charles Upward the Carpenter's Bill	0	18	3

[to Christmas]

Charles Samway Keeper in full	10	0	0
Robert Snow Underkeeper one Quarter Wages	7	10	0
George Prince Underkeeper one Quarter Wages	7	10	0

Bursey Stool Walk

[to Lady Day]

John Stubbs Keeper one Quarters Wages	12	10	0
John Cox Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	7	10	0
Charles Prince helping at night	1	2	0
Half a Years Assessed Taxes for Keepers' Horses	3	13	3

[to Midsummer]

John Stubbs Keeper one Quarters Wages	12	10	0
John Cox Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	7	10	0

John Stubbs for 2 Game Certificates	7	9	0
[to Michaelmas]			
John Stubbs Keeper one Quarters Wages	12	10	0
John Cox Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	7	10	0
Half a Years Assessed Taxes for Keepers' Horses	3	13	3
[to Christmas]			
John Cox Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	7	10	0
John Cox under fees of Does sent to Lord Rivers	1	5	0
Cobley Walk			
[to Lady Day]			
Charles Longman Keeper one Quarters Wages	7	10	0
William Hill Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	7	10	0
James Goodfellow Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	3	5	0
Charles Longman keeping Hounds half a Year	5	0	0
Charles Longman Hay for Deer	1	5	0
Charles Longman taking 4 Deer Stealers	4	4	0
Charles Longman Expences with Deer Stealers	2	9	6
Charles Longman Fees of 4 Does sent to Lord Rivers	0	10	0
Charles Longman paid Henry Penny for information	1	0	0
Charles Longman Horse Tax &c. half a Year	3	8	4
William Hill Horse Tax &c. half a Year	1	12	0
[to Midsummer]			
Charles Longman Keeper one Quarters Wages	7	10	0
William Hill Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	7	10	0
James Goodfellow Underkeeper one Quarters Wages	3	5	0
Charles Longman keeping Hounds half a Year	5	0	0
[to Michaelmas]			
Charles Longman one Quarters Taxes to Midsummer when this Walk was given to Lord Shaftesbury	2	6	0
Sundry Expences			
[to Lady Day]			
James Webb for 2 Loads of Hay	9	15	0
James Webb Expences to Salisbury	0	6	6
James Webb Carriage of Hay from Wardour	1	0	0
James Webb Carriage of Hay from Mr. Harris's	1	0	0

James Webb Carriage of Hay from Mr. Harris's	1	0	0
James Webb Charles Longmans Expences to Salisbury	0	13	9
James Webb Carriage of Hay from Mr. Harris's	1	0	0
James Webb George Thompson for Baskets	1	8	0
James Webb Joseph Isaac for Browsing in Winter	1	0	0
James Webb Joseph Isaac for Thorn in Winter	1	0	0
James Webb Carriage of Hay from Mr. Harris's	1	0	0
James Webb Carriage of 2 Loads of Hay	2	0	0
James Webb Keepers Expences to Shaftesbury	0	13	7
James Webb Mr. Futcher for Hay	26	5	0
James Webb one Quarters allowance for Beer for Keepers	2	10	0
James Webb Mr. Harris for Hay	22	18	0
James Webb Charles Samway extra Browsing	3	12	0
James Webb Charles Samway Bill for Rails for West Lodge	0	6	6
James Webb Charles Samway for a Pad	0	7	0
James Webb Keepers taking Deer Stealers in 1815	5	0	0
[to Midsummer]			
Charles Longman taking Cornelius Herley a Deer Stealer	1	1	0
Charles Longman Expences with Cornelius Herley	0	14	0
James Webb Expences for himself and Keepers at Sarum with Deer Stealers	1	13	6
James Webb Expences for himself and Keepers at Sarum with Deer Stealers	1	15	6
James Webb Expences to Melbury and Shaftesbury	0	11	0
James Webb 24 Venison Baskets	2	8	0
[to Michaelmas]			
James Webb Bugden for Baskets	1	4	0
James Webb Carriage of Venison to Sir George Gibbs	0	4	0
James Webb George Thompson for Baskets	0	6	5
James Webb George Thompson for Baskets	1	2	0
James Webb Beer for the Keepers half a Year to Michaelmas	5	0	0
James Webb John Carpenter the Taylors Bills for making Liveries	8	6	8
James Webb John Dibben Warning Court	0	10	6
James Webb for keeping Keeper White's Horses at Straw Yard	2	2	0
Expences at Tollard Hunt Fees to Stubbs at the Breakfast &c.	1	7	6
Edwin Andrews Bill for Beer for Tollard Hunt	4	19	0

[to Christmas]			
Stephen Burden and Son five weeks Browsing	5	5	0
John Dunford and other Keepers taking Deer Stealers at Handley in the Winter of 1820	6	6	0
Elias Dunford taking Thomas Weeks	1	1	0
Elias Dunford and Moses Brixey to Salisbury and Expences with Weeks	1	14	11
John Carpenter the Taylors Bill making Liveries	3	6	0
Samuel Hall for keep of Charles Samways Horse in Straw Yard as per Bill	4	11	0
William Collins the Taylors Bill making West Lodge Liveries	3	5	3
Samuel Hall for Hay for West Walk	1	2	4
Charles Samway taking Charles Trowbridge P. Tuffin and William Young Deer Stealers	3	3	0
Messrs. Stevens and Blackmore's Bill for Keeper's Liveries	85	18	10
Thomas White for Journey to Salisbury &c. with poachers	2	0	4

Taxes Housekeeping and other Expences at Rushmore House

Taxes			
Half a Years Assessed Taxes to Lady Day	34	12	10
Half a Years Assessed Taxes to Michaelmas	34	12	10
Housekeeping			
[to Lady Day]			
ames Webb Letters Carriage of Parcels Postmans Salary	8	13	11
ames Webb Clerk of the Church at Berwick	0	5	0
ames Webb Carriage of Fagots Coals &c. for House	4	18	0
[to Midsummer]			
ames Webb Carriage of Fagots Coals &c. for House	14	18	0
ames Webb Thatchells Bill	0	10	0
[to Michaelmas]			
ames Webb for Carriage for the House	14	11	3
ohn White postman half a Years Salary at 2/- per week and for postage of etters and Carriage of Parcels	9	5	6
ally Shepherd for assistance at Court Dinner	0	5	0
[to Christmas]			
ollard Ringers at Christmas as usual	0	10	6
ollard Singers at Christmas as usual	1	0	0

Berwick Ringers at Christmas as usual	0	10	6
Berwick Singers at Christmas as usual	1	0	0
Thomas White's Bill for Sundry Housekeeping Expences Butchers and Grocers Bill &c. for the Court Dinner	18	19	3
Mrs. White 1¾ Years Wages as Housekeeper at £12 per annum	21	0	0
5360 fagots supplied to the House	43	13	6
Henry Ferrett for one Quart of Oats	1	2	0
Garden Payments			
John Green the Gardiner one Years Wages	26	0	0
Joseph Symes 5 weeks assistance	1	10	0
Sally Shepherd for nuts to plant	1	7	0
John Green for Garden Supplements	0	8	1
Joseph Symes 2 weeks assistance	0	10	0
Stephen Burden and Thomas White for nuts acorns &c. to plant in 1819 and 1820	7	8	6
Joseph Symes assisting 13 weeks to 1st June	3	18	0
Repairs			
Joseph Symes the Carpenter's Bill	19	19	3
Charles Holloway the Glaziers Bill	2	9	5
Charles Hardiman the Smiths Bill	1	19	0
Robert Barrett the Masons and Tilers Bill	3	18	1
One Years insurance	4	4	0
Henry Ferrett for Labourers removing Park Gate Hurdles and other work	8	7	6
Donations	25	12	0
	1223	*8*	*5*

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DRO Dorset Record Office (now the Dorset History Centre)
GRO Gloucestershire Record Office
HRO Hampshire Record Office
NA National Archives (formerly the Public Records Office)
SARC Somerset Archive and Record Service
WSRO Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office

DRO D/ANG Paget, Marquis of Anglesey: Dorset and Somerset Estate
DRO D/PIT Pitt-Rivers Estate Archive
DRO NG/PR1 Dorchester Prison
DRO D/TRD Trenchard Estate

GRO D2700 Badminton Muniments Volume II, Estate and Household

NA CRES 38 The Crown Estate Commissioners and Predecessors: Title Deeds etc of Properties Acquired, and Sold or Leased, by the Crown
NA F 43 Forestry Commission: Headquarters: Inspections Files
NA LRRO 5 Office of Land Revenue Records and Enrolments and Predecessors: Deposited Documents and Miscellaneous Records
NA LRRO 67 Hewlett Record Agency: Papers

SARC DD/WY Wyndham of Orchard Wyndham

WSRO 1284 Eyre-Matcham of Newhouse, Whiteparish and Downton
WSRO 1300 The Marquis of Ailesbury
WSRO 1369 Council for the Preservation of Rural England (Wiltshire Branch)
WSRO 2057 The Earl of Pembroke
WSRO 2667 Arundell of Wardour
WSRO A1 Wiltshire Quarter Sessions
WSRO CC Church Commissioners

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